

**UNITARIAN UNIVERSALISTS  
WALKING THE TALK  
CONGREGATIONAL ACTION AND SOCIAL JUSTICE**



**A workshop led by Richard S. Gilbert  
Social Justice Coordinator - St. Lawrence UU District**

**Co-sponsored by the Ballou Channing District and  
Channing Memorial Church**

**Channing Memorial Church  
Newport, Rhode Island  
Saturday, February 27, 2010**

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## UNITARIAN UNIVERSALISTS WALKING THE TALK CONGREGATIONAL ACTION AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Unitarian Universalists are eloquent in talking about peace and social justice. However, we have our problems in “walking the talk.” This workshop will explore the spiritual roots of social action, a perspective on the unique UU mission, organizational tools for a congregation and a practicum on planning for change. Participants are asked to come with a Congregational Self-Analysis Survey completed. This workshop is designed as a fundamental orientation to congregation-based social action.

**9:30 a.m. Ingathering** – creating social justice name tags. Cut a piece of construction paper into the “shape of justice” as you would symbolize it (E.g. Flaming chalice). Complete it as follows: (1) your name in large print in the middle; (2) upper left hand corner – the most critical social issue we face; (3) upper right hand corner – a social justice group in which you are involved; (4) lower left hand corner – chief obstacle to greater involvement; (5) lower right hand corner – why you are here.

**10:00 a.m. Worship:** On Becoming a Spiritual Center with a Civic Circumference

**10:30 a.m. Creating a Beloved Community of Love and Justice**

What do I want to change through my UU social justice work?

How do I want to be changed through my UU social justice work?

What do I want my congregation to change in this community?

How do I want my congregation to be changed through my UU social justice work

**11:00 a.m. – Five Types of Social Action:** Social service, social education, social witness, social advocacy, community organizing

**11:30 a.m. Analysis of Rhode Island Congregational Social Justice Programs**

**12:15 p.m. Lunch**

**1:00 p.m. Introduction of the Church without Walls Model with discussion**

**2:00 p.m. Where Do We Go from Here? Discussion**

How should the congregation mobilize for social justice?

Should the church speak out?

What is the unique mission of your congregation?

Social Action in the Channing-Ballou District

**2:45 p.m. Strategic Planning Process**

How can issues be prioritized?

How do we “Case” a Community

How do we develop a balanced social justice program?

How do we involve more people, including youth?

**3:45 p.m. Closing Worship:** The Eleven Commandments for Social Action

**4:00 p.m. Finis**

## OPENING WORSHIP

### Song *Gathered Here* (SLT # 389)

“Gathered here in the mystery of the hour;  
Gathered here in one strong body.  
Gathered here in the struggle and the power; Spirit draw near.”

### Reading: *A UU Version of Hebrews 11* - Adapted from Alfred S. Cole by Richard S. Gilbert

Leader: Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for; the evidence of things not seen; for by faith our forebears labored mightily.

Congregation: By faith, William Ellery Channing, with the power of his spirit and thought, led his people out of a theological wilderness and championed the rights of the downtrodden and the poor.

L: By faith, Margaret Fuller broke the fetters of old creeds and dead systems and laid the foundations for women's rights.

C: By faith, Theodore Parker, with his pen, voice and example, wrought courageously for justice and freedom, and became a beacon-light of truth in a dark and trying time.

L: By faith, Susan B. Anthony toiled a lifetime against overwhelming odds for human freedom, unable to taste the fruits of her labors.

C: By faith, Clarence Skinner spoke the prophetic word against oppression of the poor and championed the persecuted.

L: By faith, Malvina Reynolds lifted her voice to protest the making of war and sang her songs of love and peace.

C: By faith, Dorthea Dix and Horace Mann, Clara Barton and John Haynes Holmes witnessed to justice and human rights.

L: And what shall I say more? For the time would fail me to tell of the teachers and leaders of youth, the toil of the humble who, through service to the needy and sick, have righted wrongs, inspired hope and wrought righteousness.

C: Then let us in our day, seeing we are encompassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, lay aside every weight and the inertia which so easily besets us, and let us run with patience, the race that is set before us.

### **Meditation** (Dick Gilbert) *A Spiritual Center with a Civic Circumference: Spirituality and Social Justice – a Seamless Garment – An Autobiographical Indulgence*

### Song *Now Let Us Sing: SLT # 368*

(Men) Now let us sing, sing, sing, sing.

Now let us sing, sing, sing, sing.

Lift up your voice, be not afraid,

Now let us sing to the power of the (faith) (hope) (love) (joy) within.

(Women) Sing to the power of the (faith) (hope) (love) (joy) within.

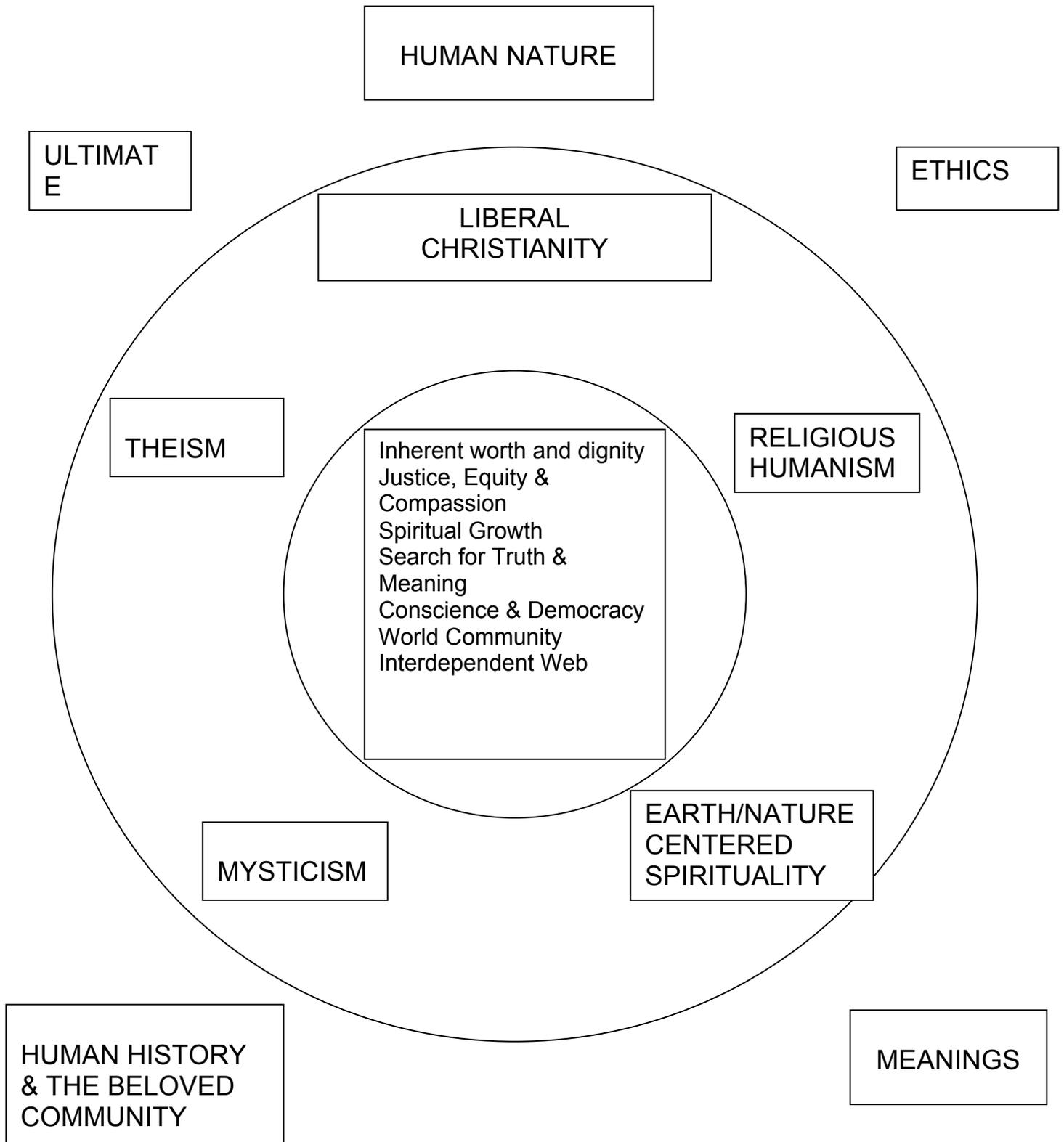
Sing to the power of the (faith) (hope) (love) (joy) within.

Lift up your voice, be not afraid;

Now let us sing to the power of the (faith) (hope) (love) (joy) within.

### Closing Words

# COMPREHENSIVE THEOLOGICAL MODEL & PURPOSES/PRINCIPLES



## COMPREHENSIVE THEOLOGICAL MODEL & PURPOSES & PRINCIPLES

How do Unitarian Universalists "do theology"? I suggest Unitarian Universalist theology can be understood at three levels (see diagram): (1) the operational level, the process by which we do theology in religious community; (2) the menu of the diverse theological perspectives from which we may choose; and (3) the specific credos which result when we build our own theology.

**I. Operational Values:** We covenant to affirm and promote: (1) The inherent worth and dignity of every person.  
 2. Justice, Equity and Compassion in Human Relations.  
 3. Acceptance of One Another and Encouragement to Spiritual Growth in Our Congregations.  
 4. A Free and Responsible Search for Truth and Meaning.  
 5. The Right of Conscience and the Use of the Democratic Process within Our Congregations and in Society at Large.  
 6. The Goal of World Community with Peace, Liberty and Justice for All.  
 7. Respect for the Interdependent Web of All Existence of Which We Are a Part.

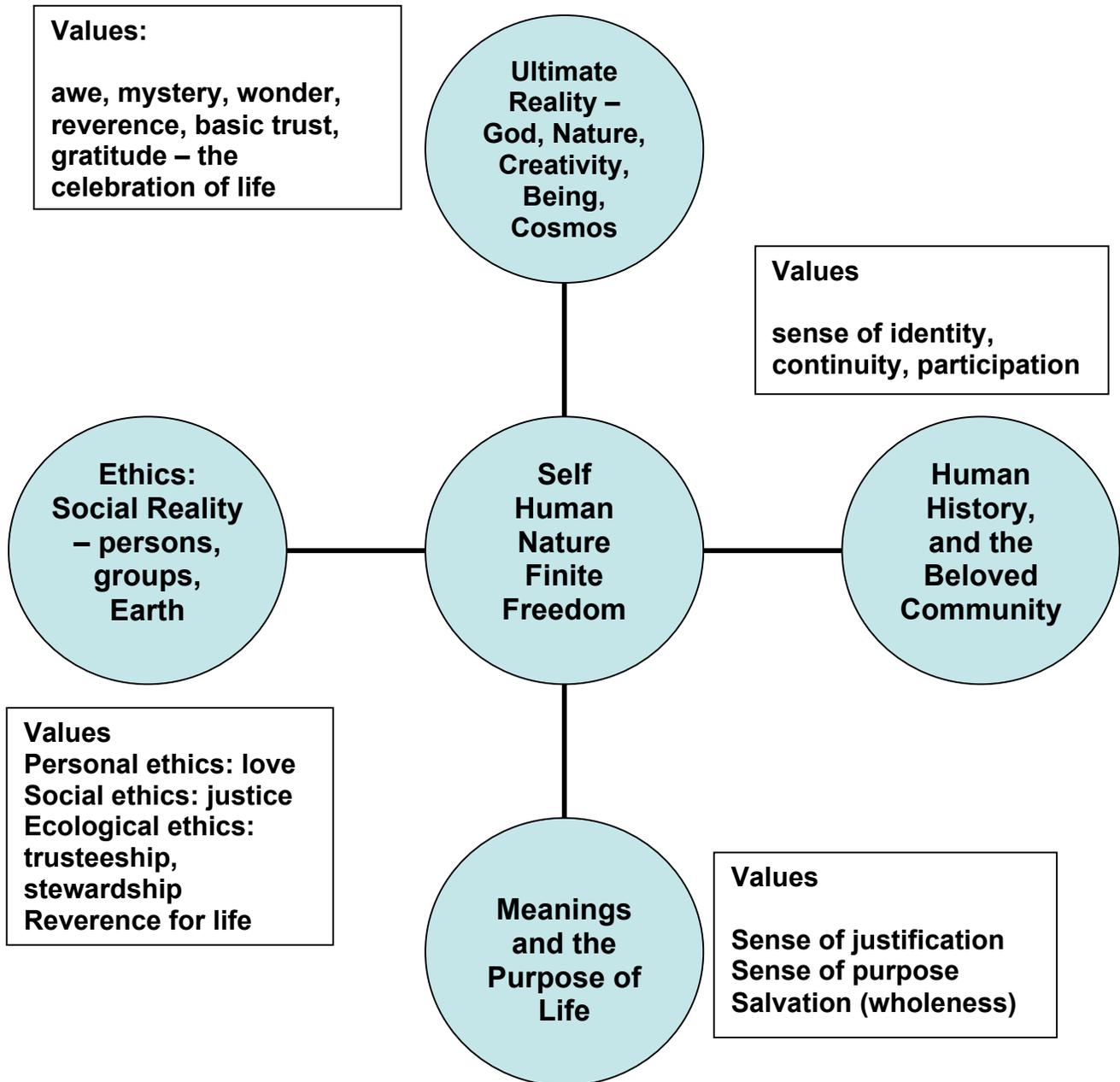
**II. A Theological Menu:** However, as poet George Santayana once wrote: "We cannot be religious in general." It is not enough to affirm these operational values; they do not constitute specific beliefs about the nature of ultimate reality, humanity, morality, human meaning and destiny. While we embrace these seven principles consensually, their use takes us to different places on the theological spectrum.

A 1998 Unitarian Universalist Association study posits five discrete theological options which might characterize American Unitarian Universalists: **(1) Religious Humanism; (2) Earth/Nature Centered Religion; (3) Theism; (4) Liberal Christianity; (5) Mysticism.** Such categories, of course, are imperfect mechanisms to capture the theological diversity among Unitarian Universalists. Some would find a part of their theological belief in two or more of them. And we might even add others like scientific naturalism, universal religion, or liberation theology.

