

The Congregational Body: Head, Heart, and Hands

A sermon by the Rev. Bill Phillips

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Introduction:

Over the past several months I have been particularly aware of the amazing human body. My open-heart surgery and triple bypasses have caused me to become very respectful and fascinated with the healing process. I have even gone back and refreshed my memory of human anatomy. (I must confess I was neither a gifted, nor dedicated science student in high school or college.) I almost flunked physics my final quarter of college---(tell story of Dr. Paul Blair.) Today, I want us to think about the human body and the congregational body.

I. Basic Anatomy

About a dozen biological systems:

Skeletal	Respertory
Muscular	Reproductive
Cardiovascular	Lymphatic
Digestive	Integumentary (skin, hair, nails)
Endocrine	Immune (Our protective system)

Excretory

Nervous (autonomic control system)

This wonder-filled body of ours is also made up of primary organs.

These organs do important work for us day-in and day-out all our lives.

We simply cannot do without them. Think about our primary organs:

Our brain Our liver

Our heart Our pancreas

Our lungs Our stomach

Our bodies are the most complex and efficient machines on earth. It is amazing that most of them work quite well for about 75 years. (But remember we cannot withstand bombs or bullets, starvation or dehydration---there are limits to the abuse the body can tolerate.)

II. Our Congregational Body:

Thinking about our individual bodies led me to begin to think about our communal body—this congregation of Unitarian Universalists. Our congregation is also made up of interconnecting systems and organs. Our congregation has organs also: a brain, a heart, hands and feet.

Our brain trust is the UUCG Board of Trustees, made up of the four officers: a president, a vice-president, secretary, treasurer and three members at large (the minister is ex-officio with a voice but no vote). This group is in charge of thinking, planning, and decision-making.

We elect the board members of the congregation for two-year terms. These seven members are the head of the UUCG Body; the thinkers, planners and decision makers. They need and deserve our support and our appreciation.

I believe the heart of our UU body is our Sunday Service. The Sunday service is where we express our feelings of concern, hope, fear, anxiety, despair, and connectedness. It is on Sunday mornings that we come together to experience our need for each other, our frustrations with our culture and ourselves. Hopefully, we also receive inspiration, caring, and a sense of belonging. I like to think this is one place that I can know I am with loving friends who will help me live my life more joyously and more courageously. Church ought to be a place to recharge your batteries, give yourself a break, feel loved, and think new thoughts. The heart of this body called UUCG is our beloved community of acceptance, which gathers on Sunday mornings.

I think our teams are the hands and feet of the congregation. This is where we put our faith into action. Our Social Justice Team uses their hands, feet, brains and heart to bring our message of worldwide connectedness, equality and hope to our community, county, and state. If you want to work on issues of justice and equality this is the team to join. I will not cover all the teams, but some of the other action and service teams that do the trench work of our congregation are: Hospitality, Membership, Programs/worship, Caring, R.E., Building and grounds, Finance, Marketing & Communication, and our newest team—The Search Team. (Let me say a word or two about this very important team. They will spend many hours preparing us to select the next minister. Please support them and please support the next minister. He or she will be coming to us with a fresh start, new ideas, and a lot of talent. However, they will make mistakes like I have made, he or she will need your support, encouragement and respect. Please give them the love and appreciation you have given me. Believe me, the pastor wants and needs your love and your support.) The UU teams are where we put our head, hearts and hands into action and service. I hope that each one of you will volunteer to serve on one team during 2011 as a part of your commitment to the congregation. Whether you are a team member or not, please support and

encourage those who are providing leadership, doing planning, and serving the community in our name. This is church business is a team effort!

Conclusion: So what is the role and job of the minister? For me it is similar to the coach of a football team or the manager of a baseball team---to understand, to teach, to motivate, and to encourage every member to be all that they can be. I hope I have done that well.

This is my last pep talk to you. Here are my final two sentences that I would put on the team room wall, I hope you remember them:

“A UU congregation is a caring, cooperative, and creative community rooted in the seven principles.”

The second is a simple statement of faith: “Love is Our Doctrine, Truth is Our Sacrament, Service is Our Prayer.” It has truly been a pleasure serving you and I thank you all for your love.

Amen

