

# UU General Assembly 2007

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Note that each session has a 4-digit code, making it easy to find on the GA2007 website, located at <http://www.uua.org/events/generalassembly/2007/>.

## Thursday, June 21

### #2004 8:30 Plenary

#### Sinkford

Living UU faith: What is our vision? What is our vision? How do we live our lives?

Ending congregational isolation → covenant of relationship applied to churches

Working more effectively: Example, in DC, hate crimes bill. UUs are working with other churches on basic protections. 220 church leaders attended GLBT action (in DC?). Marriage rights in Mass. & NY.

Not being diverted by sexuality issues, forcing most attention on poverty, war, health care.

Document: “The True Cost of War: A Balance Sheet” (UU?)

UU is a prominent voice in many issues; want to make it a dominant voice

Health care initiative for UU religious professionals unveiled

Growth: 1%/yr for ~20 years. US population growth faster, but still better than mainline churches which have seen steep absolute declines.

Growth projects: Regional campaigns in Florida, Kansas City, Houston, Orange County, SF Bay area (9/2007), others? New DVD about UU for attracting new members, will be sent to all congregations.

New member profiles: what will they look like? Search for non-white members (recall 1997 resolution on racism, which apparently helped this search). Top down proclamations and GA directions deemed not helpful. “Building the world we dream about” (new curriculum).

Majority of all UU ministers are women. 32 non-white UU ministers today, but many of these are leaving. 44 are in preparation for ministry. New initiative: Identify 12 non-white ministers and 12 congregations to place them.

250 congregations signed up for Association Sunday, Oct. 14. Talk about core UU issues. *(4 of these identified, 1 per year. This year, the Association Sunday is focused on growth, I believe. Need to find information about the other 3, which are probably on the web site).*

Reconciliation process (modeled on Truth Commission in South Africa). Article by David Pettee (Petit?) in UUWorld: “Claiming Our History, Warts and All.”

UUA pledged \$1M many years ago for slavery reparations at a previous GA, but only about 50% has been paid. Should we complete the payment? Sense of betrayal by many. This is apparently a very divisive issue within the UU denomination.

Need to support core UU activities, new priorities, e.g. curricula. New initiative, 5-year campaign called "Now is the Time". Goal is \$50M = \$20M cash + \$30M gift commitments. Already raised \$33M = \$14M cash + \$19M gifts.

## **Thursday, 10:45: #2018: Nuts and Bolts of Healthy Youth Groups**

Sponsored by Pacific NW District, UUA

Brainstorming about ideas that enhance and hurt youth groups.

Why kids come → Not school!

- Different set of friends and peers they don't normally see
- Deeper connections, meaningful activities
- With non-parent adults(?)
- Confidential → safety and fun promoted
- First opportunity for leadership

Moderator (Mod): Some kids fit in in YG where they don't in other areas

Mod: Some experiences. YG was in bad shape, no one showed up. Moved out some YG advisors, others stepped in. Invited people to discuss what YG should do. Looked at UUA components of successful Y programs. Identified some activities that might work in each area. Since there were still not enough people in some activities, adults jump-started some of these. Invited youth from outside UU church, did some overnights. As people stayed, adults stepped back. Lesson was that adults might need to step in for a time.

Mod: Issues concerning when YG meets, morning vs evening. Some kids don't show up for mornings, but can't have just evening because of loss of contact with the congregation.

Mod: OWL is a bonding experience! A surprising result. Timing issue, OWL vs YG activities. Do both?

Mod: Attending worship, not a big issue? He liked youth to create their own community. But cannot abandon worship idea.

Youth led worship is highly meaningful (intergenerational)

Chrysalis training and workshops, apparently successful

Attending district events

Good templates for youth worship exist, no need to invent everything.

One congregation financed group of kids to come to GA

YG advisors:

- Bad, i.e. unqualified YG advisors (e.g., too controlling, sitting back too much, being one of the kids, not listening, untrained, not understanding youth empowerment)
- Careful selection of YG advisors of high importance
- YG advisor training, including online and direct
- Support, doesn't require a lot of money

Attracting young adults → bring to District youth meeting

Specialized duties for youth advisors to avoid burnout and share labor. Perhaps use guest sponsors.

