

**ONLINE - FALL 2010**  
**Dynamic Youth Ministry**

Instructors: *Megan Dowdell and Betty Jeanne Rueters-Ward*  
*Starr King School for the Ministry*

**Course Description:**

This lively and interactive on-line course grounds participants in philosophical, psychological, programmatic, ethical and theological aspects of youth ministry. Geared particularly toward Unitarian Universalists, but open to all, this course seeks to embody a vision of youth ministry that is a vibrant, robust, and flexible part of every congregation. Topics of instruction include leadership and spiritual development, professional support for youth advisors, denominational polity, adolescent life issues, building intergenerational community, and a critical analysis of different models of youth ministry and programming. Recommended for all religious leaders, both new and old to youth ministry.

**Course Instructors:**

**Megan Dowdell** is a Unitarian Universalist lay leader, graduate of Starr King School for the Ministry, and current PhD candidate at the Graduate Theological Union. She served as the first Youth Trustee-at-Large on the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) Board of Trustees, and co-convened the Association's Consultation on Youth Ministry with the Rev. Dr. Bill Sinkford, then the UUA President. Previously, she served as a mentor for the YMCA Y-Scholars program, helping first-generation college-bound students achieve their goals.

**Betty Jeanne Rueters-Ward** is a lifelong Unitarian Universalist and full-time Youth and Young Adult Program Coordinator at the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Shelter Rock. She is a graduate of the newly-established Master of Arts in Religious Leadership for Social Change at Starr King. As a Youth Programs Specialist for the Unitarian Universalist Association, Betty Jeanne coordinated international conferences, trainings and social justice initiatives. She has also served as a youth advisor at the First Unitarian Church of Oakland, as a youth mentor for OutLoud Radio, and with youth clients at Carroll Center for the Blind.

Megan and Betty Jeanne bring over two decades of experience in youth ministry. Individually and as a team, they have consulted with Unitarian Universalist congregations, districts, camps and conferences on multigenerational community building, youth ministry, and other issues.

**Course Commitments and Expectations:**

This course relies on the thoughtful participation of each participant; all will be expected to engage actively in on-line discussions and activities, in addition to completing all reading and written assignments. Over the span of the semester, participants will generate a culture of peer support as well as their own personal philosophy of youth ministry for use in professional and academic contexts. We hope that these philosophies might become an edited compilation, a resource for future students as well as the broader community through podcast, paper distribution, etc.

**Educating to Counter Oppressions:**

Starr King's mission, theological vision and educational philosophy support us in educating to counter oppressions. In our work, we strive to embody what we hope to see in the world -- a just, loving humanity and community in which people are free to be themselves fully and without fear. A community where no one is exiled, silenced or exploited because of gender, gender expression, race, color, ethnic or national origin, religion, sexual/affectional orientation, age, class, physical character or disability. For more information about Starr King's educational philosophy, including its counter-oppressive commitment, we encourage you to visit [http://sksm.edu/about/educational\\_philosophy.php](http://sksm.edu/about/educational_philosophy.php).

The course instructors share a vision in which counter-oppression efforts are infused in every part of youth ministry. This course will examine assumptions about age, leadership, and authority and employ a collaborative

approach to shared ministry with youth. We will explore course topics using a critical analysis of many other identities and oppressions, primarily race, ability, gender, and sexual orientation. In reading and discussing the first-hand accounts of youth, we will draw from a diverse pool of voices and experiences. Students will examine their own social position (internalized privilege and oppression, etc.) as it affects their own life experience, and their ministry with youth.

## **Course Requirements:**

### Class Participation

*Each week,*

Post in an online discussion and comment on at least one posting by a peer.

Participate in a scheduled voice-to-voice conference call (with peers)

Complete reading/viewing assignment

Complete a written reflection

Engage guest presenter (join special conference call, view video presentation, etc. depending)

*During the first month,*

In-depth consultation with instructor

*During the final month,*

In-depth consultation with instructor

*At mid-semester and end-of-semester,*

Complete evaluation of course environment/instruction, and of own engagement in course

### Praxis Requirement

Starr King is committed to community-based, immersion learning to complement classroom/online engagement. Further, the instructors believe that learning – particularly about youth ministry – thrives in a praxis engagement model, which cycles between action and reflection and enables us to continuously draw from our firsthand experiences in ministry with youth.

As such, all students are expected to develop and engage in an individualized youth ministry praxis of at least 25 hours over the course of the semester. This might include serving as a congregational youth advisor or mentor, participating in an in-person youth ministry training or conference, fulfilling volunteer requests for denominational youth ministry staff, soliciting feedback from a community about their youth ministry needs, etc. The instructors will provide support and consultation to assist students in developing their praxis component; at the same time, the instructors defer to the wisdom and authority of congregational / community leaders in deciding appropriate roles for students to fill.

Please see the praxis hand-out (distributed at the start of the semester) for more details.

