

WELCOME TEAM TRAINING
AGENDA Sept 5, 2007

Welcome and Big Picture – 10 min.

7:30-7:50

Welcome. I'm Justin Schroeder – and I'm learning the ropes of this new position as Membership Coordinator...as I think about the whole of Congregational Life.

I'd like to begin by offering the big picture framework – looking at why and how we do this Welcome Team Work.

I have a story from Unitarian Universalist minister Robert Fulghum, that he shared at this year's General Assembly.

He begins his story: "I Live in Seattle, right across from an elementary school.

I love it; every day there's a buzz of energy and life.

And there's another perk to being this close to the school. Every morning I go out and sit in my yard to drink a cup of coffee or tea - and there's a fence between my yard and the school.

But from my back yard, I am able to hear, from over the fence, the things that mothers and fathers (mostly mothers), say when they drop their kids off at school.

One morning, I heard a door slam shut, and then another car door clearly wrenched open and a mother addressed a child in the back seat,
"Billy, what on earth have you done?"

Have you ever said that? To a kid? Or maybe you've had that said to you?

"What on earth have you done?"

And I'm thinking, "What has Billy done?"

Probably between home and this situation, he's opened his lunch, he's smeared it all over the back seat, maybe he's thrown up, taken off clothes, put magic marker all over the car, maybe stuck a fork in the leather upholstery...Maybe he's done all these things, because little kids are fast!

I'm sitting here thinking, I've played both parts of this deal. I've been the parent and I've been the kid. And what I know is that "What on earth have you done?" isn't an invitation to a discussion. It isn't a question.

Your mother is saying, you're an idiot, a loser, if I could trade you in, I would. That's what that means.

So any kid in his right mind, will start to cry...and say, "I don't know, I don't know." A kid is not supposed to know. That's a kid's job.

I hated my mother at these moments, Fulghum says, because I knew I wasn't being invited to discuss things. I knew she was saying I was an ass, and I thought she was too. It was not a great moment.

But then it occurred to me, sitting in my backyard, that's a hell of a good question to try to answer as an adult:

"What on earth are you doing?"

"What on earth have you done?"//

And if I ask myself that question, it's a question of accountability...It's a question of, "What's my record?"

My record of life? What have I stood for, accomplished, done? What do I think about my record?

What on earth have I done?"

Then it occurred to me that my mother had another question, the great theological question - "What in the name of god are you doing?"

"What in the name of god are you doing?"

And in that same line of serious thinking, as an adult, as a mature adult...well, that's a good question for me.

What in the name of all the things I hold sacred, all the values I hold, what in those aspects of my best character, my hopes, my aspirations, what am I doing in the name of all I hold sacred?

That's an active, now question. That's not a past history question and it's a very good question, says Fulghum.

And then there's the projected time question my mother used to ask me. She said it all the time, and I'm sure you're familiar with this one: "And what will you think of next?"

(Fulghum pauses here, and then continues) - I just had a flash that my mother, in saying these things and then in trying to get me out of her life for a little while - taught me yoga. She didn't know it, I didn't know it, but think about it.

You say to a kid, sit in that chair and shush up and don't move from that chair. Think of the positions a kid will get in: upside down, crossways, twisted around - never touching the floor. That's off the subject, but anyway...

So, I thought, this is good stuff, these questions:

"What on earth are you doing?"

"What in the name of god (or those things you hold most sacred) are you doing?"

And "What will you think of next?"

That's a really good question, that last one. What will you think of next – it means you're still thinking, still engaging the world...and what will you do next?

These are all questions of accountability...of living and being in accord with some greater values or purpose in mind.

So, Fulghum explains, all of this happened in a very short amount of time, and I decided to get up from my chair and go around the fence, and tell this mother what she'd got me thinking about.

So I went around the fence, and there's a woman in brand new Lexus SUV sitting there with her head on the steering wheel, doing this with hands (pounding them).

Her windows are down and she's sobbing. And I realized, "This is probably not the time for the appearance of the unknown wise man from around the fence."

Because if I had started talking to her, she would have asked me the last of the 4 great questions: "Who the hell do you think you are?"

So I went back around the corner into my yard, thinking that these are really profound elementary questions.

And they are useful for us to ask ourselves.

"What on earth am I doing?"

"What in the name of god (that which I hold sacred) am I doing?"

"And what will I think of next?"

