

First Unitarian Church of San Jose Iraq War Presentation

Slide #1

“The title of my presentation today is:

Using Our Statements of Conscience as Organizing Tools

Conscience without action is meaningless”

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Slide #2

People want to make a difference

- Far too often, our congregations make statements of conscience that do not include a commitment to take action.
- When we do this, we undermine the real power of conscience: ***to move people to action.***
- The people that make up our congregations DO want to make a difference.
- Making a congregational commitment to take a stand on an issue can be a very powerful motivator.

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Slide #3

Following the decision-making process

- In late November of last year, it seemed that we urgently needed to come up with a SOC on the looming war with Iraq from our church, to add our voice to local opposition.
- Rather than forcing a statement on the congregation quickly, we chose to go through our congregational decision-making process that lasted more than a month.
- We held discussions and engaged the congregation in the process of coming up with a SOC that would represent us all.

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Slide #4

The Vote

On Sunday, January 12th, 73 members of the congregation came together and after an hour of mostly wordsmithing, **unanimously** voted for a SOC that committed us all to “work together to stop the war.”

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Slide #5

Initial Conclusion of SOC on upcoming war on Iraq

We urge our government and our countrymen and women to talk and walk the path of peace.

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Slide #6

Final Conclusion of SOC on upcoming war on Iraq

In the process, we decided to add one important sentence:

We urge our government and our countrymen and women to talk and walk the path of peace. ***And we, the members of this congregation, commit to work together to stop this war.***

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Slide #7

Clear intent

- Please note, we did not agree to “voice our opposition,” “make moral appeals” or “reflect on the meaning of war in our lives.”
- We agreed to “work together to **stop the war.**”

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Slide #8

A mobilized congregation

On Saturday, January 18th, more than 130 members of our congregation joined with 200,000 opponents of the coming war on Iraq in the largest march in San Francisco since the war on Vietnam.

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Slide #9

We gathered early Saturday morning to carpool up to the protest in San Francisco.

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Slide #10

We designed and printed a 10 foot by 3 foot banner to walk behind and make our opposition to the war visible.

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Slide #11

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Slide #12

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Slide #13

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Slide #14

It is a beautiful banner!

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Slide #15

Many of the youth from our congregation came out to experience what democracy really feels like!

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Slide #16

The banner reads:

The First Unitarian Church of San Jose

Promoting respect for the interdependent web of all existence.

(We chose that principle because it could be used in just about any circumstance.)

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Slide #17

Our ministers, Reverend Lindi Ramsden and Reverend Lilia Cuervo.

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Slide #18

Our elders also represented!

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Slide #19

So did our middle-aged folks!

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Slide #20

And our Spanish-speaking ministry was also well represented.

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Slide #21

200,000 protesters is quite a site!

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Slide #22

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Slide #23

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Slide #24

My seven-year-old daughter, Arianna and me.

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Slide #25

Experiencing People-Power

- I would say that at least 1/3 of the folks from our church that attended this rally were our youth.
- I can't imagine a better lesson in what real democracy means than being a part of a 200,000+ person protest!
- I highly recommend this kind of hands-on teaching to all parents in the audience!

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Slide #26

Making History

- By joining with millions around the world, we were all making history.
- Dr. Robert Muller, former assistant secretary general of the United Nations: "Never before in the history of the world has there been a global, visible, public, viable, open dialogue and conversation about the very legitimacy of war".

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Slide #27

Carrying on the conversation

- Just because the US invaded Iraq, it does not mean that this conversation needs to end.
- Our congregations are the perfect place to keep this conversation alive.

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Slide #28

Nonviolent alternative to war

- I would like to close by suggesting that we, as a movement, begin studying the vast history of nonviolent struggle and become experts in how and why nonviolence has or has not worked in the past.
- The only way we will ever be able to end war is if we develop an effective alternative.
- Nonviolent struggle is that alternative.

(end presentation)