

## **Second Unitarian Church of Omaha and First Unitarian Church of Omaha Young Religious Unitarian Universalists (YRUU) Joint Group Policy**



Date of Approval by Board of Trustees: July 2016

Policy Owners: Directors of Religious Education, First Unitarian and Second Unitarian

The Young Religious Unitarian Universalists (YRUU) Group for grades 7-12 is contributed to jointly by both the First Unitarian Church of Omaha and the Second Unitarian Church of Omaha. It was formed in 1998 through the efforts of the Directors of Religious Education (DREs) of the congregations, Cheryl Wallace (First) and Anita Jeck (Second). The group has youth who are members of both congregations as well as youth who do not belong to either congregation. It is an open group.

This policy was developed jointly in 2016 by both congregations and YRUU participants (parents, youth, past and present) to provide a framework for communications, expectations and structure.

YRUU is an important ministry to both First Unitarian Church and Second Unitarian Church. This is a unique program that it serves the youth of both congregations and therefore the congregations need to stay in right relationship with one another to resolve problems, maintain transparency of programming and plan effectively for the future. YRUU is implemented through the Religious Education Programs of each congregation with guidance and oversight by the Directors of Religious Education and Ministers of both congregations. Our interactions with each other are based on a covenant of relationship jointly created at the beginning of the YRUU term. The covenant will apply to all participants in the group: youth as well as adults.

### **Goals**

The goals of YRUU are to:

- Create a safe, supportive and meaningful space;
- Foster and grow a personal religious identity within the safety of our Unitarian Universalist community;
- Provide worship, celebration and rites of passage for UU youth;
- Learn about the traditions and heritage of Unitarian Universalism;
- Develop personal growth, relationship building & leadership skills for youth;
- Help youth to develop a social conscience and learn to be agents of change, as a group and individually, in the world;
- Engaged by and with larger church community;
- Develop continuity and foster communication between age levels of youth within the program; and,
- To foster tolerance, understanding and acceptance of diversity.

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### **Youth Advisory Committee (YAC)**

The Youth Advisory Committee (YAC) is a youth/adult collaboration on leading the YRUU group, comprised of all youth interested in taking leadership roles, youth advisors, and interested parents and developed in 2014-2015. YAC officers are elected, all comprised of youth, with adult mentorship for each role. Youth Positions include:

- President
- Vice President - 2, one coming from each congregation
- Facilities Manager - coordinate table & food set up and clean up

Meeting time occurs one hour prior to YRUU group meeting (unless change is desired).

The YAC will utilize the feedback gained from the full representation of youth and parents to plan and organize programming with the structure of "[The 6 Pillars of Balanced Youth Ministry](#)" (from the UUA Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministries):

- Building Community,
- Social Action,
- Worship, Learning,
- Leadership, and
- Congregational Involvement.

The YAC meets between one and three times monthly to ensure effective leadership for the YRUU, to plan weekly programming, events, and activities, and to formalize the structure of youth leadership within YRUU. They are responsible for establishing the covenant each year, for embedding it in the culture of the group and for holding the group members accountable to their covenant.

### **Youth Advisors**

The YRUU Group will be guided and facilitated by adult Youth Advisors (YA).

- Both congregations will contribute youth advisors, at least one primary youth advisor from each congregation, seeking a diversity in leadership as models for the youth. Youth advisors must be members of one of the two congregations, comfortable with youth and articulating Unitarian Universalist values.
- Youth advisors are identified by each congregation's nominations/leadership development committees, through the DRE or respective religious education/lifespan learning committees, and/or by the ministers. Youth, parents, previous/current youth advisors, congregational members and self nominations are all sources of these individuals.
- As with any individual interacting with a minor in our congregations, they are asked to sign a code of conduct and undergo an annual background check by their respective DRE/Minister.
- The commitment is year-to-year, with transitions occurring during the summer months.

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Two primary youth advisors are, as a team, responsible for:

- Facilitating the YRUU meetings to meet the covenant set out by the youth.
- Ensuring a strong Unitarian Universalist values-based theme running throughout the year.
- Providing leadership guidance to the YAC.
- Providing budget plans and budget requests with the help of the DREs and respective religious education chairs to the two congregations (by the congregational deadlines), and helping guide the YAC meet those budgets goals.
- Reserving space for events through the respective congregational offices.
- Communicating with youth and their parent(s)/guardian(s), including distributing meeting summaries and notices by posting announcements and schedules on Facebook, email and text
- Regular meetings and communications with DREs and the respective religious education committee chairs to relay any concerns, needs or events of the YRUU to the respective churches. They also help contribute to the evolution of this policy.

The primary youth advisors are supported by the secondary advisors in meeting the responsibilities. A secondary youth advisor can step into the role of a primary youth advisor if a vacancy opens up during the year or someone is unable to attend a meeting. Furthermore, this policy recommends someone hold the position of secondary advisor for a year prior to becoming a primary advisor. We encourage youth advisors to hold the primary advisor position for a year, and then moving back into the supportive secondary advisor position in order to prevent burn out, yet allow for continuity of leadership for the youth. When our YRUU schedules an overnighter or conference (Con), youth advisors will be a key presence in organizing the event and at the event.

Youth advisors are NOT responsible for:

- Planning or executing Our Whole Lives classes
- Coming of Age classes
- Attending Cons or overnights as a chaperone (unless they want to). Parents and their children will decide whether the absence of a Youth Advisor will determine their youth's participation at an event. Only the parent and child have the ability to make that comfort decision together.