**III. Building Our Own Theology:** Ultimately, we are all theologians. We all ponder the great life issues. As Unitarian Universalists we celebrate common operational values which unite us even as we enjoy a diversity of perspectives which enables us to learn and grow religiously. We come, then, to the task of life-span religious education - building our own theology.

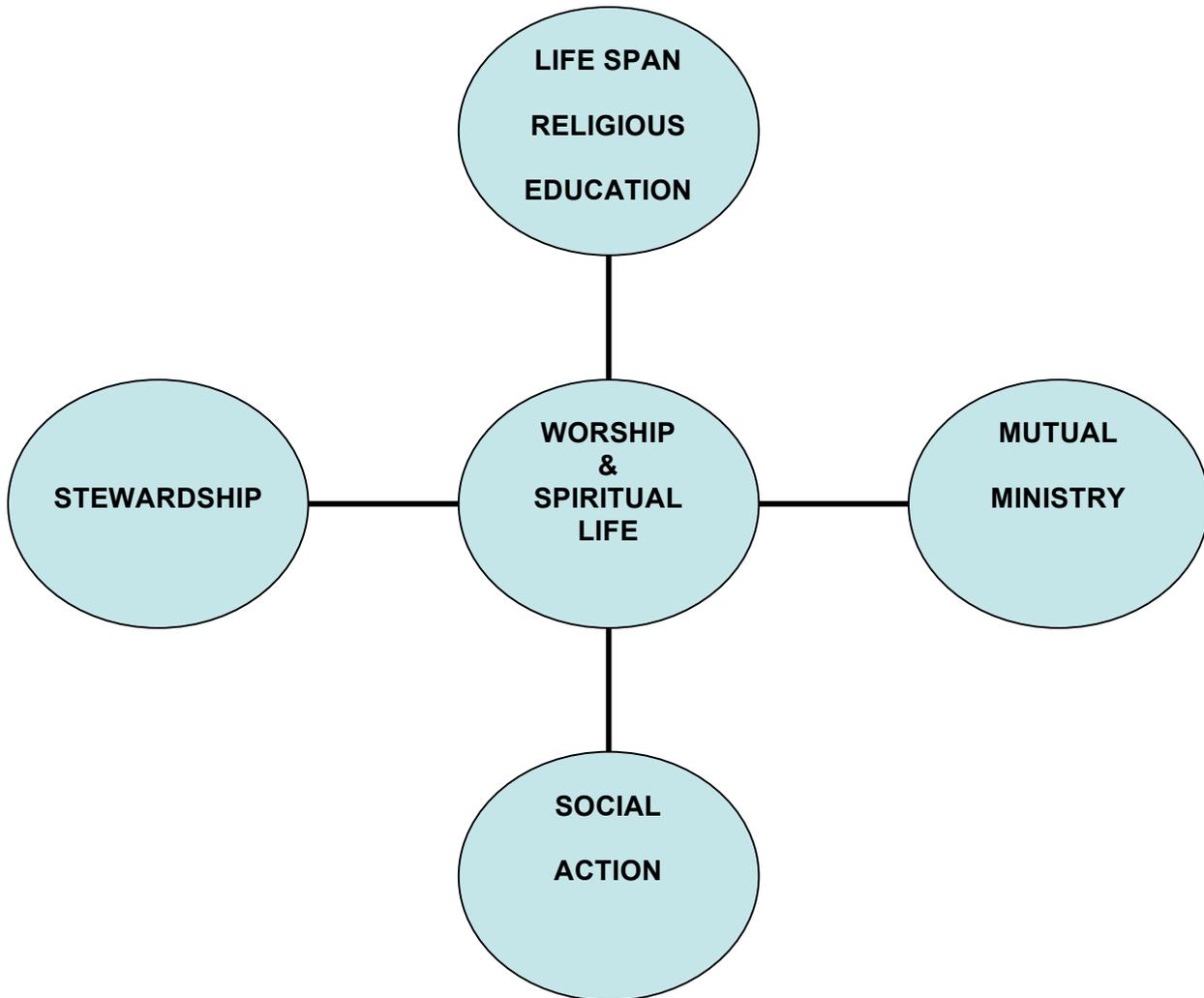
Religion is that core of ultimate meanings and values to which we commit our lives - convictions. Meanings are the "whys" of human behavior, the purposes that explain our behavior. Values are those guidelines by which we understand the world and act upon it. Convictions are the living out of those meanings and values in action. Religious education is the life-span process of growing those meanings, values and convictions. I suggest there are basically five religious categories in a personal credo: (1) an understanding of human nature; (2) a perspective on ultimate reality; (3) an ethic that enables us to interact with other persons, with groups and with the earth itself; (4) a sense of ourselves as creatures in the long story of evolution and as historical creatures; (5) the meaning or meanings of our existence. So what?

# A UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST THEOLOGICAL MODEL



Building your own theology begins with an understanding of self – our human nature – finite freedom. We have transactions with Ultimate Reality (God, etc.) emanating in values of awe, reverence basic trust, gratitude and we celebrate life. We are ethical creatures dealing with individuals, social groupings and the earth itself – creating values of love, justice, trusteeship. We are historical creatures – precipitates of the evolutionary process – creating values of identity, continuity and participation. Finally, we are creatures who seek meanings in life – a sense of justification, purpose, what some call salvation – literally wholeness.

# THE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATION A MODEL



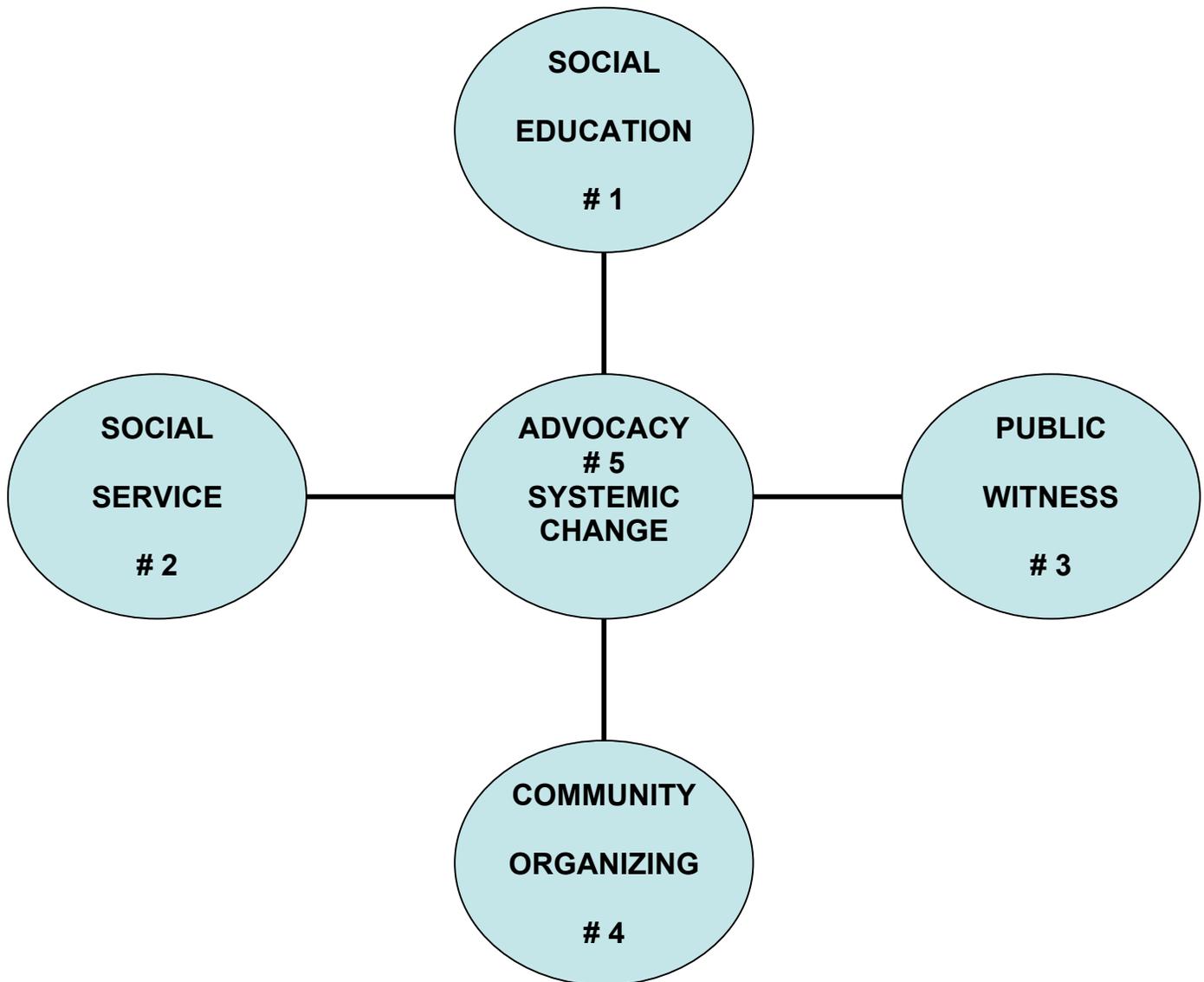
## THE LIBERAL CHURCH AS SPIRITUAL CENTER

### WITH A CIVIC CIRCUMFERENCE

Worship and the spiritual life at the very center  
 Life span religious education and growth  
 Stewardship of time, treasure and talent  
 Mutual ministry and caring community  
 Community of moral discourse and social action

# FIVE MODES OF SOCIAL JUSTICE WORK

Richard S. Gilbert (adapted from Thomas Price)  
(see description on the next pages)



Mode 1: Social Education: the process of studying issues and social dynamics.

Mode 2: Social Service: direct, “hands on” service work from person to person.

Mode 3: Public Witness: making known to the community a position on issues for the sake of being heard and seen.

Mode 4: Community Organizing: mobilizing social actors (religious and secular) in a given community (section of city, country, state, nation, world) to address a set of social problems.

Mode 5: Social Action – Systemic Change: working on changing policies and policy makers to effect whole systems. All of the above modes may be utilized in mode 5.

## SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY TYPOLOGY: FIVE MODES - Richard S. Gilbert

To provide a framework for considering social responsibility I have chosen a typology of "The Four Types of Social Concern" as developed by Thomas E. Price.<sup>i</sup> He suggests four basic options in describing the role of the church in society: social service, social witness, social education and social action. Price stresses these options are not mutually exclusive, but help clarify the relationship of institutional religion to social life.

Social service might well be thought of as the "charitable" approach, a direct rendering of service to those in need. Here is the embodiment of the Good Samaritan, responding to immediate need by stopping on the road to Jericho to help the traveler. This is the most frequent dimension of social responsibility. We are all familiar with the relief efforts in time of disaster, Christmas baskets for the poor, and a prison ministry, to cite but a few examples.

Social witness is the process of making public, by word and/or deed, convictions of an individual, organization, or institution on particular social issues. Social witness may be individual or corporate, but it is distinguished from other forms of social concern in that the convictions are made public for the sake of making them public.<sup>iii</sup>

Witness is advocacy, but as long as it is isolated and not part of an organized effort to bring about social change, it remains witness. In the Good Samaritan scenario we might think of a silent vigil both to identify with the victim and to point out the danger on the road. In contemporary mode witness might be in the form of denominational resolutions, a sermon on a public issue, or a hunger strike to call attention to injustice.

Social education is the process by which persons learn about social issues in the light of a religious tradition. Again taking the Good Samaritan parable, we might expect to learn about the history of the road, the social background of the perpetrators of crime, and the alternatives for remedying the situation. Social education on public issues involves both a discussion of their content and an interpretation of that content in the context of ethical principles. Study and reflection are the components of this mode of social concern. Study groups, sermons (again), and documents for congregational study are illustrations.

Social action is distinguished from the other modes of social concern in that "(1) It is organized (implying group support for the objectives); (2) It attempts to influence policy makers and decision makers (implying a focus on structures rather than people)."<sup>iiii</sup> Social action involves concentration on causes of injustice rather than symptoms - going "beyond the Band-Aid."

In the first century of the common era this might have involved working to improve the lot of people whose impoverishment may lead them to crime - creating jobs by rebuilding the highway using previously unemployed laborers. This particular option comes closest to what has been called in this study "the prophetic imperative."

I have added a fifth type of social responsibility: community organizing. This is the church acting in concert with other religious organizations and community groups to organize a population in a particular area for social transformation. Saul Alinsky and the FIGHT organization in Rochester would be one example as the Council of Churches, working with the black community, brought Alinsky to town to help the black community organize itself. Various interfaith organizations to which churches belong would be a good example. This Alinsky-inspired program is now the Industrial Areas Foundation. But there are several more groups in this category: the Gamaliel Foundation, DART, the Pacific Institute of Community Organizing, which are coalitions of community organizations and ACORN, which is a member-based community organization.

We might illustrate this whole paradigm with a contemporary issue - criminal justice. Social service might involve a chaplaincy to inmates, providing one-to-one counseling and support. Social witness could entail a vigil at the time of the death penalty being carried out. Social education is illustrated in a study group to consider the criminal justice system of a community judged by a religious community's ethical values. Social action might well embrace all of these, but with the added dimension of mobilizing social power to change the very structure of the criminal justice system itself: e.g., persuading and/or pressuring an appropriate legislative body to decriminalize certain activities, pressing for a moratorium on prison construction, or advocacy of alternatives to incarceration, or actions targeted on the social conditions that breed crime.

The "Parable of Good Works" dramatizes the potential conflict between these types of social concern:

Once upon a time there was a small village on the edge of a river. The people there were good and the life in the village was good. One day a villager noticed a baby floating down the river. The villager quickly jumped into the river and swam out to save the baby from drowning.

The next day this same villager was walking along the river bank and noticed two babies in the river. He called for help, and both babies were rescued from the swift waters. And the following day four babies were seen caught in the turbulent current. And then eight, then more, and still more.

The villagers organized themselves quickly, setting up watch towers and training teams of swimmers who could resist the swift waters and rescue babies. Rescue squads were soon working twenty-four hours a day. And each day the number of helpless babies floating down the river increased.

The villagers organized themselves efficiently. The rescue squads were now snatching many children each day. Groups were trained to give mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. Others prepared formula and provided clothing for the chilled babies. Many.... were involved in making clothing and knitting blankets. Still others provided foster homes and placement.

