

Ministerial Musings

Giving and Getting

You know it's time to talk about this, right? It's time for our annual "pledge drive". One of the things people often cite as something they don't like about "church" or institutional religion is the focus on money. It is sometimes seen as unseemly to ask for money, let alone, suggest how much people might "give".

And sometimes mixing money and religion puts us at risk of thinking about congregational life as a business transaction; people start to think of what they're giving as if purchasing something.

But giving money to The Unitarian Society is not like buying a car or a new pair of shoes. It is more like investing in your beliefs, putting your money where your heart is. Of course you do "get" something in return, but sometimes it is not a tangible thing, and often the level of your return on this investment ebbs and flows. That's the nature of our lives.

Contributing money to a religious institution - and in particular this congregation - is an act of faith. Faith in who we were - in the history and the people who established and nurtured this congregation almost 60 years ago. It is faith in who we are, the community we create and sustain; the community that nurtures us. And faith in all we are yet to be - in the possibilities our religion unleashes when we live it fully; in the future we cannot yet know.

It is not crass or unseemly to focus on how each of us can support this congregation. This generosity I speak of is about giving - giving something tangible that funds the programs and purposes of this congregation. And it is giving of yourself, too: investing your whole being, as best you can, in sustaining this congregation.

And the money you pledge and give is not just measured in dollars and cents. As terribly important as your generous pledges and contributions are, there is something more happening in this than simply writing a check. Because when you give you are investing a little bit of your soul - or at least I hope you are.

It's not just about buying what you like, or paying for only the parts of TUS that you "use", that you think you benefit from directly. The thing is, even if you aren't an active part of a sector of congregational life, your contributions support those programs or efforts, and you benefit from it all. For example, maybe you don't have children in Religious Education or your kids are all grown up and moved away. Even if that's the case, it is important to support TUS fully so that we can fund and provide a strong Religious Education program for all those other children and families who are a vital part of our community; and for all those families who have yet to come through our doors.

When we give generously, give with confidence and hope, giving deep from our hearts and not just our wallets, we are increasing the good. We are sharing the love, we are making sure this congregation is here and strong now. And we are strengthening the foundations for the future.

In the faith, with hope and love,

-- Rev. Susan