

Roundtable on Theological Education and Youth Ministry

Cosponsored by
The Unitarian Universalist Association
Office of Youth Ministries, Lifespan Faith
Development Staff Group,
and Ministry and Professional Leadership
Staff Group

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Lifespan Faith Development Office of Youth Ministries and the Ministry and Professional Leadership staff group cosponsored the Roundtable on Theological Education and Youth Ministry. The purpose of the roundtable, held March 5-7, 2008, was to analyze what theological education needs to provide religious professionals for excellence in youth ministry, noting that not all religious professionals are ordained clergy. It was determined that this excellence can be achieved only via a major cultural change in the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA). Therefore, a series of action plans were developed to better prepare religious professionals for this cultural change.

A major area of action centered around inserting a youth lens in all programs and processes already in place, such as major events at General Assembly and the nominating process for UUA committees. Another recommended action is tasking a committee or staff person to review current UUA materials to ensure that they include a youth ministry perspective. One important area for review is the material related to credentialing religious professionals. Both the Ministerial Fellowship Committee (MFC) and the Religious Education Credentialing Committee will work on further developing their competencies in youth ministry. To support the application of this youth ministry lens, the roundtable recommends that youth ministry be a part of the UUA Board of Trustees' policy governance ends statements. This will help facilitate the cultural shift needed for excellent youth ministry.

Training opportunities for ministers were identified as another opportunity for increased competency in youth ministry. The MFC plans to encourage seminaries to work together to provide core competency classes that would be available to seminarians at all schools. Conversations began on how the seminaries could work together to jointly offer courses on youth and multigenerational ministry. Outside the seminaries, the Renaissance module on youth ministry will also be revised, and a new module for ministers will be created to be offered to Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association (UUMA) chapter programs. The UUMA will also consider training Collegial Consultants in youth ministry to serve as resources for ministers in their local chapters. Interim Minister trainings and district start-up workshops were also identified as opportunities to provide youth ministry training.

The final action plan is to recommend participants to the Panel on Theological Education's Excellence in Ministry conference who can speak to the priority of youth ministry. It is clear that the Panel on Theological Education (POTE) can have a major impact on the future of youth ministry in Unitarian Universalism.

Included in the appendix is a response to this report by the Youth Ministry Working Group. Their response highlights their concern that excellence in youth ministry cannot be achieved without a focus on multicultural ministry. Toward this aim, they made the following suggestions to the main outcomes of the report: adding a multicultural lens to youth ministry programs and processes; explicit link made between youth ministry and Anti-racism/Anti-oppression/Multiculturalism requirements for credentialing; adding a focus on identity-based ministry, ministry to marginalized groups, and ministering in multicultural congregations for continuing education and training; UUMA collegial consultants on multicultural ministry;

advocating for the UUA board's support of multigenerational identity-based programs and affinity groups; and to recommend people to attend the Excellence in Ministry conference with experience with youth with traditionally marginalized identities and people with experience with multicultural congregations.

BACKGROUND

For the past three years, the UUA has been involved in a Consultation on Ministry to and with Youth. This process gathered information through youth and advisor surveys and through congregational, district, and stakeholder conversations. Over 5,000 Unitarian Universalists participated in this process. The data gathering culminated in July 2007 at the Summit on Youth Ministry. At the summit, a group of youth and adults produced a vision statement and specific recommendations for the future of youth ministry in the UUA. This vision calls for 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.”

We are now beginning of the implementation phase of the consultation. UUA staff members, in consultation with an appointed Youth Ministry Working Group, are charged with making this new vision of youth ministry a reality. Ministers are key to the realization of this vision. One of the recommendations from the summit called for convening “a task force with representatives from seminaries, MFC, UUMA, and congregational youth to strengthen the preparation of ordained clergy for youth ministry.” With grant support from the Panel on Theological Education, we were able to convene a roundtable and begin the process of creating excellence in youth ministry through the training of our religious professionals, with a focus on ordained ministers.

Attending the roundtable were faculty representatives from Starr King, Meadville Lombard, and Andover Newton; seminarians and recent graduates; representatives from the Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association, Ministerial Fellowship Committee, and Panel on Theological Education; youth who have served on search committees; and staff from the Lifespan Faith Development and Ministry and Professional Leadership staff groups. We focused our work on three areas: Credentialing and Fellowship, Theological Education, and Continuing Education and Training. During our time together, we discussed the history of youth ministry and our vision for excellence in youth ministry, and we named concrete steps to make this vision happen. At the end of the meeting, different members of the roundtable took ownership of action steps.