## **Course Schedule:**

### **Week One, beginning September 6:** Introduction to the Course

- Expectations and Syllabus Overview
- Why Youth Ministry?
- Reflect on Your Personal Experience of Being a Youth

### **Week Two, beginning September 13:** Foundations of Youth Ministry / Youth Programs

- How and Where Youth Ministry Happens
- Models of Youth Ministry and Youth Programming
- Components of Balanced Youth Programs

**Week Three, beginning September 20:** Theology and Philosophy of Youth Ministry

- Overview and Analysis of Liberal Religious Education Philosophy
- What is “Youth Empowerment”?
- Visions of Multi-generational Community

**Week Four, beginning September 27:** Unitarian Universalism and Youth

- History of UU Youth Movements
- Youth in Congregations – Results of Contemporary Survey and Research, Mosaic Report
- Institutional Memory, Organizational Change and Youth

**Week Five, beginning October 4:** Adolescent Development

- Physical Growth and Sexual Development
- Cognitive and Intellectual Development
- Social and Affective Development
- Moral Development
- Spiritual, Religious, and Faith Development

**Week Six, beginning October 11:** Leadership Development and Youth

- Collective Decision-Making
- Partnership between Adults and Youth
- Youth Leadership in the Congregation

**Week Seven, beginning October 18:** Mid-term Dialogue, Peer Support, and Evaluation

**Week Eight, beginning November 1:** Spiritual Development and Youth

- Contemporary, Traditional and Alternative Worship Styles: Participant Observation
- Unitarian Universalist Identity Development
- Issues of Cultural Appropriation in Worship
- Personal and Group Spiritual Practice
- Youth Ministry and the Arts

**Week Nine, beginning November 8:** Group Dynamics

- Stages of Community Building in Youth Groups
- Conflict Resolution
- Engaging Different Learning Styles
- Supporting Youth in Crisis

**Week Ten, beginning November 15:** Faith in Action

- Social Justice Resources and Activities for Youth Groups
- Anti-Oppression and Anti-Racism Initiatives

**Week Eleven, beginning November 22:** Identity, Privilege and Oppression

- Age Dynamics
- Community Differences
- Mattering and Marginality, Resilience and Resistance
- Specialized Support for Queer Youth, Youth of Color, and Youth with Disabilities

**Week Twelve, beginning November 29:** Collegiality, Policy and Professional Concerns

- Team Youth Ministry
- Supervision and Support for Youth Advisors
- Creating Safety in Youth Programs
- Codes of Ethics

- Evaluating Your Ministry With Youth

**Week Thirteen, beginning December 6:** Bridging the Lifespan

- Transitioning Children into Youth Programs
- Support for Youth Bridging into Young Adulthood
- Building Youth-Friendly Congregations and Communities

**Week Fourteen, beginning December 13:** Celebration, Final Evaluation and Closing

**Sources for Learning:**

*Guest Speakers*

Guest speakers are an integral part of this course. Almost every week, students will have access to experienced leaders in youth ministry – both adults and youth – who will provide content and dialogue. Assignments will be tailored to build upon guest contributors each week.

*Readings*

Course readings will draw from the following:

*Required texts* (to be read in their entirety)

- Arnason, Wayne and Scott, Rebecca. *We Would Be One: A History of Unitarian Universalist Youth Movements* (Skinner House, 2005) \$15.00 at UUA Bookstore. ISBN 9781558964884
- Smith, Christian and Melinda Lundquist Denton. *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* (Oxford University Press, 2005) \$17.95 publisher price, \$15.99 new at Amazon. ISBN 0195384776

*Excerpts to include:*

- Hoerltoerfer, Patricia and Muir, Fredric, ed. *The Safe Congregation Handbook: Nurturing Healthy Boundaries in Our Faith Communities*. (Unitarian Universalist Association, 2005)
- Hurd, Tracey. *Nurturing Children and Youth: A Developmental Guidebook*. (Unitarian Universalist Association, 2005)
- UUA Office of Identity-Based Ministries. “Mosaic Project.” (UUA.org)
- UUA Board of Trustees. “The Consultation on Ministry to and with Youth.” (UUA.org)
- Schwendeman, Jill. *When Youth Lead: A Guide to Intergenerational Social Justice Ministry*. (Unitarian Universalist Association, 2007)
- Erslev, Kate Tweedie. *Full Circle: Fifteen Ways to Grow Lifelong UUs*. (Unitarian Universalist Association, 2004)
- Tain, Shell. *Youth Advisors’ Handbook: Second Edition*. (Unitarian Universalist Association, 2003)
- UUA Young Adult and Campus Ministry Office. *Crossing the Bridge from Youth to Young Adulthood: Designing and Implementing a Bridging Ceremony in Your Congregation*. (Unitarian Universalist Association, 2004)
- UUA Youth Office. *The Youth Group Handbook*. (Unitarian Universalist Association, 2006)
- Essex Conversations Coordinating Committee. *Essex Conversations: Visions for Lifespan Religious Education* (Skinner House, 2001)
- Tatum, Beverly Daniels. *“Why are all the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?” And Other Conversations about Race* (Basic Books, 1998)
- Ward, Janie Victoria; Robinson, Tracy; Garrod, Andrew; and Kilkenny, Robert. *Souls Looking Back: Lifestories of Growing up Black* (Routledge, 1999)
- Ward, Janie Victoria. *The Skin We’re In: Teaching our Teens to be Emotionally Strong, Socially Smart, and Spiritually Connected*. (Free Press, 2002)

