

“Preparing Your Community for Spiritually Motivated Social Action” Wendy Craig-Purcell

*Spiritual Social Action Workshop
2007 Unity Peoples' Convention*

Introduction by Jane Simmons

I'd like to introduce to you a wonderful member of our Spiritual Social Action Ministry Team. Rev. Wendy Craig-Purcell has been an ordained Unity minister for 27 years. Wendy pioneered a church in San Diego, CA nearly 25 years ago and it has grown to a large community of 1400 on Sunday. She became involved nine years ago with the Association for Global New Thought. She's on the leadership council for that organization.

AGNT has been on the leading edge in moving New Thought in the direction of spiritually motivated social action; for years they've been “taking action” as well as spreading the New Thought message. They've brought forth such events as the Season for Nonviolence and the Synthesis Dialogues, and were instrumental in Unity's attendance at the Parliament of World Religions, a few years back, in Spain.

We are very blessed to have Wendy's expertise on our team. She is a member of the Education and Training subteam, which is looking at resources for teaching. We're very glad you're here, Wendy. I'll pass the mic over to Rev. Wendy Craig-Purcell.

Keynote by Wendy Craig-Purcell

Introduction

I am honored and thrilled and excited and humbled to be sharing with you today something I feel very passionate about. And I realize that I'm probably speaking to a very wide range of people, in terms of the kinds of involvement that some of you are already engaged in, in your ministries locally and globally, around this topic of spiritually motivated social action. I also realize that some of you here today may be asking how to go into that whole arena, especially if you personally, as a minister or a board member or lay leader, have some passion for that.

How do you bring your community along into that idea, in a way that continues to nurture your ministry itself, strengthen your ministry, and not breed any division or any unnecessary upset? It's my intention to speak to some of those things today, with “Preparing Your Community for Spiritually Motivated Social Action.” Here are the points we're going to cover:

1. What is Spiritually Motivated Social Action?
2. If your congregation has done nothing in this area, or very little, how do you ease into it, and how do you get buy-in for it?
3. How do you align social action with Unity principles? How do you speak about this without getting too political?
4. Where and how do you begin?
5. What are the benefits to the local congregation?

There is no question that something's been happening in our movement over the past four years. One of the advantages of being in ministry for a long span of time is that you get to see and feel the changes in our movement. And that's very, very exciting. For me to be at this point in my life, both personally and professionally, and seeing the maturation in our movement of Unity and then also in the broader New Thought movement, is encouraging and inspiring.

These are the very kinds of things we're talking about now: there's a workshop on this topic, there's a committee with 40-plus people on it, we heard from James [Trapp] and we heard from Charlotte [Shelton] today about the social action in the world, about staying true to our teachings, staying true to

our principles, lifting up our voice in the world, and taking that beyond however we define our local spiritual community. Taking that out into the world.

That hasn't always been the case. We have not always been having this conversation. Not only is this new, but I'm seeing and feeling something new in the last year. There's an openness and an excitement around it, and not so much needing to convince people.

Do any of you notice that as well? Have you been feeling that? How many of you have felt like jumping up during the presentations just in these last couple of days and saying, "Oh, my God!" There's an echoing of something that we've been feeling and sensing and now it's out there as a voice.

Before getting into these actual points, I want to share about how I got into this aspect of my ministry. Because it is somewhat new for my ministry also.

Part I: Personal Story

First Synthesis Dialogues – Dharamsala, India

In 1998 I had joined and become involved with the Association for Global New Thought. And in 1999 I was part of the leadership council that created the first Synthesis Dialogues. That was a five-day gathering where the Association for Global New Thought had convened religious and spiritual leaders and leading thinkers from around the world and across various spiritual practices and religions. We had convened them in Dharamsala, India, to meet with His Holiness the Dalai Lama, and to discuss world issues. How do we change the world, from a spiritual [perspective]?