Once we were grounded in the history of ministerial involvement in youth ministry, we were able to explore our common visions for youth ministries. This led to an understanding that cultural change is needed for our denomination to achieve excellent youth ministry. So what do our religious professionals need to be able to do in order to participate in that change? They need to be grounded in the history of UU youth movements and to help youth and adults grieve the loss of these past movements. Religious professionals also need an understanding of UU culture and identity, how the needs and experience of lifelong UUs differ from come-inners, and how all the identities we carry intersect with UU culture and identity. Having legitimate connections with youth is very important and gives an experiential understanding of the power of youth ministry. These relationships also move us beyond categorical thinking about youth. Religious professionals also need to have an understanding of multigenerational ministry (not just in worship, but in all aspects of congregational life). A large part of the role of religious professionals is to build the capacity for excellent youth ministries, not by attempting to do everything but by providing training and support for those who will be working with youth.

LEVERAGE POINTS

In order to begin this cultural change toward excellent youth ministry, several leverage points were identified. The following leverage points became the seeds of the action plans generated later in the meeting:

- UUA Board development of ends statements
 - Building on the Appreciative Inquiry process at General Assembly 2007, setting an ends statement that embodies goals related to youth ministry/multigenerational ministry.
- UUA Ministry and Professional Leadership Staff Group
 - Including youth ministry as part of the staff's priorities.
- Internships
 - Encouraging internship sites to incorporate youth ministry in their internship experiences.
- Ministerial Settlement process
 - Updating the Settlement manual to include youth ministry as a concern.
 - Adding questions about youth ministry to congregational and ministerial records.
 - Including youth ministry as a focus in the district staff's assessment/report.
- Interim ministry
 - Using this time as an opportunity to have congregations evaluate their youth ministries.
- Committee on Ministries
 - Training these committees to have a youth/multigenerational lens.
- Renaissance Module
 - Updating and remarketing the module on youth ministry.
- Panel on Theological Education
 - As the POTE explores excellence in ministry, including youth ministry as part of that excellence.
- UUMA Chapter Meetings
 - Serving as continuing education opportunities for youth ministry.
- District Support
 - District staff functioning as advocates for youth ministries and providing support for congregations.
 - Working with District presidents on the importance of youth ministry.
- UUA Presidential Election
 - Bringing forth youth ministry as an issue for the candidates.
- Anti-Oppression ties (ageism)
 - Connecting the ageism issue to the work of existing programs and transformation teams.
 - Working with the JUUJUST Change Consultancy on ageism and validating youth/young adult anti-oppression work in our movement.
- Web site

- Highlighting youth ministry on the Web site.
- Incorporating youth and multigenerational resources on WorshipWeb.

OUTCOMES

Building on the leverage points, the members of the roundtable split into three smaller groups. These groups were based on specialized knowledge and experience and were formed to discuss further action and next steps around the theme areas of Credentialing and Fellowship, Theological Education, and Continuing Education and Training. The following particular outcomes were noted by the groups.

Youth lens in all programs and processes:

- There will be intentional focus on the importance of youth ministry in the programs that already have great importance and widespread participation in the Unitarian Universalist community. This will include the work of all UUA staff groups, as well as the Ware Lecture, UU University, and the Service of the Living Tradition at General Assembly and the Berry Street Essay.
- A committee or office position will be tasked with reviewing materials and language from UUA staff groups and committees to ensure that they have a youth lens in their focus. Among the things that the Credentialing and Fellowship group named as materials to be edited were the ministerial renewal materials, ministerial search materials, interim materials, internship focuses and opportunities, Regional Sub-Committees on Candidacy, and Ministerial Fellowship Committee questions and evaluations. This review will incorporate a necessary focus on new language and an emphasis on youth ministry as a true ministerial calling for our clergy. It will be an important service for our Association to provide.

Credentialing requirements creation and evaluation:

- The Regional Sub-Committee on Candidacy will be approached about asking a question regarding youth ministry to evaluate how candidates' competencies stand and whether youth ministry is something that they particularly need to focus on in their pathway to ministry. Then the MFC will follow up on this when they interview candidates, examining with questions, the essay, and competencies.
- A major step has been taken by the MFC to ensure that a youth lens is overarching in the credentialing process for ministers by adding a new competency on human development/family life education/ministry with youth and young adults and an essay describing "an experience ministering with children and youth and how this experience informs your philosophy of religious education." The next step is evaluating these new requirements and whether people are fulfilling them adequately, especially seeing whether candidates are addressing the area of youth ministry. The benchmark for the MFC to evaluate their competency and essay will be March 2010.
- The Religious Education Credentialing Committee will work to add an essay or competency around youth ministry. Continued work will be done with the Consultation on Ministry to and with Youth Report and Summit on Youth

Ministry report to ensure that religious professionals and lay youth ministers are key to this cultural change in youth ministry and our congregations.

