



Mid-South District Consultation on Youth Ministry Summary Report

May 5, 2007

MSD Annual Assembly

UU Congregation of Montgomery, AL

Facilitators: Megan Dowdell and Hannah Stampe

The Consultation on Ministry To and With Youth District Information

Full name of district: Mid-South District

Date of gathering: May 5, 2007

Type of gathering: Part of Annual Assembly

Length of gathering: 3 workshops; one 45-minute session, and two 1-hour sessions.

Total number of participants: 143

Number of youth participants: 20

Number of adult participants: 123

Does the district have a Youth-Adult Committee/Youth Steering Committee?

Yes, Youth Adult Committee.

What positions/roles does it include? Co-chaired by two youth (Sr. and Jr. Co-chairs) and advised by adults. See Article VI of the Bylaws for other positions.

Is there a youth on the district's Board of Trustees? Yes, and an adult trustee for youth, who also sits on the YAC.

Do youth serve on any other district committees? No

Does your district have a youth coordinator/minister? No

What other staff support, if any, exists for youth ministry in the district?

District Executive, Lifespan Program Consultant

Does your district regularly offer trainings (Leadership Development, Spirituality Development, Youth Advisor, Anti-Racism Analysis Development, Chaplain, Renaissance Modules)? If yes, which one(s)? How often?

Yes, alternate years for all, but we have Renaissance Modules, OWL, and Advisor Trainings every year.

The Consultation on Ministry To and With Youth Strengths and Needed Changes (+/Deltas)

What do the survey and congregational results imply about the current state of Unitarian Universalist youth ministry in the district?

<u>Strengths</u>	<u>Changes</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Youth adult participation• Good momentum among youth• Wonderful youth• Great youth events• Ability to see room for growth• Great YAC advisors• Great congregational support for youth events• Youth involved continentally• (Scott) Trustee for Youth• AR/AO programming continentally	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Youth and adult participation• More youth!• Better sense of congregational community• Getting input from youth• Bring in more congregational youth (reach out)• More consistency• More learning about youth oppression• Not all youth are the same• More activities that appeal to youth• More adults involved with youth• Youth learning from previous youth• Post-high programs• More support for families• More AR/AO in district



The Consultation on Ministry To and With Youth Identifying Needs and Changes

PROGRAMMING

Programming Need/Change #1: Promotion of leadership con

What will this change accomplish? Clearly defined positions and better trained leaders -- both youth and adult	
NEXT STEPS	WHO?
1. Task Force	YAC
2. Publicity for cons, retreats, workshops	Networker
3. Recent grads (Young Adults)	Task Force

Programming Need/Change #2: “Articulating UU Faith” in intergenerational class

What will this change accomplish? Having UU youth ability to articulate/explain beliefs to others outside congregation.	
NEXT STEPS	WHO?
1. Task Force	Individual congregations

INFRASTRUCTURE

Infrastructure Need/Change #1: Improve YAC & MSD communication especially on the website

What will this change accomplish? Transparency, timeliness, comprehensive	
NEXT STEPS	WHO?
1. Get MSD website up and running	John Mott and Eunice Benton
2. YAC webmaster collaborates with communication	MSD Trustee, John Albers, John Mott

Infrastructure Need/Change #2: Structure to transition from youth to young adults

What will this change accomplish? Help to bridge the gap, retaining involvement	
NEXT STEPS	WHO?
1. Create a task force to create a program	MSD Board
2. Bring in YACM Regional Organizer to conduct one workshop minimum	TEACH Trustee

Infrastructure Need/Change #3: More youth involvement at district level

What will this change accomplish? Increase leadership pool for district; Opportunity for service; Leadership development	
NEXT STEPS	WHO?
1. Encourage standing committees to find youth	MSD trustees
2. Make part of leadership development committee to seek out youth	Leadership Development Committee
3. Youth member of Leadership Development Committee	