That was my very first time to travel out of the United States. And to go to India as your first experience is a pilgrimage. I came back *deeply* changed. I thought I was going to come back deeply changed by the experience with the religious leaders and His Holiness, and certainly that was a beautiful experience. But what profoundly changed me was what I saw and felt as I got out of my own culture and saw how so much of the world lives. As I saw and felt and smelled and walked among poverty like I could not imagine. It touched me in such a very deep way, and it linked me to our principle of Oneness in a way that I had never felt before. For me, it was the living proof that we are absolutely One. That there is absolutely one presence and one power and one human family. The pain I felt, seeing what I had seen, made it very difficult for me to re-enter my life as it had been before, and deal with "Where is the intersection of my faith, my spiritual practice, with the conditions of the world?"

I felt not just an emotional pain, but I felt a huge personal responsibility for what I had seen. I was haunted by the thought, "I have helped to create this." Not consciously and directly, but by not being more aware of the circumstances of the world that I live in. And by every choice I make, every decision, every action I take. It became irreconcilable for me. I could not shut off what I had seen or felt, and I couldn't say it was separate from my spiritual faith. It became the *natural* extension, for me, of what our teachings of love and compassion are.

So that was my personal experience. And I wrestled with the pain and the heartache of that for quite some time. As I wrestled with it, I noticed that the way I talked on Sunday mornings, the kinds of examples I started to use, the kinds of books I started to read, the kinds of personal choices I was making in my life were changing. When you're being your authentic self in ministry, you can't help but pull from your own life experience. What's changing and moving in you as the spiritual teacher comes out in what you say and what you teach, and therefore begins to have a rippling effect in your community, and begins to subtly but deeply shift the culture and the focus of the community.

As a community we started talking more about global ideas. Not just about "Unity's message needs to get out in the world"—I support that, I believe that—and not just "Boy, we should have more and more Unity churches doing great work in the world"—I support that, too. But something slightly different which carries all that: the application of our teachings to the world's issues became a conversation, not just for me, but my board and my staff and members in my church.

Third Synthesis Dialogues – Rome, Italy

Fast-forward to the year 2004, to our third Synthesis Dialogues in Rome, Italy. We were able to invite members of our congregations to join us. From the Church of Today, the church I serve (we're now called the Unity Center), 60 people took that trip. While the Association for Global New Thought, the leadership council and myself were working on the Synthesis Dialogues, our 60 members were touring Rome. They were supposed to be on a tour of the Vatican at the very time that President Bush was coming in to meet with the Pope. And unbeknownst to them in advance, our 60 people from the Church of Today, and about 100 people from the other churches, found themselves trying to get to the Vatican but blocked by an enormous peace rally. The tour guide tried many times to move the group through this very well-behaved peace march, but the people wouldn't part. And rather than diverting the group, members of our church said, "Let's join them." So all of these people from our New Thought churches that had joined us for the Synthesis Dialogues were now taking part in a peace rally in Rome as President Bush and the Pope were meeting.

By the time I finished my responsibilities for the Synthesis Dialogues, and I could meet up with the members of my community—we were taking a bus somewhere—there was a murmuring and excitement on the bus. The conversation was, "We've got to do something when we go home." Two of the 60 people from my church, John MacNeill and Christine Elliot, had previously attended a conference, at which Marianne Williamson talked about the Department of Peace legislation that was appearing before Congress. John and Christine had done nothing about that idea when they had first heard it; but after being part of this peace march, they got back on the bus, and the other Church of Today people and myself were a captive audience. They said to me, "What are we going to do? It's time that we do something about the Department of Peace at the Church of Today." The whole bus started talking about this, and turned to me and said, "Can we do this at the church?"

I had an internal split. Have you ever had that, where your heart says "Yes" and your mind says, "But, Oh my God, do you know what you might be saying 'Yes' to?" You know, "Couldn't you have picked 'Feed the Hungry'? Or couldn't you have picked something a little less potentially risky than 'Department of Peace'?"