Continuing Education and Training:

- Since many of our UU theologians go to non-UU seminaries, it is important that seminarians be grounded in core Unitarian Universalist theology, including the theological basis for and importance of youth ministry, as well as how to foster UU identity in others, including youth. Starr King School for the Ministry and Meadville Lombard Theological School would like to make UU experiences available to other seminaries. This may include online or seminar opportunities for seminarians in non-UU theological schools.
- The MFC plans to coordinate core competencies with seminary courses. They will work with seminaries to compile a shared chart of courses offered by different schools, at different times, that fulfill different competencies. This will also allow seminaries to see and step forward to develop new courses and approaches to youth and multigenerational ministry that fit with UUA and MFC priorities.
- The UUMA will train Collegial Consultants in youth ministry. These ministers will be point people working with youth and District staff to be resources for their ministerial colleagues and champions locally around youth ministry. They will ensure the high priority of youth ministry at the chapter UUMA level, closer reaching to congregations.
- The Renaissance module on youth ministry will be revised, and an adaptation of that module tailored specifically to ministers will be created. The revision of the Renaissance module will be completed by the UUA Lifespan Faith Development Office. Then, that office will work in coordination with the UUMA to adapt the module and ensure that CENTER presenters and UUMA Chapter leaders are adequately trained in the Ministerial Youth Ministry Renaissance Module.
- The annual Interim Minister's training and the start-up workshops (done by UUA Districts) are also opportunities for trainings around youth ministry. Particular members of the roundtable will be discussing this opportunity with the UUA Ministry and Professional Leadership staff and UUA District staff.

UUA Board of Trustees' Policy Governance Ends Statements:

- Participants in the roundtable will be working with the Youth Ministry Working Group to put pressure on the Board regarding the importance of youth ministry.
- The UUMA will recruit influential ministerial champions in Districts to discuss youth ministry with District Presidents and other individuals involved in the ends process, in particular the efficacy of good youth ministry as an instrument of growth.

Panel on Theological Education's Excellence in Ministry Conference:

- The roundtable will recommend particular people to be present at the conference who can speak to the priority of youth ministry and ensure that a multigenerational lens is present in the conference and in the outcomes.

CONCLUSION

Much work needs to be done to shift UU culture to this new youth ministry. It will take commitment and leadership from all leaders in our faith community—clergy and other religious professionals, as well as lay leaders. As the panel looks at defining excellence in ministry, we hope that you remember that youth ministry is an important part of that discussion. This report and the roundtable itself speak to the conviction of many leaders in our denomination that youth ministry should be a priority. The time is now to make the change that will deepen the ministries of our UU communities. Let us work together to create further excellence in ministry.

Appendix A: **Roundtable on Theological Education and Youth Ministry** **Participants**

The Rev. Jory Agate: Jory is the ministerial development director at the UUA. She is the representative from the UUA Ministerial and Professional Development staff group helping to plan this roundtable.

The Rev. Wayne Arnason: Wayne is the incoming chair of the Ministerial Fellowship Committee. He is cominister of West Shore Unitarian Universalist Church in Cleveland, Ohio.

The Rev. Dr. Lee Barker: Lee is the president of Meadville Lombard Theological School.

Erica Baron: Erica is a seminarian at Andover Newton Theological School.

The Rev. Rob Eller-Isaacs: Rob is the president of the Unitarian Universalist Minister's Association. He is cominister of Unity Unitarian Church in St. Paul, Minnesota.

Sara Eskrich: Sara is a youth ministry associate at the UUA. She is one of the main support people for this roundtable. Please contact her at any point with questions or concerns.

Sam Greeley: Sam was on the Ministerial Search Committee last year at First Parish in Framingham, MA. He is now a freshman at St. Olaf College in Minnesota.

Rev. Dr. William Herzog II: Bill is the dean of the faculty and vice president for academic affairs at Andover Newton Theological School.

The Rev. Darrick Jackson: Darrick is the assistant youth ministries director at the UUA. He is one of the main support people for this roundtable. Please contact him with questions or concerns.