These are questions of accountability. And, as Fulghum concludes, if you can answer these questions and answer them well, you can answer this one, too - "Who do you think you are?"

These are the questions at the heart of a living faith and I share this story because it relates to our Welcome Team Ministry.

Being on a Welcome Team is a way to live into and answer these questions, in our faith, and our lives - "What on earth are you doing?" "What in the name of god (or that which you hold most sacred) are you doing?" "What will you think of next?" and "Who do you think you are?"

Serving on a Welcome Team is so much more than the tasks (important as they are) done Sunday morning.

Being on a Welcome Team is a serving ministry...

As a Welcome Team member, you are serving as...

...Ambassadors of Unitarian Universalism, a generous and life giving faith.

...You are serving those within our walls, and perhaps most importantly, you are serving those who are seeking a faith such as ours. Some of you serve as coffee pourers, others as Welcome Table greeters.

...Through “a gracious and active hospitality” you are acknowledging the spark of the divine in another, saying directly or indirectly, “You have something to offer us; I’m glad you’re here. Welcome.”

...You help orient people to this church - to the building, to our faith.

If you truly engage these questions that Fulghum mentions, and think of them in the context of who you are and how and why you serve the church as a Welcome Team member, something remarkable might happen...something beautiful and holy might take place.

My dream is that Unity’s Welcome Teams will deepen their engagement with people who come through our doors.

So all of this, my comments, Robert Fulghum’s story, all of it - relates to my vision of ministry – which is a contagious, shared ministry, a ministry that connects us to each other, and invites us to serve one another and the larger community.

I have a diagram of what I’m talking about as far as contagious ministry...

Welcome Team Structures 7:50-7:55

*Welcome Team Members (well over a hundred people with 12 Team Leaders) Expectation, unless you communicate otherwise, is that you’ll show up! (Don’t be afraid to ask people to serve on a Welcome Team!)

*Dan and Meg

*Justin

It’s a ministry that goes upward and out from the ministers and staff.

Practice Hospitality (Justin’s version) 7:55-8:10

So I’ve been talking for a while...and I’d like to give you all a chance to practice hospitality.

Find someone in this room, you don’t know very well – practice being Welcoming with one another. Often, when I meet someone, I say, “Hi, how’d you come to Unity, what do you enjoy doing, tell me a bit about yourself?” So take about 15 minutes to connect with someone else in this room – to practice hospitality and welcoming.

Nitty Gritty Overview with Welcome Team 8:10-8:40

Before we jump in to the Nitty Gritty, I want to refocus on the big picture of Welcome Team Ministry...which is inviting people into a sacred and welcoming space.

It's about being present to guests and members, it's about kindness and attentiveness.

I say all that, so you don't stress all the details these lengthy master cheat sheet handouts that cover all aspects of the Welcome Team Ministry.

I'd like to move through it pretty quickly, but feel free to ask questions!

And also, I would encourage you and your team to cross train – so that you can serve coffee, or usher, or be at the welcome table!

Many of you have been doing this for years and years...with many hands, it's light work! Share the work – and invite others to join you on a Team – there is nothing as powerful as a personal invite!

Questions and Answers

8:40-8:55 pm

Closing Reading:

9:00 pm

As you serve as a Welcome Team member, I invite you to think and feel through the eyes of a stranger, or even a long time member...

How do you want to be when you greet people and welcome them?

What hospitality or sense of love do you want to incarnate?

Who are you, and how are your values lived in this Welcome Team Ministry?

As always, I'm open to your ideas for change and making things work better.

I have a closing reading.

I began our time together with Robert Fulghum and I'll end with him, as well.

Speaking to a room of 6000 people, he said, "This room, and there are 6,000 of us here, are people who meet Josiah Bartlett's [former Starr King School for the Ministry president] criteria for ministry: in the world, eyes and ears and hearts and minds open, trying to be useful. . . . I know you came to see me, but I have come to see you. We come to this place because we need each other, we need to see each other, we need to touch each other, we need to smell each other, we need to hug each other.

We need each other.

So we come to this place. We come to work, to talk, to sing, to laugh, to dance. We call this a religious community, not because this convention center (or this room, I would add) is holy ground, but because what we do here, what we say here together, and what we are here, makes it a sacred gathering.

May it be so in our gathering and in our welcoming – amen – and thank you for coming!