While not all the babies, now very numerous, could be saved, the villagers felt they were doing well to save as many as they could each day. Indeed, the village priest blessed them in their good work. And life in the village continued on that basis.

One day, however, someone raised the question, "But where are all these babies coming from? Who is throwing them into the river? Why? Let's organize a team to go upstream and see who's doing it." The seeming logic of the elders countered:

"And if we go upstream, who will operate the rescue operations? We need every concerned person here."

"But don't you see," cried the one lone voice, "if we find out who is throwing them in, we can stop the problem and no babies will drown. By going upstream we can eliminate the cause of the problem."

"It is too risky." And so the numbers of babies in the river increased daily. Those saved increased, but those who drowned increased even more.<sup>iv</sup>

## SYSTEMIC SOCIAL CHANGE

Richard S. Gilbert

The term "systemic problems" suggests that social actions should be directed at the underlying causes of social problems, not at their symptoms. Treating symptoms alone might well be a soporific to cover fundamental injustice, putting Band-Aids on a cancer. Thus, food kitchens, however laudable, merely feed the victims of a fundamentally unjust social order instead of rooting out causes of hunger. A systemic approach challenges the underlying premises of the American economy which produces "poverty in the midst of plenty." A systemic approach deals with policy issues, taxation, government welfare programs, and income distribution.

Francis Greenwood Peabody saw this in the 19th century: "The social question of the present age is not a question mitigating the evils of the existing order, but a question whether the existing order itself shall last. Instead of generosity, men ask for justice....it inquires for the causes of ill fortune and demands justice for the poor. It applies itself to changing the conditions which make people poor rather than to pitying the poverty which evil conditions have made."

Systemic change contrasts with attitudinal change as the most effective way to achieve social justice. In the latter it is assumed that one must first work on individual attitudes before behavior can be modified. ("You can't legislate morality!") This is the "Billy Graham philosophy" - that social change consists of bringing people to Christ; social amelioration automatically follows. In liberal circles, it is sometimes assumed this transformation comes through "consciousness raising," as if awareness of problems somehow inexorably leads to their solution.

Analysis of systemic change points to the frequent futility of this approach, showing that social justice is caused more by irresponsible groups than guilty individuals. That was Reinhold Niebuhr's insight when he wrote of "moral man and immoral society." For example, despite all the preachments, civil rights progress for black people in this country came only when structures were changed by force of law. The 1954 Brown vs. Board of Education decision of the Supreme Court has come to be accepted as the beginning of the Civil Rights Revolution. It is generally conceded that civil-rights legislation was required to bring American blacks into the mainstream of human rights. Social scientists point out that one of the most effective ways to change behavior is to alter social structures. The Marxist analysis of history is likewise built upon the need for structural change. Systemic change is built on these insights.

Theodore Parker put it graphically:

"Yet it seemed to me the money given by public and private charity - two fountains that never fail in Puritanic Boston - was more than sufficient to relieve it all, and gradually remove the deep-seated and unseen cause which, in the hurry of business and of money, is not attended to. There is a hole in the dim-lit public bridge, where many fall through and perish. Our mercy pulls a few out of the water; it does not stop the hole, nor light the bridge, nor warn men of the peril! We need the great Charity that palliates effects of wrong, and the greater Justice which removes the Cause."

## UUA CONGREGATIONAL SOCIAL JUSTICE EVALUATION FORM

Short Form: There are five types of social justice work: service, education, witness, advocacy and community organizing. Review the work of your congregation in each one. Then discuss with your small group and present a distillation of those findings with the whole group. The survey below can be useful for work in your congregation back home.

1. **Service**
2. **Education**
3. **Witness**
4. **Advocacy**
5. **Community Organizing**

Please fill out this survey as best you can to give me an overview and a feeling for the congregation(s). To ensure that the information is as complete as possible, data can be gathered from a variety of resources including the minister, the members of the social justice committee, and the board of the congregation.

### 1. GENERAL INFORMATION

NAME OF CONGREGATION:

CITY:

ADDRESS:

PHONE

FAX

E-MAIL

LEADERSHIP

Name

Address

Phone Number

E-mail

Board Chair

Social Justice Chair

Minister

Minister

ADULT MEMBERS THIS YEAR:

AVERAGE SUNDAY SERVICE ATTENDANCE:

NUMBER OF PEOPLE INVOLVED IN THE CONGREGATION'S SOCIAL JUSTICE PROGRAMS:

APPROXIMATE AGE RANGE OF MEMBERS (Expressed in percentages)

Under 20 --- 21 – 25 --- 26-34 --- 35-44 --- 45-54 --- 55-64 --- 65 and over

How would you describe the racial/ethnic/economic composition of the congregation?

LOCATION OF MEETING PLACE (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY):

Rural  Small Town  Suburban  Urban Neighborhood  Large Downtown

What percentage of your congregation works in the social service/advocacy fields?

## 2. HISTORY

A. Is there a written history of the congregation and/or of the social justice program? If so, please reference or attach.

B. If there is a written history of the congregation's social justice ministry, how is it used?

C. Who carries the institutional history of your congregation's involvement in social justice? How is that information transferred to congregation members and newcomers?

## 3. ROLE OF THE CONGREGATION

A. This congregation is: (Please circle the number beside the one that most closely applies.)

1. Inwardly oriented: Invests a majority of its time, energy and resources in serving its members needs, but also invests some resources in caring for others outside the congregation.

2. Outwardly oriented: Invests a majority of its resources in caring for others, but also invests some resources in meeting the needs of its members.

3. Balanced: Strives toward a relatively equal allocation of resources among members and non-members.

4. Other: Please describe:

B. Do the members of your congregation, as a whole, have a role in deciding which social justice issues to support in any given year. If so, what is the method used?

C. In what ways does your congregation relate its public ministry to UU values, identity, and history?

D. Has your congregation adopted a vision statement, a mission statement, or a statement of purpose? If so, please attach.

E. Who in your congregation holds responsibility for the congregation's identity within the larger community?

## 4. ROLE OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES (OR ITS EQUIVALENT)

A. How does the Board work to make the congregation a socially responsible institution (e.g. by being conscious of its hiring policies, investment of endowment funds, and impact on the environment)?

B. How does the Board provide leadership to ensure that the congregation is anti-racist as well as inclusive of people of color, lesbians and gays, physically challenged people, and others?

## 5. SOCIAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE OR COORDINATING GROUP

What structure manages the social justice efforts of your congregation? Do you have a social justice committee, social justice coordinating group, task groups? Include an organizational chart if available. Describe in detail how someone becomes a part of this structure.

## 6. TASK (OR PROJECT) GROUPS

A. Provide a brief description of the role, number of members, and types of current activities of these groups.

B. In the past three years, what major social justice or public ministry programs has your congregation undertaken? If you have any written materials which describe these programs, please attach. The types of involvement provide one kind of model to help you.

**Advocacy:** Working through the legislative process to add power to those who have been systematically disempowered. e.g.: visit and write letters to public officials, including legislators, go to court with or in behalf of other people or a particular issue. What kinds of advocacy work with local and national legislators?

**Service:** Hands-on projects to help individuals. e.g.: rehabilitate low-income homes; serve in a food kitchen; staff a Help Line; raise money. In what kinds of service projects are the members of the congregation involved?

**Community Organizing:** Addressing issues at a societal level. e.g.: organize a voter registration drive; start and facilitate an interfaith organization to address social issues; establish a neighborhood block organization. Is the congregation involved in community organizing projects, coalitions, or ecumenical or interfaith groups in its community?

**Education:** Informing others about an issue and its importance. e.g.: find speakers and create a forum for discussion and/or debate; provide expertise in a particular field; write pamphlets, brochures, or flyers. kinds of education programs, worship services, or forums target public issues?

**Witness:** Taking a public stand. e.g.: attend a demonstration, write a letter to the editor. In what ways have members of the congregation given public witness on issues that are important?

F. What denominational social justice programs is the congregation involved with? (For example: District, UU Service Committee, UU-UN Office, Green Sanctuary, Welcoming Congregation, etc.)

## 8. FUNDING

A. What is the annual budget of the congregation? Please attach.

B. What is the line item amount allocated in the congregation's budget for social justice programs?

C. Does the congregation have any additional ways of raising money for social justice projects? If so please describe:

Please attach a copy of your social justice program budget.

## 9. GETTING PEOPLE INVOLVED

How do you get members of the congregation involved in your social justice ministry?

## 10. PUBLICITY

A. What type of image does your social justice program have in the church? And what type of image does it have in the community at large?

B. How do social justice people communicate with the members of the congregation? (e.g. Regular articles in the newsletter; Announcements in the Sunday service; Brochures and other written materials, a Social Justice Table Sunday morning, etc.)

C. How do social justice people communicate with the wider community? (e.g. Articles in local newspapers; Radio or TV; Interfaith Networks; etc.)

## XI. PROFESSIONAL LEADERSHIP

A. How much of the professional minister's time is going into the congregation's social justice program?

B. What kinds of local projects, ecumenical groups, or community boards is/are the minister(s) serving on?

## 11. BUILDING USE

In what way is the congregation's building being used by groups or organizations in the community? (Even when groups pay a rental fee they seldom cover the whole costs of upkeep. So the congregation is making a valuable contribution to the community when groups make use of its facilities.)

## 12. DEALING WITH CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES

A. Are there major conflicts in the congregation about doing social justice ministry?

B. Are there "painful episodes" in the history of the congregation when members were deeply divided over controversial issues?

C. What methods does the congregation use to deal with controversial social justice issues?

## 13. PROCESSES OF EVALUATION

A. Do you have a way of evaluating your social justice programs on a regular basis?

B. What accomplishments have you made in your social justice program during the past three years?

C. Where have you fallen short in your social justice program this year? What would you like to improve in the future?

D. What needs to be done to strengthen and further develop your social justice program?

E. Are there any particular issues about the structure of your program that you want addressed?

F. What additional resources, information, training, or funding information do you need?

**UNFINISHED SENTENCES REGARDING CHURCH SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY**

Ideally, my church should always .....

Ideally, my church should never .....

I get upset when .....

I could be comfortable if my church .....

Models for church involvement in social responsibility that have occurred to me are .....

A way of resolving the local congregation's dilemma might be

One of my most effective expressions of a, social concerns was

The most radical organization I have ever joined is

The most radical social action I have ever undertaken was

When I want to do something significant to express my social concerns I'm most likely to

The place or group where I'm most like to find allies is

In the community where I live the most important social issue is

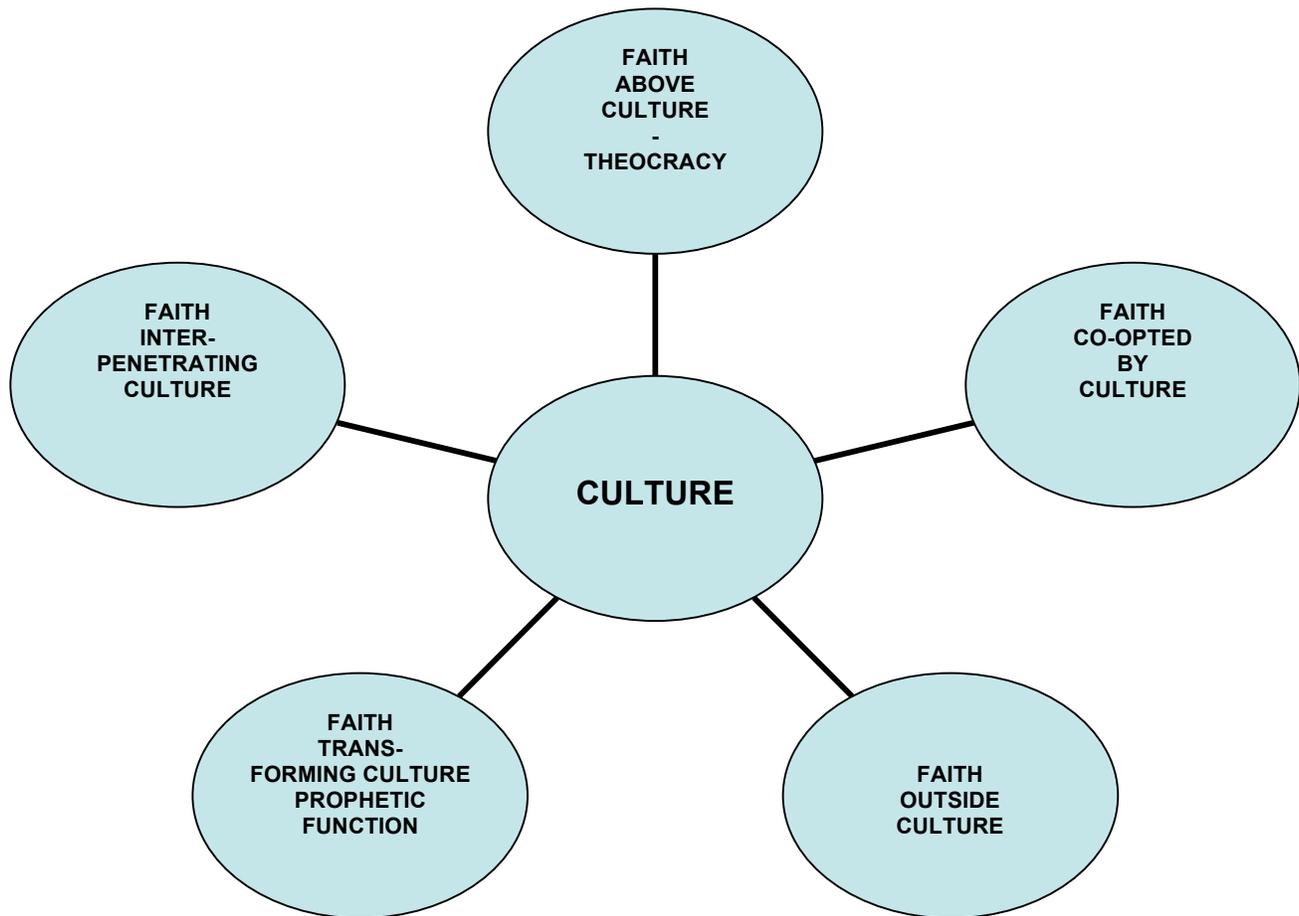
In relation to social action the most important thing to say about my local UU society is

What would help me most to express my social concerns more effectively would be

Three heroes of mine who have shared my vision of what society ought to be were/are

(Please complete the above sentences.)