Youth advisors (both primary and secondary) will meet during the summer for a training inservice and policy review annually. The training is led by the DREs. It will include safe congregations and disruptive persons policy, and provide a time for paperwork (code of ethics, sex offender forms, etc) to be filled out.

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### **Parent/Guardian Group**

A volunteer Parent/Guardian Group will assist YRUU in its operations. It also provides an opportunity for parents and guardians to get to know the other parents and guardians in YRUU.

- Work with YRUU/Advisors/DREs to decide what long term events to fund (insight into what is realistic/feasible for their family, etc.)
- Design fundraising plans to enact YRUU's goals (bake sales, grants, etc.)
- Oversee the meeting treats by setting up a schedule or sign up for weekly treats to be brought (i.e., using an online service like VolunteerSpot for signups) and submit any reimbursement requests by families. They will also organize any potlucks.
- Promote upcoming or conference (Con) and Leadership schools and coordinate any chaperones needed. Any youth who needs a scholarship can apply directly to the DREs or their minister for financial assistance through the congregations without going through the parent group if they prefer. DREs will help the parent group be aware of Cons, leadership schools, trainings, grants and any other events or sources of funding they deem relevant.

### **Meetings**

The YRUU Group, parents/guardians, youth advisors and DREs will decide on location, frequency, time and week day of the meeting. The typical term runs from September through April, with YRUU taking the summer off. Sometimes special trips, cons or events are planned for the summer, however, regular meetings are not.

Either church can host the meetings and it is encouraged to rotate between the two locations whenever feasible. This improves congregational relationships to the group, helps families out so one side is not perpetually traveling far distances, and emphasizes the joint nature of this group.

Meetings scheduled throughout the year for YRUU can or should include:

- Covenant development - A YRUU covenant is made at one of the first meetings of the year. It applies not only to the youth but also to the adults (including parents and advisors).
- One service at each congregation - this has been alternated between Mother's and Father's day in the past; however, one in the fall and one in the spring could be another option. The youth plan out the entire service and lead it.
- A service learning project.
- A focus on the goals of YRUU (from above goals section) and the 6 Pillars of Youth Ministry
- Projects/activities designed by YAC and advisors to meet objectives developed by the ministers and DREs.

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### **Conflict**

In the event that a dispute between two or more individuals cannot be resolved within the framework of the YRUU group covenant, an individual (youth or adult) can approach either DRE. If satisfactory resolution is not reached there, they have the option of approaching either minister. They are not restricted to approaching the DRE or minister of their own congregation.

### **Financial Details**

The group is financially supported by the two congregations in addition to their fundraising. Any funds provided by either congregation is dependent on their budget process: YRUU may receive full funding from one congregation but not full funding from the other depending on how their pledge drive went. YRUU will have to adapt to their “new” budget as all church committees are required to. It is the responsibility of the youth advisors to communicate the budget needs in advance of the deadlines required by the congregational fiscal committees, being aware that missing a deadline can have an impact on any budget request to that congregation.

The funding formula will be discussed annually by the DREs and religious education chairs once a budget request has been submitted by the primary youth advisors to the DREs.

Suggested initial funding formula to split up the proposed budget requested by YRUU.

- A fixed amount of support will come from each congregation. (\$500)
- A variable fee of support (\$25/youth) will be applied to each congregation for the youth enrolled in YRUU who are affiliated with that congregation. (i.e., 10 youth identify with “X” Unitarian Church, ergo “X” Unitarian Church would owe an additional \$250). Families will indicate their congregation affiliation on the YRUU registration.

Other sources of funding for YRUU:

- Dues/Fees from families: Currently, YRUU requests a \$35 annual fee from each family with a \$50 cap per family who attends the youth group. In cases of financial hardship, the family may approach a DRE or minister to receive assistance/waiver.
- Any additional funding beyond that amount would be raised by YRUU through the parent group.

DREs will submit the YRUU funding to their respective congregations with their budgets.

Currently, First Unitarian Church will manage accounting and the checking account. Funds supplied by the congregations and not spent by the end of the fiscal year (July-June) will be returned to each congregation. Funds raised for specific purposes (i.e., a trip) can be placed in a special fund to be carried over. If that specific purpose is canceled, YRUU votes on how to reassign the funds.

Reconciliation will be done at request by either congregational board, DREs, Ministers or YRUU leadership. Reconciliation results will be communicated with all: YRUU, parents, advisors and both congregations.

In the event that this particular joint structure of YRUU is ever disbanded by the two congregations (due to overwhelming growth, etc), a disbursement of fixed and variable splitting (as was used to fund the group during the previous budget cycle) of the debts and assets should be used if the boards do not agree to an alternate plan.

## **Young Religious Unitarian Universalists (YRUU) Advisor Resources Addendum**

Youth advisors (both primary and secondary) will meet during the summer for a training inservice and policy review annually. The training is led by the DREs.

### **Resources for youth advisors:**

- DREs from both congregations- communications with families, curriculum, directing youth to YRUU, promotion of YRUU events
- [Youth Advisors' Handbook: A Resource for YRUU Advisor](#) By Shell Tain
- [Youth Advising Competencies](#) developed by the Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministries in collaboration with a number of regional teams (2015). PDF available from either DRE
- [Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministries](#)
- Leadership training opportunities through the district or UUA.

### **Disruptive Persons & Safe Congregations:**

In situations of a disruptive person or safe congregation issue, both congregations and parents need to be notified of the situation and kept informed of the progress of the case. The policy should progress along the procedure outlined in either congregations' handbook.