



Joseph Priestley District Congregational Conversation Results

This fact sheet includes basic information and some of the issues, problems and solutions, which **Joseph Priestley District** congregations discussed in their congregational conversations.

Do these results match what you would expect from other congregations in your district? What would you expect to be different?

The Basics

- Thirteen (13) congregations in the **Joseph Priestley District** returned report forms—the highest return rate of all the districts.
- Six (6) were large congregations, four (4) were mid-size congregations and three (3) were small congregations.
- All thirteen (13) are **Welcoming Congregations**.

Intergenerational Community Relations

Five (5) congregations mentioned the **strong bonds in the youth group**:

- “activities that promote bonding: trips, lock-ins, music, movies, dance, camp, etc”
- “good bonds among youth and between youth advisors”
- “cohesive youth group, which is open and energetic”
- “enough youth for a critical mass”

Two (2) congregations mentioned “**safe space**” as vital to their youth ministry’s success: “youth feel there is a ‘safe space’ in the group and in the larger congregation.”

Five (5) congregations mentioned that there was a **lack of integration** in the congregation:

- “no bridge between youth and adults”
- “lack of communication between church leadership and youth ministry”
- “feeling of isolation in community at-large”
- “lack of youth integration and recognition in congregation”

Nine (9) congregations decided to **improve scheduling and communication** in order to transform their youth ministry:

- “expanding virtual communication, website, order of service – hand out order of service to classes and youth group each Sunday, start youth newsletter”
- “actively seek youth input”
- “connect the youth group with committees within the church”



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Mission, Vision and Priorities

Four (4) congregations discussed **their respect for youth and the value of youth ministry**:

- "wanting lifelong UUs"
- "5-year plan objectives including youth"

Four (4) congregations mentioned that **adult commitment** was important in their youth ministry.

Four (4) congregations decided to complete a **visioning process** in new ways in their community:

- "create youth ministry committee system" and "build in yearly goals and milestones"
- "council focus on youth"
- "hold focus groups with youth about why they do or do not participate"

Curriculum, Resources and Transitional Age Youth

Five (5) congregations celebrated their **strong junior high and RE curricula**:

- "bonding experience of OWL in 8th grade"
- "RE program for youth to build relationships, values and support base"

Three (3) congregations mentioned that **social justice**, volunteering and other "opportunities for political and social action" were reasons for their youth ministry's success.

Five (5) congregations decided to **change their curriculum** and two (2) decided to **seek youth input** in future curriculum.

Twelve (12) congregations have **youth advisors**, six (6) have **paid** advisors and (6) have **Youth Adult Committees**.



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Leadership Development and Opportunities for Practice

One congregation has a youth on their **Board of Trustees**. Four (4) decided to **create a position** for youth on their Board as a result of the congregational conversation.

Six (6) congregations celebrated the success of youth leadership in their community:

- “younger kids see [youth group] as a place where they will have more power”
- “youth-led” programs

Five (5) congregations decided to invite youth to join committees.

- “educate committees on how to approach youth”
- “adults and youth represented on Program Council”
- “intentional integration of youth as individuals into all committees and activities of the church”

Serving the Spiritual Needs of Youth

Two (2) congregations mentioned “living/carrying out the **seven principles**” as a driving force in their youth ministry.

Two (2) congregations mentioned the arts as important parts of their youth ministry:

- “intergenerational performance arts”
- “music program/chalice theater”
- “youth bells”

Three (3) congregations mentioned that youth did not participate in worship and four (4) discussed how their worship services did not engage youth. Others mentioned poor youth spiritual development:

- “worship and other activities not adapted to welcome youth”
- “lacking spiritual definition and identity”
- “few opportunities for spiritual development”

Five (5) congregations decided to include youth as participants in worship, four (4) decided to encourage youth attendance of worship and three (3) decided to increase ministerial contact with youth:

- “locate vehicles of youth inclusion in Sunday Services”
- “youth decide and implement services”
- “invite youth to Sunday Service” and include “service music by youth”
- bring “youth and young adults on worship committee”