



Prairie Star District
Consultation on Youth Ministry
Summary Report

14 April 2007

Minneapolis, MN

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The Consultation on Ministry To and With Youth District Information

Full name of district: Prairie Star District

Date of district youth ministry gathering: 14 April 2007

Type of gathering: Series of 3 workshops at Annual District Meeting

Length of Gathering: 10:30 – 11:45 am; 1:30-2:55 pm; 3:15-4:30 pm = 3 hours, 55 minutes

Participation:

Total number of participants: 41

Number of youth participants: 17

Local YAC members: 3

District YAC member: 1

District volunteer: 1

Youth Rep to District Board: 1

Con Planner: 1

Number of young adult participants: 1

Campus Ministry organizer: 1

Number of adult participants: 23

Youth Director: 2

Youth Advisor:

Youth Advocate:

Director of Religious Education:

Minister of Religious Education: 1

Religious Education Committee: 3

District Religious Education Committee: 1

Seminarian: 1

OWL Instructor: 1

Parent: 2

Con Planner: 2

District Staff: 2

UUA Trustee: 1

(some wore two or more hats)

Does the district have a Youth-Adult Committee / Youth Steering Committee/ the equivalent? Yes (YAC)

Is there a youth on the district's Board of Trustees? No

Do youth serve on any other district committees? No

What staff support exists for youth ministry in the district? Program Consultant and Youth and Young Adult Specialist

Does the district offer trainings? Renaissance Modules, Basic Youth Advisor Training, non-UUA Youth Advisor Trainings, OWL, Spiritual Development, Leadership Development Con (every-other-year), Social Action Con. Groundwork Anti-Racism/Anti-Oppression Training is coming.

Please share with us exciting aspects or programs of your district's youth ministry. This district has worked hard to make the Annual District Meeting welcoming and pertinent to youth.

The Consultation on Ministry To and With Youth Reflection Questions

Spiritual Development:

How can Unitarian Universalist youth ministry help youth to determine their spiritual needs, articulate their faith, feel spiritually fulfilled, and live out our faith in the world?

How do congregations and district currently contribute to the spiritual development of youth?

How could congregations and the district contribute to the spiritual development of youth?

- Opportunities outside RE to get to know each other
- Integrate youth into the worship/ service committee
- A group with youth and adults that meet and talk about what is spiritual to them. One person could share every week what their feeling on what is spiritual to them is.
- Learn more about our own religion at a young age and a little about other religions.
- Adults give advice to youth on explaining UUism to others
- Increase the amount of interaction between youth and adults for worships and services
- Give “safe” space and time to bond/ educate youth/ have people who understand you/ involvement with congregation/ be comfortable with talking to each other
- OWL, COA, Cons, discussion & real interaction with others, worships at cons
- Be invited into committees
- Visit other UU churches

Congregational Involvement:

What aspects of congregational life may cause youth to feel alienated or isolated within their own congregation?

- Ignoring youth until there is work to do and then they decide to get the youth involved
- Boring sermons
- They don't ask for our opinions and ideas. Ask us!
- Youth have to choose between participation in the service and youth groups.
- We don't have our own space.
- Cliques.
- Youth downstairs. Adults upstairs

What can congregations/district and continental leaders (youth and adult) do to make the majority of youth feel supported in the congregation?

- Get the youth involved in worship and sermons

- Try to have staff that stays with the youth for a longer period of the time to form better bonds
- Better salary for youth workers
- Respect youth language and interests.
- Keep in touch with youth after graduation
- Allow youth to participate in the service and the youth groups. Don't make us choose.
- Drive us to cons.
- Don't make promises you won't keep.

What could motivate youth to become and remain actively involved in different types of youth ministry?

- Make youth ministry interesting
- Freedom for discussion
- Ask youth to help create their own programs
- Food! Feed us!
- Flexibility
- Decision-making power and accountability
- Sincere recognition, not obligatory so you feel better
- Adult who really know us or want to
- Realistic expectations
- Less pressure to be perfect little spiritual beings

How can congregations support the healthy racial, gender, and sexual identity development of youth?

