To: Executive Council  
Boards of Directors of the Covenanted Ministries  

From: Linda Jaramillo and Steve Sterner  
RE: Report on the interim process for Youth and Young Adult Ministries

We want to give you an update on our plans for this interim period of discernment and assessment for future staffing needs and resourcing for youth and young adult ministries in the national setting.

Two staff positions relating to young people’s ministries were established in the 2000 restructure - the Minister for Youth and Young Adult Ministries (Local Church Ministries) and the Minister for Youth and Young Adult Empowerment (Justice and Witness Ministries).

When both positions became vacant (LCM in August 2007 and JWM in January 2008), we decided that it was an opportune time to do a more in-depth assessment of what is needed for the future. The first step was to schedule a Summit, which was held in February 2008. Present were members of the Council for Youth and Young Adult Ministries (CYYAM), key conference staff, and a few additional young leaders. A facilitator guided us through a day long exploration of how we might begin assessing the future shape of youth and young adult ministries in the United Church of Christ.

Based on the recommendations of those at the February Summit, we decided to pool our resources to hire an interim and a consultant to conduct a needs assessment. The Interim Minister for Youth and Young Adults would be housed in LCM to carry out the ongoing essential functions including support for CYYAM and preparing the youth and young adult program for next year’s General Synod. JWM would contract with a Consultant whose primarily responsibility would be to conduct a thorough needs assessment and analysis.

We are very pleased that the Rev. Kelly Burd accepted the position as Interim Minister for Youth and Young Adults and that Mr. Thom Chu has been retained as the Consultant. Kelly has served in the local church and most recently was the Coordinator of the National Youth Event this past summer. Thom has been involved in ecumenical circles for over twenty years in several roles serving the Episcopal Church, most recently as program director for Ministries with Young People. He is compiling an online survey as part of the needs assessment and will facilitate regional focus groups. Reports from both Kelly and Thom follow.

We are confident that their expertise and experience will help us move this process along quickly and effectively. A Youth and Young Adult Advisory Committee has been established to provide input during this interim period,
particularly as a design for staffing youth and young adult ministries is developed. Kelly and Thom are working collaboratively during this interim period as are respective staff persons from Local Church Ministries and Justice and Witness Ministries. Our plan is to have a final report and recommended design by General Synod and in time for 2010 budget preparation.

We are convinced that we must hear from our constituents in order to design the most effective staffing structure possible for this crucial ministry. We look forward to consulting youth, young adults, local church, Association and Conference leaders during the course of this process. What follows are reports from our Consultant and Interim for Youth and Young Adult Ministries. Please be in touch with us if you have any questions or comments.

**Youth and Young Adult Ministries Assessment Highlights**

Thomas K. Chu, Consultant
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- Listened to the needs and aspirations of over 150 youth and adults who work with youth at five workshops held at National Youth Event.

- Participated in a conversation on race with over 50 youth, mainly African-American, at Franklinton Center at Bricks.

- Observed Pacific Islander and Asian-American Ministries youth and young adult event in Honolulu with over 100 participants.

- Conferred with the Council for Youth and Young Adult Ministries at their semi-annual meeting.

- Began a series of one-on-one interviews with conference youth and young adult ministry coordinators.

- Made contacts with staff of the UCC in Washington regarding Ecumenical Advocacy Days and other opportunities for youth and young adults to participate in justice-making, as well as staff in Global Ministries for opportunities in mission service for both individuals and groups.

- Met by phone with a diverse Advisory Committee for Youth and Young Adult Ministries, which will give direction to and monitor the progress of the assessment effort.

- Digested responses to an online preparatory survey of youth, young adults, and adult stakeholders to produce a church wide survey that will be distributed in October 2008.
The next phase will include consultation with other constituencies, including the Student Ecumenical Partnership (STEP), 20/30 Clergy, and members of historically-underrepresented groups (HUGS). Working with Kelly Burd, we will convene four regional focus groups across the church bringing together about 100 youth, young adults, and those who minister with them to add the textures of personal stories, unmapped connections, and the possibility of invigorating a network for ministry with youth and young adults in the UCC. The outline for these regional focus groups is as follows:

