

Report to the UUA Board of Trustees on Youth Leadership

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Chronology of Major Youth Ministry Initiatives 2004 - Present

This chronology begins with the Board of Trustees's call for a Consultation on Ministry to and with Youth. There is also rich history leading up to this decision.

October 2004 – Call for a Consultation

The UUA Board of Trustees discusses the UUA's youth ministry and resolves to convene the Consultation on Ministry To and With Youth for "the purpose of renewing the Association's vision of its ministry for and with youth." President Bill Sinkford and Youth Trustee Megan Dowdell co-convene the Consultation.

February 2005 – Starting the Conversation: Convocation on Ministry to and with Youth

President Sinkford and Megan Dowdell convene a diverse group of youth, parents, and religious leaders for a Convocation on Ministry To and With Youth. The group identified priorities to be addressed by the larger Consultation process. A Design Team is selected to articulate a more detailed plan.

April to June 2005 – Articulating the Consultation Process

The Design Team coordinates with the co-conveners, the Board of Trustees, the Convocation attendees, and the YRUU Steering Committee to create a process plan. The plan is shared widely with youth and adult leaders throughout the Association. The salient components of the plan are 1) appointing a task force to oversee the process, 2) a survey, 3) congregational conversations, 4) stakeholder group meetings, 5) district gatherings, and 6) a summit to make recommendations based on the data gathered during the other components of the process.

July 2005 – Task Force Selected to Oversee Consultation Process

Members of the Task Force on Ministry to and with Youth are selected. The Task met in person three times (October 2005, July 2006, and March 2007) over the course of the Consultation process.

2006 to 2007 – Gather Feedback: The Consultation Begins

To gather feedback from a broad base of constituents, the Consultation employed a youth ministry survey, which approximately 1,400 twelve- to twenty-year-olds completed, congregational conversations in approximately ninety congregations, district gatherings, and stakeholder conversations with groups such as the UUMA, LREDA, DRUUMM, Interweave, ARE, and others with a vested interest in the future of Unitarian Universalist youth ministry.

July 2007 – The Summit on Youth Ministry: Giving Voice to the Data

The Summit on Youth Ministry in July 2007 was the culminating event of the Consultation process. Almost sixty youth and adults representing a variety of stakeholders came together to create recommendations based on the

data gathered throughout the Consultation. They considered where we have come from, where we are right now, and where we can go with our youth ministry. The Summit participants articulated the following broad vision for youth ministry:

We envision a youth ministry that is central to the articulated mission of Unitarian Universalism, offers multiple pathways for involvement in our faith communities, and is

- congregationally based;
- multigenerational;
- spirit-centered;
- counter-oppressive, multicultural, and radically inclusive.

February 2008 to February 2009 – The Youth Ministry Working Group: Creating a Strategy

After the Summit Youth Ministry Report was received by the UUA Board of Trustees in October, 2007, UUA President William Sinkford created a Youth Ministry Working Group (YMWG) to review and prioritize the findings of the Consultation and Summit. In cases where the Summit had set out broad and sweeping goals, the Working Group would identify specific people, resources, and steps needed to achieve them. The YMWG Report contains the concrete actions the Working Group believes are necessary to realize the exciting vision of youth ministry imagined by the Consultation and Summit.

June 2008 – Youth and Young Adult Empowerment Resolution

The 2008 General Assembly passes several resolutions related to youth ministry, a sign that constituents are passionate about youth ministry. As requested by one of these resolutions, the UUA administration collected feedback from congregations, districts, and other groups regarding their progress in youth ministry and presented a consolidated report at General Assembly 2009.

June 2009 to Present – Sharing and Implementing Our New Vision

The Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministries continues to disseminate information about the Consultation and the Mosaic Project. Our staff created three user guides (one for UUA staff, one for youth, and one for congregational leadership) to aid the Association and its congregations in implementing the recommendations of the YMWG. A Youth Ministry Advisory Committee to review the Association's progress and advise the UUA Administration on youth ministry is currently being formed. For more on what we're doing now, see *Where are We Now?* in this report.

UUA Administration's Vision for Youth Ministry

The UUA Administration affirms the vision for youth ministry set forth by the *Consultation on Ministry to and with Youth*, the *Youth Ministry Working Group Report*, and the recommendations of *The Mosaic Project Report*.