This talk isn't meant to be about the Department of Peace, but it is about how we got into spiritually motivated social action. It is why I feel I have something to offer in terms of how to step into an arena that could be challenging. And I can't think of any more challenging one than the one we stepped into. I think we did it beautifully, very successfully, very spiritually oriented, very much with Unity principles and practices at heart, and legally responsibly.

Church of Today and the Department of Peace

When the trip ended and we came home, the idea wouldn't let go. When the conversation continued, "Can we do Department of Peace at the Church of Today? Can we support the effort to establish a cabinet-level position called the Secretary of Peace? Can a church get involved in that?" we realized we had a couple of options. We could say, "No, we can't do that." We could say, "Well, yeah, we'll give you some space, and you guys can meet and do what you want to do, but we won't really publicly endorse it, or say a whole lot about it." Or, we could try to make a decision as a board that we were going to bring it fully into the heart of the ministry.

So we had some *really* long conversations as a board as to what was the right thing to do: What could we do legally? What was ours to do spiritually? Why was this idea holding onto us and not letting go? We had conversations about the consequences, what would be the upset. "Isn't Unity just about personal transformation?" and "Who will we lose if we say 'Yes' to this?" (San Diego's a *very* conservative town. Our ministry is literally within walking distance from the main entrance gate to Miramer Air Station. From the second floor of our building you can see the faces of the pilots as they fly over for their demonstrations.) We talked about issues like, "What does it mean when we say we stand for peace? Where do we draw that line? If we're going to lose people, wouldn't it make more sense to lose people around things that really matter, than things that don't really matter?"

Please do not hear me as saying you should go out and “do Department of Peace.” I’m not suggesting that’s your work to do. But I think we as spiritual leaders are compelled to look very deeply at why we would say ‘No’ to something. Are we saying ‘No’ out of fear of upset, or can we say ‘Yes’ to those things that we are clear are solidly within the congruency of our message?

So we made the decision, we said ‘Yes’, that we were going to be fully involved in the Department of Peace. I want to describe briefly what that meant, and that we also went about it very responsibly.

We got a legal opinion. What we could do, and what we couldn’t do. For those of you who’ve never had to get a legal opinion, it’s not just going up to an attorney and saying, “Give me your opinion on this matter.” You actually pay significant dollars to have attorneys research what you can and cannot do and put their response in writing. We paid for a legal opinion to educate ourselves, and in very typical attorney legalese, the letter we got back told us all the things we *couldn’t* do. And what’s left was what we *could* do. We learned, for example, that we can *educate* any spiritual community on issues, and even on candidates. But absolutely no endorsing. So we’re not interested in doing anything around candidates. But we were very interested in educating, at least providing the opportunity for our people (those who wanted) to know something about this thing called a “Department of Peace.” We were told, legally, we could educate around “Here is a piece of legislation.” So we have done a lot of education around that.

We also learned—this was a surprise to us—that a congregation can even do a small amount of lobbying. It’s a bit of a gray area, though, because “a small amount of lobbying” is defined, not in a black and white numerical figure, but in words like “a small percentage of your revenue.”

So we got clear we weren’t going to invest dollars, but we did make space available, we made our copier available. I would make announcements from the platform: “There’s a meeting being held to educate about the Department of Peace,” and so forth.

The very first time we held an informative meeting, 70 people came forward and attended. The next time, when we decided to host a state training day, 145 people came forward. It’s grown from there, to the place where it’s not so much a Church of Today activity anymore. The meetings still take place there, I still speak about it from time to time, but it’s now grown to include so many other New Thought churches in San Diego, so many other organizations. The two leaders, John and Christine—to bring it full circle, they became the leaders of our initial involvement with the Department of Peace (and I’ll speak about why it’s so important who your leaders are)—were eventually recruited away from our local area into becoming the state coordinators, and they’ve done enormous work. They have a mailing list of 7,000 people, that has its roots in the decision our board made to say, “Yes, we’ll take the risk. We feel this is ours to do, to take a lead here.”