# FAITH AND SOCIAL CHANGE



**Faith above culture – theocracy:** The view that a single religious community ought to shape and control the values of a society. Islamic extremists and sharia or American fundamentalists who insist this is a Christian nation are examples.

**Faith co-opted by culture:** Faith communities lose their sense of identity and vision while being reduced to a mere status quo. Instead of influencing the culture they are decisively influenced by it. Walter Rauschenbusch’s “culture Protestantism” is an example.

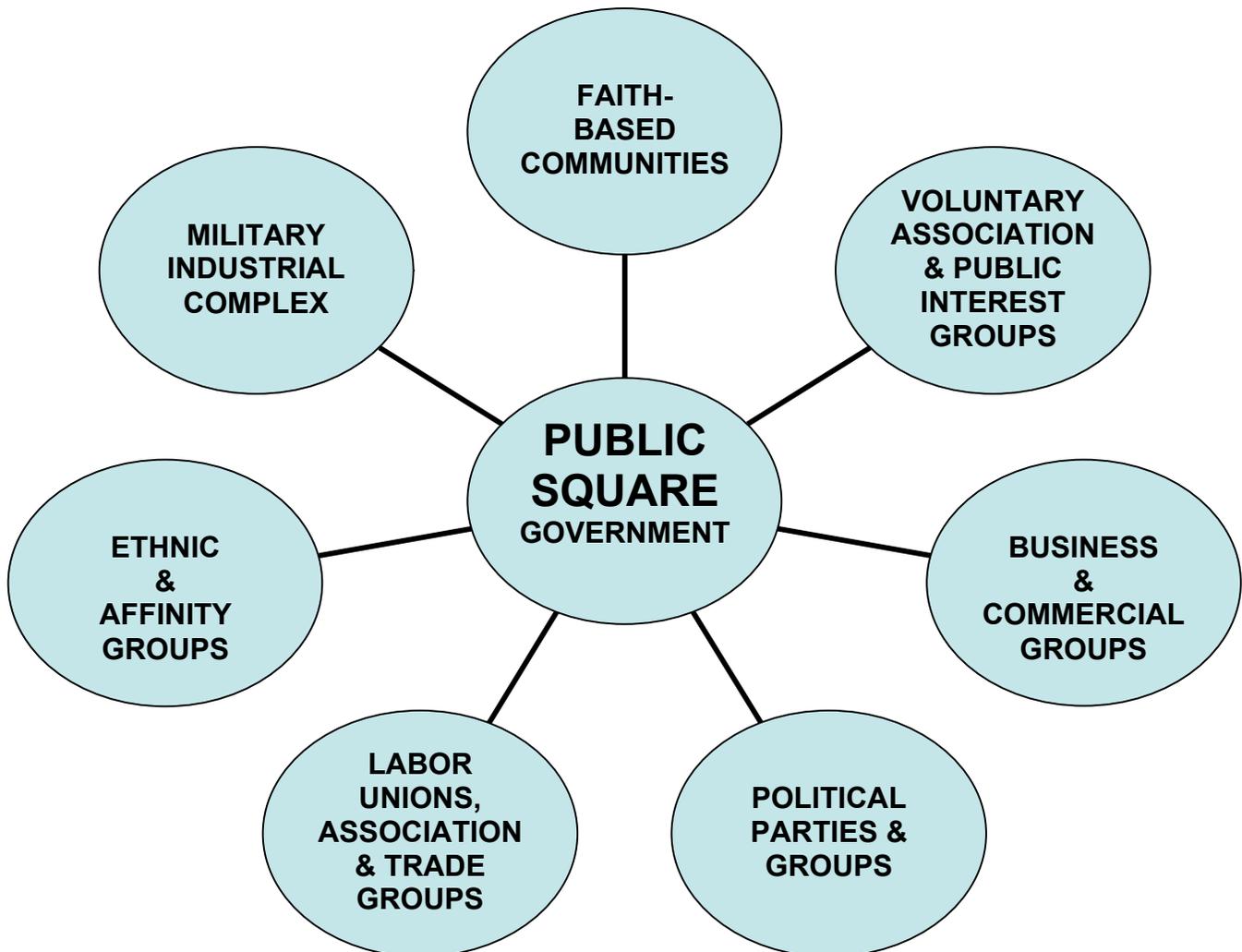
**Faith outside culture:** those faith communities which believe the culture is corrupt and the only way to preserve their religious values is to have as little to do with it as possible. The Amish, and to a lesser extent, the Mennonites demonstrate this view.

**Faith interpenetrating culture:** this understanding is that the values of the faith community in subtle ways gradually influence the values of the wider community. There is no direct address to changing the world. This is the Billy Graham approach – convert individuals and you will eventually convert society.

**Faith transforming culture:** this is the prophetic understanding of history in which the faith community seeks to move the culture toward its vision of the Beloved Community. Faith-based civil rights and peace movements illustrate this perspective.

Richard S. Gilbert – based on analyses from H. Richard Niebuhr and Paul Tillich.

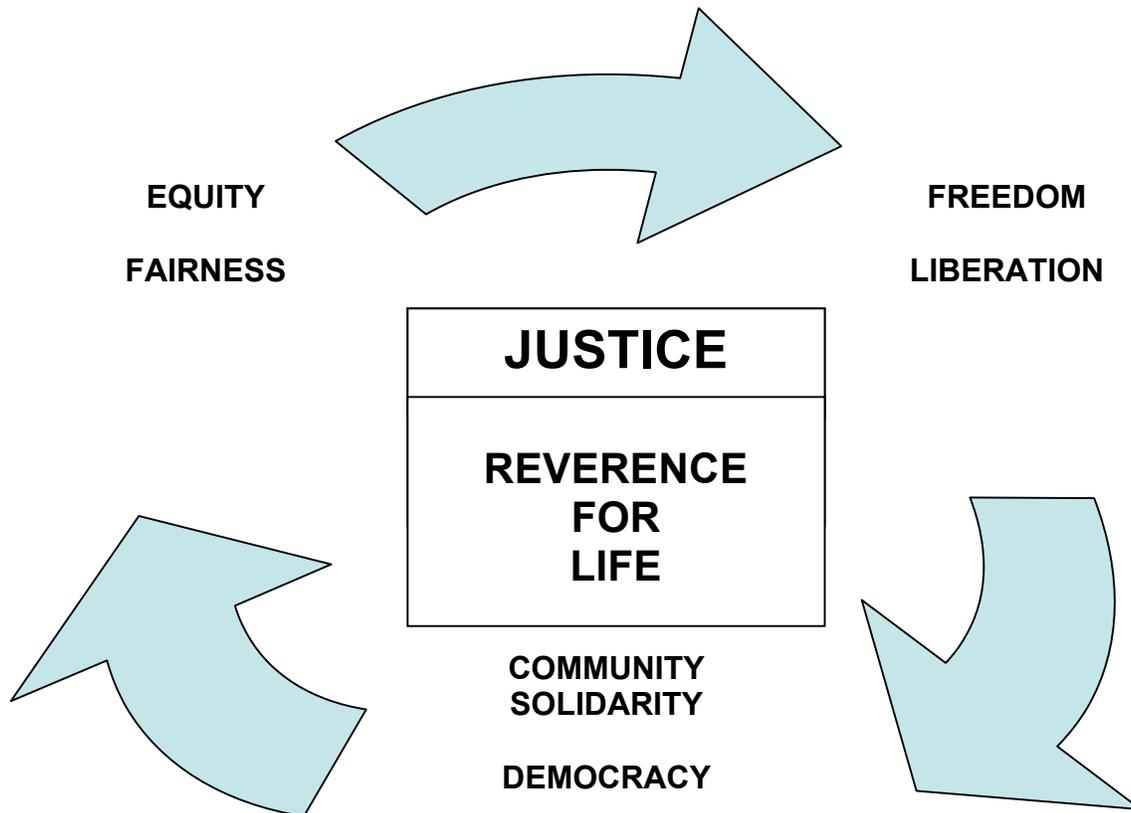
# LIBERAL RELIGION IN THE PUBLIC SQUARE



Society is composed of a number of groups as illustrated above. The church is one of the voluntary associations but with a religious base. The unique contribution of faith-based communities is that their interest is the public interest. While most groups seek their own self-interest, faith-based groups may well advocate for policies that go against the self-interest of their members. Thus, while most interest groups lobby for member benefits, faith-based groups for the most part advocate for the common good.

The government serves as a kind of umpire in the public square. Its policies are decisive for the well-being of the citizens and the various groups contending for power. When there is a balance of powers a kind of equilibrium is achieved. When one group dominates with its own interests paramount injustice results. Justice is achieved when there is a balance of freedom as self-determination, equity as fairness, community as democratic processes.

# A JUSTICE MODEL FOR UNITARIAN UNIVERSALISTS



## BELOVED COMMUNITY OF EARTH

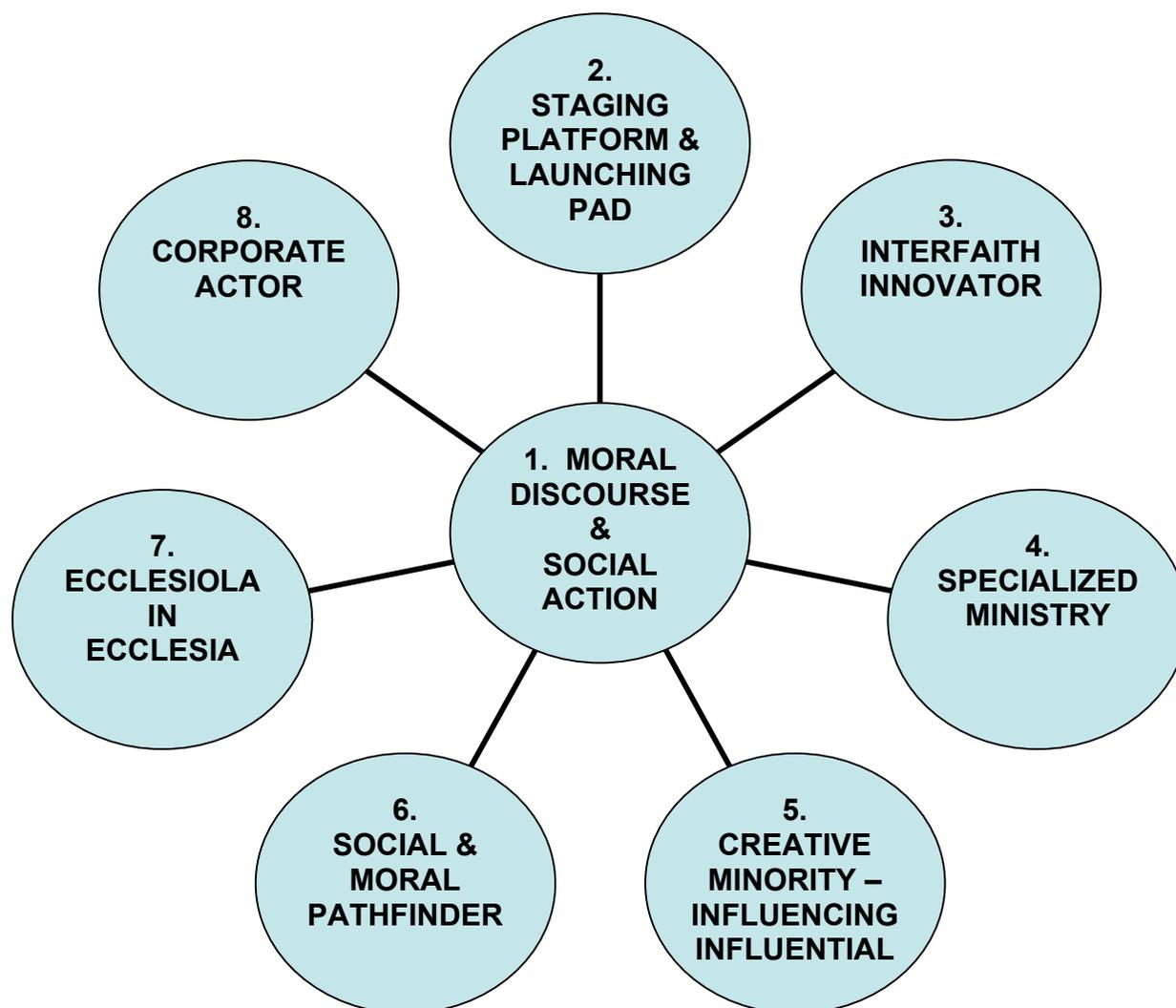
The end for which we strive is the Beloved Community of Earth. Its central value is Justice, a principle which is achieved through the integration of the values depicted. The core ethical value which is the glue to this whole process is reverence for life.

First is freedom – self-determination to participate in those processes which affect one’s life. Liberation is freedom from the underside – working against all kinds of oppression – classism, racism, sexism, ableism, ethno-centrism, nationalism.

Second is equity – the fair allocation of the resources of the earth. Justice is approximated when there is sufficiency for all – superfluity for none.

Third is community - of being a responsible part of the web of all existence – while solidarity is the human manifestation of our sense of togetherness. This is the common good, the public interest. Democracy becomes a religious value.

# SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY MODELS FOR THE LOCAL CONGREGATION



There are several ways in which the liberal church can see itself as an agent of social transformation. The center of an effective program of social action is the church as a community of moral discourse and social action. This discourse is historically, theologically and ethically based and socially and politically relevant. Out of that discourse grow a number of approaches.

Congregations may embrace some of these understandings of their role in the world – there are a variety of combinations. Some churches will be uncomfortable with a number of these approaches. They would do well, however, to understand the meaning of each one. A church with a comprehensive approach will be functioning in all these areas.