The Summit on Youth Ministry, the culminating event of the Consultation process, articulated the following broad vision for youth ministry:

We envision a youth ministry that is central to the articulated mission of Unitarian Universalism, offers multiple pathways for involvement in our faith communities, and is

- congregationally based;
- multigenerational;
- spirit-centered;
- counter-oppressive, multicultural, and radically inclusive.

The Youth Ministry Working Group (YMWG) provides a strategic imagination for Unitarian Universalist youth ministry based on the findings of the Consultation on Ministry To and With Youth. The YMWG Recommendations constitute the concrete actions the Working Group believes are necessary to realize the exciting vision of youth ministry imagined by the Consultation and Summit. The recommendations are organized into four sections:

I. Structure and Scope - This section defines the age for youth ministry, addresses changes in service delivery and staffing, and expands opportunities for youth leadership, spiritual development, and engagement in our faith.

II. Resources - This section contains recommendations for the review and revision of existing resources and includes recommendations for new programs and resources.

III. Religious Leadership - This section includes actions for training and supporting those who will help bring about the culture shift necessary for this bold new youth ministry—both religious professionals and youth and adult lay leaders.

IV. Accountability and Assessment - This section describes the roles of various entities that share responsibility for assessing our Association's progress in implementing these recommendations and nurturing a vibrant youth ministry.

The Mosaic Project was an assessment project that focuses on identifying the Unitarian Universalist ministry needs of Youth and Young Adults of Color. The Mosaic Project Report is full of recommendations; the Executive Summary recapitulates, "In order to provide a ministry that meets the needs of Youth and Young Adults of Color, the UUA and Unitarian Universalist congregations, districts, and organizations must focus on four key areas:

- Identifying and dismantling racial and ethnic inequities in Unitarian Universalist communities and institutions
- Creating multicultural communities that encourage the full participation of all who seek a liberal religious home

- Supporting healthy racial identity development of all Unitarian Universalists, with particular focus on the specific needs of People of Color
- Nurturing and supporting People of Color communities at local, district, regional, and continental levels and helping Youth and Young Adults of Color connect to them.

Our congregations, districts, and Association must be a part of the scaffolding that supports Youth and Young Adults both in their development of a healthy identity and through the transition from childhood to adulthood. The positive impact of creating such an environment can reach beyond the Youth and Young Adults of Color community into all ministry areas.

Where Are We Now on National and District Youth Leadership?

Congregations play the most important role in fostering youth leadership through their religious education programs, social justice opportunities, congregational leadership positions, mentoring, and other ways youth participate in congregational life. When youth ministry is strong in the congregation, youth leadership is strong. The UUA staff works to provide congregational and district youth and adult leaders with resources and skills to foster healthy youth leadership and to supplement the leadership development youth receive in their congregations with additional opportunities. The primary venues used to deliver these services are trainings, gatherings, and print or online resources. We also serve as a communication nexus to communicate opportunities for youth leaders.

There is nothing quite like hands-on learning, and so one of the best ways to foster youth leadership is to provide leadership positions to our youth. This is the responsibility of all of us. The Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministries affirms the recommendation of the Youth Ministry Working Group to widen youth voice and participation throughout all levels of the Association.

Trainings and Opportunities

Chrysalis Training of Trainers – The Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministries coordinates these trainings of youth and adults every few years. Those trained go on to lead Chrysalis trainings throughout the denomination. This is a serious commitment and outstanding leadership opportunity for youth. The next TOT will take place in July of 2010.

[Chrysalis Trainings](#) - Chrysalis trainings are held at the district level and coordinated collaboratively by the Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministries and district staff, often with support from local coordinators. There are five Chrysalis training modules, all of which contribute to leadership development. The Leadership Development Conference focuses entirely on leadership development.

District Summer Institutes and Leadership Schools - A number of districts host summer institutes (e.g. SWUUSI) and leadership schools (e.g. Goldmine) that provide youth leadership development opportunities in peer-to-peer and multigenerational settings. Some districts also offer youth leadership development opportunities at their annual gatherings. Some also involve youth in governance at the district level.

Youth Ministry Advisory Committee – Currently in formation, this committee, which will advise the UUA Administration on matters related to youth ministry, will provide an outstanding opportunity for several youth to serve as members of its team.