RESOURCES

Resource Need/Change #1: Website Development

What will this change accomplish? Effective youth involvement	
NEXT STEPS	WHO?
1. Set up site	Webmaster
2. Inform youth	DREs, Youth Advisors
3. Links back to main site	Webmaster

Resource Need/Change #2: Youth Editable Website

What will this change accomplish? Improve communications	
NEXT STEPS	WHO?
1. Editable content	YAC leaders and youth advisors
2. Links to library, OCEAN, publications	Master web developer
3. Inform congregational webmasters and newsletter editors	YAC networker

Resource Need/Change #3: Inter-district exchange

What will this change accomplish? New ideas, bigger picture	
NEXT STEPS	WHO?
1. Invite youth from outside district	Leaders
2. Link on website to other districts	Webmaster
3. Set up a forum (bulletin board)	YAC moderated webmaster

TRAINING

Training Need/Change #1: Joint youth adult leadership training

What will this change accomplish?	
Empowered youth and adults, build relationships and understanding, more intention multi-age leadership.	
NEXT STEPS	WHO?
1. Set a date and location	YAC
2. UUA training or local training	YAC
3. Possibly contact UUA	YAC

Training Need/Change #2: Con-leadership training

What will this change accomplish?	
Make cons more successful and more organized, bridge the age gap, youth will be more comfortable leaders, better cons = more youth = more awesome	
NEXT STEPS	WHO?
1. Develop resources	YAC and Connie
2. Date, location and leader	YAC and Connie
3. Evaluation or debriefing, permanent record	YAC

Training Need/Change #3: Diversity acceptance training

What will this change accomplish?	
More acceptance, more hooray for the world, make people more conscious of their words and actions, make youth feel more comfortable	
NEXT STEPS	WHO?
1. Decide whether to contact UUA	YAC
2. Find money	YAC/MSD board
3. Date and location	YAC
4. Extra youth attend effort	YAC
Facilitator Comment: After briefly observing some of this group’s discernment over training need/change #3, it became clear that there was inconsistency among the participants’ experiences with anti-racism/anti-oppression/multiculturalism training. Particularly, among some adults and youth, it appeared the language of “ <i>anti-racism</i> ” was an initial barrier to the group’s endorsement of training that seeks to dismantle institutional racism and provide a venue for personal commitment to moving beyond “acceptance” of difference toward inclusion, empowerment, self-determination and liberation of all people. As a desired outcome of the Association-wide Consultation, we strive and hope for anti-racism and anti-oppression work to become an infused part of MSD’s and continental youth ministry (Appendix A).	

The Consultation on Ministry To and With Youth Youth Empowerment

Working Definition

A covenantal practice in which youth are recognized and affirmed as colleagues who are essential and vital to our faith community. A practice based on mutual respect and trust between youth and adults, youth and youth, as well as adults and adults. This practice encourages all to grow in a free and responsible way.

This is achieved by:

- A youth-adult partnership in all parts of decision making, including worship, resources and programming.
- Talking directly, openly and honestly with love and respect in that relationship.
- Mentoring relationships.
- Youth coming together to strengthen confidence, build collective voice, and realize a more robust expression of themselves.
- Recognizing youth ministry history as part of our collective history.

The Mid-South District Gathering Attendees wrote about “youth empowerment” by answering the following questions on index cards:

What are the strengths and weaknesses of this definition?

What else does youth empowerment mean to you?