To bring this back to the heart-space—because that’s what really moved in me and brought me into this whole arena—I’ve never seen myself as an activist. I don’t even see myself as an activist *now*. I see myself as someone very committed to the wise and compassionate application of our teachings beyond just my community. Even if that means I have to push through some of my own fear, and worry about how to do that.

Why are the voice and practice of New Thought so silent and so invisible when it comes to solving the problems we face in the world today? That question has haunted me.

I think we’re at a very exciting time in Unity, because we’re at the crest of what’s going to change within our movement. Charlotte spoke of Unity Institute and all the new things that are coming forward. Our credibility is going to be so much greater than it has ever been before, which is important in our voice being heard and our teaching articulated beyond our pulpit ministries. We’re at a point where a lot of this is going to be changing.

So let’s move on to the first point, defining our terms.

Part II: Powerpoint Presentation

1) *What is Spiritually Motivated Social Action?*

“Spiritually motivated social action” is the intersection of three things:

One, the broad range of social work we do in the world, related to the well-being of all sentient beings. It could be issues of justice, race, it could be around the issues of nonviolence, of hunger, of poverty, the planet.

Second, the personal motivation—I’m going to speak quite a bit about that, the consciousness for that work—why we’re doing the work. [Link it to Unity principles and core values.]

And third, how that work is actually carried out in the world. I believe that “spiritually motivated social action” is not the same as normal activist work, not at all. And it’s not the same as charity or good humanitarian work.

The social work we do is the “what.” You may already have a sense of what that social work in the world is for you or your ministry to do. Some of you are already doing a lot and maybe there’s a next step for you, or an expanded area of work for you to do.

“How” that work is carried out in the world is the process of doing it, with our personal motivation or consciousness for the work. For example, *how we work on the issues together becomes as important as what the issues are*. If you leave here today and only take from what I share with you that point, that would be the most important one. That’s the one that changes qualitatively whatever the work is that we’re doing. That distinguishes it from regular activism work in the world, or charity or humanitarian work. *How we work on the issues together becomes as important as what those issues are*.

When our board made the whole-hearted, prayerful decision that we were going to say ‘Yes’ to supporting those in our church who wanted to work on the Department of Peace—and it wasn’t everybody, but there were enough that really wanted to do it—we knew we needed to be prepared for upset. Also, we could never lose sight of the fact that how we chose to be in relationship with each other, as we dealt with whatever came up, was going to be the most important learning. It was more important than whatever work we could do in the outer world to help support the establishment of the Department of Peace. So anytime there was upset, anytime somebody said, “Well, I don’t think we should do that,” or we got a nasty letter that was signed (so we knew who to respond to), we *would* respond and we would talk through the whole rationale, the whole process, what we were standing for, and so forth.

In socially motivated social action, we recognize and use our power to co-create the world we envision. We use our practices together. For example, when we did the first state training day, we had the representatives from the national headquarters for the Department of Peace come and give this training to the 70 people, the 145 people who showed up. They were the people in our community who said, “I want to learn how to talk about the Department of Peace, and how to write letters, and how to support getting this established.” During the state training day, there was a point where they’d given us all of the information and then they broke us into several groups by areas of interest, and the trainer said, “Okay, I need a volunteer to be a chair for this committee.” Have you ever done that and the room falls silent? That happened.

One of the things we practice in Unity is to get prayerful, and to help people touch their heart-space and be in prayer and ask: Is it their head that’s saying ‘No’, is something moving in their heart that is Spirit? Give Spirit a chance to say, “Tag, you’re It, Jane.” So I interjected in that training session, to this person who was not spiritually motivated per se, and said, “You know, can we stop this and do a spiritual process right now? Can I lead us in ten minutes of prayer and meditation and ask Spirit to move through this community, and see if there’s anyone that is being called to step into leadership of this particular committee?” There were four people whose hands got raised at the end of the process. Tiny little example that, no matter what we’re working on, that seems to be about work in the world, to remember we are Unity first. How we would deal with a problem or a question or an opportunity or an

upset from *our* tradition of spiritual practice and principle. And it worked! They used it a few times after that, I understand.

