

## A Bit about CONs

### Who are you?

The Pacific Central District Young Religious Unitarian Universalists (PCD YRUU), a long-standing youth-run organization designed to provide fun, safe, spiritual programs for youth in Northern California, Nevada, and Hawai'i. Members of our group are 14-20 years old, plus some 25+ adults who support and advise us. We are governed by a council of youth with jobs from Treasurer or Secretary to Religious Education Outreach or Social Action Coordinator. The adults on council serve in positions like Leadership or Communications Advisor.

### What is a Conference?

Conferences come in two types: Working Conferences, and Non-Working Conferences. A working conference can be one of three different types of weekend long trainings lead by representatives from the continental youth office. There are Leadership Development Conferences (LDC), Spirituality Development Conferences (SDC), and Anti-Racism/ Anti-Oppression Conferences (AR/AO). If you are asked to host one of these types we will give you more information on their specific qualities.

In most cases host churches are used for non-working conferences. These are weekend long events in which youth from all around the PCD can gather together to bond, discuss issues, and share our faith together. Although these conferences are “non-working” that does not mean that no work is done, it simply means that the sole purpose of the weekend is not focused in on one particular thing like leadership or spirituality, these conferences are more open ended and allow a broader range of activities. Every year one of council's many goals is to lead four conferences.

The first conference is in Elections Con, which is held on Presidents Day Weekend in February, at which a new council is elected each year. The second is Spirituality Con, in which the conference community has a chance to explore and discuss different spiritual

paths . The third is Summer Con which is set aside for focused discussion and action on social justice issues. The fourth is Fall Con, where the youth leaders decide on a silly theme, like Pirates. Future Fall Cons may have themes chosen by youth groups around PCD.

How a conference, or 'CON' works?

Cons are run by "deans" (they change every con to provide leadership opportunities). They are responsible for managing the entire event, from making sure that lunch is served on time, to staying late on Sunday to make sure that everyone is taken home. Questions or concerns about a specific Con's agenda or activities should be directed to them.

The other important managing figures are the Conference Co- Coordinators ( they are members of council as well ). They are responsible for communicating with the congregation about logistics and site details. If there are any issues with the site that have not been so far communicated, please get in contact with them.

After those two tiers of leadership there are YELLers (Standing for Youth Empowered Lay Leaders). They are placed in jobs such as Touch Group Leader, Worship Coordinator, and Cooks. About a week or more before the conference, all of these positions are finalized. If you feel you need to contact one of them (such as telling the cooks about what food they should bring for your special diet) please ask a Conference Coordinator for their information. Any youth can apply to be a YELLer once they've been to a few cons by asking the Co-Co-Co's for an application form. A list of the members of the current council can be found at our website, [www.pcdyruu.org](http://www.pcdyruu.org) .

Give me an idea of what goes on at a CON?

Lots of fun stuff, but without listing an infinitely long list of stuff that happens, here is a generic schedule of a CON (Elections Con is held over a three day weekend and therefore had a modified longer schedule. To be simple, what happens on Saturday can be applied to Sunday for an Elections Con)

FRIDAY

5:30 p.m. YELLers and Council arrive to set up

7:00 Start of Con: Conferee's Arrive

-Depending on the conference the number of attendees can be anywhere from 60-100 people.

-During this long period things like CHECK-IN, and get-to-know-you games happen.

8:30 Orientation for all Conferee's (adults included!)

9:00 Nuubies Meeting, and Adult Meeting

-For youth who have never been to a con before, and to orientate the adults to positions as interactive but not disciplinarian advisors.

9:30 Touch Group Meeting

Touch Group is the name we give to small, personal groups that meet throughout the weekend to provide a structural closeness to the group as a whole.

10:30 Dessert/Snack

11:30 Worship

This is where spirituality occurs.

Eventually: Bed Time!

SATURDAY

9:00 a.m. Wake-up

9:15 Morning Meeting

Morning Meeting is when the Deans explain the day to everyone and anything else that might be relevant.

9:30 Breakfast

10:30 Touch Groups

11:30 Workshops Part I

Workshops are periods of time in the day when smaller groups break off for an individual purpose such as letter writing, role-playing, or even homework doing. Workshops can be just about anything!