- (+) Emphasis on respect for each other [love] and youth integrated into community is vital.
- (+) Love and respect, equal relationship, growing in a free and responsible way
- (+) Recognized and affirmed, colleagues and essential and vital; mutual respect and trust, free and responsible. Great word sculpting
- (+): A lot of this is very good, particularly mentoring, mutual respect and talking openly directly with love
- (+): Demand for communication, closeness, being genuine with each other
- (+): Emphasizes that it is a practice on-going, day-to-day not just a checklist; colleagues is a good choice of words—implies equal importance of contributes without requiring identical contributions or identical needs for support
- (+): The word colleague is what needs to be stressed.
- (1) More training for adults in advisory positions, with youth and adults facilitating
- (Change/delta) – mentoring relationship – it seems like it contradicts the equal relationship
- (Change/delta): Achieved also by adults gaining confidence (not just youth)
- (Change/delta): achieving youth empowerment also requires building awareness, listening, sharing tools, to recognize young people’s oppression and how we participate in perpetuating it.
- (Change/delta): actually doing what is written (difficult), how to do these great concepts will be critical.

- (Change/delta): bring youth into “adult” committees not a youth reps but as participating individuals.
- (Change/delta): I’d like to see the word “emphatic” in the student. This practice encourages all began in a free, emphatic and responsible way.
- (Change/delta): must allow for natural changes which youth go through—changing interests, educational pressures, growth. Leadership development process
- “Feel” of the is definitions is so much better than previous definitions
- Age-defined, what about age, a smaller youth does not have the knowledge of what older youth have. I think that they should empower youth of all ages in some form or ways.
- Build a collective voice sounds like the borg. We get that at school. Build individual voices.
- Connie visit congregations training individually youth led
- I agree with what’s being said, but written a little differently so its easier to get
- I am having a hard time grasping this. I think that it sounds good nothing sticks out that doesn’t seem right or helpful.
- I like the definition (first part in green) very much. I see a tension between the idea of youth as “colleagues” and then also talking about adults as “mentors” How do you address the idea of wanting to empower youth but also providing leadership or guidance as adults? I am wholeheartedly in favor on drawing on youth’s excellent skills, ideas, energy, perspective=---but is there a time to encourage “push” youth to try out some ideas from adults that at first blush, may not seem exciting.
- I love it that the “practice based on mutual respect and trust” includes “adults and youth.” – adults need to learn and understand how to do it together before they can be helpful to youth (rather than assuming they already know or that its not too important or its not their thing). There’s something here about assuming responsibility and acknowledging consequences— setting limits ...
- I think that decision-making should involve everyone, but only if it has to do with those people I think that youth could decide for them with adult guidance.
- I think they youth empowerment definition is well-written True youth empowerment comes from youth and adults being in community with each other—and being equals in decision-making. There are times as an adult that you need to “advise” things that may be unsafe and/or harmful.
- If using “colleagues” need to define
- In a large congregation especially one with policy governance, it is totally unrealistic to expect youth-adult partnership in ALL decision-making.” Worship is the domain of the minister, who should encourage youth participation but youth are not going to be able to be equal decision makers.
- Joint decision-making all? What about safety issues?
- Like the mutual respect and growth for all
- More often have adults serve in their positions for a set amount of time—1-2-3 years. Make it more of a point when placing adults in positions working with youth.
- Mutual respect and trust between youth and adults. I think that is really important. In the section about achieving youth empowerment the word in “a youth-adult partnership in all parts of decision making trips me up a little. I think there are decisions that youth should make on their own and that don’t really apply to adults and vice-versa.
- Mutual respect and trust—follow-through on our promises