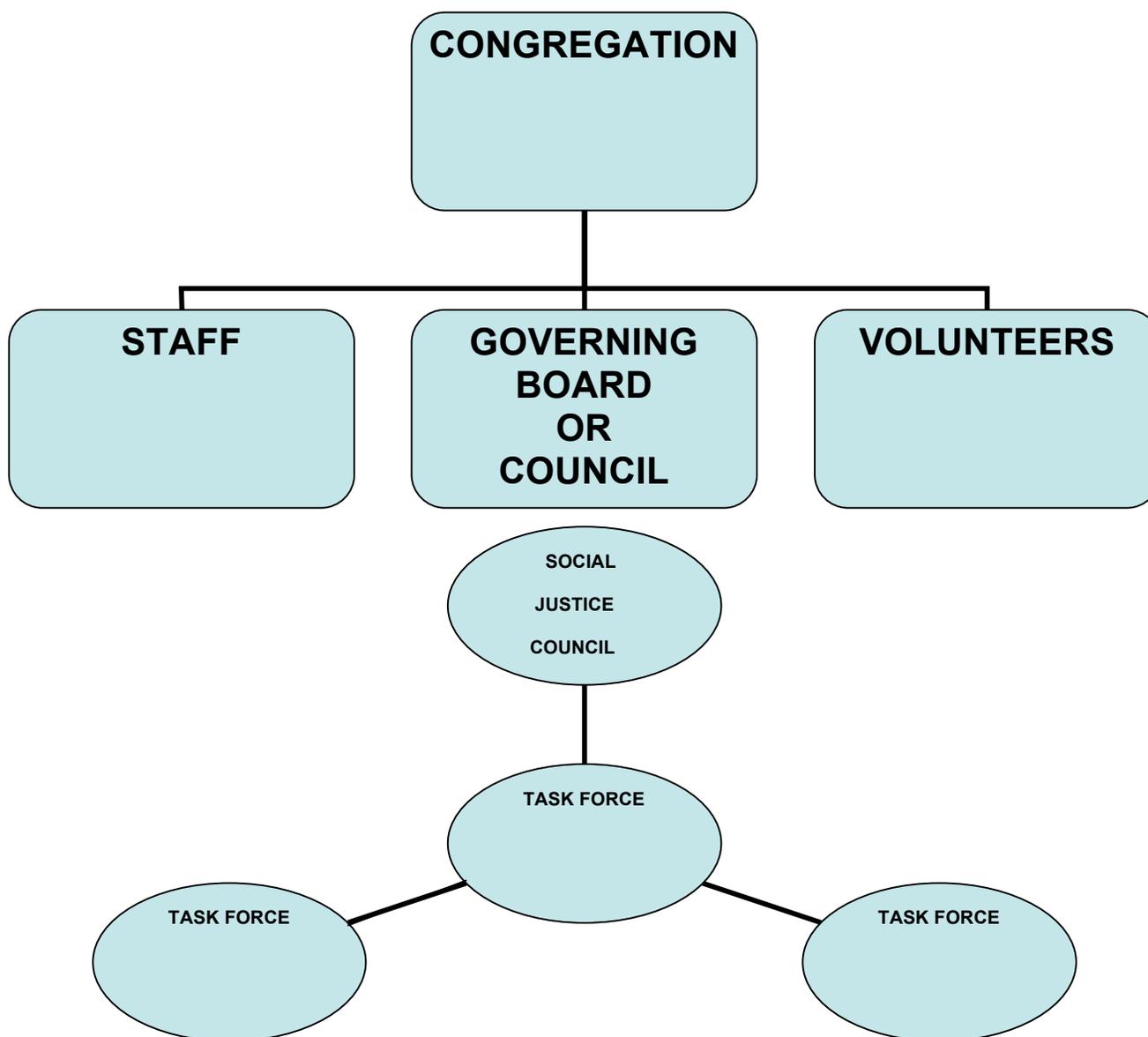
At the center, however, the congregation must at least be engaged in the kind of discourse that leads to social action.

## **SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY MODELS FOR THE LOCAL CONGREGATION: ANOTHER LENS**

Richard S. Gilbert

1. The Church as a Community of Moral Discourse: permeate society with individuals and voluntary associations. Involve whole congregation in moral discourse delineating church's moral tradition, fundamental principles of ethics and application to particular situations. Accomplished through life-span R.E. program, preaching and small group ministries.
2. The Church as Staging Platform and Launching Pad: preparation and training people for social action, encouraging disciplined involvement in voluntary associations in the community. Church taking initiative in creating groups on issues not presently being dealt with in the community.
3. The Church as Ecumenical Innovator and/or Participant: Do spade work in new and possibly controversial areas. Begin to mobilize community resources. Spin off group when community support from other churches and groups has been garnered.
4. The Church as Specialized Ministry: Providing support, financial, personal and logistical on some area of social concern. This could be done with other groups. E.g. UUJEC, Earth Ministry, Seventh Principle Project, UU's Against the Death Penalty, etc.
5. The Church as Creative Minority: Influencing the Influential: Based on Toynbee's belief that history is made by a "creative minority" who lead the masses. Based also on the rich store of personal resources in UU congregations (specialists, scientists, educators, politicians). This might involve (at congregational or denominational level) gathering together these "influentials" for conferences around specific themes out of which might emerge a statement or even a book.
6. The Liberal Church as Pathfinder. Related closely to # 5 above. But this would involve being the moral and philosophical trouble-shooter of the human race. It would involve the deliberate address of the church and its members to the "cutting edge" issues (e.g. bio-ethics, genetic engineering, limits of growth, eco-justice). It would involve delving into areas where few have been before.
7. Ecclesiola in ecclesia: (the little church within the larger church). Creating a small, disciplined group of activists who would covenant together in spiritual disciplines and involvement in voluntary associations. They would meet regularly for worship and ethical reflection on their community involvements.
8. The Church as Corporate Actor: Assumption here is that corporate role of church is inevitable and should be made conscious. That is, any voluntary association has a "character" in the community. It is compelled to say "yes" or "no" to requests for space, funds, human support. Better that the question of process of commitment is conscious and widely accepted than ad hoc and thoughtless. Ways of "taking a stand" can be carefully is thought out to preserve democratic traditions and individual liberties.

# FAITH-BASED SOCIAL CHANGE



## THE CONGREGATION AS AGENT OF SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

The congregation is ultimately responsible for the social justice work of the congregation, just as it is ultimately responsible for worship, religious education, mutual ministry and stewardship. At an annual congregation social justice meeting the congregation shapes an agenda for work in the coming year(s). It selects issues to be addressed through task forces. The Social Justice Council is the administrative arm through which task forces are organized, supported and made accountable to the congregation. Task forces are nominated at this congregational meeting (a bubble-up process). The congregation votes on their selection based on a work plan each task force candidate presents. Selected task forces are give support by the minister(s) in sermons, editorials, counsel; by the congregation in terms of financial resources, access to communication vehicles and empowered to speak on their own behalf. Task forces report to the congregation.

## A RATIONALE FOR CHURCH “INTERFERENCE” IN SOCIETY - Richard S. Gilbert

Below is a summary of arguments for church involvement (“interference”) in society.

**1. The argument from church history:** Historically, Unitarian Universalists and their congregations have been in the forefront of social reform. From 19<sup>th</sup> century churches as stops on the Underground Railroad to 20<sup>th</sup> century churches providing symbolic sanctuary for draft resisters; from the Portland, Oregon, church wrapping a “hate free zone” ribbon around its structure to protest homophobic state legislation to congregations which display a “Marriage Equality” banner on their buildings, corporate social action has been important in expressing Unitarian Universalist values.

**2. The argument from personal religious growth:** if churches are to promote “spiritual growth in our congregations” then social action is one vehicle for personal spiritual learning and growth. “The 'holy' thing in life is the participation in those processes that give body and form to universal justice.” (James Luther Adams) “To be a (human being) .... is to feel, when setting one's stone, that one is contributing to the building of the world.” (adapted from Saint-Exupery). Abraham Maslow held that self-actualization has social implications. William Ellery Channing declared religion was a “social principle.”

**3. The argument from praxis:** we learn *by doing*. Praxis is a process of interaction between doing and reflecting. We live ourselves into religious thinking more than we think ourselves into religious living. (Henry Munroe) “An 'Ish Terumot' - (person of many gifts) -may destroy the world. This refers to a wise (person) ... However, when an orphan or a widow appears before him/her to obtain justice, he/she responds, 'I am occupied with my studies. I have no time.' About such a (person) says the Lord, 'I consider him/her as if he/she had destroyed the world.” (adapted from Proverbs 29:4). Martin Luther King, Jr.: “My feet were praying.” *Koran*: “An hour of justice is worth 70 years of prayer.” The church teaches by what it does.

**5. The argument from conviction:** convictions are religious values in operation. Ideas about religion yearn to be embodied. When they are not, they wither and die. They need tangibilication, embodiment. Social responsibility is the spirit in action. Deep religious values empower our living. The poet Heinrich Heine was walking with a friend before the cathedral of Amiens in France. “Tell me, Heinrich,” said his friend, “why can't people build piles like this any more?” Answered Heine, “My friend, in those days people had convictions. We moderns have opinions. And it takes more than opinions to build a gothic cathedral.”

**6. The argument from wholeness:** we educate not a mind, not feelings, nor a spirit - we educate a whole human being with thoughts, feelings and behavior. “An ultimate concern must express itself socially. It cannot leave out any sphere of human existence” (Paul Tillich). “People who have principles but no programs turn out in the end to have no principles” (Republican soldier in the Spanish Civil War).

**7. The Argument from political power and necessity:** There is no vacuum in social life. Many religious institutions already engage in the economic marketplace and the political public square – the religious right and the Roman Catholic church to name two. If Unitarian Universalist congregations do not engage institutionally other religious groups will have a monopoly on religious influence. The church as a social institution has power in the community. Power implies obligations to act.

As Michael Eric Dyson says in his biography of Martin Luther King, Jr.: “Justice is what love looks like when it speaks in public.” (*People So Bold*, p. 92)

## **THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS IN ACTION DESIGNED FOR USE IN UU CONGREGATIONS AND GROUPS**

The Strategic Planning Process suggested here is a composite drawn from many other variations on this theme. It is a group process for a disciplined program of reflection and action on social problems by a religious community. It is a framework for decision making and action. It is a process in which goals and objectives, strategies and tactics are continually under review.

**STEP ONE: DEFINITION OF THE SOCIAL PROBLEM TO BE ADDRESSED.** This is a one-sentence statement of a specific problem which indicates who or what is doing what to whom and where. It should be a problem about which there is high interest in the group, the possibility of meaningful action and a sense of appropriateness.

### **STEP TWO: STATEMENT OF ASSUMPTIONS, ENVIRONMENTAL AND RELIGIOUS.**

Environmental assumptions describe briefly the social context in which the problem is found. This would include stating why it is a problem, who suffers from it, how they are affected and the economic, political and social factors involved.

The religious assumptions are the value base out of which a group operates. These would be affirmations, theological and ethical in nature which describe the motivation of the group in attacking a particular problem. Statements about ultimate concerns, human nature and life meaning would be included. They should state why the problem represents injustice and why achievement of the goal is a step toward justice.

**STEP THREE: STATEMENT OF THE ACTION GOAL.** Here is a declaration of the ultimate aim of the group with respect to the social problem selected. It should be:

**Specific** -- as to time and place and people.

**Measurable** -- so that the group may chart its progress or lack thereof.

**Achievable** -- something that is reasonably within the group's capacity.

**Consonant** -- with the religious values of the group.

**STEP FOUR: SELECTION OF A STRATEGY OR STRATEGIES.** This involves examination of the alternative plans which might be chosen to achieve the goal. One or more strategies might be selected from many possibilities. A strategy is an overall plan by which a group guides itself. It is a "how" of social responsibility. It should indicate who does what.

**STEP FIVE: DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF TACTICS.** Tactics are those specific actions which constitute a strategy. They indicate assignments of action to particular people, the details of what they are to do and a time line for reporting on and completing the tasks. The development of tactics should result in an overall time line which indicates an end to the project. The time line will form the core of the agenda for future meetings.

**STEP SIX: EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT.** Evaluation should be a part of every meeting. It is a means of checking on all the above points to be sure the group still supports the items chosen. Evaluation should be done in the following areas: (1) what changes have been made that lead to problem solution? (2) how is the group functioning in terms of morale, efficiency and meaning of the task? (3) what has been learned about social change and about personal growth in social responsibility?

## THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS AT WORK: AN EXAMPLE

### STEP ONE: DEFINITION OF THE PROBLEM TO BE ADDRESSED

The Federal Government plans to convert the athlete's housing area for the 1980 Winter Olympics into a youth prison following the games.

### STEP TWO: STATEMENT OF ASSUMPTIONS, ENVIRONMENTAL AND RELIGIOUS

**Environmental:** (1) Lake Placid is an area remote from the cities from which the young prisoners would come; (2) predominately white guards would supervise predominately black prisoners; (3) the United States ranks third highest in rate of incarceration in the world, behind South Africa and the Soviet Union; (4) the "Olympic Prison" will embarrass the United States in world opinion; (5) prisons have a poor record of rehabilitation; (6) alternatives to incarceration exist.

**Religious:** (1) We "affirm, defend and promote the supreme worth of every human personality." (UUA by-laws) Therefore, each person is of worth, including prisoners. Prisons, by their very nature, tend to dehumanize people. (2) Affirming individual freedom, it is our task to maximize human choice consistent with social responsibility. (3) Human nature is not inherently "bad" but characterized by "finite freedom". We must recognize human finitude in both offender, offended, and the community and seek to liberate that which is noblest in each. Alternatives to incarceration speak to this issue.

### STEP THREE: STATEMENT OF ACTION GOAL

To persuade the Federal Government to find more humanizing after uses for the "Olympic Prison" (training site for athletes, public housing, etc.) and to begin implementing them by October 1980.

### STEP FOUR: SELECTION OF A STRATEGY OR STRATEGIES

**Strategy One:** To mount a massive public education campaign on the "Olympic Prison".

**Strategy Two:** To call world attention to the "Olympic Prison", during after the 1980 Olympic Games.

**Strategy Three:** To mobilize Unitarian Universalists and other citizen groups in putting pressure on government officials to change the after-use plan.

### STEP FIVE: DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF TACTICS

**Strategy One Tactics:** (1) Launch a study group in the church to study the "Olympic Prison" in particular and the moratorium on prison construction in general within two months. (2) Persuade the minister (or guest speaker) to preach on the issue within the next month. (3) Develop a core of "experts" to begin a letter writing campaign over the next month, and make electronic media contacts within the next four months to obtain radio-TV exposure.

