



A Process Guide for Congregational Conversations on Youth Ministry



Adapted from the January 2006 Process Guide for the
Unitarian Universalist Association's Consultation on Ministry To and With Youth.

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Dear Congregational Leader,

Thank you for your interest in holding a congregational conversation about your ministry with youth! Congregations are the heart of our faith, and the health and vitality of our congregations' youth ministries is essential to the well-being of our movement. Congregational conversations are an opportunity for people in your community to come together for an assessment of your youth ministry. Some congregations may find it helpful to do this on a yearly basis, while others may hold one every few years as a new generation of youth becomes involved in the life of the congregation.

This process guide is designed to help you and your congregation organize and conduct an intergenerational congregational conversation about your youth ministry. The effectiveness of this conversation will depend on the stakeholders and leaders represented at the table. See "C2. Coordinator Resource: Whom to Invite" for a list of crucial participants. To help make your congregational conversation a success, the guide includes suggestions about everything from facilitation to food.

From 2005 to 2007 the Unitarian Universalist Association conducted a Consultation on Ministry To and With Youth – a process of deep listening and engagement with Unitarian Universalist of all ages on the topic of youth ministry. This process resulted in a clearer understanding of the strengths and challenges of Unitarian Universalist youth ministry at the time, and developed a new vision for this vital ministry for the years to come:

We envision a youth ministry that is central to the articulated mission of Unitarian Universalism and is

- Congregationally based,
- Multigenerational,
- Spirit-centered,
- Counter-oppressive and multicultural, and
- Radically inclusive,
- Offering multiple pathways for involvement in our faith communities.

Being together in multigenerational community, sharing our stories, and working together to strengthen youth ministry benefits us all. I hope your conversations will nurture your spirit and foster meaningful connections.

In Faith,

Beth Dana
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About Congregational Conversations

Let's remind our adult members that the youth within our congregations are part of our community. They may not meet on Sunday morning. They may be less visible than the younger kids or older members, but they are still an integral part of who we are as a religious community, and their contributions enrich us. Youth are also tomorrow's adult members. If we do not provide a place for them in our churches, they are less likely to remain Unitarian Universalists as adults.

-From the Youth Advisors Handbook by Shell Tain

Congregational conversations are intended to help you successfully integrate youth into your religious community. These conversations will allow you to explore how your congregation can strengthen its youth ministry.

Conversations should provide space for participants to envision a wider array of opportunities for youth and a stronger youth ministry in your congregation. If participants get caught up in the negative, facilitators should encourage them to think of the possibilities.

The congregational conversation process includes these elements:

Diagnosis

What is our youth ministry like? Is it healthy? What is going well, and what is not going as well?

Vision

Thinking outside the box and beyond just youth group, what can our youth ministry be?

Needs Assessment

What do we need to achieve this vision?

Next Steps

What do we need to do more of? Less of? Differently?

C1. Coordinator Resource: Logistics

Modeling shared leadership is a great start to an intergenerational dialogue, so congregational conversations should be the result of collaboration between youth and adults. It is recommended that one adult in the congregation—a minister, DRE, youth coordinator, board member, or other lay leader—work with one or two youth in the congregation to coordinate the logistics.

Responsibilities of the Coordinators

1. In consultation with congregational leadership and youth, **schedule the conversation**. The gathering could take place on a Saturday or after a Sunday service. It is recommended that you plan three to four hours for your congregational conversation.
2. **Secure meeting space**. Ideally, you will have either break-out rooms available for small group work or a flexible arrangement in the large meeting space.
3. **Recruit** (or have appropriate others recruit) youth and adult facilitators.
4. Engage the congregation's interest and support, and **seek participation** from all groups in the congregation. (See "Engaging Your Congregation.")
5. Make photocopies and **provide supplies**, using the list below.
6. **Arrange for food**. If all you need is snacks, you can coordinate them yourselves. If your congregation is doing a daylong conversation or the conversation will follow the Sunday service, you may want to enlist others to coordinate a meal.