### **Thursday, 2:45: #2072: Supporting and sustaining young adult members**

UUA staff

- Little Rock, AK story (Director of YA ministry): Had 25 YA out of 125. Forced all YAs to join committees. Congregation agreed to allow YA to transform committees. Very positive experience. 5 YA on worship committee now.

- Davis, CA story (minister, internship). Faith, love, hope & joy are her rewards. Enjoyed the community and welcoming congregation. But had some initial problems being welcomed.

- Metro NY & NJ story: Avoid stereotypes:

- Adults don't know how to reach out to YA and youth.
- Get to know YA, what they want, what they can bring to you. Don't stereotype YA being only associated with Y or YA activities. Example: a particular YA was an event planner!
- Use the internet! Good website!
- Investment in YA. Even though they end up somewhere else, it is a good investment for the UU movement and not a waste of time.
- Professional position for YAs

- All Souls, NY, NY:

- Thriving YG!
- Put YA in front of church each Sunday, welcoming people. Even better if the person is non-white to show total welcoming.
- Need to build up funds for a YA professional. Takes time, but worth it. Can carry out lots of core activities, such as meetings, notes. "Staff before growth".

Mod: 22 year old volunteered to teach 3-year olds, but DRE got to know him and steered him to teaching sexuality to 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders. Now he is a minister about to be given his first assignment!

### **Friday, 8:30: Plenary**

Outstanding UU Volunteer: UU Trauma Response Ministry. Started with 9/11 and branched out. This is second time in a row that the volunteer of the year has been a group.

Fiscal situation is good. However, he presented no numbers or charts, leading to an almost content-free but market-heavy presentation. Is this type of report part of a new trend or is it the norm at GA?

Breakthrough congregation (Kansas City, MO). Showed video. Each day at the morning plenary showed a different breakthrough congregation (4 in all?).

### **Friday, 10:45, #3006, GAP of Campus Ministry**

Led by Channing-Murray Foundation in Champaign-Urbana. CM was originally part of the UU church.

UU church is an “Anchor Congregation”, 1/3 of foundation goes to campus ministry. (*Is this right?*) Part of UUA campus ministry (UUA-CM).

GAP refers to people of ages 18 – 35 that are most underrepresented in UU churches, after high school and before kids. Refer to UUA 2002 initiative, “Mind the Gap”.

<10% of UUs grew up as UUs.

Young people do community differently than adults. Churches need to be flexible, but can help by providing long-term monetary support → congregational commitment.

- “Organizing Campus X Guide” on UUCM website.
- [www.fuuse.com](http://www.fuuse.com) (forum, 2700 members) *Need to find out more about this.*
- OPUS and Concentric National Conference

New UUA-CM initiative: UU Regional Campus Centers (bricks & mortar). Perhaps 10 around the US. Regional scope would include multiple campuses, with the RCC being the anchor, including a person hired to help run programs. Place them on campuses that can be reached easily by car from a number of other campuses.

2002 30 CM groups

2007 120 CM groups

19 anchor congregations (12 official?)

Church of the Younger Fellowship (CYF) provides an online presence

Goal for each UUC (Campus center): On-campus presence, 80 – 100 active YAs, 500 events/year, regional events. \$50K/year in support (possible in-kind).

5000 UU high school graduates/year. A \$1000 investment per HS graduate → \$5M national.

At UIUC there are large assets in trust fund that runs Channing-Murray (\$60-80K/year). Need comparable funds for a campus regional center.

How do we start?

- Anchor congregation
- Large churches
- Seminars
- Active clusters

What do we know? UU YAs form UU campus groups on their own. Wear Chalice pendant to draw attention. However, most die out because founders leave.

UU RCC could support and host regional events, say within 160miles. Need to avoid loss of key people. Note Ethan Field's article (on <http://uucyf.org>) "UU for life. UU youth crave a UU home, even if not a specific congregation."

Goal is 50 UU RCCs.. Potential ROI:

- Retain 10 – 15% of HS grads, go to 30%
- 30% → 1500 college students, about 1000 incremental

## **Friday, 1:00PM, #3036, Why Liberal Churches are Growing**

Teresa Cooley

Based on FACT study (2005) at <http://fact.hartsem.edu/products/index.html>.

