

**Report of the
Youth Task Force
February 24, 2003**

Background

Deb Worley, who has been on a year-long maternity leave, has requested to return in April on a half-time basis. The Personnel Board was informed of this in November (officially notified on December 11). The Youth Task Force was chartered by the Personnel Board to consider options and make a recommendation in light of this request. The Youth Task Force was not formed until January due to the lack of church board activity in December.

The Youth Task Force was comprised of members of the church that have a particular interest in youth ministry:

Sharon Allen, Parent of Youth,

Terry Langham, Co-Chair of CE Board, CE youth sub-committee member,
and Mexico Trip sponsor

Brad Meyer, Board of Elders, Mexico Mission Trip sponsor, and Parent of
Youth

Sharon Stover, Personnel Board and Parent of Youth,

Jay Dee Conrad (ex-officio), and

Randy Erickson, Co-Director of the Mexico Mission trip, Past President,
Parent of Youth, and Chair of the Youth Task Force.

Each member of the Task Force understands that everyone in the church values a vibrant, active youth ministry. As we considered Deb's request, we identified a comprehensive set of options, evaluated "pros and cons" based on a great deal of input from the youth, parents of youth, and concerned members of the congregation, and formulated a recommendation for how we best provide youth ministry for our church.

Recommendation

The Youth Task Force believes that a full-time staff person for youth ministry is paramount, and therefore recommends that The United Church initiate a search for a full-time staff person to meet the youth ministry needs of the congregation. This is based on overwhelming input that having a full time youth minister is a high priority for our members, particularly those with kids entering the mid-high and senior-high age groups. While there was very high praise for Deb's capabilities for youth ministry, there was concern that her inability to participate in overnight events would impact the depth of her relationships with the youth.

However, the Youth Task Force believes that this search should lag the process to fill the Senior Pastor position. We believe that it could be problematic to fill a youth position without knowing who the head of staff will be, and how well they would function as a

team. It is possible that the tenure of such a person would be brief, creating yet another disruption in our youth ministry.

It is estimated that the process to fill this position could take a year to a year and a half, depending on the pace of our activities to search for a new Senior Pastor. During this period of time, it is recommended that we accept Deb Worley's proposal to return from maternity leave on a half-time basis (with that time dedicated fully to youth), and augment her efforts with either someone from the community (preferred) or a seminary intern to sustain a full-time presence in our youth ministry during this transition.

This transition strategy has several advantages. First, it allows a continuation of Deb's ministry and provides continuity in the important relationships with the youth that she has developed over several years. Second, it sustains an effective core ministry team in our church that can provide added stability during the tenure of an Interim Senior Pastor. Third, if past efforts to fill a youth ministry position are an indication, we may find limited candidates for a full-time youth position. Deb's involvement could continue until a strong candidate is found.

A very positive aspect of our wrestling with this question is that it has forced us all to consider the importance of this part of our church mission and experience. Based on the input we received, the Task Force strongly believes that the approach outlined above provides the best opportunity for the short-term and long-term spiritual development of our youth. Some of the input we received is relevant to longer-term staffing strategies. This input will be forwarded to those involved in reviewing our overall staffing vision as part of our search for a Senior Pastor, which also has a bearing on the search for a person to fill a full-time youth position.

Finally, the Task Force believes that the strength and success of our youth ministry depends greatly on the support and involvement of all the members of the congregation and the whole ministerial staff. As Deb pointed out in one of her sermons, we make that commitment at each baptism when we stand with the child. In addition to enriching the experience of the youth during their time with us, it provides the best buffer against disruptions that come with staff turnover.