

Youth Leadership

A Leap of Faith

by Megan Selby

Young Religious Unitarian Universalists (YRUU) programming is based on six components necessary to build a strong and complete youth program:

Worship

The **R** in YRUU is for **religious**. YRUU is a spiritual and religious home for youth, and worship is an important and sacred part of many UU youth events. Youth worship tends to be interactive and non-traditional. It often takes place in a circle and focuses on sharing. Many youth groups also conduct Youth Sunday worship services in congregations. Worship can be a time for YRUU to share spirituality and caring with the larger community.

Spirituality Development Conferences are working conferences centered on spiritual growth, creativity, and meaningful youth worship.

Chaplain Trainings are trainings for youth and adults serving as chaplains to youth, whether in youth groups or at conferences. These trainings address ethical and legal issues and teach the skills a chaplain needs.

Youth-Adult Relations

YRUU communities where youth and adults work together and share power with each other have huge potential to promote spiritual growth. Intergenerational environments support all the other components of youth programming as youth and adults learn from each other, experience youth worship, build community, empower each other to lead, and make a difference in the world through social action.

Basic Advisor Training presents the core issues, philosophies, and skills needed to advise and empower youth.

Advanced Advisor Training addresses more serious issues in youth ministry, church structure, and adolescent life. Both trainings are for adults and youth currently in leadership roles.

Community Building

This component honors our friends and loved ones and the social aspects of youth programs. Community building, or socializing, is a time for people to "hang out" and get

to know one another. Social activities provide valuable opportunities to bond together, share values, establish trust, generate intimacy, and practice acceptance.

DRUUMM and White Allies Conferences are sponsored by Diverse and Revolutionary Unitarian Universalist Multicultural Ministries (DRUUMM), an affiliate organization for UU people of color. These conferences give youth and young adults of color an opportunity to be in community with one another and discuss issues of identity. The UU White Allies organization holds coordinating conferences for white youth and young adult allies to explore identity and ways to oppose racism.

Social Action

UU youth are passionate about social issues and have been at the forefront of social action activities at local and district levels and Association-wide. YRUU is a place for youth to express and explore their values and act on their concerns. Social action projects help YRUUers put their hands and feet to work in the service of our Principles while having fun.

The **YRUU Social Justice Conference** brings together UU youth to learn how to organize grassroots campaigns, work with the media, and learn about social justice issues.

Anti-racism Workshops offer youth and young adults the opportunity to come together to work on anti-racism. One initiative, the Anti-racism Trainer-Organizer Program (ARTOP) equips participants with tools to effect social change and build anti-racist, multicultural communities.

Learning

Almost every aspect of YRUU can provide learning experiences. The youth group is a great place for discussion sparked by a guest speaker, movie, or our own experiences. It is a safe place to expand our horizons and to learn more about the world around us.

General Assembly Youth Caucus is an opportunity for youth to get involved in the business of the Unitarian Universalist Association. Who should attend? Youth who want to participate in the Association, grow as UUs through a wide range of workshops and meetings, and network with the wider UU community.

Synapse is a YRUU publication. Each issue contains articles, essays, poetry, and artwork by YRUUers across the continent. It's a good source of information about leadership and job opportunities, YRUU conferences, and YRUU governance.

Leadership

YRUU is primarily a youth-led organization and the development of youth leadership is one important contribution YRUU makes to our Association. YRUU leadership is about

learning how to work together, facilitate, reach consensus, foster cooperation, and make sure every person gets heard.

Leadership Development Conferences are working conferences to develop youth's leadership skills. Youth group planning, consensus training, and facilitation are a few of the components.

Youth Council, the governing body of YRUU, meets annually to set goals and priorities. Decisions are expressed in resolutions reached through the democratic process of consensus.

Opportunities

Leadership Opportunities for You in YRUU

There are many ways to get involved in YRUU. Consider taking on one of the many positions for youth and adults that keep our organization thriving.

Continental

- **Join our staff.** Every year new staff is needed for Continental Conferences, GA Youth Caucus, and the Social Justice Conference.
- **Apply to be a trainer.** Each year the Youth Office holds two trainings of trainers to teach youth and advisors how to lead a Leadership Development Conference, Spirituality Development Conference, Basic Advisor Training, Advanced Advisor Training, Anti-Racism Workshop, or Chaplain Training.
- **Join Youth Council.** Consider running for one of the following positions: People of Color Caucus, Canadian at-large representative, continental social action coordinator, working action manager, position on appraisal, adult at-large representative, junior or senior high transitional age range representative.

District/Region

- **Volunteer your youth group** to plan the next district/regional conference or join the Conferences Planning Committee.
- **Run for your district/regional youth governing body.** Each district/region has a Youth Council representative and at least one social action coordinator. Contact these people to find out how you can get involved.
- **Run for the District/Regional Board.**
- **Attend a training.** You will gain skills to share with your youth group and congregation, and you will empower yourself.

Local and Grassroots

We can often have the most impact in our local communities. Get involved!

- **Take on a youth group leadership position** such as social action coordinator.

- **Join committees in your congregation.** They need youth. Try the Board, the Social Action Committee, the Youth Adult Committee, the Ministerial Search Committee, or the Anti-Racism Transformation Team.
- **Join groups outside of your congregation,** like the School Board, City Council, or the local anti-racism network.

Purposes of YRUU

Young Religious Unitarian Universalists shall serve its members for the purposes of fostering spiritual depth, creating a peaceful community on earth and peace within us, and clarifying both individual and universal religious values as part of our growth process. Our purposes are to provide and manifest a greater understanding of Unitarian Universalism and to encourage the flow of communication between youth and adults.

In doing so, we shall nurture the freedom and integrity of the questioning mind and embrace all persons of diverse backgrounds. We shall encourage the development of a spirit of independence and responsibility.

We shall strive to support our members and member groups with educational resources, a communications network, and love.

These purposes shall assist us in developing an effective system for social action and serve to raise our levels of mutual respect, communication, and community consciousness.

For more information, contact the
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