

Proposed Constitution for Annual CUC Youth Assembly

By Paul Hunt

In the interest of simplicity, masculine pronouns are used in this document to represent both genders.

Preamble

I Definitions

- ACM- Annual Conference and Meeting of the CUC. Held Victoria Day weekend
- Assembly – Annual Youth Assembly outlined in this proposal.
- Board- CUC Board of Directors
- CanUudle- Youth conference held in tandem with the CUC's ACM.
- CUC- Canadian Unitarian Council
- DLL- Director of Lifespan Learning. Employee of the CUC responsible for, among - other things, youth ministry. Member of the YAG
- ED- Executive Director. Currently an Ex Officio member of the CUC board.
- RRYSC- Radical Regional Youth Steering Committee, Western Region's equivalent to a YAC. In this document use of the term YAC includes the RRYSC.
- YAC- Youth Adult Committee. Regional elected body of youths and adults who are responsible for regional policy and event planning. In this document the term YAC includes the western region's equivalent, the RRYSC.
- YAG- Youth Advisory Group is a national advisory committee of the Director of Lifespan Learning comprised of 6 youth and 3 adults.
- YCR- Youth Council Representative. There are 3 regional representatives (BC, West and Quom) as well as one Canadian-at-Large position who attend Youth Council. More information is available here: <http://www.uua.org/YRUU/governance/structure.html#yc>
- YOB- Youth Observer to the Board. Elected youth who sits as an observer on the CUC board.

II Concerning This Proposal

This proposal is an attempt to improve the election process for the YOB as well as to create an accountable and representative decision making youth body at CanUudle.

The first version of this document was written in the summer of 2005. The author then held preliminary discussions at Jarkcon 2005 and requested input from selected friends. An updated version was presented to the YAG a few weeks prior to their December 2005 retreat. The document was discussed at the retreat and during YAG conference calls following the retreat. As suggestions were made, the document was edited. This version is expected to be the last before the document is made public and submitted to the youth community and board. The youth body at CanUudle VI in Saint John will be asked to discuss the proposal, suggest final amendments and vote to ratify the final document. A two thirds majority in a vote of you attendees will be required for the proposal to be

ratified. If ratified, the final draft will be presented to the board at their September meeting for approval.

This section previously read as follows:

When considered ready, a draft of this proposal will be presented to the YAG for review and debate. The YAG will have the chance to suggest changes at which point a second draft will be written. The proposal will then be available to youth prior to CanUudle so that the larger community can familiarize itself with it. The youth body at CanUudle will have a chance discuss the proposal, suggest final amendments and vote to ratify the final document. A two thirds majority will be required for the proposal to be considered. If ratified the final draft will be presented at the ACM to the board who will be asked to submit their approval.

1 The Youth Delegation

1.1 Mission Statement

The responsibility of the youth delegation is to debate and vote on the issues presented at CanUudle assemblies, in a manner that represents the best interests of Canadian Unitarian Universalist youth.

1.2 Delegates

Delegates are voting members of the Youth Delegation. Only delegates will have the right to vote at CanUudle assemblies. Each church recognized by the CUC will be allowed to select delegates according to the number of youth in the youth group. Churches without youth groups will be allowed to select a youth from the whole congregation.

Eligibility

Delegates must be within the national age range for CUC youth activities.

Only youth attending CanUudle may be delegates.

Each delegate must present a form at CanUudle with the signatures of the youth he is representing, including himself, as well as the signature of either his Youth Advisor, Director of Religious Education, Church President or Minister.

Selection

Youth groups selecting a delegate will use a democratic process such as a vote or consensus.

A youth may be appointed as a delegate by his Youth Advisor, Director of Religious Education, Church President or Minister if he is the only youth of the church.

If only one youth is attending CanUudle, he should obtain the support of his youth group.

Multiple Delegates

The number of delegates per youth group will be as follows:

1-7 youth = 1 Delegate

8-14 youth = 2 Delegates

15-21 youth = 3 Delegates

22-28 youth = 4 Delegates

The maximum number of delegates from a single youth group will be 4. When a youth group sends multiple delegates to CanUdle, each delegate is representing specific members of the youth group. The division of members should allow all of the views of a youth group to be represented.

Youth groups who send less than their allowed number of delegates to CanUdle will be permitted to submit votes by proxy equal to the number of allowed delegates they do not send.

