

Next Steps

—Richard L. Kiniry

As most members know I am planning on retiring soon, and while that news is not as earth-shattering as Global Warming, it will be a significant change for the Society. Of course how I handle my departure from the position of Leader of the Society will be a reflection of my character and to tell the truth, I may have trouble keeping my mouth shut about the direction of the transition.

There is a mountain of literature on leadership transitions in religious congregations. And although we aren't a normal religious congregation, the Society's Board is taking the advice of the experts on the subject. The Board will of course tailor that advice to our needs.

I have offered June 2011 as my departure date and between now and then there is an enormous amount of work to be done. A survey of all members is planned plus a very careful process for selecting a Search Committee that will have the challenging job of searching out and selecting possible worthy candidates.

This can be a very exciting time for all of you. An essential part of the process is the expectation that all our members and friends will be involved in this work. The whole focus and direction of the Society will be examined and you will have the opportunity to have your needs addressed as the Society moves into the future. The Society can be an important part of your life if you make it so, if you make it work for your better self, if you make it work to enhance your relational and spiritual journey with life.

And by the way, the entire process will be open to a membership vote. The Nominating Committee will offer a slate of trustworthy members to serve as the Search Committee and the whole membership will have an opportunity to vote on that slate. And any candidate the Search Committee chooses will need to be accepted by the membership.

While all that is going on I will continue in the role of Leader and since this will be my last time to present as a whole my view of Ethical Humanism, I will be shameless in pressing my opinion that our philosophy has power to change the world. It is a rational, naturalistic and humanistic understanding of living that can be the foundation for a more respectful, honest, sustainable and satisfying approach to living for everyone.

With that in mind, I will during the year address many aspects of everyday living. I will start in September with a foundational talk entitled "The Failure of Religion." It will be foundational in that I want to start by situating the Society as a "religious" community. Since religion is supposed to be that part of the culture that offers an understanding about the meaning of life and about how to live a good life, it appears that religion has failed at its job. Meaningful living does not seem to be a cultural priority and too few people are taking responsibility for the world we are making. My questions will be, are we doing better? Have we faced reality? If we know of a better way of living and I think we do, are we doing it or are we, like so many other religious groups, saying one thing in the "sacred" space but in our living accepting the escapists' consumer values of the larger culture? If our agenda is making a better world, where do we start?

In the following months I will discuss particular issues: our relationship with the natural environment, raising children in a media-saturated reality, what we can personally do about economic inequality, a new understanding of maleness, redefining work, achieving an honest spiritual life and accepting our

failures.

I anticipate a year of lively conversation, but of course conversation with a productive focus. We have work to do as we create the next stage of the life of the Society. I hope you can get involved in the fun.