

June 6, 2010

Dear First UU Austin Leaders:

I'm greatly looking forward to our work of filling the nested bowls of values, mission and ends at your board retreat on June 12th. You've done an impressive job of listening to your congregation and preparing for this final step in the first phase of a transition to policy-based governance.

Attached is the proposed agenda for the retreat. You'll see that it is ambitious and tightly timed. We'll work at a brisk pace tapping into the power of the unconscious and conscious wisdom we all possess. We will work for accuracy rather than precision. We'll look to identify the specific differences in lives that you want articulated in ends statements, but try not to get wrapped up in wordsmithing them. The final wordsmithing can occur after the retreat. One thing the Unity Consulting team likes to encourage boards at this stage in the governance transition is to draft ends that you can live with for a year, with the full intention to revisit them when you are ready to begin officially operating in your new governance system.

Your preparation prior to the retreat will greatly facilitate the pace and outcomes of our work. I encourage you to read through the results of the Bridge to Our Future sessions at least two or three times. Your Governance Task Force has done a good job of categorizing and grouping the values and possibility statements. Review the raw and categorized results. See whether other categories or groupings come to you and begin to note mission-related themes. Begin thinking about what other sources of authority and accountability (i.e. future members/future generations, ancestors or UU faith tradition, the citizens of Austin) might have to say about your core values and the differences First Austin exists to make in lives.

You will have observed that most of the possibility statements from the Bridge to Our Future session are expressed as either indicators (ex. "The 'go to' church on social justice issues") or as factors or means (ex. "a paid volunteer coordinator"; "strong intergenerational program supported by a new RE building..."). As you prepare for the retreat, probe these indicators, factors or means for the differences in lives that they reflect or enable. Ask:

- *What difference(s) in whose lives would be occurring if this statement were reality?*
- *What difference(s) in whose lives would this factor or means enable?*

Lastly, I just read the excerpt from Rev. Dr. Rebecca Parker's new book in the recent Summer 2010 edition of the UUWORLD magazine. The article in the 'reflections' section is titled "*We are already in paradise.*" In it Parker presents an appreciative theology that has me thinking about how a theological framework might ground or frame our values, mission and ends. Read it and see whether Parker's perspective inspires you, too. The article can be viewed online at <http://www.uuworld.org/spirit/articles/162500.shtml>.

In faith,
Joe Sullivan
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