1.3 Delegation by Proxy

If a youth group is sending no youth to CanUdle, they may submit their opinions in writing. Groups may vote by written proxy on all elections and resolutions announced two weeks prior to the Assembly. It is expected that Youth Groups will decide on an appropriate democratic process to use when making their decisions on these issues. The proxy ballot must include the signatures of the youth represented, as well as the signature of either his Youth Advisor, Director of Religious Education, Church President or Minister. Proxy ballots are allotted in the same way as delegates. No youth group may have more than 4 proxy votes. The YAG will arrange to collect proxy ballots on Friday at the ACM. Arrangements may be made for the ballots to be e-mailed as well. Once presented ballots cannot be altered. Because of the time frame, it might be best for a youth group to ask an Adult delegate of their church to carry their proxy ballot to the ACM and give it to the YAG.

1.4 Introduction of Resolutions

Any delegate may introduce resolutions for debate at the Assembly. Non-delegate youth should have their delegate present the resolution. Elements of the Youth Document that require approval are presented by the YOB (see below). The National Social Action Issue is the responsibility of the National Social Action Coordinator (see below). Constitutional Amendments require the approval of the YAG (see below). All resolutions must be presented by the Wednesday two weeks previous to CanUdle (see timetable).

Resolutions may be amended during the assembly.

* If this proposal is accepted a clear definition of what is and what is not an appropriate resolution will be written by the YAG to prevent abuse and wastes of time. A submission form will be made to simplify and standardize the resolution process.

2 CanUdle Assembly

2.1 Agenda

The YAG will be responsible for creating an agenda for the meeting or meetings of the Assembly. Time should be allotted to each item on the agenda. No more than 4 hours of total time should be allotted to the Assembly, which could be divided into two sessions. Agendas should follow the following basic model but include more detail.

Opening of the Assembly
Selection of Roles
Reading and Approval of the Agenda
Creation of a Covenant

Reports
Debate
Public Input
Voting
Elections
End of the Assembly

2.2 Roles

Certain roles must be undertaken to help the Assembly proceed smoothly.

Facilitator- This person will preside over the meeting by regulating the debate. They will also share the responsibility of keeping focus and following the agenda. Facilitators should point out when they wish to offer a personal point of view. The YOB will facilitate the beginning of each Assembly but the job may be passed around during the assembly so that no one person abuses this position of power.

Notes + Minutes This is the task of taking notes for the Assembly, on paper and/or computer. It also involves the creation of minutes to take place after the Assembly. This is an important and difficult task and should be shared.

Speaking Order A delegate who is chosen to keep track of who wishes to speak. Should also observe the process and try to manage dynamics.

Time Keeper A delegate who is chosen to make sure the time periods of the agenda are respected and inform the Assembly when they are using too much time.

2.3 Reports

The Assembly will allot time to each of the following people/groups at each assembly. These people/groups will have the opportunity to inform the Assembly about their actions in the previous year.

YAG Report
DLL Report
YOB Report
ED Report
YAC Reports
NatSac Report

2.4 Covenant

A covenant is a set of rules and guidelines for discussion. A new covenant will be created at each Assembly, by the delegates. A covenant is a living document and can be changed during the course of an Assembly.

2.5 Procedure

The assembly will vote by show of hands on any issues concerning the procedure of the meeting. A delegate must propose a motion and have it seconded before a procedural vote is held. Procedural votes are by show of hands. Delegates must vote yes or no on the motion, they may not abstain. Colour ballots may be used to distinguish delegates from non-delegates.

Some examples of cases where procedural voting would occur: Approval of the Agenda, Approval of the Covenant, Speaking Time allotted to reports or the public, Closure of Debate, Choice of Voting on or Tabling a resolution, Adjournment of Assembly.

2.6 Quorum

Quorum for the Assembly will be of 12 delegates total from at least 3 of the 4 CUC regions.

Proxy ballots are counted towards the Quorum only on the issues that those ballots address. An Assembly without Quorum should still be held. However, any decisions or documents that such an assembly produces must state clearly the failure to make Quorum. Any long term planning should be brought up and discussed again the following year. If an issue requires immediate attention, the YAG will examine it and if they reach consensus, will send it to the board.

2.7 Constitutional Amendment

Any changes to be made to this document must be presented as resolutions by the YAG or bear the YAG's approval. Constitutional Amendments must be prepared and publicized two weeks before the Assembly. For a Constitutional Amendment to pass it must receive a 2/3rds majority. The CUC Board must re-sanction this constitution every 4 years.

3 Resolutions

3.1 The Youth Document

The Youth Document is a document presented to the board each year at CanUuddle, authored by the YOB and affirmed by the YAG. It serves as an update concerning youth ministry's progress in the past year and goals for the next. Elements that represent goals or requests for the board should be included in the youth document. These elements must be presented beforehand in the form of resolutions so that they may be debated and receive ratification by the Assembly.

