



# Young Adult Ministry Self-Assessment Tool for Congregations

Helping our Unitarian Universalist congregations become spiritual homes for younger generations is an essential priority for our faith. This self-assessment, based on five stages of development for ministry with young adults (ages 18-35), can help a congregation discover effective strategies for moving forward. Any individual or group can take the assessment by selecting the statement for each area that most accurately describes the current state of their congregation; statements are presented in random order for each area.

## 1. Presence of young adults

- a. A few young adults visit or are present.
- b. Young adults make up a significant portion of our congregation, and are integrated into every aspect of congregational life.
- c. We have many young adults, and they form a relatively large and active group.
- d. There is a small group of young adults that meets regularly.
- e. No young adults are present in our congregation.

## 2. Coffee hour and social gatherings

- a. There are not usually any young adults at coffee hour.
- b. Young adults are often around for coffee hour, and tend to be talking to one another.
- c. Adults of all ages are around for coffee hour, and there are designated welcomingers for new or visiting younger adults.
- d. The few young adults who are present at coffee hour are easy to spot.
- e. Our young adults mix and chat at coffee hour, and also catch up with one another.

## 3. Worship

- a. Worship services on Sunday are accessible and engaging, and often explore new worship elements. Young adults are regular participants.
- b. We sometimes try new elements in the Sunday service outside of our standard format.
- c. Sunday services are consistent, and generally use the same structure.
- d. Sunday worship is interesting and affirming, and worship leaders have occasionally reached out to include young adults and their perspectives in services.
- e. Our worship services are relevant, exciting and powerful; they are held at different times of the week, and include contemporary or "soulful sundown" services. Young adult perspectives are a normal part of the diverse voices present in worship services.



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## 4. Leadership

- a. There are one or two areas where young adults have become regularly involved as leaders (social justice committee, coffee committee, small group ministry, etc.).
- b. We do not have young adults involved in lay or professional leadership roles.
- c. Most of our committees and teams seek young adult members, and young adults have been involved in our most important leadership roles (e.g. minister, Board of Trustees).
- d. We have occasionally had a young adult involved in a committee or as a staff person, but mostly our leadership does not include young adults.
- e. In every major leadership group or team, including staff and clergy, younger adults are involved and bring their unique generational perspectives into the leadership of the church. Leadership roles are available for a variety of personal gifts and interests.

## 5. Young adult activities

- a. We have tried from time to time to get a regular group or activity going for young adults, but it has not been sustained.
- b. There are no young adult groups or activities.
- c. Our young adults have one or two regular activities that are easy to organize, like going out for brunch after Sunday services.
- d. Young adults have opportunities to connect deeply with one another, and are also involved in every other aspect of congregational life.
- e. An active group of young adults participates a range of activities (e.g. volunteering, social gatherings, monthly discussion groups, coffee house performances, etc.)

## 6. Social media/online presence

- a. In addition to a professionally-designed website and developed social media presence, we are always looking for new ways to carry forth our congregation's message online.
- b. Our website reflects the feel our church, and social media on a variety of platforms (Facebook, Twitter, blogs, Instagram etc.) is a regular part of congregational life.
- c. Beyond a basic website, our congregation does not engage with social media or anything else online.
- d. The church's website is a good resource, including listing our young adult group, and there are daily or weekly updates through social media (e.g. Facebook page).
- e. Our website has updated information about our congregation and how to attend weekly services, and we have explored some social media options like Facebook.



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## 7. Congregational events

- a. At most events and gatherings there are usually no young adults present.
- b. Most events and gatherings include young adults, and young adult leaders organize events for the congregation as well.
- c. Events are open and welcome to young adults, and a few young adults often attend.
- d. With many ways to participate, regardless of one's financial means or weekly schedule, and a variety of spiritually engaging activities (with childcare), younger members are a regular presence at congregational events and often help plan and lead them.
- e. Young adults are seen at the biggest events (e.g. annual auction or church retreat) though not usually at smaller, regular ones (e.g. women's circle, weekly potluck).