In spiritually motivated social action we're *for* something and against nothing. I know you know this. This language is important to use within our communities, though. I don't know if this is true for you, but it is true about me and I'm trying to change it: I have this tendency to think if I say something to a group of people once or twice, they get it and I never have to say it again. I'm learning that's not correct. I'm always personally looking for effective language I can use when I speak about issues, something as simple as "We're for something, we're against nothing." We speak about that when we have these Department of Peace meetings. As these have changed and become filled with people that are not Church of Today people, we've had an opportunity—and it's not always been easy—to try to model Unity to people who have come into the work because they have an interest in the Department of Peace. They're coming to it from a politically activist point of view, and that's not what we're supporting. We get to teach and practice and model Unity with them, and if they're not comfortable working on that project from the Unity point of view—guess what happens—they just don't "stick," they don't stay, they go to work some other place and some other way.

We fully utilize our spiritual tools and practices in the work without trying to convert others to our philosophy. We're clear that in the work we do in the Department of Peace we're not trying to get people to come to our church. We said 'Yes' to that project because it, to us, makes so much sense as one way—not at all the only way, and not a perfect way—but as one way to support a more peaceful, nonviolent world. But our intention isn't, "We're going to do these things because we want more people to come to our church."

2) If the congregation has done nothing in this area, how do you ease into it and get buy-in?

I think "preparing the field" is the most important piece. If you have not done anything in your communities and you're wanting to step into something that feels kind of big and is going to require a stretch of you, this would be the second-most important point that I suggest you take home with you. Preparing the field is critical. Here are some actions to help prepare the field:

Always link what you're doing with a core spiritual value or principle.

We would consistently bring conversations about "Why is the church doing something around the Department of Peace?" back to our core principles and values of peace and nonviolence. We would say, "Although it's not perfect, it's not the only possibility, we think it's the best one out there that can help turn that level of leadership to thinking in a different way, to have a voice, at a cabinet level." A position that talks about peaceful, cutting-edge, peaceful nonviolent solutions to domestic and international problems. So we would always link it back.

Keep reassuring people who disagree with you that they don't have to participate just because the church is getting involved.

This was really important. My experience has been, when people get afraid of a new direction that the church is moving in, some of their fears are that the church they loved won't be there for them anymore. I see part of my role and part of my staff and board's role as nurturing the new life that is wanting to come into a ministry, whether it's a new program or project, as being a cheerleader. But also at the same time supporting a respect for our past. We would talk with people, "It's not an either-or." Not everybody was going to be interested, or able in a time commitment-way perhaps, to be involved in this thing called the Department of Peace. We're currently looking at a Fair Trade Bazaar, at micro-finance. I spent a week with a board member in Sonora, Mexico, learning about the Gramine Foundation there, because the same feelings that we had around the Department of Peace are bubbling up inside of me and my board around this idea of micro-finance. So we're deeply educating ourselves about it. That one is going to be a whole lot easier because there's not the political aspects about microcredit. It makes so much sense and is so spiritually sound.

But we're going to have to reassure people that, just because this is an offering and an involvement of the church, doesn't mean you have to be involved in it. You don't have to pick and choose. It might seem obvious to you as ministers or as leaders in your communities that people don't have to choose, but you have to keep reminding them. When they're afraid, their fear causes them to think, "I'm going to have to choose, and I don't want to do that thing."

Be clear on how you language things.

If you need to spend some time in prayer, figuring out how you're going to word things, then do that and get real consistent in whatever that language is going to be. And then share the languaging with your key stakeholders: your board, your staff.

Keep painting a bigger picture and invite people to step into it.