Culture shifts:

- Expectations of volunteers: not steady anymore, lack of time, too much going on in lives to devote to volunteerism
- Centralized governance, a consequence of above
- Growth of staff to handle duties, a consequence of above
- From service to constituents to service to mission

Need to study the surrounding community. Who are we accountable to?

Balancing act: I + We + Vision

- She claims UUs do this better than most denominations
- Growing congregations do this balancing best!

ARIS (American Religious Identification Survey (2001), see the links

- [http://www.religioustolerance.org/chr\\_prac2.htm](http://www.religioustolerance.org/chr_prac2.htm)
- [http://www.gc.cuny.edu/faculty/research\\_studies/aris.pdf](http://www.gc.cuny.edu/faculty/research_studies/aris.pdf)
- 630,000 people who "identify" as UUs (2001)
- 502,000 people who "identify" as UUs (1990)
- 42% of our churches grew by 10% or more 1995 – 2000

- Roughly same figures from 2000 – 2005

UUA statistics (I think she is referring to UUA below)

- 1968 UUA members 282,000
- 2004 UUA members 218,000
- 1.5% of churches account for 24% of growth
- 30% of churches have shrunk by 10% or more. Losing fastest on east coast.

Compare to other churches from 1975 – 2000:

- Presbyterian: -50%
- Methodist: -52%
- UCC: -60%
- Evangelical: +50%

Most liberal and conservative churches are growing! Attributes of growth churches

- Growing surrounding community
- Newer congregations
- Racial diversity

Lesson: don't be part of a stable landscape! Fastest growing are the youngest → sense of excitement, freshness

Lesson: multi-racial churches are growing quickly. Need to learn why.

Other attributes of growing churches:

- Different kinds of families
- Presence of younger age, young adults
- Children participate → “visible” kids
- Gender balance → more men now (was 78% female previously), specialized needs for each gender

Other attributes of growing churches:

- Congregation members are close but not “too close”. Avoid being a “close family” because it is exclusionary.
- Openness to change
- Lack of unmanaged conflict → can't avoid conflict but can institutionalize it
- Different kinds of volunteers
- Denomination doesn't matter:
  - Don't need to be tied closely to a denominational mission
  - Might not apply to UU churches because of who we are
  - Programs, preaching matter more than denomination
  - Examples of non-specific names: “Pathways”, “Church of the Larger Fellowship”
  - Be aware of how strangers see the church from the outside
- Purpose, sense of mission
- Spiritual vitality
  - Needs to be joyful!
  - Sense of vitality, aliveness

### Why grow?

- Must have a spiritual basis, not be based on practical need (e.g., more teachers, \$)
- Desire to include, engage and invite. We grow in spirit when we open ourselves and meet different people
- Commonality (including unexpected commonalities) and difference, open to the mystery

### Incarnational growth (growth in spirit)

- Power of curiosity
- Abandon preconceptions
- Recognize that we can learn something
- Risk being “intrusive” to visitors (take a chance & ask questions)
- True engagement

### Personal growth = congregational growth

- Full spectrum of person based programs → congregational growth
- Clarity of purpose → lived experience
- Mission between service and worship
- Small group ministry *essential*

### Implications for staff

- Centralized accountability
- Decentralized authority → give people a stake in congregations
- Have a “leader to the leaders”
- Staffing for growth

### Implications for congregations

- Flexible governance
- Opportunity to listen and learn
- Decisions that matter
- Trusting leadership
- Direct communication
- Willing to experiment and change

### Potential for future

- Motivated volunteers
- Motivation for giving → “could, not should”
- Less burden for leaders
- Influence on larger community
- Relevance to daily living

### Reaching outside to others

- Evangelical churches greet warmly, stand *outside* the door. UU churches do this poorly in many cases
- Reaching out to communities
- Night courses
- Identifying community needs (e.g., courses for gay parents)
- Attractive to Jews → replace “church” with “congregation”?

- Use of electronic aids, screens, TVs, etc → this seems to be a new area for UU churches though not for evangelical churches

See [tcooley@uua.org](mailto:tcooley@uua.org) for more information. Presentation (Powerpoint and video) can be found at <http://www.mbdoua.org/resources-services/downloads/>.

**Friday, 2:45PM, #3055, Using the Web to nurture the spirit**

UUA staff

Still to be completed...