3.2 National Social Action Issue

It will be the responsibility of the National Social Action Coordinator to plan the adoption of a National Social Action Issue, should that be the wish of the Assembly. Debate and voting on a National Social Action Issue will take place at the Assembly.

3.3 Voting

When debate on a resolution concludes, the Assembly must choose whether or not to vote on the resolution. The Assembly may hold a procedural vote to table the resolution and give the power to the YAG to continue debate and come to a final decision. If the Assembly chooses to vote on the resolution, it should be done by show of hands or secret ballot, depending on which procedure is thought to be appropriate, at the discretion of the facilitator. Proxy votes for a resolution that has been amended during the Assembly should be ignored. Colour ballots may be used to distinguish delegates from non-delegates.

3.4 Finances

The CanUUdle Youth Assembly will not require financial support beyond what is already allotted for CanUUdle. No funds previously used for CanUUdle will be required for the specific purposes of the Assembly. The Assembly will have no power to make any binding decisions regarding finance.

4 Elections

4.1 YOB

A description of the YOB position is available at:

<http://www.cuc.ca/youth/YOB-Position-Description2005.pdf>

A subcommittee of the YAG, including the YOB, is responsible for the planning of each youth Assembly as well as the creation of the Youth Document and any resolutions at an Assembly that relate to the Youth Document.

The term length for the YOB will be modified as such: the YOB will serve a 1 year term with a second year option. If a YOB chooses to only serve the first year of his term, an election must be called following the YAG's winter retreat. If after the YOB's first term there is serious doubt or concern about the ability or effectiveness of the youth serving in the position, a confidence vote may be called. The procedure for a YOB election and a YOB confidence vote are described below.

4.2 National Social Action Coordinator

Learn more about the role of the current National Social Justice Coordinator here:

<http://www.cuc.ca/youth/socialjustice/>

This position would be renamed National Social Action Coordinator. The Social Action Coordinator is the "National" link in the connection between Local, Regional, National and Continental Social Action work. This position would become an elected position and follow the same term length and election procedures as the YOB. The SAC would be the 10th YAG member.

4.3 Canadian at Large

The official description of this position is available at:

<http://www.uua.org/YRUU/governance/whatsmyjob.html>

This elected position would follow the same election procedures as the YOB. It is a one year position.

4.4 YOB Election Procedure

If the YOB is in the second year of his term or chooses to hold the office for a single year, an election will be announced following the YAG's winter retreat and publicized according to the process laid out in the section "Timeline". Youth from around the country will be presented with a description of the position and invited to present their candidacy. Candidates will introduce themselves in a 250 word biography and will each have the chance to speak during the Assembly. Other ways for the candidates to interact with voters may be used so long as they are publicized and do not give any candidate any advantage or disadvantage. Candidates should be invited to attend any CUC AGM events that the YOB attends to experience the requirements of the position. The vote will be held

in the manner described below and the winner will begin his term as YOB July 1st. Votes will be archived for the duration of a YOB's term. If the YOB should resign, the runner up candidate will inherit the position. If there is no runner up, the YAG will appoint one of its members to the portfolio.

4.5 YOB Confidence Vote

If a youth or group of youth do not feel the YOB is adequately fulfilling the requirements of the position during the first year of his term, they may call for a confidence vote. To do so they must present their grievances to the YAG before the beginning of the Assembly. The YAG will assemble a committee of three YAC members, one from each YAC, who will determine if the concern is founded. These YAC members must not be YAG members. The YOB will be notified of the concern and be given the opportunity to explain himself to the committee. If they find that a confidence vote is not needed, they will communicate with the YOB so that he may address the concern. The confidence vote will be added to the agenda of the Assembly and be discussed. The Assembly will agree upon a percentage that will demonstrate confidence in the YOB. If a vote by secret ballot shows that a number of delegates less than that percentage have confidence in the YOB, the YOB will be forced to resign his position. An election will be called following the pre-constitutional process of mail-in balloting. The unseated YOB will be allowed to participate.

It must be understood that the Confidence Vote intended to be a check on the YOB's power, but should only be used in extremely rare circumstances. It is necessary to keep the position accountable. The YAG will be vigilant in identifying any abuse of this measure.

4.6 Elections

If there is only one candidate for a position, that candidate must obtain a vote of confidence from the Assembly. If there are multiple candidates for a position, Instant Runoff Voting will be used.