1:00 p.m. Lunch

2:00 Touch Groups

3:00 Workshops Part II

Usually in every con we have an all-con workshop in which a guest speaker/ artist will come to share some of their knowledge with us. In the past year all con workshops have included things like movement coaches, youth lead projects on judgment, and speakers on transexuality. Of coarse, sometimes we just have more workshops.

4:30 Recess/or Super Secret Activity

This time is used for things like piñata's, water fights, dance parties, or events occur that include the whole CON.

6:00 Dinner

7:00 Touch groups

8:30 Coffee House

Coffee House is a slapdash talent show of sorts meant for poetry readings, songs, bedtime stories, or anything else. We seldom actually get around to serving real coffee.

11:00 Worship

Eventually: Bed Time!

## SUNDAY

6:00 a.m. Wake up (Yea, that is for reals)

6:15 Morning Meeting and clean up

Clean Up is something we take very seriously. This is the one activity you must participate in, because have to clean the whole church well before it's service starts. It is also one of the few ways we can give a big Thank You to the host site. We do everything from replacing displaced items to vacuuming and mopping.

9:30 Service A

Lots of churches have two morning services. If they do not, we simply wake up later.

11:00 Service B

12:30 p.m. Touch Group Closing

1:00 Closing

2:00 Grab food, Leave!

So are conferences a time in which youth can do whatever they feel like?

No. Cons have rules, just like any other youth event. The rules listed below are included in every CON flyer.

“To keep our community safe and healthy, the following are of course not allowed within a conference: violence, drug use, leaving the site (unless prior arrangements have been made with the registrar and the deans of the conference). Youth under the age of 18 will be turned away if they do not have a registration slip with the signature of their parent or legal guardian. While sexuality is a healthy and important part of the lives of youth, exclusive relationships and disrespecting the boundaries of others are not allowed as they detract from the community. Thus it goes without saying that any type of sexual harassment or any clearly sexual activity (the appropriateness being determined by the conference staff) is strictly not permitted. As a Unitarian Universalist organization, we are a community that celebrates diversity and promotes the inherent worth and dignity of all human beings. Therefore discrimination based on gender, sexuality, physical capability, race/ethnicity, politics, religion and even diet are also not permitted. The Pacific Central District Young Religious Unitarian Universalist (PCD YRUU) Council and the conference staff reserve the right to deem any behavior inappropriate. Parents/Guardians are invited to discuss this policy with youth. Breaking any of these rules may result in being asked to leave the conference and/or not return to future conferences.”

In YRUU we understand youth leadership to be one of the most empowering and growth simulating parts of our organization. Understanding this makes comprehending a conference much easier. You may be wondering why under the Adult Meeting portion of the previous schedule we stated that adults are not present to be disciplinarians. During conferences if a conferee breaks one of the aforementioned rules it is his or her peers who

handle punishment. As an example let's say that Luucy Buuth is discovered at a conference using an illegal substance. As soon as possible a CAC is formed (Conference Affairs Committee). This committee is made up of the deans, the conference coordinators, a member of council (either the Energy Chair or the Facilitator Chair), an adult, two uninvolved youth (one male, one female), and Luucy. This group discusses the situation, the youth involved, and the consequences. They will ask Luucy to explain herself and will to explain to her the repercussions of her actions on our community and why this behavior cannot be accepted. In this specific scenario the punishment would most likely be immediate removal of Luucy from the conference and a yearlong ban on her attendance to conferences. After this year were up Luucy would have to write a letter to council to ask for her re-admittance to the community. If a CAC is called during our stay at your church we will inform you.

Although the adults are not the organization and leadership force behind any conference we find them to be an important part of our community. We require a 10:1 ratio of youth to adults at every conference. Adults are an integral part of our learning process and we appreciate their wisdom but ask that we may actively learn from them but not be actively taught by them.

I still have more questions!

Here is a list of what you can do to learn more!

Explore our website! [www.pcdyruu.org](http://www.pcdyruu.org).

Ask someone who already goes to CONs. Heck, that's how you probably found out about them in the first place.

Hope to see you there!