This is so powerful. When we start preparing the field in our communities that we're feeling the call to do more, we want to invite people to step into that. It's a little like saying, "Where would we stop God's love and compassion from flowing through us?" How many of you have gone through growth cycles in your ministries where people were saying, "The church is getting too big"? When I used to do church growth workshops at our Center, one of the pieces of languaging I would offer ministers to use in their communities, when people would say that, is "Who would you suggest we close the door to? The days right before you came, people were saying the same thing, and if we had closed the door when they said that, *you* wouldn't have come through the door."

So painting a bigger picture and inviting people to step into it, helps the energy to keep moving forward. Helps to minimize the upset. I think there comes a point in our spiritual growth and education where we don't hear any more new ideas—we know what the principles are, you might hear it in a different way—but you're not hearing anything drastically new. What *is* different or where the real application is, however, is when things get difficult and we use our spiritual practices and maturity to work through those difficulties.

Recognize and seize the many teachable moments.

When someone is challenged in the direction that you want to go, or there seems to be a lack of resources, or whatever is happening, recognize that as a teachable moment. Stop and ask yourself, "What is a spiritual principle or practice that I need to apply here?" Make it become your spiritual laboratory, your learning center. For me, probably more than anyone else in this room, that's to *be patient*. It just takes time to prepare the field.

3) How do you align social action with Unity principles? How do you speak about it without getting too political?

The point that I had shared earlier, from our legal opinion, was that you can educate on issues. I think that's a very healthy and important thing to do. Not just the issue that we were educating on, the Department of Peace, but on any issue where there is an intersection between the issue and what you believe Unity is teaching at the level of principle—inclusivity, love, compassion, peace, nonviolence. Those are personal questions you and your board have to get clear on. For example, what do you really mean when you're saying, "We believe in peace and nonviolence"? To what extent are we going to stand by that? When you're clear on that, or whatever the issues are, then you can start educating on some of the pieces of legislation, or some of the ways to deal with the issues.

On very sensitive issues, I would not educate directly, from the platform on a Sunday morning. My personal practice is that's not the purpose of the platform. I believe the purpose of the platform can be to speak about those kinds of issues more generally, and then invite people into a place where there can be a conversation that's a two-way dialogue. Otherwise it's unfair, I think, for a congregation to hear something that could be construed politically, and not have a chance to say, "Wendy, what did you mean by that?" or "I disagree," or "I just don't understand." You can do some of those things privately and start

to get your community, if you feel guided to do this, talking about the intersection of our spiritual practice and principle: if we're going to be congruent, then we've got to be congruent even when it isn't so comfortable.

Outreach, or involvement in the world, is a natural extension of who we are as spiritual beings. It's not something separate from our teaching at all. When you're trying to educate to some of the issues and trying to teach where there is that intersection, it's a great place to practice the higher teaching of being patient and inclusive, and to model inclusivity and compassion and patience. In your mind and in your tone of voice and actions not making that other person wrong—you know it is a tough one. I found myself saying again and again, "If we can't learn to do this in Unity, if we can't learn to have these difficult conversations in this spiritual community, then I personally have no hope that it can be done in the world." I remember saying that a couple times from the platform, and many times in a board meeting, and frequently in other gatherings. If we can't even have the conversation in Unity, in our spiritual communities, where we say we love one another, then I don't have any hope that we can do it in a world that doesn't have that love and doesn't have that practice.

We need to get clear: Are we *really* trying to convince the other person that they have to do what we think? If that's not our agenda, if we're really okay with them disagreeing with us, then we can stand in that practice much more easily and say, "I want to have that difficult conversation with you, and help *me* see it the way that *you* see it." This is, to me, the deep teaching that we get to practice, holding that kind of conversation in our communities, which probably does more teaching to our members than anything we could say on a Sunday morning.

4) *Where and how to begin—a possible process*

Start introducing the idea of social action in your Sunday messages, speaking about what's moving in you and how it's a natural extension/evolution of the teaching.

