

Sylvia Speaking, December 2003

A lengthy year-end summary ~ grab a coffee, tea, cocoa, mulled cider or egg nog!
“ Season’s Greetings!” What a full year 2003 has been!

As many of you know, the DLL position has a broad national portfolio, developing, supporting and empowering a network of volunteers with expertise in:

- Religious Education (RE) for children,
- Ministry With Youth and Young Religious Unitarian Universalist (YRUU) continental connections,
- Young Adult and Campus Ministry (YA/CM) information and UUA links,
- Adult Programs
- Curriculum Visioning and Development
- Intergenerational worship and other “whole church” community-building opportunities
- Library and resource development for religious educators as well as congregations
- Professional support, mentoring and networking for religious educators
- Leadership development opportunities for Religious Educators, Youth and YA/CM leadership
- Workshops on RE and lifespan learning around visioning, process and planning
- Safe congregations issues in Lifespan Learning Programs
- Connecting congregations to Lifespan Learning Service Consultants and other resources through various means of communication.

If you have an interest in working with the Lifespan Learning team in one of these areas, I would be pleased to chat! The LL portfolio is HUGE so priority has to be given to certain components each year.

Annual Conference and Meeting 2003,

Did you know that at the ACM 2003 in Winnipeg, we addressed the LL portfolio by providing the following opportunities?

- Renaissance Module, UU History (15 hour intensive training, Thursday and Friday, pre ACM)
- OWL (combined grades 7-9 and 10-12) Leadership Training (15 hour intensive training, post ACM)
- CanUUdle Youth Conference
- Youth Advisory Group youth workshop
- Young Fun Children’s Program
- UUA Youth Office staff facilitated workshop (Jesse Jaeger)
- UUA Young Adult Office staff facilitated workshop (Michael Tino)
- Campus Ministry Networking Session
- Adult Programs Networking Session
- OWL Networking Session
- Religious Educators Networking Session

- RNG appreciation dinner, all LL SC in attendance

Here are the lifespan learning plans under development for Edmonton's "We Are The New Pioneers" Annual Conference and Meeting 2004 :

- Renaissance Module (15 hour intensive training, Thursday and Friday, pre ACM, Worship for all Ages)
- Adult OWL Leadership Training (15 hour intensive training, Saturday and Sunday, concurrent with ACM)
- CanUUdle IV Youth Conference and workshops
- Young Fun Children's Program
- UUA Youth Office staff facilitated youth workshop (Jesse Jaeger)
- UUA Young Adult Office staff facilitated workshops (Michael Tino)
- Campus Ministry Networking Session
- LL Curriculum Workshop
- Empty Bowls Workshop
- Various networking sessions

Regional Fall Gatherings 2003

Lifespan Learning community was alive and growing at each regional fall gathering. The degree of presence respected the diversity between regions and was dependent on the unique make-up of each regional planning team.

We had a Leadership Development Conference for youth and adults and a Lifespan Learning "diversity" stream in BC, a Youth Advisor Training and a youth con running concurrently in the West, a youth stream in Central, a youth conference and Lifespan Learning "intergenerational whole church" stream in the East. A children's program was available at each regional gathering.

As DLL, I was able to attend three of the four regional fall gatherings. The Lifespan Learning Service Consultants were each present in their respective regions. We are learning and growing in this area, as the concept and presentation of an intergenerational conference setting is new to many, both planners and attendees. Your feedback and suggestions on how to bridge the gaps between regional needs and service delivery is always welcomed and considered in our planning.

Lifespan Learning Service Consultants

Lynn Sabourin, BC, Leuba Franko, Western, Diane Bosman, Central and Jo-Anne Elder-Gomes, Eastern, have each addressed congregational and regional LL requests. Lynn and Jo-Anne co-lead Lifespan Learning/RE workshops at Regional Fall Gatherings. Lynn and Diane have done on-site consultations or workshops for congregations in their regions. The LL team is gathering in February 2004 in Toronto for further orientation and visioning. They are an excellent team to support and work with!

Youth Programming and the Youth Advisory Group (YAG)

As the DLL, in partnership with the YAG, I am working to develop and promote a plan to serve the needs of Youth, Youth Programming and Ministry With Youth in Canada, through our continental connection with the UUA. The YAG is still very new. As with all 'new' groups, growth, challenge, turmoil and conflict are to be expected and clear expectations, accountability and terms of reference continue to be a part of the valuable start-up work we're doing. I have dedicated a significant portion of my time and efforts to the youth component of my portfolio this past year.

One of the challenges is in developing a plan that was not fleshed out for us ahead of time in "Of Regions and RNGs" It brings both good news and bad news! The good news is that the CUC's implementation task force's direction or plan to staff and volunteers to support YRUU within the Regions and RNGs document was not made very clear, so "we" (the YAG and others) can develop it. The bad news is that the CUC's implementation task force's "plan" to support YRUU within the Regions and RNGs document was not made very clear, so "we" have to work to develop it...

I have endeavored to articulate and share my vision of the Youth Advisory Group as :

- an opportunity to hold, nurture, better understand and celebrate youth/adult partnering and to model youth/adult partnership on a committee.
- an opportunity to put our volunteer guiding principles, our YAG covenant and our UU principles into action, something of extreme value.
- an opportunity to educate and inform Canadian congregations on youth leadership and the opportunities for embracing and nurturing youth leadership.
- a communication conduit to local and regional youth structures.

The YAG met this past Dec 5-7, 2003 weekend in Toronto for only our second time as a group, for retreat/meetings. We had a very full agenda and first off developed a revised Vision and Mission. We did much hard, stretching work together toward a plan for bringing our amazing vision and mission statements to life.

