

Essay Title: Transforming Your Nominating Committee

Audio Essay Series: Disc 1, Track 5

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Date of Release: June 23, 2005

OUR UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATIONS ARE TREASURES! They hold and transform and even save the lives of individuals. They challenge and change the communities in which they sit, and they change the larger social-political circles as well. They help to shape and support children and youth in healthy, creative, life-affirming ways. They are treasures!

Thoughtfully, lovingly, prayerfully, we should reflect on the question of who among us is the strongest, wisest, clearest-thinking, most creative, and responsible. To whom should we extend the privilege of leading us in the years ahead, and how can we best support them in that work.

Of all the good work done in our congregations, none is more important than the work of the Nominating Committee. To select, appoint and support those who will serve on boards is holy work. To choose those who will guide the religious education of our children and youth, carry out the work of stewardship, steer the course of the congregation in ways of health and vitality, and do all the other essential tasks of congregational life is work that should be done with the greatest love and care.

And, when invited to serve in a leadership position, unless there are compelling personal issues, an appropriate response is always a humble and grateful, “Yes. Thank you for honoring me in this way. I will do my very best to live up to the trust you have placed in me.” It might be necessary to re-organize one’s life and to set aside other commitments, but of course one would do so willingly, in order to rise to meet such an opportunity.

We hope you don’t think that this is foolish ranting, or tasteless sarcasm. We are absolutely, genuinely sincere. Those of you who cherish your religious communities, if you reflect deeply, will see the truth in this vision of congregational leadership. Sadly, however, too often the process for selecting congregational leaders is a hasty, disorganized, apologetic kind of approach. We need to make a sea change in the culture of inviting people into leadership positions.

We commend those congregations which are moving from the model of the Nominating Committee to the model of Leadership Development, broadening and deepening their understanding of this work. Ideally a Leadership Development Committee meets year round, helping to strengthen weak committees, getting to know potential leaders, sharing their vision of a strong future for the congregation, eliciting the visions and enthusiasms of others. They would provide clear and accurate information about the mission of the board and other committees, how they function, what a commitment to participation would entail.

Our congregations are treasures! What could be more important than the careful selection and the loving nurture of those entrusted with guiding its path into the future.

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