**Strategy Two Tactics:** (1) to place an ad in the New York Times and local newspapers at the time of the pre-game competition (2) to publicize the report of the UN Human Rights Sub commission on the prison immediately (3) to demonstrate peacefully at the pre-games and the Olympic Games themselves.

**Strategy Three Tactics:** (1) to maintain contact with the National Moratorium on Prison Construction Office (2) to contact other prison action groups immediately (3) to lobby Congress and launch a letter writing campaign to the President.

### STEP SIX: EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

Were the initial goals met? Why or why not?

What was accomplished?

Was there spiritual and moral growth in the participants?

**A STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS WORKSHEET FOR GROUP ACTION****STEP ONE: DEFINITION OF THE PROBLEM TO BE ADDRESSED (in one sentence)****STEP TWO: STATEMENT OF ASSUMPTIONS, ENVIRONMENTAL AND RELIGIOUS****Environmental:****Religious:****STEP THREE: STATEMENT OF THE ACTION GOAL (specific, measurable, achievable and consistent with the group's values)****STEP FOUR: SELECTION OF A STRATEGY OR STRATEGIES****Strategy one:****Strategy two:****Strategy three:****STEP FIVE: DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF TACTICS****Strategy one tactics:****Strategy two tactics:****Strategy three tactics:****STEP SIX: EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT (ongoing)****Personal growth:****Changes made:****Group morale:****What has been learned?**

**A SAMPLE STRATEGIC PLAN FOR ILLUSTRATIVE PURPOSES ONLY**  
**The *Jonathan Society***

**MISSION STATEMENT**

To preserve seagulls and promote compassionate public interest in their pursuit of self-realization.

Objective One: to supply crash helmets to fledgling seagulls in rocky environs.

Objective Two: to organize public tours to seagull habitats.

Objective Three: to plan a "take-a-seagull home-to lunch" week.

**STRATEGIES FOR OBJECTIVE ONE**

Strategy One: to identify three potentially rocky areas frequented by seagulls.

Strategy Two: to design a seagull crash helmet.

Strategy Three: to locate 4 plastic craftspersons.

**TACTICS AND TIMELINES FOR STRATEGY ONE**

Tactic One: Sub-committee of JB, HS and DM to engage UR seashore scientists to do demographic study of area by June 30.

Tactic Two: The whole committee will visit the areas by August 31, 1992.

Tactic Three: Recommendation of committee to the Jonathan Society by Sept-ember 30 1992. Adoption of program by October 1, 1992.

**EVALUATION**

1. Was the objective completed in the time allotted?
2. Do the Jonathan Society members feel good about what they have accomplished?
3. Was the program environmentally sound in keeping with the Jonathan Society's by-laws cherishing "the interdependent web of all being"?
4. Was their wide participation in the process?
5. Other?

**Criteria for Issue Selection**  
**Choosing an Issue: Prioritize Prioritize Prioritize!**

**Method One: UUA**

When evaluating your issue-based priorities, consider the following for each issue:

1. **Grounding:** Does the issue have authentic and deep Unitarian Universalist roots? Does it link to the current identity and theology of Unitarian Universalists?
2. **Fit:** Is there a match between our congregation's resources, aspirations, and ability to make a real difference?
3. **Opportunity:** Is there a likelihood that we can be a respected participant in the public dialogue on this issue?

**Method Two: (Adapted from Metro-Justice Organization – Rochester, NY)**

1. **Organizational:** is it a well-defined, visible issue? Is it one we can hope to win? In this connection, victory may take many forms – including the raising of the general consciousness level of people concerning some social injustice. Finally, what resources are required and does your congregation have them?
2. **Identity:** Does the issue genuinely impinge on our lives? Is it in our own self-interest in the broadest sense? Does it force UU's to examine their own strengths and weaknesses? Does it raise consciousness?
3. **Philosophy:** Does the issue deal with the individual's sense of powerlessness? If won, will power be distributed more equitably? Is the issue related to the basic cause of the societal malaise? Does it address the question of accountability?
4. **Style of Leadership:** Does the issue cut new ground? Is it one no other group is likely to tackle? Will it involve a sizable number of people within and outside our congregation?

**Method Three: (Adapted from New Hampshire Faithful Democracy Project)**

1. What are we Unitarian Universalists passionate about?
2. Recognizing we are a small group, we have to work in coalition if we are to be effective. Which organizations do we see as allies for building and effective social justice program?
3. What are the priorities of district, national and international organizations (UUA, UUSC, UUJEC, UUUN, IARF, etc.)?
4. What issues will help us “grow” Unitarian Universalism and build Unitarian Universalist based of support?
5. What issues will help individuals and congregations to grow spiritually and ethically?

**SOCIAL JUSTICE INDEX**  
**QUALITY OF LIFE INDICATORS IN THE COMMUNITY**  
 A method for ascertaining the quality of life in a given community  
 Richard S. Gilbert

“The Gross National Product does not allow for the health of our children, the quality of their education, or the joy of their play. It does not include the beauty of our poetry or the strength of our marriages; the intelligence of our public debate or the integrity of our public officials. It measures neither our wit nor our courage; neither our wisdom nor our learning; neither our compassion nor our devotion to our country; it measures everything, in short, except that which makes life worthwhile.”  
 Senator Robert Kennedy

In *The Social Health of the Nation: How America Is Really Doing* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), authors Marc and Marque-Luisa Miringoff claim that the conventional economic indicators on the health of the nation are not only inadequate, but they are also misleading. The authors suggest a *Social Report to the President* instead of the standard *Economic Report to the President*. Many other nations, developed and developing have such an index.

This is a simple method for analyzing the social justice needs of the community in which the congregation lives. It is intended as a work sheet for a social justice committee, task force or board as part of a strategic planning process.

**\* 1. How do you define the community in which your congregation lives – geographically?**

What is the area for which you feel a social justice responsibility? Indicate on a scale of 1 (highest) to 5 (lowest) your felt sense of obligation. Who is my neighbor?

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**\* 2. Steps in analysis:** Obtain the US Census Data for tracts that show the demographics in your community that may be relevant for a social justice program - such as age distribution, income distribution, poverty, health care coverage, family groupings, growth rates, racial and ethnic distribution and other areas you may deem important.

Age distribution: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Family groupings (singles, one-parent, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Growth rates (population; economic) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Racial/ethnic composition: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Other \_\_\_\_\_

**\* 3. Indicators of community social justice health**

**Fairness Index (economic justice)**

Income Distribution: by quintiles  
 (1 – poorest) \_\_\_\_\_% (2) \_\_\_\_\_% (3 – middle) \_\_\_\_\_% (4) \_\_\_\_\_% (5 – richest) \_\_\_\_\_%  
 Poverty rates: Child poverty \_\_\_\_\_ Family poverty \_\_\_\_\_ Elderly poverty (65+) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Average weekly wages \_\_\_\_\_ Median income \_\_\_\_\_ Economic inequality \_\_\_\_\_  
 affordable housing \_\_\_\_\_ unemployment rate \_\_\_\_\_.

**Green Index: Environmental: air and water quality, sustainability, land use**

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**Civic Health Index – Social Capital Index – Participation Index) voter participation**

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**Education Index: – per pupil expenditure, dropout rates, student-teacher ratio, outcomes**

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**Governmental Service Index: Quality of governmental services, underserved areas**

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**Health Index:** life expectancy, infant mortality, hospital ratings, health care coverage (uninsured):  
 teenage suicide \_\_\_\_\_ teenage drug use \_\_\_\_\_ teenage birth rate \_\_\_\_\_ Other

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**Violence and Crime:**

child abuse \_\_\_\_\_ spousal abuse \_\_\_\_\_  
 homicide rate \_\_\_\_\_ violent crimes \_\_\_\_\_  
 property crimes \_\_\_\_\_ other \_\_\_\_\_  
 alcohol-related traffic fatalities \_\_\_\_\_

**Spirituality Index:** Community morale, happiness, sense of meaning, anti-social behaviors

What criteria would you use to measure the Beloved Community? Your own community?

Who hurts? When did this hurt begin? What changed to cause the hurt?

What needs to change to heal the hurt?

Who is part of the problem; who is part of the solution?

What has been tried to heal the hurt? What is being tried now to heal the hurt?

What more do we need to find out answers to these questions?

## FPA's 10 TIPS ON HOW TO LOBBY (ADVOCATE WITH) LEGISLATORS

(From Family Planning Advocates of New York State)

- 1. KNOW WHO YOU'RE TALKING TO.** Research your legislators' histories. Know, before you arrive, his or her position on issues related to those you plan to discuss. Ascertain his or her voting record on those issues. If appropriate start the meeting with appreciation for past support. Personal information, such as being a grandparent or having a religious upbringing, can also be helpful.
- 2. ORGANIZE.** Develop a strategy for the meeting. Identify the strengths of each team member and decide who will speak, for how long, and on what issues before you enter the room. Identify your priorities and limit the number of topics you will discuss. Identify a team leader to lead the discussion and make strategic points.
- 3. STAY FOCUSED.** Focus on what you want your legislator to do. For example, will he/she talk to the Speaker of the Assembly or write a letter on your behalf? Will he/she co-sponsor a bill? Will he/she commit to vote for a specific bill?
- 4. LISTEN CAREFULLY.** Politicians tend to speak generally and may avoid the topic. Try to keep him or her on track by politely drawing out specific answers to specific questions, keeping focused on your issues
- 5. YOU MAY NOT KNOW ALL THE ANSWERS.** Never guess or give incorrect information to respond to a question. Offer to get the answer and report back. Then do so. It is the perfect opportunity to stay in touch!
- 6. DON'T ARGUE.** Legislators often have strong opinions. So do advocates. You probably will not change their minds in one visit. Remember you are building a relationship. Find common ground and use specific samples of people who need the legislation you are promoting. Be polite and NEVER argue with the legislator, legislative staff or your fellow team members.
- 7. LEAVE SOMETHING BEHIND.** Bring information for the legislator about your program, a local event or specific issues. Bring local information or data relevant to his or her district and key constituencies. Leave draft letters they can use for your request.
- 8. APPRECIATE STAFF MEMBERS.** Staff members are often your most important allies. If you are meeting with an aide, give him or her the best information (including bill numbers) to make a compelling argument to your legislator.
- 9. TAKE NOTES.** Immediately after the meeting, make notes of what was discussed and what the legislator agreed to do. Record the names and titles of staff members who are present or to whom you were introduced (you can ask for business cards). Translate those notes onto a lobby report form before you forget important details and commitments. Make sure you let FPA know an office requests additional information.
- 10. FOLLOW UP.** After the meeting send a thank you note that summarizes your understanding of what the legislator agreed to do. Let them know you are available to help on related issues. Include any information you promised and ask to meet them in their districts, preferably for a clinic visit. Send separate notes to staff member(s) you met and make a point to keep in contact with them.

## CASE STUDIES FOR GROUP WORK

**Case 1:** A task force comes to the board of trustees asking for a congregational meeting to declare the church a sanctuary for illegal immigrants who are threatened with deportation. The congregation has a procedure for bringing such controversial issues to the congregation. You are a member of the board. How would you vote? Why?

**Case 2:** The GLBT group in the congregation wants to display a banner on the front of the church – which sits on a busy city street. It would read: “Unitarian Universalists for Marriage Equality.” You are a member of the group. How would you approach advocating for this position? Outline your strategy.

**Case 3:** You are a member of the Peace Task Force in your congregation. The group is discouraged that the peace movement has not been able to mount an effective campaign to disengage the troops from Iraq and end the war. You feel your congregation ought to be in the forefront of this movement. How would you suggest the Task Force proceed?

**Case 4:** You are a member of a congregation which is not engaged in social justice work beyond some modest efforts in human service – soup kitchens and food banks. You are frustrated and you think your minister is also frustrated at this lack of social passion. How would you go about helping your congregation mobilize for social action?

**Case 5:** As a religious educator you have been asked to stage a debate with the high school group about church involvement in social justice work: “Resolved that the church of East Podunk establish a social action committee with the power to act on behalf of the congregation with the consent of either the board or the congregation.” The youth need help in formulating their arguments. Please articulate 3 or 4 arguments on each side of the issue.

**Case 6:** In rewriting the church mission statement someone raises the question: “Why aren’t there more people of color in our congregation?” Someone suggests the music and worship style aren’t welcoming. Another says that the issue is more one of class than of race. Still a third party says the issue is not the color question in the congregation but the urgency to address wider issues of poverty – which disproportionately affect people of color. What is your view? And how would you rewrite the church mission statement to bear on this issue?

## Congregational Decision-Making about Controversial Social Justice Issues

**By the Rev. Bill Gardiner**  
**Director for Anti-Racism and Social Justice Empowerment Program**  
**Advocacy and Witness Staff Group, Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations**

In some Unitarian Universalist congregations there is real controversy about involvement in social justice programs. Possibly the minister preaches a sermon on a divisive issue. Or the social responsibility committee votes to get involved in an unpopular community cause. Or the UUA General Assembly decides to take a stand on an issue that is very controversial. These actions may be upsetting to some of the members of the congregation.

In recent years some of our Unitarian Universalist congregations have been seriously divided by social justice issues such as the Vietnam War, the Black Empowerment Controversy, gay and lesbian rights, women's rights, being a Sanctuary congregation, and investing endowment funds in an ethical way.

There are a number of reasons why members of congregations disagree about engaging in social justice issues. There are disagreements about whether the congregation should respond to social justice issues in any way as an institution. There may be agreement that the congregation will be involved in the community but then disagreements about how it should be engaged and what issues to focus on. And there are concerns about whether the congregation should take stands on controversial issues and who speaks for the congregation on matters of public policy.

### **SHOULD THE CHURCH AS AN INSTITUTION BE INVOLVED IN SOCIAL JUSTICE ISSUES**

Some Unitarian Universalists oppose having the congregation involved in social justice issues in any way.

Some Unitarian Universalists see the congregation as a refuge from the turmoil and conflict of everyday life. They argue that the congregation should be a place of serenity and a refuge from the conflict in the world. One UU minister has written, "The main purpose of the church is that it is a community of healing and wholeness...But how can a church be a place of healing if it is a place of acrimonious debate?"