We have a place to talk about it more generally in our communities. You can start to gently introduce the idea, and what I mean is, you don't say, "We're gonna go talk about ____ issue," or "We're gonna start doing..." You don't do that. But if something is moving in you, then speak about that. And pay attention in your prayer life, and pay attention to what you see moving in your congregation. People are going to come to you and you're going to find if there's agreement or support among a small group of people for what's moving in you.

Get board leadership buy-in of the broad field of activism, not just approval for a specific project. This was another key piece when we as a board made the decision for our involvement with the Department of Peace initiative. We said, "We realize we're stepping very publicly into the whole broad range of spiritually motivated social action." We had done shelters and collections, made backpacks and sandwiches, and so forth. But it had never been at the level of "This is a whole thrust of our church now, that there's a part of the world that we need to care for and apply our spiritual teachings to." So we had buy-in for the whole concept of spiritually motivated social action and we use that term a lot now in our ministry.

Select an issue or area or project in the social arena that speaks to you.

That "you" could be just you as a minister, or it could be you and the board. Where is your passion or interest? Is there an issue or theme that seems to be bubbling up in your spiritual community? Or your geographical area? You might consider joining some already successful models or opportunities, like those that are offered by the Association for Global New Thought; I only mention that one because I'm more closely involved there and I know those better. There may be many opportunities emerging in Unity, so it's not saying you have to go outside of Unity. (There's no "outside of Unity," anyway, but that's another topic.)

Do your homework, do due diligence.

I think this is only necessary if you're stepping into something that could be perceived as political. I am very protective of my congregation, I am very protective of my character and my reputation, and anything that I put my name to or speak about I have researched to the nth degree of what's possible for me. I am a stickler for, "Do your due diligence; your first commitment is to the well being of your spiritual community. And you don't put it at risk." That means if you don't know what you can do, then you find out from a reliable source what you can do. And you don't deviate from that.

Search for quality leadership for the project.

This is much more important than quantity. We never would have said 'Yes' to the Department of Peace if we were not 100% sold on the character, integrity, and spiritual maturity of the two people who were going to launch it.

Keep teaching to the idea that what we work on is only part of the picture. Equal to it is who we are together as we do social work in the world.

Again, I said this is the most important thing. Ongoing education and open dialogue to dissent are very important. What we work on is only part of the picture. Equal to it, perhaps greater, is who we are together as we do that social work.

5) Benefits to the local congregation

Greater self-esteem. Spiritually motivated social action increases your congregation's self-esteem.

Greater visibility in the community. Absolutely greater visibility, not that that's a reason you should do it. I don't think spiritually motivated social action should be motivated by that.

Possibility of attracting a more sophisticated, mature, and capable group of people.

Did we lose people? Yeah, we happened to have lost our second highest financial contributor to the church when we said 'Yes' to the Department of Peace. Would I do it again? Absolutely, I would. And I believe the board would, too. We are attracting a whole different quality of leadership that we've never had before. People who have said, "I know these teachings, and I practice these teachings, but I don't want to come to a church that's not engaged in doing something in the world."

Retaining those who are looking for greater meaning, purpose and involvement in their lives. They're looking for something more than just ushering!

Giving your people a place to grow into.

Fun!

You tend to attract people with higher leadership skills, and greater emotional maturity. It's a powerful way to match passion, interests, knowledge and skills with service opportunities.

This is important. This is also where, in our Unity churches, we have a gift that I don't think we've recognized. Activism through a Unity or Religious Science church is powerful because we have a stable community. People come to our ministries—and I don't care if there's just 20 of them or 2,000 of them—who are connected with the teaching, connected with us, and connected with each other. When you get that kind of field working together on any project in the world, it's powerful to the project they're working on and deeply satisfying to the people who are working on it. To work on an issue or for a cause you believe in with your spiritual soulmates is juicy. And spiritual communities have an established delivery system. Martin Luther King Jr. did it well.

In closing:

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has. –Margaret Mead