*We will be convening four focus groups between November 2008 and February 2009. We hope to bring together 20-25 persons to each group, diverse in terms of age, gender, identification with historically-underrepresented groups, geography, and ministry setting. The focus groups are intended to draw voices from across the church together to yield a snapshot of ministry realities in local church, associational, and conference settings. In complement with information coming through a church-wide survey as well as interviews and interactions with leaders in a range of roles, the focus groups will be an engine to identify, listen to, and connect those interested in promoting the health of youth and young adult ministries in the United Church of Christ.*

*In order to accommodate busy schedules and yield diverse gatherings, a suggested format for the focus groups would include travel on a Friday (optional and informal activities on Friday evening), intensive focus group work on Saturday, ending by Saturday evening for return travel for those with Sunday obligations. We would provide optional activities for those staying over on Saturday evening.*

*Participants under age 18 would need to be able and willing to travel alone to the meeting site, and appropriate preparations would need to be made as to medical and media releases as well as Safe Church practices and procedures.*

**Youth and Young Adults Discernment Process – September Actions and Progress**

Kelly Burd, Interim Minister for Youth and Young Adult Ministries  
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- Thom and I met with the Council for Youth and Young Adults Ministries (CYYAM) at their August meeting. Their input last winter helped national staff to identify the need for this discernment period, and their subsequent and continued input has helped to inform the process.

- On September 2, I officially began in the role of Interim Minister for Youth and Young Adults. Thom and I have been in conversation since then about the framework and goals for y/ya regional gatherings.

- Once Thom Chu and I confirmed our availability for regional gathering dates, I communicated by phone and email with each of those identified as regional partners to help us by hosting focus group gatherings in their respective regions. As of October 3, we plan to have the following regional gatherings:
- **Mid-Atlantic and Southern Regions**: Regional Partner is Josh Blakesley (Minister of Youth and Young Adult Discipling, Pennsylvania Southeast Conference). The event is confirmed for **January 16 – 19, 2009**, location TBA.

- **Great Lakes and West Central Regions**: Regional Partners are Wade Zick (Ashley Minister of Faith Formation for Children and Youth, Minnesota Conference) and H Scott Matheney (Chaplain and Dean of Religious Life, Elmhurst College). The event is confirmed for **February 6 – 8, 2009** at Elmhurst College.

- **Western Region**: Regional Partners are Mike Denton (Conference Minister, Pacific NW Conference) and Adam Blons (Associate Minister, 1st Congregational Church, Berkeley). The event is scheduled for **February 27-March 1, 2009** at a UCC church in the Bay Area (TBA).

- **New England Region**: Regional Partner is Da Vita McCallister (Association Conference Minister for Youth and Young Adult Ministries, Connecticut Conference). Since several New England Conferences are experiencing turnover in staff, a date and location has not yet been determined. Da Vita will send emails for contacts in the region and we will work together to confirm the details.

  - I contacted Delbert Lancaster, Minister for Diversity and Affirmative Action, to communicate our plan for the focus groups and the need for them to be diverse in age, gender, geography, ministry, and identification with historically-underrepresented groups. He provided updated chair and contact information for COREM Ministries and Historically Underrepresented Groups. This information is being used to communicate about the discernment process and to request participants from their respective ministries.

  - Next steps include a web post and email to our roster of youth/young adult ministry contacts with promotion, dates and link to the online Y/YA Ministries survey Thom is creating.

  - In November, I will be hosting a gathering of the Outdoor Ministries Association Professionals in Cleveland. I plan to inform/update them on the discernment process and seek their support to make the survey available to youth groups this fall at OMA facilities with internet access.

  - We agreed that, rather than invite 20/30 Clergy to regional gatherings, I will contact their chair to schedule a group conference call. Thom Chu and I will continue to seek opportunities to connect with people at ministry events relevant to youth/young adult ministry.

  - It was agreed that we will use a nominating process for potential participants. Regional partners and I will contact colleagues in Conferences for help identifying and nominating people, with nominee names being directed to me; I will then follow up with the necessary contacts, forms and logistical support.

October 6, 2008

Y/YA Interim Report to EC and CM Boards Fall 2008
As we contact colleagues among our Conferences, Associations and Congregations, we will extend a search for a diverse group of potential participants for each regional gathering as well as an intentional pursuit of representation from:

- Each Conference
- COREM Ministries and HUGs
- Youth, young adults (age 19-29) and youth/young adult ministers or leaders
- Parish and non-parish ministry settings
- Congregations of varied sizes and settings (rural, suburban and urban)
- Campus and outdoor ministries
- UCC youth/young adults working in social justice related roles (community organizers, advocates, activists)