Instant Runoff Voting works as follows: Instead of just casting one vote for one candidate, voters rank the candidates: 1,2,3, etc. If no candidate receives a majority of the #1 votes, the candidate with the least total of #1 votes is eliminated. The second choice votes from these ballots are then transferred to the other candidates. The ballots are recounted, and candidates are eliminated in this fashion until 1 winner emerges with a majority of the vote.

5 Logistics

5.1 Responsibilities of a Local Youth Group

For the CanUUdle assembly to be effective and representative, involvement is needed at the local level. Regional YACs are responsible for spreading awareness of this assembly and its purpose to their region. Direct information about the Assembly will be available through websites, listservs and monthly mailings. However the YACs must take steps that encourage the youth of their regions to seek out and act upon this information.

Each youth group should choose a point person who will bring the needed information to the group. This could be a youth or an adult such as a DRE. Upon receiving the pre-packet, the youth group should decide who will be attending CanUUdle and choose their delegate accordingly. This is an excellent exercise in democracy. Consensus or a vote should be used to confirm the group's choice. At this time the group should also discuss possible resolutions they want to propose and individuals should consider positions they might apply for. In late April, the point person will once again bring information to a youth group meeting. At this time, the group should discuss how the delegate(s) should vote at the Assembly. Once again consensus or voting should be used. At this time any documents pertaining to the Assembly or to proxy voting should be completed and a way of sending them to CanUUdle planned. Throughout this time the YAGs and YACs will be available resources.

5.2 Timeline

This timeline shows the steps that must be taken to prepare for a fair and successful Assembly. These deadlines should be followed closely. Specific dates should be chosen and published each year by the YAG.

- Following the YAG's winter retreat the YOB will announce an election for that position if a) he is in the second year of his term b) he wishes to serve for only one term. A prepacket for CanUUdle is prepared for distribution.
- The prepacket is distributed in the March CUC mailing and on the CUC website and cuc-youth mailing list. It contains information on CanUUdle in general, on the Assembly, on the delegate selection process and the positions that will be elected at that years Assembly.
- Youth groups meet for the first time to select delegates and allow individuals to consider positions.
- The April CUC mailing will be a first opportunity for further announcements and preliminary candidacies to be announced.
- Six weeks prior to CanUUdle a final date will be set for candidacies.
- Five weeks prior to CanUUdle will be the deadline for candidates for elected positions to submit their 250 word bios. The YOB will submit the elements of the Youth Document that are to be voted on. The YAG must submit any other resolutions such as the National Social Action Issue. This information will promptly be made public online, at the CUC website and through the cuc-youth mailing list. Forms for delegates and proxy votes will be included.
- A month prior to CanUUdle youth groups will discuss the candidates and resolutions. At this time they should complete proxy forms and arrange to submit them. Delegate status should be indicated on a youth's registration for CanUUdle.

Exceptions: If by the deadline for candidacy there is only a single candidate for a position, the deadline for candidacy is extended to the date when candidates submit their bios. If by the deadline for candidacy there are no candidates for a position, the deadline is removed and candidates can present themselves before and during CanUUdle.

6 About

6.1 Author

Paul Hunt

514 488 9634

ethanolxl@hotmail.com

Bragging possibly to follow.

6.2 Co Authors and Contributors

Dale Brydon provided valuable feedback on the first version of this document at Jarkcon 2005

Chris Michell contributed valuable information about the background of the National Social Justice Coordinator. She also pointed out a number of typos at the December 2005 YAG retreat.

Samaya Oakley provided her input on the first version of this document, raising concerns about motivating local groups and regional bias.

Sarah Ohl provided valuable feedback on the first version of this document at Jarkcon 2005

Tom Rylett deserves credit for the original idea of aligning the process of selecting a YOB with that of selecting an adult CUC board member. Tom also contributed his opinions of version 1.0 at Jarkcon 2005

The YAG: Dale Brydon, Chris Michell, Laurel Newton, Clark Kenyon, Sylvia Bass West, Philip Pike, Alex Dundas and Elena Feick gave their input at the December 2005 retreat, which led to improvement of the YOB confidence vote procedure and the assignment of delegates.

6.3 Sources

<http://www.cuc.ca/youth/YAG2004StatementofResponsibilities.pdf>

http://www.cuc.ca/youth/YAG2004DocumentofOperations_TermsofReference.pdf

www.csdm.qc.ca/aescsdm

<http://www.instantrunoff.com/>

<http://www.cuc.ca/youth/YOB-Position-Description2005.pdf>

<http://www.cuc.ca/youth/socialjustice/coordinators.htm>

<http://www.uua.org/YRUU/governance/whatsmyjob.html>

<http://www.uua.org/YRUU/governance/structure.html#yc>