

FIRST UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH OF AUSTIN

Bridge to the Future Process

Objectives for the Workshop

~~ “There is no power equal to a community of people discovering what it cares about...” ~~
Margaret Wheatley

- **Where do we come from?** Participants will share personal stories of experiences they consider holy and peak experiences in their lives with First UU Austin.
- **Who are we?** Our core values and our calling. Surfacing and reflecting upon shared core values, participants will discern the unique differences First UU Austin is called to make at this time and place in history.
- **Where are we going?** Participants will discover and describe energizing future possibilities that will inspire the vision for First UU Austin over the next 3-5 years.
- **Mystery ...** Through a process of Appreciative Inquiry participants will surface bold proposals and factors that infuse life and sustainability into mission and visions.

Agenda

Gather and Refreshments

- 0:00 **Chalice Lighting & Opening Words**
- 0:02 **Overview** – Today’s Objectives, Process, Guiding Principles (10 minutes)
- 0:12 **Participants Move into Exercise 1 Groups** (3 minutes)
- 0:15 **Set-the-Tone – Guided Check-in Interviews:** *Convey a brief memory of the first time you came to First UU Austin.* (5 minutes)
- 0:20 **Exercise 1 -- Experience of the Holy**
Step 1A:
 - Introduce & explain *Experience of the Holy* exercise (5 minutes)
 - Quiet reflection on the *Experience of the Holy* prompt (5 minutes)
- 0:30 **Step 1B:** *Experience of the Holy* partner interviews (10 minutes)
- 0:40 **Step 1C:** Partners create list of three shared values (5 minutes)
- 0:45 **Step 1D:** Groups-of-4 share partner values and create a new list of three shared values (10 minutes)
- 0:55 **Step 1E:** Focus Groups-of-8 share two sets of values from the groups-of-4 and create a new list of three shared core values (10 minutes)

- 1:05 ***Stretch Break & Participants Move to Exercise 2 Groups (5 minutes)***
- 1:10 **Exercise 2 -- *Discovering the Future***
Step 2A:
 - Introduce & explain *Discovering the Future* exercise (5 minutes)
 - Quiet reflection on the *Discovering the Future* prompt (5 minutes)
- 1:20 **Step 2B:** Groups-of-4 conduct *Discovering the Future* interviews (20 minutes)
- 1:40 **Step 2C:** Groups-of-4 create Possibility Statements (30 minutes)
- 2:10 ***Stretch Break -- Post Final Shared Values & Possibility Statements Flipcharts
– All Groups Come Together (5 minutes)***
- 2:15 ***Bridge to the Future – Sharing and appreciating the future we are building.
(15 minutes or less depending upon the event size)***
- 2:30 **Wrap-up and Next Steps (5 minutes)**
- 2:35 **Closing Words**

Guiding Principles for Our Work Together

- ⇒ Be fully present and positive – *Focus on what has been right and gives us life*
- ⇒ Be mindful of time
- ⇒ *Appreciative Inquiry Process*
 - ⇒ Structured dialogue rather than normal conversation style
 - ⇒ Be willing to share your reflections and ideas
 - ⇒ Take turns sharing -- respecting the rights of others to participate
 - ⇒ Listen more than you speak – *Listen from the heart*
 - ⇒ Discover new meanings – Affirm, build upon & draw out rather than counter or deny
- ⇒ Trust the process
- ⇒ Enjoy this time among friends!

~~ “*Conversation is the way we discover how to transform our world, together.*” ~~

Margaret Wheatley



From World Café Image Bank http://www.theworldcafe.com/bank_book.htm

Exercise 1 – *Experience of the Holy* – Shared Core Values

Objective: From personal stories of a peak life experience, surface and explore share core values – transcendent, timeless qualities that we want to carry forward into the future of our religious community.

Steps

Step 1A – Quiet reflection on the Experience of the Holy prompt (5 minutes)

Step 1B -- Partner share and listen to one another's story (10 minutes; 5 minutes each)

Step 1C -- Partners create list of three shared values from their Experience of the Holy stories (5 minutes)

Step 1D -- In Groups-of-4, partners share their three values and essence of their stories and the group creates a new list of three shared values (10 minutes)

Step 1E -- Two Groups-of-4 share their three values and create a new list of three shared values (10 minutes); **This last step yields the final product of three shared core values that will be collected by the facilitator.**

Experience of the Holy Reflection

What's your experience of the holy, a time when you felt connected to something larger than yourself, a time when you felt your heart and mind expand? When did your story happen? Who was there? What happened? What made this experience holy for you?



What's your partner's experience of the holy?

What values are embedded in your stories? What qualities of your experience are key to the experience *being* holy? Does the story speak to an underlying value such as independence? Reverence? Empowerment? Authenticity? Wonder? Freedom? Generosity? ...