Supply List

- Newsprint (at least four sheets per group of 5–8 people and 5–10 sheets for facilitators)
- Markers (for small groups and facilitators)
- Index cards
- Handouts, one per participant
 - Handout 1: Characteristics of an Ideal Youth Ministry
 - Handout 2: Youth Ministry and Youth Empowerment in Unitarian Universalism
 - Handout 3: Six Components of Balanced Youth Ministry
- Worksheets
 - Worksheet 1: Force Field Analysis (one copy per small group)
 - Worksheet 2: Strategies and Resources (one copy per small group)

C2. Coordinator Resource: Whom to Invite

Your congregational conversation is not just for or about youth, youth advisors, and religious educators. It is not only for adults. It is about the overall life of your religious community. It is about your congregation's attitude toward youth ministry, its commitment to youth and their families. It is about and for youth **and** adults. This dialogue encourages all participants to think about their roles in this vital ministry and to think creatively about what your congregation's youth ministry could be. The process can accommodate any number, as long as the space is adequate and the facilitators are skilled.

The value of the input, the strength of the vision, and the likelihood of implementation will all be greatly increased if all stakeholders and leaders of the congregation are at this table. While all interested congregants are welcome, the participation of the following individuals and groups is crucial:

- Minister(s)
- Director/Coordinator of Religious Education
- Other staff members (music director, administrator, etc.)
- Youth Coordinator and/or Youth Advisor(s)
- Youth who participate in a youth group
- Youth who do not participate in a youth group, but are involved in your congregation in other ways
- Youth who are no longer active in the congregation
- Congregational board members
- Worship Committee members
- Social Justice Committee members
- Membership/Volunteer Coordinator
- Middle-school/junior high youth
- Coming-of-Age teachers/mentors
- Parents of children and youth
- RE Committee members

C3. Coordinator Resource: Engaging Your Congregation

Getting buy-in from the staff, lay leadership, and membership of your congregation is essential to the success of your congregational conversation. Reach out to those who may not recognize their role in youth ministry, as well as those who are already working directly with youth.

Spreading the Word

How can you share information about the conversation with your congregation? Here are some ideas:

- Write a column in the congregational newsletter. (See “Sample Newsletter Article.”)
- Lead a forum about the process.
- Bring information to the youth group, RE Committee, and Board.
- Share information on the congregation’s website/e-mail list.

Identifying Allies

A key principle of successful organizing is identifying allies—people or groups that share your interest in a cause. Some congregational leaders have expressed the concern that their congregational conversation on youth ministry will be seen as just another “RE thing” or “youth thing,” rather than the concern of the whole congregation. One way to avoid this misconception is to identify allies in key areas of congregational life who are not typically associated with youth work.

Of course, religious educators, ministers, youth advisors, and youth are essential to the success of this process. Each has a clear stake in youth ministry, and each is concerned about issues of faith development, ministry, growth, and empowerment of youth. However, identifying allies in other congregational areas will emphasize the importance of this gathering to the congregation as a whole.

Extending Invitations

Personal invitations are an effective way to encourage people to attend the congregational conversation. Here are two suggestions:

As chair (a member) of the Worship Committee, I urge you to attend our congregation’s conversation about youth ministry, so that we can explore as a congregation what our youth need, what our ministry with youth can be, and how youth and adults can partner to make our worship services speak to all of us and bring us together.

As Congregational President, I invite you to attend our congregation’s conversation about youth ministry. This gathering is about the life of our religious community, the inclusion of youth in the ministry and leadership of our congregation, and the spiritual growth of all our members. I urge you to bring your experience as a leader in this congregation to vision and strategize for a stronger and more empowering congregational youth ministry.

In extending invitations, acknowledge the value of each person’s experiences. Encourage them to draw on their strengths in this conversation about their roles in a vital youth ministry.

Engaging Youth

Because the experiences, wisdom, and leadership of youth are essential to the congregational conversation, getting youth buy-in should be a priority. Youth need to be invited and welcomed actively; a passive invitation in the newsletter is not adequate. And a critical mass of young people is generally necessary to give them a voice, so it is important to involve as many youth as possible from the following groups:

1. YRUU youth (congregational, district, continental levels)
2. Youth in non-YRUU congregational youth groups
3. Youth involved in their congregations, but not in a youth group
4. Disengaged youth who have left their congregation or attend very rarely

There should be an intentional outreach not only to youth involved in youth group, but also to youth who have found other meaningful involvement in the congregation or who have disengaged. Disengaged youth may be harder to reach, but if they are willing to contribute their experiences and perspectives, the process could be greatly enriched.

An example invitation might be:

As a youth who used to be involved in our congregation, I invite you to attend our congregational conversation on youth ministry. Even if you are not personally interested in re-engagement in the community at this time, your input on how to retain and/or recruit youth like yourself would be an invaluable contribution to our thinking and planning. We hope that you will bring your voice to this conversation.

