

Thursday, March 22, 2007

Friends:

Well, it's spring in Boston. I know, because I'm sitting in room 304 at Pickett/Eliot House writing this letter. It must be spring, because while there's plenty of snow on the ground and I could see my breath when I was out earlier tonight, the trees are trying to bud. Ouch.

It's spring all over UU Land, so I'm traveling to district meetings and committee meetings and congregations. Our congregations feel even more energized this spring than at the same time last year. Folks are building or talking about building, growing in numbers or spirit or both, doing social justice work in the Gulf Coast and their local communities. A large number of UU congregations are implementing the responsive resolution from the 2006 GA:

Resolved, that the Delegates to General Assembly are charged to work with their congregations to hold at least one program over the next year to address racism or classism, and to report on that program at next year's General Assembly.

I was recently talking with Tracey Robinson-Harris and some other folks positioned to be exceptionally good guessers about the extent to which congregations embraced this resolution, and the conservative estimate was that one-third of UU congregations had already taken action on the resolution. They're each doing it differently, and there's something amazing and wonderful and - well, Unitarian Universalist about that. Consider asking delegates at your district meetings and other UU gatherings what they're doing or planning to do to address this resolution. Association Secretary Paul Rickter agreed to report to the delegates in Portland, so information about the implementation of this resolution in your district is useful to Paul.

Earlier today I met with Bill Sinkford, and our wide-ranging conversation included a discussion of Association leadership, the democratic process, and where the two intersect or fail to. At the January Board meeting Bill reminded the Board that he has been advocating for a change in the nomination process for UUA President since his first meeting with the UUA Board after his election as President. I suggested changes in the Moderator nomination process at my first Board meeting as Moderator in January 2004

We see many shortcomings in our current process, but two seem most critical. First, the current process does not insure a conversation about the issues we need to deal with as a faith community. A variety of views should be present in the conversation so that our community can select a direction. Second, our current process makes it impossible for too many of our best, most experienced leaders to even consider offering their skills for these most senior leadership positions. For example, the demands of campaigning mean that the typical solo parish minister cannot run. And the current expectations of the Moderator mean that few leaders can consider running for the position unless they are wealthy or retired (if both wealthy and retired, better yet).

We believe that Unitarian Universalism can do better, be fairer, and be more consistent with our principles. We also believe that addressing these issues should be the Board of Trustees to do.

I join Bill in strongly encouraging the Board to commit to review the current process and practices related to the nomination of candidates for President and Moderator in the 2007-2008 year. The goal: to recommend new nomination processes that better reflect Unitarian Universalist values for discussion by the delegates at the 2008 General Assembly. Bill and I look forward to participating in this conversation with the Board, and would be delighted to begin this discussion at the April board meeting. Just ask. ☺

On Saturday evening we'll have our biennial celebration of members of the Board who are completing their service. It's good that we set aside a specific time to remember the contributions of Pam Allen-Thompson, Linda Olson-Peebles, Charlie Ortman, Julian Sharp, Sue Stuke, and Ed Wilde. It's also good that we don't need to wait until Saturday to express gratitude for the many contributions that each has made to the life of the Association through their service on the Board. Nor do we need to wait until Board members are completing their service to note our gratitude. It's all about joy, friends.

The attached agenda is jam-packed and potentially fun-filled, but it doesn't tell the whole story. When you're stuffing your suitcase for the April meeting, don't forget to toss in the items that never appear in the agenda, but are necessary to create and sustain our Board community: perspective, candor, humility, prayer, song. I look forward to seeing each of you next month.

In faith,
Gini