Opponents of social justice in the congregation also argue that taking stands on issues or forming action groups violates the freedom of conscience of some members and compromises their beliefs. They say that if one group in the congregation takes a stand - and they may even be the majority - that group will be imposing their views on others. They assert that this infringes on their freedom of belief. They argue that the liberal church does not impose a theological point of view and it shouldn't impose political points of view either.

Now it is important to recognize that those who argue from the "freedom of conscience" point of view break down into a couple of different groups.

In one group are those who think that no social action program should be carried out in the congregation whatsoever. For them the congregation can be a place that supports individual persons in their social engagement in the world. In this context, the role of the congregation is to assist people

in shaping their own political views through worship and educational programs so that they can act in the world as their conscience indicates. They believe that members of the congregation can be involved in causes, but they should be involved as individuals.

A second group believes the congregation can provide a forum where social issues can be discussed. For these people the congregation can have an active role in educating people about issues through forums, films, and discussion groups. Hopefully persons with differing viewpoints can meet for reasoned discussions. Then when members of the congregation have raised their consciousness they can go into the community and form organizations for making social change.

In each of these approaches the emphasis is on protecting freedom of belief and individual action in the world.

But there are also other reasons that people oppose social justice programming in our congregations.

Some people are concerned that addressing a controversial social justice issue can be too divisive in the life of the congregation. These folks have legitimate concerns about the health and long-term institutional viability of the congregation.

Some people may have concerns about the skills of the leaders in the church in processing controversial social issues. When they see how poorly some congregational leaders process difficult issues they lack confidence in their ability to facilitate change.

Other people express concerns about the rights of political minorities in the UU movement. With so many of Unitarian Universalists voting for candidates from the Democratic Party they wonder how members of the Republican Party feel. They continually ask the question: How do we respect political diversity in our religious movement?

In communities that are very conservative or are dominated by the military people are concerned about sticking out, being alienated from their neighbors, or even being attacked. This is a legitimate concern when you realize how many of our churches have been firebombed or vandalized because of their involvement in community issues.

## **WHY THE CHURCH SHOULD BE INVOLVED IN SOCIAL JUSTICE ISSUES**

I believe that it is important for our liberal faith that we be engaged in social issues as congregations.

We are a religious organization that has emphasized individual freedom of belief and conscience. And we should continue to do so. But I have several concerns about those who say that because of freedom of conscience, congregations should not be involved in social issues.

One of the difficulties with this point of view is that we couldn't even have an institution if everyone had complete autonomy of thought. We wouldn't be able to hire a minister, build a church building, or run a church canvass if we couldn't set organizational goals.

A second concern that I have is that the principle of freedom of conscience does not exist by itself. It exists in relation to other important principles of our faith like the responsibility to seek the truth and the commitment to act on those beliefs that are passionately held. A vital liberal faith will find a creative balance between these three important principles.

A third concern I have with the freedom of conscience point of view is that the individual is seen in isolation or outside of the matrix of groups and institutions. But this does not jibe with the social nature of reality or the fact that we are so interdependent with one another. It does not take into account the realities of power and the terrible consequences of unjust social structures in our society.

One of the underlying assumptions of those who disapprove of social justice in the church is that individuals acting alone can change the world. But I see little evidence of that. What I find is the most important thing individuals can do is to organize others into groups who can have enough power to make a difference. That is what all of our great Unitarian Universalist social reformers did.

The point at issue here is not that the church can't be a place of personal support and healing for individuals - for that is very important - but that it is seen as only that. I believe that in the liberal church we must be able to both comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable. We need to remember that individuals live their religious lives most fully by acting upon the values of love and justice in the world.

I also agree that the church can have an important role in developing moral persons and educating people about issues. And I think we should actually be doing more to support our members as they engage in their ministries in the world.

A significant number of members of our congregations are involved in doing ministry in the world. Examples include people working in social change professions, teachers, and social workers. They also include all the people serving on community boards for organizations like Planned Parenthood, the Sierra Club, the NAACP and the ACLU. And we have many people working in business, government and universities, who are trying to make these places more just and caring institutions.

Many of these folks are working long hours under difficult circumstances. They face problems of burnout and loss of energy. They need affirmation and spiritual resources.

Congregations can support these people by providing healing services, giving a Humanitarian of the Year Award, or organizing a service based on how people are living their faith in the world. These are just some of the possibilities.

However, I do not think we can limit ourselves to simply education, discussion, and providing support for members - as important as that is. The questions become: What happens when the discussion is over? Is discussion sufficient when we see such critical human needs are not being met, and we know our congregations have the capacity to make a difference?

Engagement with the issues of the world is certainly consistent with the tradition of our faith. Our heritage is one of heroines and heroes who have struggled for justice and freedom. We remember Francis David, Susan B. Anthony, Theodore Parker, Dorothea Dix, Whitney Young, and John Haynes Holmes as being people who witnessed to their beliefs.

Engagement with the issues of the world is also consistent with our Principles and Purposes which call for respect for the inherent worth and dignity of every person; justice equity and compassion in human relations; and the goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all.

But these fine principles can become abstractions unless we are involved in the concrete issues that people struggle with every day.

James Luther Adams reminds us about the importance of using our institutional power in responsible ways. He writes,

"The faith of a liberal must express itself in societal forms; in the forms of education, in economic and social organization, in political organization. Without these, freedom and justice in community are impossible. The creation of justice in community requires the organization of power. Through the organization of power, liberated persons tie into history; otherwise they cannot achieve freedom in history. Injustice in community is a form of power, an abuse of power, and justice is an exercise of

just and lawful institutional power."

With Adams, I would argue that the effectiveness of our faith is determined not so much by the beliefs that we hold but by how we act in the world.

Finally, the idea that the church should take no position on moral issues seems to be self-contradictory- for taking no action is in itself a form action. This was clearly shown in the case of the German churches that did not speak out against Hitler as he rose to power. This unwillingness to speak out led to terrible consequences for millions of people across the world. The result of not taking a position on issues is to support the status quo. Not to decide is to decide.

## **DISAGREEMENTS ABOUT HOW TO BE INVOLVED**

Other Unitarian Universalists agree that congregations can be involved in addressing controversial social justice issues. But within their ranks there are disagreements about whether the focus of the social justice program should be service, education, advocacy, witnessing, or community organizing. Should the focus of the program be local, national or international issues or some combination thereof? Should there be an emphasis on "safe" issues where there is a strong consensus or more controversial issues that will require personal and institutional transformation?

In my experience our best congregational have a good balance of local and national, safe and controversial issues. Moreover they develop programming which provides a good balance of service, education, advocacy, witnessing, or community organizing.

## **DETERMINING HOW THE PROGRAM SHOULD BE STRUCTURED**

There are also disagreements about how the program should be structured. For example, should the program be run by a small group of people involved in the social justice committee? Or should people be involved in action groups? What are the roles of the congregation and the Board in providing leadership? And how shall the program be funded - by a line item in the budget or by special fund raising?

One way for congregations to approach these issues is to spell out the roles for individual members, social justice committees, action groups formed on particular issues, the Board of Trustees, and the congregation as a whole.

I believe we need to give greater importance to the role of the whole congregation in setting the direction for the social justice program and determining its moral identity. There are a number of ways that the congregations can vote on social justice issues. These include:

1. Provide funds in the annual budget for social justice programs.
2. Make decisions about General Assembly Resolutions.
3. Establish priorities for task forces and action groups in the life of the congregation.
4. Make commitments to major projects like setting up non-profit housing corporations or establishing a summer program for youth.
5. Write a mission or vision statement stating the congregation's role in the world.
6. Determine the ethical integrity and moral identity of the congregation. Examples are: defining a

socially responsible investing policy, becoming a Green Sanctuary, deciding to be a Nuclear Free Zone, becoming a Sanctuary church for political refugees, becoming a Welcoming Congregation.

#### 7. Vote on controversial social issues in the wider community.

The Board of the congregation also has an important role. Since the board and the ministers have the responsibility for the total life of the congregation they can work to make sure that social justice concerns are integrated into the education, worship, and community building aspects of the congregation's life.

The Board also provides leadership in ensuring that the congregation is a moral community that exemplifies the values its members think are important. This includes non-discriminatory hiring practices, socially responsible investing policies for endowment funds, and purchasing church supplies with environmental values in mind.

### WHO SPEAKS FOR THE CONGREGATION ON MATTERS OF PUBLIC POLICY?

Some of the most volatile disagreements in the life of the congregations have to do with who speaks for the congregation on controversial issues.

Some Unitarian Universalists argue that a congregation should never take a public stand on an issue. But suppose the neighboring synagogue was firebombed in an act of anti-Semitic violence. And suppose the local clergy group approached the leadership of the UU congregation about taking a public stand condemning this terrible act. What would people do then?

Let me say at the outset that I do not think that there is any disagreement about the right of an individual UU to speak out personally on a controversial public issue. Nor do I think that many UUs would disagree with the right of a person to speak out on an issue and say she or he is an individual Unitarian Universalist.

But there are disagreements about whether members of the congregation can participate in a demonstration as an identified group. And there are also conflicts about whether people can use the congregation's name or banner at public demonstrations.

There are also disagreements about whether a member, or group of members, or committee of the congregation can make a public statement on an issue or take out an ad in a newspaper using the name of the congregation in that statement.

I recommend to congregation that they develop policies to provide guidelines for who has the power to make what decisions and which groups are responsible for responding to certain situations. Below is a grid that outlines some of these decisions.

Decision-Making Group -> Areas of Concern	Congregation	Board	Social Justice Committee	Action Group
<b>Make a public statement</b>				
<b>Hold a press conference</b>				
<b>Put an ad in the paper or in other media</b>				
<b>Participate in a public demonstration as an identified group</b>				

<b>Carry the congregation's banner or a sign identifying the congregation in a march or demonstration</b>				
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Congregations use different policy guidelines for votes on controversial social justice issues:

- The congregation in Honolulu Hawaii elects a special committee at its annual meeting (along with the Board.) This committee has the responsibility for studying major social justice issues, making recommendations to the congregation, and setting up processes for education and voting.
- The Mainline Church (Devon, Pennsylvania) in its congregational vote on the issue of sanctuary for refugees from Central America called for a 75% vote. The issue did not receive the necessary percentage so the congregation did not become a sanctuary church.
- Some congregations make use of a disclaimer. After the majority has voted they state: "This decision only reflects the votes of those who were present at the meeting and does not speak for the congregation as a whole."
- In some congregations the social justice committee or an action group can vote to take a stand only for itself and not the whole congregation. In these situations the congregation has turned over its decision making power to a duly constituted group.

### **SUGGESTED GUIDELINES FOR PROCESSING CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES**

There are also disagreements about whether or how to process social justice issues with the members of the congregation.

Church leaders need to give serious consideration to whether an issue should be acted on or not. Ask yourselves:

- How central is this issue to the identity and core values of the congregation? If you can't identify core values or how this relates to your congregation's identity then the issue is not one to bring to the congregation.
- What is the level of controversy about this issue? Is the issue one in which members of the congregation need some education and they will move on it? Is it one in which a minority of people have strong feelings? Or is it one in which people are really polarized? Judgments about the level of conflict are important in deciding whether and how to process the issue. Sometimes the choices here are very complex and difficult.

If you decide to bring the issue up for discussion, thought also needs to be given to how to process the issue in the congregation. How much time should be taken to educate the members of the congregation? How much information do people need? Who will be in charge of giving the information? How will meetings be structured?

Below are listed some suggested guidelines for processing controversial social issues or major projects in a congregation:

1. Plan for several months of discussion and debate. It is better to err on the side of talking too long about an issue.

2. Use as many opportunities as possible to educate people, making use of the Sunday service, adult forums, discussion groups, and so on.
3. Allow proponents of all positions on the issue to be represented with adequate time.
4. Set guidelines that focus on facts and issues rather than personalities.
5. Make it clear that the integrity of all participants will be respected at all times and any behavior that does not treat people with dignity will not be tolerated.
6. After the agreed upon time of education and dialogue has passed, use a voting method that affirms the spirit of an inclusive democratic process and maintains the dignity, and, if necessary, the anonymity of the individuals voting. One possibility is to have a preparatory meeting at which people can deal with clarifying the language of a resolution.
7. Make sure there is ample time for discussion before a vote is taken at the meeting. Set aside a minimum of an hour for dialogue and debate if needed. Give everyone who wants to speak an opportunity to do so.
8. If after education and dialogue it looks like a vote will destroy the community, DON'T VOTE. The congregation isn't ready. Sometimes, this means more information or dialogue is needed. Sometimes it means that everyone needs more time to absorb the information. Sometimes it means the issue should be dropped.

### **CONGREGATIONAL VOTES IN EMERGENCY SITUATIONS**

The above guidelines emphasize taking lots of time for discussion and using good group process methods. But sometimes we do not have adequate time to use good group process.

A good example of this occurred in 1990 when UUs had to respond quickly to the prospect of a war in the Middle East when Iraq invaded Kuwait. Congress was going to vote within the month on whether the United States should be part of a United Nations effort to drive the Iraqis out of Kuwait.

In some of our congregations members wanted the congregation to vote to oppose US involvement in such a war.

Personally I would not favor a congregation taking a vote in this situation. Few of us know very much about the politics of the Middle East. There is not time to adequately study the issue. There would not be sufficient time to educate people about the issues. Many members would be critical about some position being pushed too quickly.

Moreover, it would be possible for people who are concerned about the issue to mobilize themselves for action without taking a vote of the congregation. In some cities UUs organized some members of their congregations to work with people from other religious communities to lobby their Congress people. Others visited the editorial boards of local newspapers to plea for a more balanced presentation of the news. In my opinion these were more effective actions to take than trying to get the congregation to take a vote on the issue. And in the heat of the moment, they had a greater impact.

### **IMPORTANT POINTS FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE ADVOCATES IN THE CHURCH**

Discussion about controversial issues can sometimes be heated and divisive in the life of a congregation. Sometimes there isn't time for full discussion, and maybe only one side is presented. Pressure or coercion is used to get votes, rather than persuasion. And appeals are made to guilt and not to reason. These are examples of bad process. And they alienate persons and divide congregations.