Why should youth be excited about the congregational conversation? This conversation is a special opportunity for adults and youth to listen and learn from each other. It is a chance for youth to have their voices heard by members of the congregation. It is also an opportunity to dialogue with leaders in their congregation, be a part of congregational decision making, and create change for themselves and for future generations.

C4. Coordinator Resource: Sample Newsletter Article

The following may be adapted for your congregation's conversation:

Youth Ministry Conversation: An Opportunity for Visioning and Growth

Join us on MONTH, DAY, at TIME for intergenerational listening, dialogue, visioning, and strategizing about our youth ministry and the life and vitality of our congregation as a whole. Everyone is encouraged to attend and actively participate. The effectiveness of this conversation will depend on the participation of our congregation's stakeholders and leaders. The gathering will be facilitated by YOUTH NAME(S) and ADULT NAME(S). Contact CONTACT PERSON for more information about how to become involved in this exciting opportunity for our congregation.

F1. Facilitator Resource: Overview

Choosing Facilitators

Congregational conversations should be facilitated by a team of youth and adults. The size of the team should be decided based on the number of participants and the conversation format you choose. While choosing facilitators from within the community may work for some congregations, others may prefer to have outside facilitators so that everyone in the congregation can engage in the conversation. Those congregations may want to bring in a youth-adult team from another congregation in their district/region/cluster.

Facilitation Skills and Techniques

Congregational conversations will require strong facilitation skills and the ability to work well in a youth-adult team. Here are some things to keep in mind when facilitating:

1. Learning Styles

People absorb information and participate in groups in very different ways. Auditory learners interact and learn best through hearing; visual learners through seeing; kinesthetic learners through movement; and heart learners through storytelling and relationship building. It is important to incorporate these different styles into the congregational conversation, so that everyone is comfortable engaging with the process. This principle also affects leadership style, so also consider it in assembling the facilitator team.

2. Sharing Facilitation

Sharing facilitation between youth and adults is one of the best ways to promote youth empowerment. Facilitation teams encourage growth, leadership, and skill building in all facilitators, and it is important that all have input into planning, decision making, and the facilitation process itself.

Since the focus of your congregational gathering is youth ministry, it is important that the youth co-facilitator be in the spotlight and that adults do not dominate the process. One simple strategy is to plan in advance who will lead which parts; another is to have the youth be the first to speak at the gathering. Youth facilitators could welcome everyone to the gathering and explain the goals of the process. Modeling strong youth leadership and empowerment makes it clear to other youth attendees that they are welcome and that you want to hear their voices, opinions, and experiences.

It is important for facilitator teams to get to know each other ahead of time. Even if you have known each other for years in the congregation, it can be useful to talk specifically about your facilitation styles. What types of activities does each of you prefer to facilitate? Do you like facilitation responsibility to shift frequently, or does that distract you? Figure out how you can best work together.

3. Group Process and Dynamics

Healthy group process is essential to the success of congregational conversations. To build a shared vision and plan, the facilitators need to structure the gathering so that people feel comfortable and are willing to speak freely. Participants need to listen to each other with respect and interest. It may be helpful to have guidelines that remind participants to stay on topic, not dominate conversation,

etc. You may want to post a simple covenant and ask the group to accept it, with brief amendments when appropriate. A typical group covenant often includes these guidelines:

- Be present.
- Be oriented towards growth and change.
- Be aware of group power dynamics (how much you're speaking, who isn't speaking).
- Engage in conflict lovingly.
- Speak from personal experience (use "I" statements).
- Challenge your assumptions and be open to new ideas.
- Think outside the box.

Facilitators should encourage honesty from participants; it is essential to building and strategizing for change that everyone embraces. The role of the facilitators is to listen, rather than direct, and to help draw out people's thoughts. The facilitator can then offer ways of bringing these thoughts together, enabling the group to move forward.

Consider using process checks to make sure the process is moving smoothly and participants feel like they have a voice in the discussion. Regular check-ins can help prevent larger problems later on. Here are three simple suggestions:

Weather Report

Have each participant give a "weather report" about how they are doing at that moment. For example: "Hi, I am Jesse. The weather is a little foggy, but it will hopefully clear as time goes on and I better understand the process." Or, "Hi, I am Judith. It is clear and sunny outside with temperatures in the mid 70s."

Go-Around Report Back

This is similar to the Weather Report, but without the theme. Ask participants how they feel the process is going so far and if they feel that they have been able to participate fully. Go around the group, making sure that each person has a chance to speak. Everyone should have the right to pass.

