



UNITARIAN
UNIVERSALIST
ASSOCIATION

Listening to Leadership: Affirming Youth Voices

UUA Board Linkage GA 2015



Listening to Leadership: Affirming Youth Voices

- GA 2015 Workshop Description:
 - UUA Board Trustees will listen to our youth talk together about what's compelling for the future of Unitarian Universalism and their engagement in our movement. Youth and recently bridged young adults most welcome as participants; others most welcome as observers of the powerful governance process known as linkage.
- Workshop Designers and Participants
 - Bart Frost – UUA Staff
 - Benji Janapol – Board of Trustees Youth Observer
 - Jim Key - Moderator
 - Kara Marler – Youth Caucus Dean
 - Laura Park – Unity Consulting
 - Christina Rivera - Trustee
 - Leslie Takahashi - Minister
 - Susan Weaver – Trustee



Shared Vision of the Association

- Global End
A healthy Unitarian Universalist community that is alive with transforming power, moving our communities and the world toward more love, justice, and peace in a manner which assures institutional sustainability.
 - 1.2 Congregations and communities are better able to achieve their missions and to spread awareness of Unitarian Universalist ideals and principles through their participation in covenanted networks of Unitarian Universalist congregations and communities.
 - 1.3 Congregations and communities are intentionally inclusive, multigenerational and multicultural.
 - 1.4 Congregations and communities engage in partnerships to counter systems of power, privilege and oppression.
 - 1.5 Congregations and communities have and use Unitarian Universalist Association resources to deepen the spiritual and religious exploration by people in their communities, to enhance the ministry of their members and to improve their



The Conversations

- Three Rounds of Conversations:
 - Pair
 - Different pair
 - Group
- “Tell me a story about a transforming experience while engaged with or participating in Unitarian Universalism and its communities.”
- If you’re an adult partnered with a youth, ask your youth partner to tell their story.
- Participants asked to Tweet #uutransform



Look to the Future

- “Imagine a UU community in the future where we’ve built on the strengths of your stories. Imagine a UU community of the future that saves and transforms lives.”
- Create a word cloud on flip chart paper with words and short phrases that describe that community and its impact.
- Participants asked to Tweet #uufutureimpact



Word Cloud Results: Tweets

- Building the future for youth is based on open arms, with opportunities to impact the world and you community.
- Building youth groups of the future includes gender fluidity, new and deepening friendship, love everywhere
- Youth envision a world of environmental empathy
- Youth envision unconditional acceptance, stretching away from comfort zones, helping each other, camaraderie, peace
- There's nothing like a UU church to be able to express your uniqueness
- Youth envision world of more love, freedom of expression, active communication, covenant, respect, willing to forgive, earn trust
- Hearing others and feeling heard



Word Cloud Results: Raw Data

- accepting
- accepting
- accepting community
- active
- Bridging
- comfort
- community connections
- confidence
- connecting
- Cooperative
- Diverse
- diversity
- Empowering Leaders
- Empowerment
- feeling heard
- free thinking
- freedom
- friendship
- friendship
- fun
- gender fluidity
- hearing others
- inspiring
- leadership
- learning
- learning
- learning with/from others
- LGBTQ Pride
- listening to share experiences and different perspectives
- Making bridging a smoother transition
- Many More UUs
- Meaningful
- More!
- Multi-congregational
- multi-generational
- multi-generational
- music
- national linkage
- Open
- open arms
- opportunities to impact the world and your community
- Opportunity
- RE Program would teach bible stories
- Relationships
- respect
- search fro truth and meaning
- service
- Spiritual
- Spiritual
- support
- support marginalized identities
- supportive
- the UU factor
- transformative
- unconditional love
- unique
- welcoming
- welcoming visuals: chalice, rainbow flag, gardens, building, nature, sanctuary



Word Cloud Results: Themes

- Accepting
- Learning opportunities
- Support (identities and atmosphere)
- Connection
- Equipping leaders and sending them into the world. How valuable leadership development training was and how important it was to them. (Reflection of audience or does that training get them involved?)
- Being empowered, coming to GA, being further empowered. Didn't even know all that it was possible for youth to do. Youth are responsive to opportunities once they know about them



Reflection

- What does this say about how the board engages with youth?
 - Youth want to be empowered, and they want to ask questions, hear stories of leadership.
 - Youth are hungering for discussion. Making more time and space for Q&A, like with Cornel West, giving them access to the board is what's needed.
 - Do we need a different workshop that does that, in addition to a more active listening workshop? Work with the Deans to give them time to choose what questions they want answered. Have board members at a youth caucus session, if they wanted it.
 - The word “bridging” popped up. The youth were seeing UUism as more than just a single time period. Connection to UUism in a long-term way to their lives. What can the UUA do to keep that long-term connection realistic for youth? How can they still see that comfort and acceptance long-term?