

GENEROSITY PRINCIPLES FOR UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATIONS

Low financial giving is the problem most easily solved in churches and the problem that many church leaders are convinced cannot be solved. Churches recover from their poverty syndrome when their leaders learn to focus on two goals, not one: (a) helping people grow spiritually and (b) providing sufficient resources for their congregation's mission and ministries.¹

According to Herb Miller, author and recognized authority in congregational effectiveness and planning, describes the various principles that high-per-capita-giving congregations use in achieving these two goals. These principles, or variations of these principles, are of value to Unitarian Universalist congregations seeking to create a culture of generosity among their members.

- *Giving to religious organizations springs from a motivation and calling that differs somewhat from giving to other secular causes and organizations.*
- *Strong financial stewardship leads to heightened morale and feelings of satisfaction among the congregants.*
- *Giving is learned behavior. People decide to increase their giving because they are asked to decide.*
- *Year-round stewardship and effectively run annual budget drives are essential in sustaining the congregation.*
- *The focus is on the need of the giver to give rather than the need of the church to receive.*
- *Building the operating budget is best done after the annual budget drive is completed rather than before it begins.*
- *The minister has a central role in preaching and teaching about effective stewardship, based on compelling faith principles, mission and vision.*
- *Many people are involved and engaged in the stewardship program and annual budget drive, and are well supported and equipped to do so.*

A top motivator for people to give generously to their congregation is *gratitude*. The challenge for professional and lay leaders is to create an environment and ministries for which people are grateful.

¹ Herb Miller, *Nuggets: Volume 5: How to Increase Financial Stewardship*, 2007, www.theparishpaper.com, institutional subscriptions available, \$150. Adapted with permission by Laurel Amabile, Director of the Annual Program Fund, UUA Office of Stewardship and Development, July 2008.