Note Cards

Give each participant a note card and give them a few minutes to write their thoughts about how the process has gone so far. Have participants hand their cards to the facilitator, who then reads them aloud, or redistributes them randomly to participants to read aloud.

Snowball Fight

This option can double as an energy break. Ask everyone to write their thoughts on paper and crumple them up. Then have a quick snowball fight, throwing the pieces of paper at each other. When the snowball fight ends, make sure everyone has a piece of paper. Then take turns reading them out loud.

Additional Roles

Before the conversation begins, the group will also need to designate a recorder and a timekeeper. Youth or adults may fill these roles.

The recorder writes all ideas on newsprint and on the worksheets, ensuring that the conversation is well-documented.

The timekeeper helps the facilitators keep within the time limits of the schedule. It is helpful to have someone keeping everyone aware of the time remaining during discussions, and it is always important to respect people's commitments by ending on time.

F2. Facilitator Resource: Congregational Conversation Agenda

Both participants and facilitators benefit from a written agenda. This sample agenda can be used for a gathering that runs approximately four hours.

Opening (5 minutes)

Introductions (10–15 minutes)

Orientation (15 minutes)

Icebreaker (15 minutes)

Force Field Analysis (1 hour, 50 minutes)

Break (15 minutes)

Process Check (10–15 minutes)

Carrying the Vision (30 minutes)

Reflection and Closing (10 minutes)

F3. Facilitator Resource: The Process

Preparation

- Gather all supplies and handouts.
- Write introduction questions on newsprint:
 1. Name?
 2. Number of years you've been in the congregation?
 3. Your connection to youth ministry (current or past), if any?
- Post a large force field diagram on newsprint. (See Worksheet 1)

Opening

5 minutes

It is important to have a spiritual element in the congregational conversation. One way to do this is to invite participants to share words or music during the lighting and extinguishing of the chalice. The following are sample readings:

Reading 1

O light of life,
Be kindled again in our hearts
As we meet together this morning
To celebrate the joy of human community
Seeking a wholeness that extends beyond ourselves.
—Rev. Samuel A. Trumbore

Reading 2

That we may remember,
That we may know,
That we may imagine and touch our joy:
Let us kindle true light
From the fire of our souls.
—Susan L. Van Dreser

Introductions

10–15 minutes

Welcome everyone to your congregation's intergenerational conversation about youth ministry. Introduce yourselves and your roles in the congregation. Acknowledge and thank the coordinators of the gathering. If the group is small, have everyone share their responses to the three introduction questions posted on the newsprint. If the group is too large to use this format, divide into groups of five to respond to the questions.

Introductions should be very brief; emphasize that participants will have time later to share more about their experiences, visions, and hopes.

Orientation

15 minutes

Below is a sample script for orientation. You are welcome to adapt or expand it.

Our congregational conversation is an opportunity to explore how we can successfully integrate youth into the religious life of our congregation. We hope to provide a forum for

you to envision a wider array of opportunities for youth and a stronger youth ministry in our congregation. We encourage you to think outside the box and beyond our current youth structure. Reflect on how varied, multifaceted, and fulfilling youth ministry and youth programs can be in our congregation.

As a congregation, we will incorporate these ideas into our vision and long-range plan. Youth and adult leaders in our congregation will work to make your vision a reality.

You should also briefly describe your congregation's youth ministry. This explanation should acknowledge that some people in the group may not know what the congregation offers youth. Does your congregation have a youth group? Does it affiliate with Young Religious Unitarian Universalists (YRUU)? Does your congregation have a Youth-Adult Committee or other youth decision-making body? Are youth involved in other areas of the congregation, perhaps as RE teachers, choir members, or committee members?

Icebreaker

15 minutes

Two icebreakers are presented below. The objectives for each are that participants will:

- get to know one another;
- reflect on youth and youth ministry;
- think about the personal, spiritual, and religious foundation of youth ministry.

Option 1

Ask the group to form youth-adult pairs. Each person will have five minutes to share on the topic, while the other person listens. After five minutes, signal pairs to switch roles.

Topic: What is youth ministry? What is/was your experience as a youth, and in what ways did you feel or not feel ministered to/with?

After both people have shared, invite volunteers to share a highlight of their conversation with the large group.

Option 2

Ask the group to form groups of four, with two youth and two adults. Depending on the number of participants, you may need to adjust the size of the small groups; if possible, each should have equal numbers of youth and adults.