## 8. Social justice

- a. The congregation, including young adults who are involved, is generally committed to engaging in social justice in the community.
- b. This congregation is known in our community and the media as a prophetic voice for justice. There are a variety of ways to pursue social justice in a spiritually grounded way in our congregation.
- c. The time our congregation spends on social justice is focused on the same issues that a few members have been passionate about for years.
- d. We are exploring a few new social justice issues or activities in our congregation that would be more relevant and accessible to a broader range of people.
- e. Congregational leaders are engaged with social justice issues, and often reach out to young adults on specific social justice projects.

## 9. Denominational connections

- a. Young adults in our church have started to connect with UU's in other congregations and may have attended regional or national events, such as General Assembly.
- b. We do not have connections with other UU churches, or district or national events.
- c. Recently we have asked one of our three younger members to be a delegate to district assembly, which was a first for our congregation.
- d. Attending General Assembly, camps or summer institutes or other UU events is common among younger and older adults alike. Young adults from our congregation are becoming ordained and lay leaders in our denomination and our community.
- e. Other adults in our congregation may be connected to the wider denomination, but this has not been an area of interest to our small but growing group of young adults.



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## 10. Staff support

- a. We have committed time in one of our staff member's portfolios to support the young adults who gather in our congregation.
- b. Generational ministry is a lens that all leaders apply to their ministry in our congregation and institutional culture has shifted to accommodate young adult innovations. Professional support for young adult gatherings is well-established, and many of our staff members are themselves younger.
- c. Staff and congregational leaders know individual young adults, but there is no staff support for activities that give young adults opportunities to connect with one another.
- d. There is regular staff support for young adult activities and groups; ministers and leaders incorporate Millennial generation perspectives into congregational life.
- e. Young adult ministry is not the responsibility of any of our professional or lay leaders.



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## Results

Circle the letter that corresponds with each statement you selected, then total the point values assigned to each statement to receive your score

	Area	a.	b.	c.	d.	e.	
1.	Presence of young adults	1	4	3	2	0	
2.	Coffee hour and social gatherings	0	2	4	1	3	
3.	Worship	3	1	0	2	4	
4.	Leadership	2	0	3	1	4	
5.	Young adult activities	1	0	2	4	3	
6.	Social media/online presence	4	3	0	2	1	
7.	Congregational events	0	3	1	4	2	
8.	Social justice	2	4	0	1	3	
9.	Denominational connections	3	0	1	4	2	
10.	Staff support	2	4	1	3	0	<b>Score</b>
	<i>Total</i>						

## Score

0-5 = Welcoming

6-15 = Inviting

16-25 = Building

26-35 = Deepening

36+ = Growing Together



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## **Welcoming**

There are few or no young adults in the congregation, because they do not know it exists or when they visit the congregation, but do not tend to stay. Getting better at welcoming younger adults is essential. Focus on specific welcoming strategies and your online presence, and on learning about the spiritual needs of the Millennial generation and revitalizing worship services (your main attraction).

## **Inviting**

Young adults are present but on the periphery of the congregation. Though they value their time in the congregation, they need opportunities to build peer relationships to avoid feeling isolated. Focus on promoting opportunities for the young adults who are present to gather, inviting their perspective and experience into congregational life, and for leaders and ministers building connections with individual young adults.

## **Building**

Connected with one another in small groups, young adults are regularly present in the congregation but lack deeper connections. Focus on building consistent structures and expectations for supporting young adults, and on easy approaches like small group ministry that can serve as a foundation for their involvement in the congregation.

## **Deepening**

Young adults are a strong presence in the congregation and there are a variety of events, groups and activities that are explicitly welcoming to them. Though some young adult leaders may be more involved in other aspects of congregational life, most younger adults remain separated from the broader pulse of the congregation. Focus on developing young adult lay leaders, creating intentionally multigenerational events and relationships and examining norms and assumptions that may be excluding young adults.

## **Growing Together**

Young adults are fully integrated into the life and leadership of the congregation, and have strong connections with each other. Focus on leveraging the wisdom of young adult leaders to explore new and innovative avenues of religious community and spiritual exploration, as well as developing the next generation of young leaders.