We are trying to live by our Principles and Purposes and respond to crucial social issues at the same time that we honor the values and traditions of our democratic religious communities.

That is why social justice leaders need to take special responsibility for using effective and fair processes that respect the individuals involved and provide ample time for discussion and reflection. It means honoring individual rights as we move for group consensus. It requires that we make sure there is time for full discussion and that all sides of the argument are presented.

Remember, how the issue is processed is as important as the issue itself. If you are successful processing one issue, then you can come back to other issues in the future.

Social justice leaders need to avoid attitudes of arrogance, and self-righteousness. It is dangerous to divide the world into those who are "moral" and those who are "immoral". They need to understand that not everyone in the church or community is going to agree with them about issues, and that is okay.

Social justice advocates need to be responsible in how they conduct their business. Sometimes programs are not well conceived or presented. Persons who speak on issues are poorly prepared. Statements are made that are not thought through or are hastily put together. Simple solutions are offered for complex problems. Social justice leaders need to do their homework. They need to be well prepared for meetings and show that they have studied the issue in depth. They need to be particularly aware of both sides of the arguments.

Social justice advocates need to remember that social justice is not the only reason the church exists and that the music, religious education, and worship programs have their importance as well.

### **IMPORTANT THINGS TO REMEMBER ABOUT DEALING WITH CONTROVERSIAL SOCIAL JUSTICE ISSUES IN THE CHURCH**

1. Conflict doesn't only happen around social justice issues in the congregation. Many (some would say all) decisions in the life of the church involve conflict. Questions arise: Should we build a new organ or keep the old one? What kind of hymns should we sing? What kind of music should we have on Sunday morning? Should the minister wear a robe or not? Sometimes people can get very heated about these issues.
2. It is unfair to single out social justice as being especially conflict laden. Oftentimes the congregation needs to address how it processes controversy in any area of its life.
3. The decision not to take stands will alienate people just like the decision to take stands will.
4. Leadership in situations involving controversy involves walking a fine line. Activists need to remember that we need to build the institutions that are our base of support. Institutionalists need to remember that Unitarian Universalism stands for some very important principles in the world. A good way to create a win-win situation is to vote only on controversial issues that will build the ethical integrity and moral identity of our congregations. Then let members of the

congregation who are concerned about particular issues in the community organize action groups or lobbying groups around those issues.

As many of our congregations learned during the Vietnam era, being right on the issue is not necessarily worth the cost of losing dedicated, participatory, members of the community.

FOOTNOTE: #1. See page 6 of the Social Justice Empowerment Handbook entitled "The Role of the Congregation and the Board of Trustees in Social Justice Ministry" for further information.



THE COMMITTEES OF CORRESPONDENCE 1772-2009  
 From Quill pens to E-mail  
 Richard S. Gilbert

The Committees of Correspondence were created by the Boston town council in 1774 to protest the domination of the colonies by Great Britain. Samuel Adams, James Otis, Thomas Jefferson, Patrick Henry and Richard Henry Lee were early members of a network that spread throughout the colonies and led to the successful Revolutionary War.

I propose a revival of these Committees of Correspondence to speak out on the dramatic changes brought on by the Contract with America and the Christian Coalition's Contract with the American Family and other proposals from both sides of the political aisle.

While UU's may well differ on the nature of the revolution required - we can agree that the active participation of citizens is required. We cannot allow such drastic change without comment grounded in religious convictions. Louise Slaughter, congresswoman from New York's 28th District, for example, tells us she is feeling the might of the religious right, but not the heft of the religious left (recognizing of course that while we are religiously left, politically we are all over the map).

Each Sunday the Social Responsibility Group will be staffing a letter writing table focusing on different local, state and national issues - with stamps, envelopes, paper, district maps and background papers. We welcome your monetary contributions, but more, your commitment to the just society.

Some congregations set up an on-line computer terminal Sundays with appropriate contact information so that congregants can e-mail messages directly to their representatives. Because of the Anthrax scare many federal officials won't accept letters in sealed envelopes without extensive screening, which can take weeks. E-mails, Faxes and post cards are more effective vehicles.

Remember, we get the kind of government we deserve. Scary, isn't it?

## MULTICULTURAL AND INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE COMPETENCY

From: Paula Cole Jones and Tracey Robinson-Harris, lens crafters

Attached you will find two assessments tools related to multicultural competencies. We would appreciate it if you would take the time to complete both of them and return them to Paula at [pcolejones@aol.com](mailto:pcolejones@aol.com).

What you need to do:

FIRST: Complete the assessment headed Multiculturalism and Institutional Change. The scale is described at the top of the form.

SECOND: Complete the assessment headed Multicultural Competencies. This is an opportunity for you to take stock of your own abilities. The scale is the same as the one for the first assessment tool.

After you have completed both assessments please email them back to Paula. We will review your responses and use the information to help us determine how we can best support you and the leadership you provide to UULTI as we do our multi-cultural lens crafting.

We are providing both of these assessment tools to all of the participants. We are asking them to complete both and use them as one set of lenses they bring to the UULTI experience.

We are also encouraging participants-to read:

*Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?* by Beverly Daniel Tatum (especially chapters 1,2,5,6, and 8)

*Soul Work* edited by Marjorie Bowens-Wheatley and Nancy Palmer Jones (especially the chapter by Paul Razor)

Both of these could be helpful to you as well in the creation of your track content. process and activities.

COMPETENCY IN INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE  
MULTI-CULTURAL COMPETENCIES

RATING				
1	2	3	4	5

1. I can discuss my own ethnic/cultural heritage.
2. I am aware of how my cultural background and experiences have influenced my attitudes.
3. I am able to discuss how my culture has influenced the way I think.
4. I can recognize when my attitudes, beliefs, and values are interfering with providing the best services to my congregation and community.
5. I verbally communicate my acceptance of people [of different cultures.]
6. I nonverbally communicate my acceptance of people whose culture is different from my own.
7. I can discuss my family's perspective regarding acceptable and non-acceptable codes-of-conduct.
8. I can discuss models of racial identity development.
9. I can define racism.
10. I can define prejudice.
11. I can define discrimination.
12. I can define stereotypes.
13. I can identify the cultural bases of my communication style.
14. I can identify my negative and positive emotional reactions toward persons of other racial and ethnic groups.
15. I can identify my reactions that are based on stereotypical beliefs about different ethnic groups.

Note: The list of competencies is modified from the multicultural competencies found in the American Counseling Association. (1995). *ACA Code of Ethics & Standards of Practice*. Alexandria, VA: American Counseling Association.

*Paula Cole Jones pcolejones@tmail.com*

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Congregation \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Multiculturalism & Institutional Change - Paula Cole Jones c 2006 [Pcolejones@aol.com](mailto:Pcolejones@aol.com) Washington DC

*Rate each item on a scale of 1-5 with 5 being the highest and 1 being the lowest. Circle your response for each line and each column: rate yourself (column 1), your team or committee (column 2). Your home congregation (column 3), the UUA (column 4).*

Competency In Institutional Change      You 1-2-3-4-5    Your Team 1-2-3-4-5    Your Congregation 1-2-3-4-5

1. I/we articulate an impetus for change.
2. I/we recognize multicultural competency as an ethical matter.
3. I/we support multicultural competency as part of the mission of this organization.
4. I/we can define multicultural competencies.
5. I/we can identify responsible agencies/committees.
6. I/we measure-proficiencies and our progress in institutional change.
7. I/we learn from our experiences and communicate our learnings.
8. I/we share and access information on multicultural competencies and institutional change at meetings.
9. I/we incorporate our learnings into orientations, trainings, planning and relevant events.
10. I/we can provide and follow multi-racial, multicultural leadership.
11. I/we use the language of multiculturalism as well as the language of antiracism and oppression.
12. We are creating a learning organization to support the development of multicultural competency and institutional change.
13. I/we have a vision for who we are as a part of a multicultural community and world.
14. I/we lead from our vision and use it to identify barriers to inclusion and change.
15. I/we understand racial identity development as a persistent dynamic of intergroup and interpersonal relationships.
16. I/we-are in right relationship with multicultural communities and especially with groups that have been historically marginalized.
17. I/we understand what it means to be accountable to people in groups that have been historically marginalized due to race and ethnicity.

# Summary: The Three Point System

The IRS regulations on the activities of congregations can be summarized as follows:

- 1. ISSUE ADVOCACY:** Without limits on time, effort and expense, congregations and their representatives may engage in issue advocacy through activities such as educating and mobilizing congregants and the general public. Example: encouraging the public to show concern for global warming by reducing carbon emissions. Please note that issue advocacy is only acceptable if it does not involve political campaign intervention (see below).
- 2. LOBBYING:** Within narrow limits on time, effort and expense, congregations and their representatives may engage in lobbying - defined by the IRS as advocating for or against specific pieces of legislation - as an "unsubstantial" portion of an organization's activities. The IRS has not provided a strict rule for what constitutes "unsubstantial," and evaluates on a case-by-case basis. However, courts and the IRS have ruled in the past that lobbying activity constituting 5% or less of total activities is acceptable. "Total activities" includes the total amount of money, staff, and volunteer time that goes into running the organization. While the 5% amount is not a strict rule, it can be used as a guidepost for an organization's lobbying activities. Example: encouraging a city council, state legislature, and/or Congress to pass a particular law to reduce carbon emissions.
- 3. POLITICAL CAMPAIGN INTERVENTION:** There is a total limit on partisan activity, which the IRS calls political campaign intervention. Congregations and their representatives can do nothing that advocates for or against candidates for public office or political parties. This includes fundraising on behalf of candidates and donating meeting space, among other things. Example: supporting a particular candidate or party because of their stance on carbon emissions. Election-related activities such as candidate questionnaires and forums may be acceptable if certain guidelines are followed; consult section C., "Political (Electoral) Activities" of this guide for details.

## Please Note:

The restrictions on lobbying and political campaign intervention described here apply only to a congregation as a legal entity, or to a person or group speaking in the name of the congregation. A minister or congregation member may freely engage in these activities as an individual. However, if the person(s) are identified by or likely to be associated with the congregation, it may be helpful to clearly state that they are speaking as individuals.

Last updated on Thursday, June 5, 2008.

For further information (1) go to UUA.org and search for Real Rules.

(2) Go to Center for Religion and Public Affairs, Wake Forest University School of Divinity for the publication "Religious Expression in American Public Life: A Joint Statement of Current Law.

<http://divinity.wfu.edu/pdf/DivinityLawStatement.pdf>

## ELEVEN COMMANDMENTS FOR SOCIAL ACTION - Richard S. Gilbert

There is an old Turkish proverb that introduces these eleven commandments for social action: "If you would speak the truth, keep one foot in the stirrup of the saddle."

1. Thou shalt always seek tangibilication of thy values. Tangibilication means simply to make tangible in actions what is intangible in values. To be biblical, "Faith without works is dead."
2. Thou shalt consider thyself a fulcrum to change the world. The Greek Archimedes once said, "Give me where to stand, and I will move the earth." Thou art a lever to move things to a better place; each action has cosmic consequences.
3. Thou shalt carry a newspaper in one hand and a bible (or its equivalent for you) in the other. Social action grows out of a value system, be it religious or secular, be it the Koran or the Constitution, be it the Hebrew prophets or Jessie Jackson. After all the great Greek philosopher Aristotle said that politics is the way we do ethics as a community.
4. Thou shalt remember that many are called but most are frozen. Beware being like Voltaire's "Candide", who seeing the evils of the world, decided he would simply cultivate his garden. I have nothing against gardens, only those who spend all their free time there.
5. Thou shalt resist burnout; thou shalt invest thyself for the long haul, yea even beyond the next issue. One of my friends hath said the world is changed by those who stay at meetings until the very end. Thou shalt remember that to love justice is not an occasional pursuit, but a way of living. Be thou not summer citizens who quit thy work when icy drafts of apathy and reaction cool thy ardor. Thy goals will not be achieved during thy lifetime.
6. Thou shalt do thy homework. Blessed (and effective) are the informed . Ye shall know the facts and the facts shall make thee powerful. And remember thou this: the world's best reformers are those who begin on themselves. " (George Bernard Shaw)
7. Thou shalt think globally and act locally. Thou shalt see thy work in its larger context of meaning and action and do thy own small part well. Sancho Panza said to Don Quixote as they approached the city: "Tell me again how we're going to fight city hall." By thinking globally and acting locally.
8. Thou shalt change the world one step at a time. Remember, "The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step." (Lao Tze) Thou shalt have thy great goals before thee, but thou shalt also have thy objectives (specific, measurable, achievable and consonant with thy values), thy strategies, thy tactics and thy timelines - especially thy timelines. Thou shalt adhere unto them .
9. Thou shalt constitute thy group as a community of moral discourse and action. Thou canst not change the world by thyself. Harken unto thy comrades and they will harken unto thee. Act faithfully and thy comrades will do likewise (hope we always).
10. Archbishop Desmond Tutu, quoting advice from his father, warned: "Don't raise your voice; improve your arguments." (World Council of Churches Ninth Assembly, Porto Alegre, Brazil).
11. Thou shalt be a happy warrior. Grouches seldom change the world. prepare thyself for a "joyous struggle" (Fred Shuttlesworth as he lay bleeding from a beating in a civil rights demonstration). Keep thy sense of humor, for thou wilt need it in a crazy world. Celebrate life in all thy going out and coming in, yea, from this day forth.

Closing Circle: **from “The Low Road” by Marge Piercy**

Reader 1: One person can have faith, but it can be lonely;

Readers 1-2: Two people make a dyad – one to talk – one to listen;

Readers 1-3: Three people are a delegation, a committee, a wedge.

Readers 1-4: With four you can play bridge and start an organization.

Readers 1-6: With six you can rent a whole house, eat pie for dinner with no seconds,  
And hold a fund raising party.

Readers 1-12: A dozen make a demonstration.

Readers 1-18: A hundred fill a hall and make a worship service.

Readers 1-24: A thousand have a house of worship and their own newsletter.

All: It goes on one at a time. It starts when you care to act. It starts when you do it again after they  
said no. It starts when you say WE and know who you mean, and each day you mean one more.  
Amen. Shalom. So be it.

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