Give each small group ten minutes to discuss this question:

What does your understanding of UUism say about this community's commitment to ministry to and with youth? How does our youth ministry connect to our Principles?

Give everyone a one-minute warning when time is almost up. After ten minutes, invite each group to briefly share with the larger group one or two highlights of their conversation.

Process: Force Field Analysis

1 hour, 50 minutes

Definition

The force field analysis is a creative group process to identify and prioritize all significant facets of a desired change. A force field analysis:

- clarifies and strengthens the forces for achieving the desired goal (the driving forces);
- identifies the forces working against achieving the goal (the restraining forces);
- prioritizes the driving and restraining forces;
- identifies actions to eliminate or reduce the restraining forces and implement or strengthen the driving forces.

The Process

The purpose of the force field analysis is to encourage people to open their minds and think creatively about how wide and varied youth ministry could be. It focuses them on how to help achieve the ideal, what works against the ideal, and what you can do to move youth ministry forward in your congregation. Encourage participants to think outside the box about the various forms youth ministry can take. If participants start to get bogged down by procedural details, refocus them on this purpose.

Explain to the group that they should do this exercise in the context of their congregation. When thinking about strategies and resources, they are looking at what actions they, as a congregation, can take and what resources they need.

Introduce this exercise with a brief (five-minute) overview explaining the steps of the process. Display the force field analysis template you have prepared on newsprint and answer participant questions. Then facilitate the process by giving instructions section by section as you move along.

1. Describing the Ideal

15 minutes

While most of this process will be conducted in small groups, this brief exercise is done in the large group before you divide participants into their groups.

Distribute Handout 1, Characteristics of an Ideal Youth Ministry (at the back of this guide) and give participants a few minutes to read it. Explain that these characteristics were identified by the Unitarian Universalist Task Force on Ministry To and With Youth (as a part of the Unitarian Universalist Association's Consultation on Youth Ministry, www.uua.org/aboutus/governance/boardtrustees/youthministry/)

Ask participants to reflect on the question, "What would an ideal youth ministry look like in our congregation? What would you add to this list?" Give participants a few moments for silent reflection, then invite them to share words or phrases that would describe their ideal. List their responses on newsprint. Facilitate this exercise as a brainstorm, not a discussion. Assure participants that they will have opportunity for discussion in the small group activities that follow.

Post this list in a central location.

For the facilitator's convenience, below is the text of Handout 2, Characteristics of an Ideal Youth Ministry from the Task Force on Ministry To and With Youth:

Our Unitarian Universalist Youth Ministry will

- no longer be seen as a problem, but rather as an asset to our congregations and our movement as a whole.
- recreate one faith, where youth can both self-differentiate and integrate with the rest of the denomination.
- have many different, equally recognized, and supported forms—youth-adult, youth-youth, and both lay and professional ministry.
- have more financial, training, and professional support resources.
- be seen not just as a program but as a ministry, allowing for youth to explore and better understand and articulate their faith and spirituality.
- make sure that all UU youth feel supported and welcomed in their congregations and in the denomination, and feel like they have a voice.
- help the voice and energy of youth to drive congregations, especially around progressive and sustainable social change.
- make sure that anti-racism and anti-oppression work is a central part of all UU communities, leading us to examine how racism and oppression tear us apart, both individually and as a faith.
- create genuine youth-adult partnerships grounded in mutual respect, trust, understanding, and empowerment.
- fundamentally transform our congregations with its greater commitment to nurturing and supporting youth during this formative time and to helping youth remain UU as they grow in their faith.

The remainder of the process is best conducted in groups of five to eight. Each small group should reflect the diversity of the larger group (e.g., youth, adults, staff, and lay leaders).

Each small group should choose a volunteer to lead the discussion, solicit input, and keep the process on track. Groups should also be prepared to report briefly to the large group.

When the small groups have formed and chosen a discussion facilitator, give each group a copy of Worksheet 2, Force Field Analysis, and Worksheet 3, Strategies and Resources. Then proceed with the process described below.

2. Brainstorming Driving Forces

10 minutes

Ask participants to brainstorm forces working for achieving the group's ideal youth ministry. List their responses in the appropriate column on the newsprint chart.

Note: These responses must be transferred to Report Form 2 later.

3. Prioritizing Driving Forces

5 minutes

Have the group identify the three driving forces they believe are the most significant. Give each person three votes. Have participants mark their votes on the newsprint with markers, or use a show of hands. Bring the group to consensus on the top three.