The Rev. Virginia Jarocha-Ernst: Virginia is a member of the Panel on Theological Education. She is the family minister at Main Line Unitarian Church in Devon, Pennsylvania.

The Rev. Alison Miller: Alison is a Unitarian Universalist Minister's Association and Youth Ministry Working Group representative to this group. She is the minister at Morristown Unitarian Fellowship in Morristown, New Jersey.

The Rev. David Pettee: Dave is the ministerial credentialing director at the UUA.

The Rev. Sheri Prud'homme: Sheri is the faculty representative from Starr King School for the Ministry.

Betty Jeanne Rueters-Ward: Betty Jeanne is a seminarian at Starr King School for the Ministry.

Ray Vasser-Semanchik: Ray is a youth on the Staten Island Ministerial Search Committee.

The Rev. Dr. Michael Tino: Michael is the facilitator for this Roundtable on Youth Ministry. He is the minister of the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Northern Westchester in Mount Kisco, New York.

Ray Vassar Semanchik: Ray is a senior in high school and was selected to represent the youth on the Staten Island Ministerial Search Committee.

Rev. Michelle Walsh: Michelle recently received her Master of Divinity degree from Boston University and is currently continuing her education toward a ThD in Practical Theology. She is the director of the Stand High/Stand United program at the UU Urban Ministry.

Rev. Beth Williams: Beth is the Religious Education Credentialing and Renaissance Program Office director at the UUA.

Appendix B: **Youth Ministry Working Group's Response**

As members of the Youth Ministry Working Group, appointed by President Bill Sinkford, we have been receiving several reports from different groups who are working on improving our Unitarian Universalist Youth Ministry. We see that it is part of our job to take these different reports and draw connections between them so that the overall process of change can be a collaborative one. Therefore we have some additional comments and recommendations that we hope will deepen the tremendous work already done by the Roundtable on Youth Ministry participants.

The reports of the Consultation on Ministry to and with Youth and the subsequent Summit on Youth Ministry have made it clear that we as a faith need to be committed to building a Multicultural Youth Ministry. In addition, the Mosaic Project is currently in the process of assessing the ministry needs of youth and young adults of color and/or Latina/o and Hispanic descent. While the assessment is ongoing initial Mosaic Project survey results show that the majority of congregations responding (95%) have children and youth of color in their programs. Only 10% provide anti-racism/anti-oppression/multi-cultural training for their teachers and youth advisors. Almost 83% have trans-racially adopted children and youth. However, only 15% provide any type of support for the children or their families. These numbers tell us two things. One is that our congregation's church schools are growing more diverse. The other is that many of our congregations still struggle with implementing programs that will help them become multicultural communities.

For our congregations to become truly multicultural we will need to recognize that Youth of color and/or Latina/o and Hispanic descent, trans-racially adopted youth as well as BGLTQ youth and disabled youth have specific youth ministry needs. Therefore any discussion or analysis of excellence in ministry will need to be also discussing ways to build excellence in ministering in the multicultural context that our youth ministries are becoming. It is important to realize that this youth ministry does not just happen in the context of the youth group and that congregations as a whole will need to work to become multicultural regardless of how current demographics in the adult population. The good news is that the work that the participants of the Roundtable on Youth Ministry engaged in did a really good job of laying a framework for how excellence in youth ministry might be achieved. We have some simple ideas for how a multicultural context could be woven through the framework already developed. Our suggestions are based on the five main outcomes identified in the Roundtable on Youth Ministry report.

1. Youth lens in all programs and processes:
 - A multicultural lens can be applied to all programs and processes along with a youth lens.
 - Programs and processes can be geared towards developing multicultural youth ministries.
2. Credentialing requirements creation and evaluation:

- Linkages should be explicitly made between youth ministry requirements and multicultural, anti-racist and anti-oppression requirements and competencies.
3. Continuing Education and Training:
- Core competency for MFC, Collegial Consultant training and Ministerial Renaissance Modules, and Interim Ministers training, could include focus on identity development and the special ministry needs of traditionally marginalized groups.
 - They could also include a focus on creating and ministering in multicultural congregations.
4. UUA Board of Trustees' Policy Governance Ends Statements:
- UUMA Champions with training and experience with multicultural congregations could be included to work with Districts.
 - Pressure could be put on the Board to put priority on supporting multigenerational identity based affinity groups and programs.
5. Panel on Theological Education's Excellence in Ministry Conference:
- Roundtable could recommend particular people to be present at the conference who have experience with youth with traditionally marginalized identities.
 - Could also recommend people with experience in multicultural congregations.