



Massachusetts Bay District Congregational Conversation Results

This fact sheet includes basic information and some of the issues, problems and solutions, which **Massachusetts Bay District** congregations discussed in their congregational conversations.

Do these results match what you would expect from other congregations in your district? What would you expect to be different?

The Basics

- Five (5) congregations in the **Massachusetts Bay District** returned report forms.
- One is a **small** congregations; four (4) are **mid-size** congregations.
- All five congregations are **Welcoming Congregations**.

Intergenerational Community Relations

Two (2) congregations celebrated their congregation's **welcoming of youth**:

- "support and respect from all church levels"
- "attitude of 'we want to do it'" in a "willing congregation"
- Youth "connection to broader community"

Three (3) congregations mentioned that youth and adults **lacked communication about youth ministry**:

- "a need for more emphasis—**lack of awareness** of youth ministry by adult population, not having a place to openly communicate between youth and adults, being separated from the rest of the congregation"
- "youth don't feel as though they are members of the community"
- "**too few adults involved**"

One congregation mentioned that there is a **resistance to change** and that "some want to keep youth/adults more separate."

Three (3) congregations decided to reach out to more youth in their congregation and two (2) decided to **increase pool of available adults** to work with youth.

Two (2) congregations decided to **improve communication** between adults and youth, "including youth events on congregation's calendar of events" and "publicizing in church newsletter."



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Mission, Vision and Priorities

Two (2) congregations celebrated the **commitment of religious professionals and adult volunteers** to their youth ministry.

One congregation said that they have a "realization there is a **need for change.**"

Another congregation said there is a "**difference in priorities** among youth and adults" and "**different goals** for youth in group."

Three (3) congregations developed strategies to address the **challenge of prioritizing youth ministry** and having a mission/vision:

- "further visioning work" and "formation of YAC [Youth Adult Committee]"
- "get support from congregation in **developing vision** for youth group"
- "need the support of parents in making church a priority from early years"

Curriculum, Resources and Transitional Age Youth

Four (4) congregations have **youth groups**; three (3) of these youth groups have **youth** advisors; one is a **paid advisor**. One congregation has a **Youth Adult Committee (YAC)**.

Two (2) congregations celebrated the success of their **OWL Program** and one celebrated the success of its **Coming of Age (COA)** program.

Two (2) congregations mentioned that their youth ministry **did not serve youth in transition** between junior high school and high school. They decided to address this challenge by:

- offering "**congregational membership for post-coming of age youth**"
- "hav[ing] UU identity reinforced in earlier years as well as junior and senior high"
- "**welcome[ing] rising [high school] freshmen** "

Two (2) congregations decided to address the needs of "bridged" and "post-high school" youth by:

- fostering a "lifelong connection via alumni association"
- "reach[ing] out to college-aged youth" in the community



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Leadership Development and Opportunities for Practice

- Two (2) congregations celebrated the strength of their youth leaders and another congregation said “**training youth for leadership**” promoted their youth ministry’s success.
- One congregation had a position for a **youth representative** (without vote) on their **Board of Trustees**. As a result of their conversations, two (2) congregations decided to create different opportunities for youth to practice leadership, such as **joining committees** or having a **youth delegate** on the Parish Council.
- One congregation discussed a “**lack of youth power in delivering consequences** for individuals and groups” and confusion over whether youth group was “youth led” or “advisor led.” As a result of their conversation, they decided to **clarify the roles of advisors** and also have youth positions on church committees.
- Another congregation decided to “find a **balance between youth empowerment and structure**” and explore the model of a “**regional youth group.**”

Serving the Spiritual Needs of Youth

Three (3) congregations celebrated ways they serve the spiritual needs of youth:

- “good ministerial support”
- “tapping into youth idealism”
- “youth service”
- “teen choir”

One congregation decided to have “**dedicated ministerial outreach** to Youth Group” and another said it would explore having a **part-time minister** fill the role of paid youth advisor.

Two (2) congregations decided to change worship services to encourage youth involvement:

- “**include youth in service** and social hour” through ushering and performing readings
- “have **combined (intergenerational) service** and “include youth in the process and giving the service”
- “try to make the **music more accessible**” to youth