



I know that some of you probably aren't thrilled to see me at the pulpit this morning, because you know that I'm probably going to be asking you for money. And you aren't wrong. For those of you that don't know, I've been the chair of the Stewardship team for... well, this is my 6th (and final) year. The Stewardship team is charged with raising funds for the church in the form of pledges. You pledge how much you will give over the course of the next fiscal year, and the Board of Trustees uses that number to build the church's budget.

I first came to this church nearly 34 years ago. It was a much smaller congregation then. I arrived with a few dollars in my pocket to put in the offering, and was really surprised to find that there was no offering! The same thing happened the following week. It took months before I found a small glass box to put my donation in (and then it sat there for quite a while; I guess I wasn't the only one unable to find that box!) I eventually learned about the pledge drive and how to give to support the church. Since then, we've added a weekly offering and have tried a few ways to share-the-plate.

Nowadays, many of us pay via automatic payments and most of us are continuing pledgers, meaning that we intend to roll our pledge over to the next year and will let the church know when we want to make changes. The challenge with continuing pledges is that the needs of the church change, but our giving may not. It's so easy to just let it ride. This next year the Board of Trustees would like to increase the budget by 9%. That can only happen if we increase our pledges.

I mentioned how the church has changed over the years, but so has my giving. As Dawn & I have become more committed to this community our giving has increased. Our giving to this community will continue to change. Beginning with this next fiscal year, Dawn & I will both be retired, so our income will change. And at some point down the road we will be faced with RMDs. How many of you have to take Required Minimum Distributions? And how many know that they are a tax deduction if you give them directly to the church? If you don't know, look around, these are the people to ask.

A wise friend once told me that an organization like the Sierra Club can raise funds from all across our country, but Unitarian Universalist organizations really only have us UUs for support. That gave me pause. Dawn and I looked at our giving and reprioritized it so that most of our giving is local. Who will give to our community organizations other than those that live here? And those organizations are also held accountable by us, their donors. This is even more true of this church. 88% of the money that keeps this church open and allows us to have programs and choirs and all of the things we do together, comes from our pledges, our giving of ourselves. Look around this room... and say thank you.

If I were audited as to where I donate my time, and where Dawn & I give our money, I would hope they say, "This is a person who values learning, who cares for her community and all of the people in it, and who really loves her church."

In faith,
Sharon Hale
Stewardship Team chair

3/3/24 worship service