Leadership Development Conference for Youth and Young Adults of Color – Scheduled for August 2010, this leadership development conference in the Chrysalis model will provide leadership development training to youth of color with specific lens component addressing the unique realities youth of color face as leaders in predominantly white communities.

Training and Service Events for Interfaith Youth Leadership – This year, thanks to a generous grant from the Shelter Rock Large Grant Fund, the Unitarian Universalist Association has partnered with the Interfaith Youth Core to bring interfaith leadership and service opportunities to our youth. One such opportunity is a free leadership training and service event developed specifically for Unitarian Universalist (UU) youth and adults who work with youth—this training will equip teams with the skills needed to return to their congregations and districts and be leaders in the interfaith youth movement. This training will take place January 15-18, 2010.

The second large event sponsored by this partnership will be similar to the event above, but in the format of a youth summer camp at The Mountain August 1 – 6, 2010.

Smaller regional trainings will also occur at events such as district annual meetings and a workshop proposal is being submitted for a workshop at General Assembly 2010.

We plan to carry this youth interfaith leadership and service forward beyond the Shelter Rock grant in the future, probably using the Chrysalis youth leadership training structure that we offer.

Sexuality Education Advocacy Training (SEAT) – The Sexuality Education Advocacy Training is an annual collaboration between the Unitarian Universalist Association, the United Church of Christ, Advocates for Youth, Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism and the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice. Through workshops on community organizing, advocacy and anti-racism/anti-oppression, SEAT teaches youth, young adults and adult allies how to advocate effectively as people of faith for comprehensive sex education. The four day training is a great opportunity to become more involved in advocacy and to lobby on Capitol Hill.

GA Youth Caucus – Youth specific programming at General Assembly provides a number of leadership development opportunities, including the opportunity to serve on Youth Caucus Staff, attend workshops, network, learn about the business of the Association, and more.

Other non-congregational organizations and groups also play important roles in Unitarian Universalist youth leadership development. These include many UU camps and conferences, which host religious education weeks and youth summer camps. The UU Service Committee's Justworks Camps and JustJourneys trips are also excellent youth leadership development opportunities.

Resources

Youth Interfaith Service and Leadership Curriculum (In development) – The Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministries is undertaking curriculum development in partnership with the Interfaith Youth Core. This curriculum will fit into the existing Tapestry of Faith program and will focus on the importance of interfaith leadership and service in UU life.

Mission Trip Handbook (In development) – The Mission Trip Handbook is a guide for leaders interested in including youth in transformative experiences of doing justice and service in the world. The authors are experienced in a variety of mission trip models and provide useful information on how to organize such a trip from start to finish, in addition to illustrating how mission trips can deepen Unitarian Universalist identity and grow greater commitments to work towards the more equitable and peaceful world we all desire. By Jenn

McAdoo and Anne Principe. This book is being prepared for publication as a Toolkit Book as part of the Tapestry of Faith project.

Youth Small Group Ministry Handbook (Being edited for publication) – Recognizing that congregations need multiple faith development models to offer youth, this resource will provide tools for leading small group ministry or covenant groups with youth. The small group ministry model can address many needs of youth, including a sense of belonging, opportunities to practice leadership, and discussions that focus on matters relevant to their own lives. Will include guidance on session structure, the role of facilitators, and confidentiality issues with youth. Sample sessions and a template for creating new sessions will be included. By the Rev. Helen Zidowecki and Jessica York

[**When Youth Lead: A Guide to Intergenerational Social Justice Ministry**](#) – Based on a view of youth as equal participants in congregational life, this Tapestry of Faith Toolkit book offers adults who work with youth guidance to construct and maintain a healthy, spiritually vital youth ministry. Social justice work is an effective tool for bringing generations together, and the suggestions in this excellent resource have the potential to build rich partnerships among children, youth, adults and elders. Includes practical tips for 101 social action projects. By Jill M. Schwendeman.

[**Youth Group Handbook**](#) – Offers practical suggestions, guidance and programming ideas for youth group leaders and members. This thorough resource provides a background on the Unitarian Universalist youth movement, guidelines for starting a youth group from scratch and tips on effective leadership. It also addresses collective decision making, working effectively with adults, fundraising, social action, anti-oppression work and worship.