## “Dynamic Youth Ministry” Fall 2010 Guest Presenters (more to come!)

*Weeks One, Seven, and Fourteen we will meet as a class, without guest presenters.*

**Week Two, beginning September 13:** Foundations of Youth Ministry / Youth Programs

- Erik Kesting, Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministries
- Rev. Brad Corban, Pastor, Wedleyanna United Methodist Church of Star, MS

**Week Three, beginning September 20:** Theology and Philosophy of Youth Ministry

- Tera Little, Director of Lifespan Programs, UUA Pacific Southwest District
- Julian Sharp, former UUA Youth Trustee; former Young Religious Unitarian Universalist (YRUU) youth leader

**Week Four, beginning September 27:** Unitarian Universalism and Youth

- Rev. Wayne Arnason, first UUA Youth Programs Director; co-author of “We Would Be One: A History of Unitarian Universalist Youth Movements”
- Rev. Bill Sinkford, former President, Unitarian Universalist Association; former President, Liberal Religious Youth (LRY)
- Rev. Hank Peirce, former LRY and YRUU leader; Minister, UU Church of Medford, MA
- Former YRUU youth leaders: Abbey Tennis, Tim Fitzgerald, Gregory Boyd, Shea Schachameyer, Hannah Eller-Isaacs

**Week Five, beginning October 4:** Adolescent Development

- Samaya Oakley, Youth Director, North Shore Unitarian Church of West Vancouver, BC; UUA Trainer for Youth Ministry and Sexuality Education
- Elandria Williams, leader in Diverse Revolutionary UU Multicultural Ministries (DRUUMM); Education Team Member, Highlander Research and Education Center

**Week Six, beginning October 11:** Leadership Development and Youth

- Joe Gayeski, former UUA Board of Trustees Youth Observer and current YRUU leader
- Megan Selby, former UUA Youth Programs Specialist and national YRUU leader

**Week Eight, beginning November 1:** Spiritual Development and Youth

- Rev. Dan Harper, longtime youth advisor/advocate and Minister of Religious Education, UU Congregation of Palo Alto, CA
- Lane Campbell, Director of Religious Education, Starr King UU Church of Hayward, CA; former YRUU leader

**Week Nine, beginning November 8:** Group Dynamics

- Beth Dana, former UUA Youth Ministry Associate; Co-Author, Tapestry of Faith curriculum
- Jesse Jaeger, former UUA Youth Programs Director and Young Adult / Campus Ministry Associate; Co-Author, Tapestry of Faith curriculum

**Week Ten, beginning November 15:** Faith in Action

- Cassie Meyer, Outreach Education and Training Coordinator, Interfaith Youth Core
- Lydia Pelot-Hobbs, former YRUU leader; Director of Religious Education, First UU Church of New Orleans, LA
- Rev. (as of 9/19/10!) Jason Lydon, former UUA Youth Programs Specialist; Congregational Director for the Community Church of Boston, MA
- Rev. Meg Riley, former UUA Youth Programs Director and Advocacy and Witness Director; Minister for the Church of the Larger Fellowship

**Week Eleven, beginning November 22:** Identity, Privilege and Oppression

- Ruby Cymrot-Wu, longtime religious educator and former staff for Jewish Mosaic and Progressive Jewish Alliance
- Rev. Monica Cummings, UUA Program Associate for Ministry with Youth and Young Adults of Color

**Week Twelve, beginning November 29:** Collegiality, Policy and Professional Concerns

- Rev. Pat Hoerltoerfer, former UUA Director of Childrens, Family and Intergenerational Ministry; Co-Author, Safe Congregations Curriculum

**Week Thirteen, beginning December 6:** Bridging the Lifespan

- Victoria Mitchell, former YRUU and current Continental UU Young Adult Network (C\*UUYAN) leader; Co-Author, UUA Resolution on Youth and Young Adult Empowerment
- Rev. Chris Holton-Jablonski, Minister of Religious Education, Unitarian Universalist Church of Berkeley; Author, Tapestry of Faith curriculum
- Jessica York, longtime religious educator and current UUA Youth Programs Director
- Rev. Michael Tino, former UUA Director of Young Adult and Campus Ministry and Vice President, Allies for Racial Equity