

Stories of Generosity

These are just a few of the many stories of generosity from Association Sunday 2007 that have inspired us and shown us the power inherent in the strengthening of our common bonds.

From the Kearsarge Unitarian Universalist Fellowship in New London, New Hampshire:

The Kearsarge Unitarian Universalist Fellowship in central New Hampshire is small and somewhat isolated. Their minister, the Reverend Emily Burr, has been working for some time with the congregation to connect with the wider world of Unitarian Universalism. Association Sunday has provided them with a way to do so. For them, the board's decision to give the plate to the UUA was a big first step as it was the first time they had ever agreed to give any of the Sunday collection away. They are now growing their sense of connection and their spirit of generosity. Their donation may be small, but it is an invaluable step for them and a promising sign for our movement as they reach out to connect and to give to something larger than themselves.

From the First Unitarian Church in Cleveland, Ohio:

Rev. Daniel Budd is the minister of the First Unitarian Church in Cleveland, Ohio, with a membership of 449. On October 14, he will conduct a worship service on "Growing Our Faith" and take a special collection as part of Association Sunday and the *Now Is The Time* Campaign.

Rev. Budd's support of Association Sunday is also a reflection of the way he serves as minister of the First Unitarian Church. He likes the title "Association Sunday" and the idea of connecting and affirming our common bonds and purposes as an Association of Congregations. This is because he feels himself to be connected with other Unitarian Universalists, particularly his colleagues in our ministry. Rev. Budd says that every Sunday sitting in his church study, just before he goes out to the pulpit to start the service, he says a prayer for all of his colleagues who he knows have been laboring mightily—to share their souls, to prepare a sermon and service, and to inspire their congregations.

Rev. Budd's gift is to inspire us to remember we are all connected, and to remind us of the spirit and purpose of Association Sunday.

Stories of Generosity (continued)

From the [UU Fellowship of Northern Westchester](#) in Mt. Kisco, New York:

On Sunday, December 23, the oldest member (about 90 years old) of the Unitarian Universalist (UU) Fellowship of Northern Westchester in Mt. Kisco, New York, carried the *Time* “Person of the Year” issue with him as he rose to light a candle during the Joys and Concerns portion of the service. He turned to the UUA’s ad, and with tears in his eyes, said that seeing it brought him incredible joy, that he could not recall having ever seen an ad for Unitarian Universalism before, and that it was “about time” that he did.

The Rev. Michael Tino reports that the Fellowship has welcomed steady streams of new visitors since September 2007 who cite the *Time* ad as their reason for coming.

As a result of the Fellowship's renewed energy, the congregation decided to split their entire collection for the month of January with the Association Sunday portion of the *Now is the Time* Campaign, a gift they share with the Association and our whole family of congregations.

From the [Liberal Religious Educators’ Association](#) (LREDA):

The first annual Association Sunday was scheduled for October 14, 2007, a Sunday when most Religious Education Professionals would be attending their annual conference, and thus unable to participate with their congregations. The members of LREDA graciously accepted the Unitarian Universalist Association's (UUA’s) apology for this scheduling conflict, as well as the offer of having a special Sunday service during their conference with Association Moderator, Gini Courter, as speaker.

The service proved a great inspiration. LREDA members took the opportunity not only to connect spiritually with our Association of Congregations on this day, but to support Association Sunday financially as well. They diligently worked to find a way to contribute to this fundraising effort, despite the fact that the conference rarely, if ever, includes a special collection. During the closing session of their conference, LREDA members chose to pool their resources in support of Association Sunday, and collected 57 checks totaling \$3,369.00.

The members of the Liberal Religious Educators’ Association meeting in San Antonio, TX, demonstrated their graciousness, professionalism, and commitment to all aspects of our movement. We deeply appreciate their persistent, pervasive, and inspirational leadership.

Stories of Generosity (continued)

From the [River of Grass UU Congregation](#) in Plantation, FL:

The River of Grass Congregation has only 114 members, but makes up for its size with incredible vision, inspirational leadership, and a deep spirit of generosity. As a member of the Annual Program Fund Committee, the congregation's minister Naomi King has demonstrated her strong leadership in our Association. When asked to elicit support from her congregation for Association Sunday, she did so with alacrity, and stellar success. In order to inspire members of her congregation to give, Naomi and her partner made a large pledge, and vowed to add \$10 for every person who showed up for services that Sunday. She also asked the board to participate in Association Sunday by authorizing the special collection, and by making a leadership pledge themselves.

At the service, Naomi said:

Our congregation's Board has felt this test of our emergency "faithing" system, of our connections to this tradition and to each other, was so important that every member of our Board has already pledged their support to Association Sunday. I am now giving from the abundance with which I have been blessed and am now giving until it feels good. That is leadership. Giving until it feels good.

Naomi generated enthusiasm for this special collection by "greening the plate" and talking up the spiritual importance of being generous.

When asked how this small congregation raised so much money Naomi said, "It may simply be the culture of Florida congregations loving our Association of congregations and especially the River of Grass feeling strongly about our Association. Some of it may just be the Spirit."