4. Brainstorming Restraining Forces

10 minutes

Have the group brainstorm forces working against achieving an ideal youth ministry. Ask the group to be as specific as possible, because it will help with the next steps. List the group's responses in the appropriate column on the newsprint chart.

Note: These responses must be transferred to Report Form 2 later.

5. Rating Restraining Forces

10 minutes

Explain that in moving toward a goal, reducing or eliminating restraining forces is generally more effective than strengthening driving forces. For that reason, we are going to concentrate on the restraining forces.

Since a group's ability to make changes varies with the force it would like to change, we are going to identify the restraining forces most likely to respond to the influence of this congregation. As you look at your group's list of restraining forces, ask, "What can this congregation do to reduce or eliminate this restraining force?"

You will express the congregation's influence by rating each of the restraining forces from 1 to 3:

- If the force could likely be eliminated with a thoughtful, concerted congregational strategy, we give it a 1.
- If the restraining force can be reduced but probably not eliminated altogether, we give it a 2.
- If it is probably outside the realm of the congregation's influence, we give it a 3.

Here is an example:

Issue: The ABC District wants to hold a summer gathering at a state park. Activities would center around a pavilion, which is located near a lake with a swimming area.

Ideal: The ideal summer gathering would have high turnout, beautiful weather, and spiritual grounding.

Restraining Forces: Forces preventing us from holding the ideal summer gathering include

- **The unpredictable nature of the weather.** This force is outside the realm of the district's influence, so it is a 3.
- **People are busy or away during the summer.** This force can be reduced but probably not eliminated, so we give it a 2. If we schedule far enough in advance on a weekend that doesn't conflict with other UU events, we'll be more likely to get a good turnout.
- **Our district summer gatherings often have no connection to our faith.** This force can be eliminated with a thoughtful strategy, so we give it a 1. We can build spiritual elements into the gathering. We can ground the gathering in our faith's connection to justice work by organizing a service-learning opportunity directly before or after the community gathering.

Seek group consensus in rating the restraining forces, and write 1, 2, or 3 next to each force. Try to keep the group moving along.

6. Prioritizing Restraining Forces

5 minutes

Explain that the group will now work only on the restraining forces rated 1 or 2. Of those forces, ask them to identify the three they believe could most effectively be reduced or eliminated if thoughtfully addressed. Give each person three votes. Have participants mark their votes on the newsprint with markers, or use a show of hands. If there are similar forces, each with at least a couple of votes, the group can choose to cluster them. Bring the group to consensus on the top three.

7. Developing Strategies

15 minutes

On a clean sheet of newsprint, list the three selected restraining forces. Leave room to write under each. Brainstorm strategies that would reduce or eliminate each of these forces. When the brainstorming is complete, the group will identify the top three strategies that they believe the congregation can adopt to move toward an ideal youth ministry. Give each person three votes. Have participants mark their votes on the newsprint with markers, or use a show of hands. Bring the group to consensus on the top three.

Note: The top three restraining forces and strategies should be recorded on Worksheet 2.

8. Identifying Resources

10 minutes

Now that the group has identified three restraining forces and three strategies, participants can identify what resources are needed to implement those strategies. Resources might include money, information, communication, staff time, volunteer time, or anything that will address a particular restraining force. For each resource, decide whether it is something the congregation can provide or something the congregation needs from another source. List the resources on newsprint and record them on Worksheet 2. Indicate who will provide the resource: the congregation or another source, and identify those sources.

9. Report Back

15 minutes

Have the small groups briefly share their top forces, strategies, and resources with the larger group.

10. Appreciation

Thank the participants and small group leaders for their hard work on this important process.

Break

15 minutes

Process Check

5–10 minutes

Carrying the Vision

30 minutes

The discussion that your congregation just had should not be forgotten. The commitment, enthusiasm, and vision created today have the potential to transform the way your congregation engages in ministry with youth. Encourage the congregation to think about how the visions, strategies, and actions for change can be incorporated into strategic planning for the congregation as a whole. The ideas generated in your youth ministry conversation have implications for the

congregation's mission, worship, and community. Continue to use your imagination, think outside the box, and be oriented toward growth and change.

Take time now to have the group identify and record the next steps for your congregation.

Reflection and Closing

10 minutes

This is a time for the group to reflect on the conversation they have just participated in and to conclude the gathering. Pass out one index card per participant, and ask them to think about and write something they learned today and something they will do differently as a result of this conversation. After a few minutes of reflection, ask participants to share a word or phrase from what they have written.