[**Youth Advisor Handbook**](#) – A comprehensive handbook for adults working with Unitarian Universalist youth. Everything you need to know about the history of youth ministry, the role of a youth advisor, youth issues, how to develop and encourage youth leadership, confidentiality and more.

Resources on UUA.org – We provide congregations with a number of free online resources for youth and for adults who work with youth, including resource lists of recommended outside resources and opportunities.

What Are Models of Youth Leadership in Other Denominations?

This brief overview looks at how the United Church of Christ, Reform Judaism, and the Presbyterian Church USA foster youth leadership and involve youth in governance.

United Church of Christ

Council for Youth and Young Adults – “The Council for Youth and Young Adult Ministries (CYAM) is the organization within the United Church of Christ that advocates, communicates, coordinates, and networks on behalf of youth and young adults within the United Church of Christ... Each Conference in the UCC is given an opportunity to nominate one youth and one young adult to the Council. Other members of the Council represent CYAM on Boards of Directors for one of the Covenanted Ministries of the UCC. There are also four members representing each of the racial/ethnic caucuses of the Council for Racial Ethnic Ministry. Other members are selected from the nomination pool to balance the Council for gender, age, and diversity. Elections for CYAM are held every two years” (<http://www.ucc.org/youth/cyam/youth-and-young-adult-council.html>).

This council “reports to the Executive Council and to the General Synod on issues, developments, and concerns in youth and young adult ministries in church and society.” It has 24 – 28 voting members all under age thirty for the majority of their term, elected at General Synod or appointed to a two-year term. (UCC Bylaws, Section 296)

Youth @ General Synod – “This week-long program for chaperoned high school youth groups combined General Synod events with three days of service projects, evening programs, social opportunities and after hours activities. In 2009, this group of over 220 people worked an average of 4 hours per day for 3 days, contributing a combined total of over 2700 hours of service to agencies and organizations in Greater Grand Rapids.

“During the event [a young adult and former assistant General Synod Moderator] provided an overview of General Synod and guided the youth through an actual resolution, which allowed them to experience the discernment and voting process. Other programming focused on faith, justice and service to help youth to think about their work here within the larger context of justice issues and identify opportunities for service and justice work within their own communities and congregations” (<http://www.ucc.org/youth/synod/>).

In addition to this programming, the UCC strives for full voting participation by youth as Conference Delegates at their biennial General Synod (the equivalent of the UUA’s General Assembly). From the UCC Bylaws, Section 186:

“From each Conference... the delegation shall reflect the United Church of Christ's commitment to affirmative action; it shall be representative of racial and ethnic persons (Blacks, Hispanics, American Indians, Asian Americans, and Pacific Islanders), women and youth and young adults (at least twenty percent of each delegation shall be under 30 years of age at the time of the commencing of their terms, and where possible, be represented equally by (1) youth, persons of high school age; and (2) young adults, persons graduated from high school or over 19 years of age.”

The National Youth Event – “The National Youth Event, held every four years, provides an opportunity for over 3000 youth (ages 13 to 18) to gather for worship, workshops, faith, fun and fellowship. It is planned by the

collaborative efforts of national staff and an NYE Planning Committee comprised of a diverse group of UCC youth and young adults” (<http://www.ucc.org/youth/nye/>).

Governance – The UCC Executive Committee of the General Synod (~90 members) and Board of Directors of the Office of General Ministries (~46 members) have one youth representative elected for a two-year term with a two term limit. (UCC Bylaws, Section 221d and 242)

Union for Reform Judaism

North American Federation of Temple Youth (NFTY) – This organization bears some resemblance to Young Religious Unitarian Universalists (YRUU), but with notable differences. From the Union for Reform Judaism (URJ) website: “Organized on the congregational, regional, and continental levels, this organization is advised by a set of adult Jewish youth professionals. Comprised of over 750 local synagogue youth groups, NFTY also functions as a youth organization, an affiliate of the Union for Reform Judaism (URJ), as well as a program of the Union for Reform Judaism. There is a healthy balance between those aspects of NFTY that are youth-led and those that are directed by its adult advisors” (<http://www.nfty.org/about/index.cfm?>).