- COA/ OWL
- Open air for discussion
- Model healthy relationships
- Invite and answer questions
- Don't make a big deal out of it. It's not a big deal. Adults should go to their own OWL so they know what options there are.
- Update OWL to include the whole sexual diversity
- Update Welcoming Congregations to include the whole sexual diversity

**The Consultation on Ministry To and With Youth
The State of Youth Ministry in the District**

Strengths

Opportunities to learn and grow
Cons (x2)
Healthy, trained Youth Advisors (x4)
Dedicated, year-long leaders
Youth retreats
Coming of Age (x2)
Cool people
Our Whole Lives (x2)
Having fun (x2)
Our own space
Social Justice (x2)
7-8th grader considered part of Youth
Ministry
Committed youth leaders
Attendance & participation (x2)
Inter-generations mentoring & skill
building

Growing Edges

Racism & anti-oppression work
Need own space
Youth workers paid fairly
New, pertinent RE Curriculum
Youth programming outside of Sunday
morning
More youth leadership (x2)
Stronger youth-adult connections
Perception of youth-hood & youth
ministry as precious (x3)
Youth Empowerment
Involvement with other congregations
Money (x2)
Time from adults (x2)
Paid Youth Directors
Youth in worship and on the Board
Stronger congregational YACs
Change restrictive Con policies
Outreach and organization for Jr. High
Youth
Intergenerational participation
Communication of District and
Continental to locals

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

Programming

Need/Change #1: Youth involved in congregational leadership, including intergenerational activities, programs and classes

What will this change accomplish? Empowerment, feeling of ongoing responsibility, ownership in/of community, fosters ongoing intergenerational relationships

Next Steps (Who)

1. Case studies of how youth are embraced in all areas of church in order to inspire others (board retreat, committees, committee leadership)
2. Appropriate funding/ investment through PSD grants to congregations for leadership development cross-generationally. (PSD)
3. Intergenerational discussions groups in congregations (congregational volunteers)

Need/Change #2: Relax and just have fun – intergenerationally. Variety of activities in RE, congregational youth activities, services, other activities.

What will this change accomplish? Create community, inclusivity, and more fun, keep youth attentive, enjoyment, entertaining

Next Steps (Who)

1. Well organized activities so people will attend (church staff and volunteers)
2. Communication to church leadership about which activities you could go to (congregational members)
3. Discussion board on PSD website for successful programming ideas. Bulletin board? Discussion thread? (PSD webmaster)

Training

Need/Change #1: Board Training

What will this change accomplish? Appreciation for the youth in church infrastructure. Acknowledgement of youth.

Next Steps (Who)

1. Find the Board (YAC)

2. Give board training and show them the importance of youth. Use today's keynote speaker's family values (YAC)

Need/Change #2: SDC, LDC, Worship Training

What will this change accomplish? Allow for youth and adults to learn each others' talents. Establish spiritual and social leaders.

Next Steps (Who)

1. Support involved youth and adults (YAC)
2. Find trainers (YAC)
3. Make sure they have a place to execute their learned talents (YAC)

Need/Change #3: Youth Advisor Training

What will this change accomplish? Happy, safe youth and better youth programming

Next Steps (Who)

1. Make importance of youth be known in congregations (ministers, through modeling and preaching)
2. Identify and recruit interested appropriate adults (DRE)
3. Train them!

Need/Change #4: OWL Training (for youth, but also for older adults)

What will this change accomplish? Open issues of LGBTQQ with youth to give them a safe space.

Next Steps (Who)

1. Make the importance of youth known to the congregation (Ministers)
2. Find Adults (DRE)
3. Train them!

Resources

Need/Change #1: Money. Charge fee for YRUU Membership (Tandi note – invite adults to join, too, and support)

What will this change accomplish? It will help support Cons and summer camps to create a database for YRUU so mailing lists can be more organized, support for youth in general within churches.

Next Steps (Who)

1. Put it on the YAC agenda (YAC)
2. Go through the District Board (District Board)

3. Go through Continental YRUU (Continental People)
4. Ask congregations to budget \$ for low-income youth (churches)

Need/Change #2: Committed adults and youth (time and people)

What will this change accomplish? Liabilities defined for congregations, events and initiatives would get completed, get more people into it

Next Steps (Who)

1. Invite/ recruit adults (youth and already committed adults)
2. Liabilities defined/ adequate staffing hours (District Board & YAC)
3. Publicize every successful event (everyone)

Need/Change #3: Networking

What will this change accomplish? Get people talking; bring people, congregations, District, and District Board together

Next Steps (Who)

1. Adequate district staffing & coordinating (PSD)
2. Create opportunity for people to communicate (everyone)
3. Wiki
4. Youth Advisor Training Annually: North/ Central/ South

Infrastructure

Need/Change #1: Lots of committed youth representation at congregational and district levels.

What will this change accomplish? Programming interesting for youth, increased funding for youth

Next Steps (Who)

1. Youth on church board and other committees (youth take responsibility and initiative)
2. Youth must be invited to join (adults in church, by-laws)
3. Incentives to join YAC, like YACs get \$200 incentive for existing (PSD)

Need/Change #2: Well-known communication mediums

What will this change accomplish? Connections! Community!

