

*Stewardship Truths ~ Providence General Assembly ~ c. Rev. Vail Weller*

**Stewardship Truth #1: Stewardship is a spiritual issue**

- It is a profound privilege to be able to help people link their most dearly-held values with their resources
- The issue for us is not simply how to get people to “give more money to the church” but rather, how to use all of the resources at our command to craft lives of meaning and purpose.
- Each year, Americans see and hear 38,000 ads for consumer products. This is heady competition for the annual stewardship sermon! Stewardship cannot only be discussed once a year.
- STEWARDSHIP IS AN ALL-YEAR CALLING TO A NEW WAY OF LIFE.
- “We give to many causes.” It’s true; UU’s are known to be civic-minded. This is because UU values guide our lives. We aspire to live our faith in the world each and every day.
- It is quite possible that the other causes one supports are a direct result of one’s UU values.
- It is our job to help inspire congregants to put their giving in line with their values.
- Invite people to fund their spiritual community first. Let this serve as the foundation for their other giving.
- All of the causes we support are important, but they likely flow from our UU principles. Invite people to give 5% to the church and 5% to other causes.
- Help them to claim the fact that their UU principles are primary.

**Stewardship Truth #2: We have the money to give**

- Unitarian Universalists are statistically the second highest in income level of any faith group.
- Of other religious groups, where do you think we fall in terms of giving to support our own faith? Dead Last.
- Financial planners claim that middle class Americans could double their charitable giving to all causes, and not notice the slightest difference in their daily lives.
- We have the money to give. This means that the resources for every ministry you are called to offer, for every program you might dream up, to bring on the best staff you can imagine, to do more social justice than you thought possible, the most spectacular outreach and ministry in the larger community... is all right there in your congregation. BELIEVE IT.

**Stewardship Truth #3: “Ask and Ye Shall Receive” - We must ASK for money in order to receive it**

- It is not automatically comfortable for everyone to talk about money. The truth is, you work your way into being comfortable by doing it. Practice asking within your canvass committee. No, really. Practice. Asking. Fake it until you make it.

- Understand where you yourself are coming from. What are your experiences from within your family of origin about money? *What was your family's culture and attitude about money as you were growing up?* Have your canvass committee folks spend the first 30 minutes of your next meeting discussing this question and reporting back to the group.
- It is important to meet people where they are with the issue of money, yet we need not be shy about giving them the opportunity to participate fully in the community through giving.
- We tend to not want to exclude anyone who may not have the ability to pledge at a high level. That is important: everyone needs to be included...but this also includes those who could (and should!) be pledging much, much more.
- We recommend you ask people to commit 5% of income to the congregation with the stated goal of 10% over time.
- Keep in mind: the most significant population within your congregation in terms of culture change are new members – think carefully about how you are setting the culture for them in terms of giving, and who is asking them.
- Bottom line: We need to be better about asking, expecting, and inspiring people to put their values in line with their resources.

**Stewardship Truth #4: Giving is not a logical decision. It is an emotional decision.**

- The decision to give does not come from the head or even the wallet; it comes from the heart.
- Of course, a few people always want to see the budget before they make their pledge. Have it available, but don't focus on it in a big way when you are doing your annual pledge campaign.
- We recommend you call it a *Financial Statement of Mission* rather than a budget
- Abundant giving is about inspiration and lives being transformed through challenge to live a different, more values-centered life.

**Stewardship Truth #5: Unitarian Universalism is at the heart of our lives**

- This faith has obviously changed your life. You have come to Providence to sit in a convention center to think about your congregation's health and how to strengthen it.

- Why do you stay involved? How has your life changed since you became part of this movement? These are questions you should consider and share with others in your church.
- The more our congregations are places where lives are transformed (and the more we are comfortable with asking!), the more we will experience abundant giving.
- As leaders in stewardship, we must provide opportunities for people to reflect upon the importance of the church in their lives and invite them to give in line with their values.
- It begins with the leaders. Have these conversations with your leadership.
- Leadership really matters. Board members should be expected (and asked) to pledge at a sacrificial level (5% - 10%) and to be visible leaders in terms of giving and generosity. Your minister should absolutely know what people pledge, and should be deployed to do strategic asking within the congregation.
- Ensure that your giving is in line with your values, and then have these conversations with others in your church.
- Our tradition is at the heart of many of our lives. It is worth our support, and our sacrifice.

**Summary Stewardship Truths:**

- Stewardship is a spiritual issue.
- We have the money to give.
- Ask and Ye Shall Receive.
- Giving is not a logical decision; it is an emotional one.
- Unitarian Universalism is at the heart of our lives. May our giving reflect these truths!

- So the last BIG TRUTH is that our tradition is at the heart of many of our lives.
  - This faith has changed your life in some way. You are an involved leader in your congregation; so much so that you are here inside in a hotel conference room to learn about stewardship!
  - I want to invite you to think about how you became involved in Unitarian Universalism, and why. I want to ask you how your life has changed since you became part of this movement.
  - Our tradition is at the heart of many of our lives. Let our giving reflect this truth.
  - The more our congregations are places where lives are transformed, the more we will experience abundant giving. As leaders in stewardship, we must provide opportunities for people to reflect upon the importance of the church in their lives and invite them to give in line with their values.
  - It begins with the leaders. Go home and have these conversations with one another and ensure your own giving is in line with your values, and then have these conversations with others in your church.