

Dear Youth Advisors,

I had planned to be at the gathering tonight, but my healing is not progressing as rapidly as I had hoped. (but I am healing).

UU churches have a long reputation for effective youth programming. Unlike some faith traditions, the intent of our programming is not to provide the path to church membership, but rather, a bridge to responsible adult living based on values we as a congregation seek to model.

I think it is important to rehearse that we do have many values in providing Youth programming. Here's an incomplete list, based on my 50 years working in youth work.

It seems to me that we want to provide:

Positive experiences of Community with other youth and Adult Mentors;

Opportunities to develop personal leadership skills;

A chance to consider social injustice and encourage them to work for justice;

A safe milieu in which things of meaning and truth can be openly discussed without fear of shame or blame;

Encouragement to articulate their personal Faith in an atmosphere which makes space for a diversity of beliefs.

Support from Mentors who live our UU principles and expect the youth to do the same.

A chance to feel supported, recognized, and welcomed as a part of our faith community.

It is my experience that it takes time to develop bonds between youth and advisors.

Unitarian-Universalism is based on covenants. A covenant statement of the Youth-Advisor relationship which states the relationship and how it shall be honored is important. The regular rehearsal of that covenant is crucial.

I believe that the fruition of this work can happen in Senior High.

Junior High is the training program for Senior High. It requires a steady hand of the advisors on the curriculum activities and content. OWL and COA are bonding tools. It also requires that behavioral expectations are articulated and maintained.

Thank you for your time this evening and Blessings.

In Faith,

Stan Crow

August, 2009