Exercise 2 – *Discovering the Future*

Objective: From personal stories of peak moments when First UU Austin was making differences in peoples' lives, you will surface bold and energizing future possibilities that will inform the congregation's mission and vision.

Steps:

Step 2A -- Quite reflection on a peak moment when they experienced or witnessed First UU Austin making a difference in people's lives, and your wishes for the future – *Personal Vision* prompt and question on page 6 (5 minutes)

Step 2B -- Group-of-4 Personal Vision Interviews (20 minutes; 5 minutes for each interview)

- You will take turns around the group-of-4 to interview one another in response to the Personal Visions prompt and question on page 6. Use the “Tips for Interviewers and Interviewees” on page 9, if needed.
- While one person serves as interviewee, another serves as interviewer, another as note-taker recording the essence of the interview on the interview sheet that the facilitator will provide, and the fourth person listens. ***The facilitator will collect these pages at the end of the exercise.***
- Facilitator will keep time and signal when there are two minutes and one minute remaining in each 5-minute interview, and then when time is up, instructing you to switch roles until all four interviews are complete.

Step 2C -- Groups-of-4 create Possibility Statements (30 minutes)

- Having heard each others stories of First UU Austin making a difference in people's lives, your group will use the intentional dialogue process explained earlier to explore commonalities and images from the stories that inspires a collective response to the Group Vision prompt and questions on page 7.
- A note-taker is appointed to make keep notes of the possibility statements as they begin to emerge from the group. The facilitator will have extra copies of page 8 for the note-taker, if needed.
- Facilitator will keep time and signal when there are 15, 10, five and one minute remaining.
- When there are 10 minutes remaining, the note-taker should summarize the possibilities that have emerged, and the group will proceed in their intentional dialogue to ***select no more than three possibility statements and associated factors.***
- A scribe will then write or sketch these possibilities and associated factors on a flipchart sheet, and put the group ID number on the sheet. **This flipchart sheet is the final product of Exercise 2, and is collected at the end by the facilitator.**
- ***Perfect wording is NOT an objective. Recording the essence of the future possibilities in short phrases, or even in drawing, is quite fine.***
- A spokesperson is selected who will have up to a minute to share the group's shared values from Exercise 1 & Possibility Statements from Exercise 2 with the other groups in the next step.

Step 2B -- *Personal Vision Reflection*

Tell me a story about a peak moment when you experienced First UU Austin making a difference, a time when you felt particularly alive, involved, connected and engaged, a time when you felt affirmed in your decision to participate in this community. It could be a difference the church made to you, to your family, to another member, to the local community, or it could be a more global difference the church made to the wider world.

What happened and how?

When and where the experience occurred?

Who was involved?

What factors in you, in others, and in First UU Austin made this experience possible?

*DON'T FRET OVER TRYING TO THINK OF THE BEST OR "JUST RIGHT" PEAK EXPERIENCE!
Describe whatever experience comes first to mind.*

Use this space for notes on your reflection of the peak moment.

Now, imagine five years have passed and envisioning that the factors that made your peak experience possible are fully alive in First UU Austin, what wish or wishes (your personal visions) for this church have come true?

Step 2C: Create Group Vision – Possibility Statements & Factors

Vision Prompt & Questions:

Imagine a future – say five years from now – when Unitarian Universalism is alive and flourishing through the life of First UU Austin:

- 1. Possibility Statements: What specific, significant meaningful difference will First UU Austin have made in lives of its members, children and friends..., in its Greater Austin & Central Texas communities..., in our UU movement..., in the wider world...?*
- 2. How do these possibilities emerge from or connect with your shared core values?*
- 3. What factors (congregational practices, individual behaviors, organizational infrastructure) will have contributed to First UU Austin making these possibilities come to pass?*

Your Possibilities Statements should be:

- **Desired** (if you got it, you would still want it)*
- **Bold, provocative** (it is a stretch that would attract others)*
- **Affirmative** (stated as if it is happening now)*
- **Grounded** (you can name current examples that make this a real possibility for the future)*

*~~ “The place where God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet.” ~~
Fredrick Buechner*

Tips for Interviewers and Interviewees

When you are the **interviewer**:

- Use the interview guide to ask questions and take notes.
- Be genuinely curious about experiences, thoughts and feelings.
- Let the interviewee tell the story; *don't offer your opinion*.
- Allow for silence.
- If the interviewee doesn't wish to answer a question, honor that wish.
- Ask questions to dig deeper, questions such as:
 - Tell me more.
 - How did that affect you?
 - How has that changed you?
 - What support did you receive in that situation and from whom?
 - Who else was involved?
 - What was important to you about this?
 - How did you feel about that?
 - When did this happen?
 - What was affirming to you?

When you are the **interviewee**:

- Be very detailed
 - ✓ Time
 - ✓ Place
 - ✓ People
 - ✓ Situation
 - ✓ Outcome
- Tell your whole story