Close with a reading, song, or other ritual meaningful to your congregation. Below are two suggestions.

Reading 1

Releasing the separate one is a difficult knot.

Finding yourself is something only you can do.

Imagine yourself coming back 10 years from today

Through time, to help you where you must now be.

—Jim Cohn, "The Secret Desire of Fear," from *Grasslands* (Writers and Books Publications, 1994)

Reading 2

ALL: We come together as a living church.

WORSHIP LEADER: We come together from different places as unique individuals. Our paths and the ways of our going are diverse, yet we share our journey.

CONGREGATION: We come together in gladness, knowing that here we are welcome as we are and that here also the best possibilities of our spirits are encouraged to grow.

PARENTS OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH: I am glad to bring my children to this church which is for us a larger family. Here we come to understand that we are all part of an even larger family of life on earth, which is our home. In our church we can discover what it means to be related.

CHILDREN AND YOUTH: I am glad I came into a family of love. I am glad to be part of this church family, and glad to be part of a world where there is so much to discover and to do.

TEACHERS OF THE CHURCH SCHOOL: I am glad I have the opportunity to work and play and learn with the youngest people in our church. Your questions invite my wonder, your trust encourages my hope. So I will strive to give each of you the kind of affection and respect which fosters your ability to question and to trust.

OTHER ADULTS: We all rejoice in the children and youth who are with us on life's journey. As we cherish you, we pledge ourselves to share with you the living wisdom of our religious tradition which is your heritage. We welcome you into our fellowship. As you grow, we hope to find you beside us in the long and loving work of creating goodness in the world.

CONGREGATION: As members of a church family we promise to stick together, to support each other, as all good families do, through thick and thin, through joy and sorrow,

through tears and laughter, through work and play and all the choices and challenges life's journey brings.

WORSHIP LEADER: As children of one Creative Spirit we affirm our relationship to the larger family of life. We affirm our faith that we have within us the power and wisdom to join in the creation of a world of justice, peace and joy.

ALL: Let us strive to understand ourselves and one another, and to extend the spirit of goodwill as far as our love can reach.

—Rev. Ruth Gibson, from the 1997 UUMA Worship Materials Collection

Force Field Analysis

Driving Forces

List the top three forces that are driving our ministry with youth towards its ideal state.



1.



2.



3.



Current Youth Ministry

Restraining Forces

List the top three forces that are restraining our ministry to and with youth away from its ideal state.



1.



2.



3.



Ideal State of Youth Ministry

Strategies and Resources

List the top three strategies to address the restraining forces you identified. Then list the top four resources needed to make each strategy work.

		Who can provide this resource?	
		Your congregation	Other (identify)
Strategies			
1.	_____		
	Resources:		
	• _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
	• _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
	• _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
	• _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
2.	_____		
	Resources		
	• _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
	• _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
	• _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
	• _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
3.	_____		
	Resources		
	• _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
	• _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
	• _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
	• _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> _____

Characteristics of an Ideal Youth Ministry

The ideal Unitarian Universalist youth ministry is:

- an asset to our congregations and our movement as a whole.
- a religious community, where youth are both self-differentiated and integrated with the rest of the denomination
- expressed in many different, equally recognized, and supported forms—youth-adult, youth-youth, and both lay and professional ministry.
- enabled by financial, training, and professional support resources.
- a ministry through which youth explore and better understand and articulate their faith and spirituality.
- supportive of and welcoming to youth in congregations and in the denomination, and a place where voices of youth are heard.
- a positive force to drive congregations, especially around progressive and sustainable social change.
- a central part of all UU communities, leading us to examine how racism and oppression tear us apart, both individually and as a faith.
- grounded in genuine youth-adult partnerships with mutual respect, trust, understanding, and empowerment.
- able to fundamentally transform our congregations with its greater commitment to nurturing and supporting youth during this formative time and to helping youth become lifelong Unitarian Universalists.

Youth Ministry and Youth Empowerment Working Definitions

Youth Ministry

Unitarian Universalist youth ministry is a collaboration between youth, their families, and adults to create authentic, anti-racist, anti-oppressive and multicultural communities which empower and support:

- The spiritual, religious, and ethical development of youth grounded in Unitarian Universalist identity
- Mutual love, respect, and trust between and among youth and adults
- Relationship-based ministry and peer support
- A youth-driven ministry of justice that calls all of us to live out our values in the world.

Like all ministry, ministry with youth is the responsibility of the whole congregation and the whole community.