Next Steps (Who)

1. More internet interactive usage/ youth ownership of the site (webmaster and youth)

2. Bring *Visions* back (youth)
3. Mentor program/ wisdom sharing (congregations and youth groups)

Need/Change #3: Separate space for youth

What will this change accomplish? Youth community building

Next Steps (Who)

1. Build youth rooms (congregations)
2. Hospitality room for youth at PSD meetings (PSD)
3. List youth space as part of healthy congregation necessity in PSD assessment (PSD consultants)

The Consultation on Ministry To and With Youth Comments on Youth Empowerment & Youth Ministry Definitions

Youth Ministry

- ⊕ Integrated into the Unitarian Universalist faith community/ expression
- ⊕ Build youth capacity, character connectedness
- ⊕ Affirm the Unitarian Universalist Principles
- ⊕ Are ministries both by and for youth (multi-directional)?
- ⊕ Simplify, not so much specific stuff
- ⊕ Define it positively – take out the anti’s
- ⊕ Include social development
- ⊕ Include social action in youth lives
- ⊕ Multi-generational, developmentally sensitive
- ⊕ Enriching & challenging to UUs in living out our faith
- ⊕ Shorten! Basic definition in 1st sentence or 2. Go on to elaborate beyond for details
- ⊕ GLBTQQ social justice work (and/or) include anti-homophobic in intro
- ⊕ Community of integrity, instead of litany of specific manifestations/ buzz words
- ⊕ Question – what is the difference between youth (teen) Religious Education and Youth Ministry?
- ⊕ Community-building, non-exclusive
- ⊕ Kind of a negative definition. I’d like to see “inclusive” in it. We sound inclusive by default, because we’re anti-everything, not because we truly want to appreciate and welcome all people
- ⊕ Use “intergenerational community” instead of “youth – adults,” because it’s too limiting to have only two options.

Youth Empowerment

- ⊕ Mentoring relationships & capacity building, skill-building, relational.
- ⊕ Do we really need a list?
- ⊕ Include social development
- ⊕ Recognition of differences, similarities, resources, and abilities of youth and adults, and the sharing thereof.
- ⊕ 1st sentence is great!
- ⊕ Specifying youth-youth, youth-adult, adult-adult seems overkill. But maybe not everyone understands that and needs to hear it like that. Otherwise “among youth and included in the wider community.”

The Consultation on Ministry To and With Youth Evaluation Summary

24 evaluations were filled out and turned in.

Most Useful.

- ⊕ Networking (x6)
- ⊕ Sharing in smaller groups (x5)
- ⊕ Strengths/ Growing Edges (x2)
- ⊕ Post-it Notes (x2)
- ⊕ Being with youth – how refreshing (x2)
- ⊕ Survey, statistics
- ⊕ Impassioned leaders
- ⊕ Different ideas and views – it opened my mind
- ⊕ Gold Nugget catching

Least Useful.

- ⊕ Power Point (x3)
- ⊕ Very long (x2)
- ⊕ Too fast paced (x2)
- ⊕ So task oriented
- ⊕ I didn't want to take a break
- ⊕ It was so long my brain went numb

Comments on process and facilitation

- ⊕ Good balance of moving and sitting (x4)
- ⊕ Very organized (x2)
- ⊕ Confusing at times – talking about district youth ministry or congregational youth ministry?
- ⊕ Thanks for letting us move around
- ⊕ Well-facilitated
- ⊕ Extremely productive and positive
- ⊕ It was safe for me to share
- ⊕ Excellent!
- ⊕ Variety of exercises
- ⊕ Tom is a cutie (youth comment)

The Consultation on Ministry To and With Youth Process Schedule

Welcome (Tandi)

Introduction to the Consultation (Tom)

Individual introduction go-around (Tandi)

Covenant creation (Tom)

Power-Point Shuffle (Tom and Tandis)

We sprinkled Power-Shuffle-type exercises throughout the Power Point presentation. It kept things going and took it deeper. The adults relayed that they really, really appreciated hearing how the youth really felt about their church experiences.

“I love Youth Ministry that...” Game (like Upset the Apple-cart) (Tandi)

Strengths/ Growing Edges (Tom and Tandis)

Break

Definitions: Youth Ministry & Youth Empowerment (Tom)

Reflection Questions (Tandis and Tom)

Break

Intro to Four Areas/ Post-its/ Small Groups/ Report Back (Tom & Tandis)

What Now? Announcements (Sherry)

Closing (Tandis)

Evaluations