

Dear UCC Education Consultants, *Faith Practices* writers, AUCE members and Partners in Education:

Greetings in the name of our Stillspeaking God!

Thank you for your incredible investment of work in envisioning, creating, using and sharing *Faith Practices*, a monumental project and transformative resource for our congregations and for the individuals who experience it. Your commitment, advocacy and concern for *Faith Practices* are deeply appreciated.

During the past month when the UCC Education Consultants and the Coordinating Committee of the Association of United Church Educators (AUCE) were here at the Church House in Cleveland, we had several opportunities to discuss what's happening with *Faith Practices* and what we envision for the future.

I'm writing to summarize comments I shared with several during this time in order to clarify what we see, at the time being, for the future of the *Faith Practices* process and product.

First, I want to reassure you that we are not abandoning *Faith Practices* at the end of the third year. We all have invested great time, resources and finances into this project which we think can be a cornerstone in transforming the faith formation process in congregations. We also realize that this process of transformation will take time.

We will, however, be taking a breather, a time for the church to catch up with all that is and will be available by next fall. But, yes, we will not immediately be taking up new writing teams, but will be maintaining and massaging what we have, and ascertaining needs and next steps for any future writing processes. Since *Faith Practices* was never intended (nor marketed) as a linear, year-sensitive curricula, but a resource with multiple jumping-in places, we feel there is and will be ample material available.

We will be entering into an initial assessment review of the use and impact of *Faith Practices*, including an evaluation of the financial investment (and the return on that investment) before pursuing additional writing. This will also provide time for us to glean learnings from our Faith Formation Research Project in 2012, currently underway.

As you know, the original plan called for a second set of practices that built on the first 12, using the same titles but with different foci (e.g., a second "Keeping Sabbath" but through a different lens and with different activities). I would like time to rethink this concept and perhaps pursue 12 authentically different practices, should we move forward. So, there is obviously some assessment, review and perhaps rethinking that feels necessary at this time.

I'm also interested in the possibility of creating "addendum resources" that promote creative use of *Faith Practices*, such as "Using *Faith Practices* to Revitalize Your VBS" or "Using *Faith Practices* in Worship" or "How *Faith Practices* Can Jumpstart Intergenerational Ministry." There is a factor of folks being overwhelmed with the sheer quantity of what is available and people feeling inadequate to knowing how to utilize *Faith Practices* in various

settings of church life. Therefore, in short, we envision some new resources and trainings (through investment of additional dollars) that will help people unpack the resource itself. In addition, just maintaining current product with accurate URLs and swap-outs of outdated activities will be an ongoing investment of staff time and energy.

Dave Schoen and I would like to use the gifts of AUCE and the Consultants to help us teach and promote use of *Faith Practices* via seminars and webinars. In our discussions, they expressed eagerness to serve the wider church and *Faith Practices* in this capacity.

I also believe that our new price structure (\$300 subscription instead of \$600) seems to be much more in keeping with what churches could/would be willing to pay, since recent stronger sales seem to be reflecting this. Once *Faith Practices* is available in its entirety, we will explore making it a “complete congregational online resource” rather than a subscription (i.e., customers pay \$300 and get all of *Faith Practices* to keep – with no time limit). This would enable us to roll out a less complicated purchasing experience, provide more choice for congregations and, on the cost-saving side of things, enable us to reduce our outside web-hosting costs that the current multi-tier, multi-option purchasing plan requires.

I hope my thoughts and comments on the present and future of *Faith Practices* have helped clarify our commitment and vision for this resource. I look forward to further discussion and communication with the Consultants, AUCE, writers and Partners in Education. I also encourage your participation in the National Listening Campaign for Christian Faith Formation, as well as a more in depth review that Kristina Lizardy-Hajbi, Minister for Christian Faith Formation Research, will be doing in the year ahead.

More than anything, I appreciate your continued commitment to and work with us in promoting and resourcing *Faith Practices* in the years ahead.

Blessings,

Ben Guess

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