“The great end in religious instruction...is not to make them see with our eyes, but to look inquiringly and steadily with their own.” – William Ellery Channing

* Anti-racist and anti-oppressive communities are ones in which individuals actively work against individual and institutional racism and oppression while striving for safe, welcoming, and radically inclusive communities. The language of “anti-” is used to emphasize the prevalence of oppression in the world. It is our calling as people of faith to actively dismantle oppression in Unitarian Universalist communities and the world at-large.

Youth Empowerment: Unitarian Universalist Guiding Principles

Youth empowerment is both a goal and a practice that has intrinsic merit for each of us in our ethical and spiritual lives. The practice of fostering youth empowerment varies by context. In congregations, youth empowerment practice depends on the geography, culture, history, and structure of the congregation. Youth empowerment and youth leadership development reinforce one another – calling for our personal and community commitment to right relationship between youth and adults. Across diverse contexts, the principles of youth empowerment remain the same, but the details of its practice must address the particular needs of each community.

The task of youth empowerment is not to make our congregations safe for youth or to determine authority within Unitarian Universalist institutions. These are the responsibility of our shared faith community. If covenant is the backbone of our faith, youth empowerment is one vertebra among many. In order for individuals, groups, and communities to determine the structural barriers to youth empowerment and enact the practices in which youth empowerment might be fully realized, we must first define a philosophy of youth empowerment grounded in our Unitarian Universalist principles.

Youth empowerment is a covenantal practice in which youth are safe, recognized and affirmed as full and vital participants in the life of our shared Unitarian Universalist faith community.

This covenantal practice is based on the following set of guiding principles:

- Love and trust between youth and adults, between youth and youth, and between adults and adults;

- Mentoring relationships among children, youth and adults, which draw from direct experience and wisdom;
- The development of youth confidence and self-identity through building community, learning to use one's voice effectively, and realizing a more robust expression of themselves;
- Encouragement for all to grow together in accountability;
- Youth defining their issues and participating in the decisions that impact youth communities and the larger multigenerational communities we share;
- Youth and adults having access to information through direct and honest communication expressed with grace, humility and respect;
- Trust in the competence of youth and the authenticity of their insights;
- Appreciation of the prophetic wisdom and energy of youth to be agents of social change, justice, and service;
- The recognition that youth ministry is an integral Unitarian Universalist ministry and part of our collective past, present, and future.

Six Components of Balanced Youth Ministry

Worship

Red is for worship; the heart, compassion, and love we share together. Worship is an important and sacred part of many UU youth events. Youth worship can be interactive and non-traditional. It often takes place in a circle, with sharing as a focus. Many youth groups also put on Youth Sunday worship services in congregations. Worship is a time and place where we can share youth spirituality and caring with the larger community.

Youth-Adult Relations

Orange is for warmth of the bond between youth and their elders, essential to youth empowerment. Youth communities where youth and adults work together and have power with each other have huge potential. Intergenerational environments encourage all of the other components of youth programming and ministry. Youth and adults can learn from each other, experience youth worship, build community, empower each other to lead, and make a difference in the world through social action.

Community Building

In literature, yellow is the color of memory and reminiscence. It honors our friends and loved ones, and the social aspects of youth programs. Community building, or socializing, is a time for people to get to know one another, time devoted to “hanging out.” Some of the most valuable experiences in youth ministry happen during social activities. This is the time to bond together, share values, establish trust, generate intimacy, and practice acceptance. Community building is the time to share our liberal religious values by getting to know one another.

Social Action

Green is the color for treating the earth and each other responsibly. Green is for social action. Because youth have passionate opinions about social issues, the youth in this denomination have been at the forefront of social action activities. Youth ministry is a place for youth to express and explore our values, to put action behind our concerns. Social action projects are an important way for youth to put hands and feet on our principles while having fun.

Learning

In some eastern philosophies, blue represents intellectual growth and mental energy. Almost every aspect of youth ministry can provide learning experiences for youth. RE curricula are great resources for learning in youth ministry. However, curricula do not provide the only learning opportunities for youth. Youth ministry can also be a great place for discussion- sparked by the topic of a guest speaker, movie or from youth's own experiences. Youth ministry is a safe place to expand our horizons and to learn more about the world around us.

Leadership

Purple, the color of royalty, represents leadership and self-governance. One of the biggest contributions youth ministry can make to our denomination is by the development of youth leadership.



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UNIVERSALIST
ASSOCIATION OF
CONGREGATIONS