YAG Vision Statement, (the why) developed Dec 6, 2003

The CUC Youth Advisory Group fosters the passion and dreams of Canadian UU Youth; linking our voices toward vital, empowered and supported ministry with youth at all levels.

YAG Mission Statement, (the what) developed Dec 6, 2003

In pursuit of the YAG Vision we endeavour to provide leadership for the purposes of:

- connecting youth groups, congregations, youth governing bodies, the CUC and its Board,
- supporting YRUU community,
- advocating for youth empowerment,

- advising CUC Lifespan Learning office, UUA Youth Office, Regional YACs, CUC Board and YRUU Steering Committee on Canadian youth issues,
- encouraging discussion around ministry with youth,
- ensuring opportunities for youth participation in all levels of our faith

CanUuddle 2004 planning group YAG members Robbie Brydon, Asha Philar, Myda Egrmajer are working in cooperation with the Edmonton host planning team and DRE Karen Mills for the May 2004 youth conference in Edmonton. A generous YRUU Steering Committee Y-FUUD grant of \$980 US will help support registration and travel costs of “CanUuddle youth staff”

As well, each of our regions is represented by a regional YAC or Youth-Adult Committee. These groups plan to best meet their region’s conference and training needs, advocating for and empowering youth leadership and encouraging congregational support.

Continental connections with UUA offices, Youth and Young Adult

We are grateful for the continuing continental connection with the UUA’s Youth and Young Adult and Campus Ministry (YA/CM) Offices, and the staff, services and resources we can access. A Campus Ministry Training was held in Toronto Oct 31 – Nov 1, 2003. We were supported in excellent dialogue amongst 14 participants from across Canada, representing all four regions, all keen on learning more about supporting U*U Campus Ministry in their communities. I am serving as an adult-at-large on YRUU Youth Council and attended UUA ConCentric Young Adult Leadership Training and Business Meetings in August 2003.

The CUC plan for Campus Ministry is on the CUC Board’s agenda at present. With assistance from the UUA YA/CM office, the CUC’s LL office will support a young adult representative from each of the four regions to attend ConCentric each summer. Look for an outline in the new year of how we hope to select the regional reps and please share your interest with me, if you are a young adult considering supporting this emerging stream of ministry in Canada with your leadership.

Overall

I am so grateful to have the cooperation and vision of staff and volunteers as we continue our transition in lifespan learning, dancing between reality and possibility, patience and perseverance, all the while risking growth and change with optimism and faith!

Mary Bennett continues to support and address the Social Responsibility portfolio of the CUC, and she links directly with the Board so she works to invite youth participation on these initiatives. There is a nice cooperation and carry over between our staff positions there and with the “safe church” components as well. Initiatives involving adult education and curriculum development begun under the ED portfolio will be gradually handed over to the LL portfolio. Linda and Sara, our visionary DRSs are working with me to inform

RNG teams on LL perspectives and opportunities, so that networkers in turn can share those with congregations.

The Lifespan Learning Library is growing. The CANUUE newsletter is broadening its scope. Thanks to Karen Mills LLL librarian and Terry Stafford, CANUUE editor.

I am eager to invite every congregation to clearly articulate the top three priorities for RE related leadership development that they would wish for over the next year or two, and then we will work to address those needs at regional and national conferences, and other times when the needs can be met through appropriate service delivery directly to a congregation or group of congregations. Some of the programs (such as OWL, Renaissance, Youth Advisor Trainings, Leadership and Spirituality Development conferences, etc) require UUA trained leadership and the costs can be significant to run many of the programs, so careful considerations of budgets and timing to meet the needs of the greatest number of folks is required.

We have developed a mentoring support for folks, paid or volunteer, who are working in RE in our congregations. Audrey Brooks in the West and Audrey O'Callaghan in the East are liaisons and will offer connections to/for mentors.

CUC brochures outlining and promoting RE and lifespan learning and curriculum resource development will be priorities for the year ahead. In consultation with many, I am developing LL the necessary documents and guidelines addressing children and youth components of regional and national conference manuals as well.

Our CUC LL web site pages also will receive much needed attention and updating in 2004. If this is one of your passions and strengths, I welcome your assistance!

Respecting congregational polity, I am encouraging congregations to look at Lifespan Learning as an integral part of the whole church community and I am promoting the value in congregations supporting RE leadership training and developing professional standards. Please consider RE and Lifespan Learning in your vision/mission work and long range planning and feel free to contact me if you are developing strategies in these areas. I am serving on the Liberal Religious Educators Association Board and LREDA Fall Conference 2004 will take place in Chicago at the Sheraton Gateway Suites October 22 – 25, 2004 with a very exciting and relevant theme, Religious Education: Models for the 21st Century. The presentations will feature a variety of successful, innovative models...we will hear about four models during theme presentations on Saturday morning, then choose two for more in depth learning through demonstration workshops! Details of fall conference will be in the LREDA spring mailing to members and on the LREDA and CUC web sites.

I am most supportive of the discussions around shared ministry in our congregations as to me, this speaks to community building and nurturing, affirming and making a space for each individual's gifts and strengths ~ then stretching ourselves to be open and responsive

to those gifts , all the while being willing to share our own gifts with others with truth and compassion!

It is my dream that our UU congregations and community gatherings in Canada, whether at local, regional or national levels, be intentionally intergenerational communities whenever possible, reaching out and welcoming everyone, no matter their age. Each and every one of us needs and deserves a broad sense of community where we can give voice to our truth and learn from others, in a world that too often offers us disconnectedness, individualism, materialism and isolation. Each of us must give what we can of ourselves to help make this happen.

In closing, I believe that “each night a child is born is a holy night” and our children are our greatest gifts. Our children and youth need and deserve our love, guidance, good examples, respect, compassion and encouragement. Thank you for sharing yours with them!

Sylvia Bass West