- Mutual respectful and trust between youth and adults. I really like this sentence. I think that is important.
- Need to state age of youth to recognize and affirm them as colleagues
- Pay trustee for youth position – real value, it is a big time commitment= real money.
- Recognition of mutual benefit of relationship?
- Respect and trust between youth and adults – stuck out to me
- The strongest word I see in the youth empowerment is “colleagues”. This word, to me, truly defines how youth; adults and congregations can be “empowered” to support our youth movement and individuals. Specific—bring youth into “adult” congregational committees, such as religious services committees, as full participating members and not just youth reps, but as participating individuals.
- There is an unequal relationship—in terms of power ratio not in terms of one person being better or more important than another—small children and youth—youth and adult. Healthy boundaries are vital to the creation of safe space where youth can explore and grow.
- This is an unequal (power ratio not our person better or more important than the other) relationships between young and old. (small children and youth—youth and adult) healthy boundaries are important.
- To promote youth empowerment—the youth leadership training for advisors Connie held helped a lot for other adults to see the youth as leaders not what are we planning for the youth mentality
- What about children? Today’s youth are role models and inspirations to tomorrow’s youth just as adults have a mentoring relationship to today’s youth; youth have a responsibility to kids, too.
- Wish we could move beyond the term “youth empowerment,” because it is such a loaded phrase with too much negative connotations within some congregations and within the district.
- With the term empowerment are youth implying they don’t have power today and want more?
- Youth are not necessary in all parts of decision-making in the same way adults are not necessary in all decision making. Saying youth have to be in everything is a lot like saying big corporations hiring black employees to improve the bottom line. It is the abilities of the person regardless of age



Evaluation Summary

of evaluations: 20

Unknown age: 1

Older Youth: 4

Young Adults: 2

Adults: 13

Currently or in the past involved in district youth programs: 15

Are or have been a leader (youth or adult) at the district level: 12

Most Useful. Dialogue and interaction. Small group discussions. Exchange of ideas being intergenerational. Direct meeting with youth. Several felt they got the most out of the morning survey results and plenary session that everyone attended. Working on the plan for the future. Goal setting and coming up with concrete ideas was most useful for many participants. Getting information and listening. Felt safe. Second session allowed one person to truly see the possibilities.

Least Useful. Survey analysis. General exchanges to get to know your “neighbor.” Breakout session had only youth and adults that were already involved. When can we move beyond “youth empowerment?” One adult would have preferred a different seating arrangement other than the sanctuary. One adult wondered about the potential of follow-up. Editorial comments. Opening meeting was not helpful and heard it all at GA. Difficult to get participation. One person didn’t find icebreaker useful. Index cards on youth empowerment were not helpful to one youth. Felt ideas that went unconsidered were not helpful.

Hope for the future of youth ministry. All of our ideas coming to life on improving. Extreme growth. More youth leaders. Mainstreamed into combined youth/adult ministry. Continued growth. Intergenerational communication. “Wanted to get beyond the same old discussions. These questions have been going on for years. I had hoped this consultation would have brought something new to the table.” Deepening relationships and human liberation! Provide a place for non-Christian youth to be able to voice their beliefs. Community. Fun. Consistency and growth for YAC programs for adults and youth. Youth joining as a team. Transformation, practice and leadership. That we will truly embrace it and do it, not just talk about it. Better communication. Not to the youth but with the youth. To have better youth adult relationships. More involvement by the larger community.

Gifts to strengthen youth ministry. Presence and leadership is helping. Experience and dedication. Ideas, work with youth in other congregations. One-on-one mentoring. Awareness of issues. “Continuing to strengthen an already thriving ministry with youth in my congregation and advocate youth/adult PARTNERSHIP. Commitment and vision. Being a youth advisor. Time and support. Social justice work and interpersonal relationship development. Training at district and congregational level. Writing and publication skills, passion for youth. Energy and organization.

Able to make an important contribution to the gathering and that your voice was heard. Most people said yes. One person felt that it was all news to me so I was just

learning. One person said “No, youth in the first breakout session were talking among themselves the whole time.” Another said, “Yes, youth were willing to listen.” Stay in the thick of it. Someone mentioned wanting to bring out other voices.

Process. Feedback on the process was very positive. Almost every evaluation said that the process was good/great/excellent. Thankful for the process. Wonderful facilitation—warm, flexible, smart and respectful. Wanted more handouts. Some people felt we should have encouraged youth to spread out and not sit as a block. Liked the opening reading by Tandi. One person mentioned to use the microphone consistently and call out youth or adults on the talking amongst themselves. Followed a logical sequencing. One person preferred we not say things like “great job” or offer comment as transition when ideas are presented. Needed written copy of the working definitions to comment on. Posters hard to read—consider asking for UUA staff assistance in making a “set.” Youth were sleep deprived. Great tag team, seamless. One person wanted more time and maybe have people get questions ahead of time.