Individual youth groups affiliated with Reform congregations have a youth board and an adult advisor appointed by the congregation. Like in Unitarian Universalism, this advisor might be a parent, volunteer, or staff person, depending on the size and budget of the temple. At the continental level, NFTY has a North American board of five youth leaders, generally in their first year of college.

Youth Committees – “The Youth Committee has primary responsibility for creating, sustaining, and overseeing the quality, scope and curriculum of the synagogue’s total youth program. It is the liaison between the youth group, other youth programs, and the congregation. It is both the adult advocate for the youth programming in the temple community and the agent of the congregation, ensuring that the philosophies, policies, and standards of the synagogue are implemented in the youth program” (<http://www.urj.org/leadership/youth/>).

NFTY Leaders Assembly – This programming for URJ high school youth occurs concurrently with the URJ’s Biennial Conference. Attendees attend some learning and plenary sessions with the larger assembled body.

Governance – There is no dedicated youth position on URJ’s 253 member Board or 70 member Executive Committee; they are composed of adults.

Presbyterian Church USA

Presbyterian Youth Triennium – “Every three years the Presbyterian Church (USA), Cumberland Presbyterian Church and Cumberland Presbyterian Church in America gather thousands of Presbyterian youth and adult youth leaders together for worship, play, music, community building, and Bible study. This is known as the Presbyterian Youth Triennium or PYT. PYT is for young people entering or completed high school (approximately age 14-19 years old)... Adult Advisors must be 21 years of age by this date. A Work Crew track is available for college-aged young people who would like to apply to attend and volunteer to work behind the scenes” (<http://www.pcusa.org/gamc/business/sept09/information/232.pdf>).

Pathways leader development and youth ministry training for youth and adults – This program is similar to the UUA’s Chrysalis Trainings. These one day training events offer youth, youth leaders, volunteers and professionals opportunities to learn new skills, reflect theologically about youth ministry, consider their call and their gifts, network with youth and adult youth workers and take their ideas and resources back into their communities, congregations and regions. They occur at six regional locations and charge reasonable registration fees.

Presbyterian Youth Connection – “Identity, belonging, and leadership opportunities were the three key needs that emerged from a study of young people in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). In response to those needs, the 205th General Assembly (1993) approved the creation of a new national youth ministry organization, named the Presbyterian Youth Connection. The Presbyterian Youth Connection seeks to do just that -- connect young people to each other, the whole church, and the whole world through faith in Jesus Christ”
(<http://www.pcusa.org/youthministry/pyc.htm>).

Governance – All Presbyterian governing bodies above the session level have a committee on representation, whose main function shall be “to guide the governing bodies with respect to their membership and to that of their committees, boards, agencies and other units, in implementation of the principles of participation and inclusiveness, to ensure effective representation in the decision making of the church.” These committees are required to have youth representatives per the Book of Order, Section G-9.0105 A.
(<http://www.pcusa.org/oga/publications/2009-2011-boo.pdf>)

Additionally, some Presbyteries send youth representative delegates to the Middle Governing Body level General Assemblies. More research needed here.

Appendix A: Links to Relevant Documents

Important documents referenced in or relevant to this report are listed chronologically below with links to their online locations.

Listing of Salient Unitarian Universalist Youth Ministry Historical Documents (1976 – Present)

<http://www.uua.org/aboutus/governance/boardtrustees/youthministry/14738.shtml>

Consultation on Ministry to and with Youth Summary Report (2007)

http://www.uua.org/documents/youthconsultation/0708_summary.pdf

Summit on Youth Ministry Report (2007)

http://www.uua.org/documents/youthconsultation/070720_summitreport.pdf

Youth and Young Adult Empowerment Business Resolution (2008)

<http://www.uua.org/socialjustice/socialjustice/statements/115971.shtml>

Youth and Young Adult Empowerment Responsive Resolution (2008)

<http://www.uua.org/socialjustice/socialjustice/statements/115970.shtml>

Follow up Materials on the Youth and Young Adult Empowerment Responsive Resolution (2009)

<http://www.uua.org/congregationallife/youthyoung/133261.shtml>

Mosaic Project Report (2009)

<http://www.uua.org/leaders/leaderslibrary/mosaic/>

Youth Ministry Working Group Recommendations (2009)

http://www.uua.org/documents/youthoffice/090325_wg_recommendations.pdf