



# Using Our Statements of Conscience as Organizing Tools

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*Conscience without action  
is meaningless*



# People want to make a difference

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- 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.



# Following the decision-making process

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- 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.



# The Vote

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- On Sunday, January 12<sup>th</sup>, 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.”



# Initial Conclusion of SOC on upcoming war on Iraq

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



# Final Conclusion of SOC on upcoming war on Iraq

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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.**



# Clear intent

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- 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.**”



# A mobilized congregation

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- On Saturday, January 18<sup>th</sup>, 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.





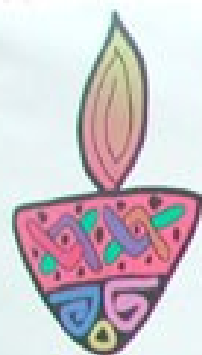
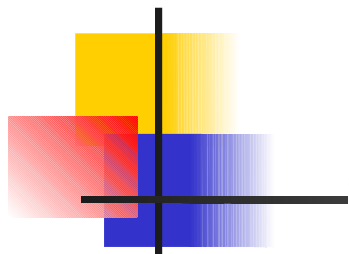










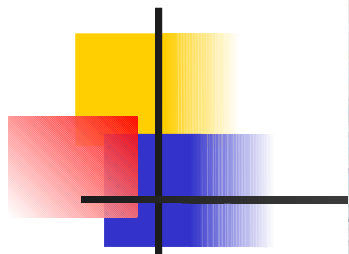


# *First Unitarian Church of San José*

*Promoting respect for the interdependent web of all existence*





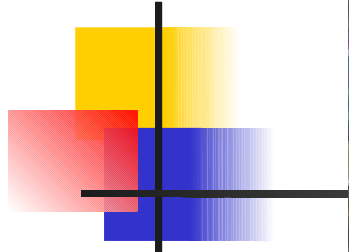


























# Experiencing People-Power

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- 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!



# Making History

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- 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".



# Carrying on the conversation

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- 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.



# Nonviolent alternative to war

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- 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.