The Consultation on Ministry To and With Youth Schedule

9:15-10:00am “Conversation to/with Youth” [Plenary Session]

- Reading (written by: Tandi Rogers Koeger, Appendix B)
- Introductions and brief history
- Icebreaker: three questions
- Survey and Congregational Conversations Presentation w/ two discussion questions [20 min]
- Plug for two break-out sessions and evaluations

10:10-11:10 am Breakout Session 1

- Discuss +/-changes based on data [strengths & weaknesses]
- Introduce Youth Empowerment definition
- Small group discussion of +/-changes to definition
- Large group report back of +/-changes
- Round-Robin Brainstorming session on four areas

1:40-2:30 pm Breakout Session 2

- Review brainstorming
- Small group prioritizing, defining and expanding [25 min]
- Report back
- Evaluations



APPENDIX A:
Desired Outcomes of the Consultation on Ministry to and with Youth

The desired outcomes of the process are:

- More than just a one-size-fits-all youth ministry—a youth ministry that is **robust, flexible, and diverse**
- Denominational youth work that focuses on **servicing local congregations**
- Mutually **respectful** and **empowering relationships** between youth and adults
- **Anti-racism and anti-oppression** work infused within every part of youth ministry, with a recognition that there is not one "right" way of doing the work—providing a forum for youth **identity development** and **institutional change**
- A youth ministry that meets the **spiritual needs** of youth and increases the **spiritual depth** of our congregations
- **Effective communication** within, between, and among all areas of the Association.

APPENDIX B:
Prayer for Youth Consultation By Tandi Rogers Koerger

plain text = voice one; underlined text = voice two; both underlined and bold = both voices, italicized text = assembled community with coaching

Spirit of Life known by many names and worshipped in a rainbow of ways reflecting the power of Love, Creation, and Community,

We give thanks this day for the opportunity to be together, to laugh, *to learn*, to play, and **to build a vision**. May this time bind us and set us free.

We call in the Unitarian youth and the Universalist youth who led the way to the 1961 merger and creation of our saving faith, Unitarian Universalism. And the Community said Come In. *Come In*.

We call in the youth of the Liberal Religious Youth who loved enough to let go and make way for the Young Religious Unitarian Universalist. *Come In*.

We call in the youth of the Continental Youth Council who said, "There must be a better way. Let us a dream the way." *Come In*.

We call in the dedicated Youth Consultation Task Force who has worked long, exhausting hours to make this happen. *Come In*.

We call in the congregations, who bone-dry, beg for the quenching energy, vision, and vibrancy of youth, but just can't find a way. *Come In*.

We call in the isolated youth who know in their hearts they are flaming Unitarian Universalist but cannot find their religious community. *Come In*.

We call in the congregations where Youth Ministry is alive and well and spilling out into their wider communities with transformation and hope. *Come In*.

Who else shall we call in? Call out the invitation. (People add their own.) *Come In*. (after each contribution.)

We call in the future of **Youth Ministry**, of which we are on the cusp, the wave, the dawn. We can hear you in our silent, wise **voice within**. Come in and come out. *Come In and Come Out*.

We welcome you who have come from far and near to give voice to your dreamings and cravings. **Welcome**.

Spirit of Life and Love, **be with us today**. Give us the vision to dream beyond ourselves. Give us the humility to see our short-comings as a place to begin and grow. Send us the compassion to create a safe place for us to explore **possibilities**.

Give us the confidence **to ask** for what we need and want.

Give us the courage to begin to build.

And the people said, we will make it so. *We will make it so*.

Blessed be! *Blessed Be. Amen! Amen*