

October 14, 2011

Rev. J. Bennett Guess
Local Church Ministries
700 Prospect Ave.
Cleveland, OH 44115-1100

Dear Rev. Guess:

As promised, following our recent conversation during the Association of United Church Educators Coordinating Committee meeting, we are following up to express our enthusiasm for the opportunities provided by Faith Practices. This is a resource which has the potential to move local churches into new approaches in faith formation.

We believe the “breather”, currently scheduled in the production process, may continue a spiral of decline in both sales and interest in the project by local churches. A confused marketing approach and the delays in making the practices available to local churches resulted in initial slow sales. Congregations were forced to make alternative choices when the first four practices were not available prior to the beginning of the 2010 program year, as originally promised. Ongoing delays are causing a lack of trust and frustration in local churches seeking to utilize the resource with some of the promised flexibility.

Initial marketing of the resource has been inadequate. In conversation with Proclamation, Identity and Communication staff, it is clear that members of the marketing team were “out of the loop” as the resource was being developed. As members of that team are now involved in the process, it is our hope that an intensive effort will be made to market and publicize Faith Practices as a flexible resource which can support faith formation in both traditional and transformative ways. AUCE could assist in promoting Faith Practices through their Website and Facebook page. Additionally, members of AUCE could share workshop templates and other interpretive materials. AUCE values collaboration and partnership and is willing to work with Proclamation, Identity and Communication staff, as deemed helpful.

Clear communication between members of staff, persons seeking to introduce and interpret the resource, and local churches is essential to the overall success of Faith Practices. Information shared in conversations, written communications and information available on various Websites should be consistent and transparent in an effort to re-build trusting relationships. Mixed messages

about the duration of the project are not helpful in developing a long term user base.

Allow the education networks of the United Church of Christ to work on your behalf by providing unambiguous information about how the project will proceed and we believe you will realize an increase in market share.

Congregations currently using Faith Practices often describe the resource as being of exceptional quality and outstanding value. The variety of pricing structures during the first eighteen months of availability and recent price reductions for Faith Practices raise questions about the value and the quality of the resource, and suggest a lack of real investment in the resources by the denomination. Please make careful and considered decisions about future pricing for the resource which support the inherent quality and value of the product.

Faith Practices is a resource critical to this time in the life of the church. It is a resource that has the potential to transform language, models and approaches to faith formation. It is imperative that Faith Practices continue to be available as a resource for local churches, who may only now be coming to a realization of the transformative potential these materials hold for the entire congregation. We look forward to working with you on this important matter and on future formational endeavors.

Blessings and Peace,

Members of the AUCE Coordinating Committee

Debbie Gline Allen, CM

Lisa Hart

Rev. K. Ray Hill

Anne Hodgman

Cynthia Hoeger

Rev. Rebecca Johnston

Rev. Susan Steinberg

Carol Wilson, CM

Rev. Ellen Witko

Karen Ziel, Minister of Christian Education

cc:

Rev. David Schoen

Barbara Powell

Rev. Kristina Lizardy-Hajbi