

## Paying it Forward...Literally!

February 12, 2017

We only ask for money one time a year...and that asking lasts for 365 days!!! ☺ We don't even take off for Christmas. We are always open for business! ☺

Why do you come to UUMAN? Why was I called to ministry? To address flooding basements? Cryptomeria trees that strangle water main inlet pipes? Falling ceiling tiles, mold remediation, crumbling floor in Fellowship Hall, sound and audio system challenges?

...and to talk about money???

Yes! (*sarcasm*) These are things that we have longed for; and we have been rewarded because there's so much of it to address!

It reminds me of a story related by Rev. Richard Gilbert. He writes:

It was standard procedure in wartime to have a runner who moved among the platoons gathering intelligence. On one occasion a particular runner returned to report to the commander. The commander asked, "Well, how does it look?" The runner, an irrepressible optimist, replied enthusiastically, "We can attack in any direction, sir. We're surrounded!" (Richard Gilbert, "The Prophetic Imperative," p16)

And often it feels as if we are surrounded by so much stuff to do...and it seems to be so deep that it seems never-ending! We can attack in any direction!

In the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of the Super Bowl last week, the Falcons defense seemed to be surrounded and out flanked by Patriot receivers.

Although the outcome was very sad, I believe that sometime soon the future Falcons will win the Super Bowl. And when that happens some of the players and coaches will say,

Remember how the inexperience of those earlier Falcons cost them that Super Bowl against the Patriots; and before that, remember how bad the Falcons were? Yet all the while, they were building. On all fronts they were surrounded yet they were preparing the way. Despite the injuries, disappointments, changes in direction; they were preparing the way for our future victory.

When the Falcons do win (hopefully sooner rather than later), they'll be getting their Super Bowl rings. All the players and coaches – those who actually participated in the game-day victory – will be lining up to get those gaudy rings. Of course, we won't be getting them however. We didn't play in the game; we weren't members of the team. We aren't the Falcons.

But we're something they're not – and that's us. We are the members of UUMAN....And I believe that we too can ultimately be victors in our own right. Of course, along the way, there will be disappointment, loss, sadness and an occasional injury.

And, in victory, the future members of UUMAN will say,

Remember how dysfunctional they used to be? Remember when they had that water fountain that never worked...for years? Remember that time when UUMAN had no endowment, no spare cash to pay for any emergency? Remember when they had to pass the hat for just about anything? Remember the time when they survived the sudden passing of their minister?

Yet all the while, despite the disappointment and hurt, the UUMAN members of the past were preparing the way for our future. They were paying it forward so that we might ultimately have a chance for victory.

Paying it forward isn't simply a nice thing to do. Paying it forward isn't simply doing the future generation a good turn. Paying it forward is Justice.

Sen. Elizabeth Warren said:

There is nobody in this country who got rich on his own. Nobody. [...] You moved your goods to market on the roads the rest of us paid for; you hired workers the rest of us paid to educate; you were safe in your factory because of police forces and fire forces that the rest of us paid for.... Now look, you built a factory and it turned into something terrific.... God bless. Keep a big hunk of it. But part of the underlying social contract is, you take a hunk of that and pay it forward for the next kid who comes along. (Benen, Steve, "The Underlying Social Contract," *Washington Monthly*, Sept. 21, 2011)

Many of the leaders in the women's suffrage movement in America were Unitarians. In the 1830s Unitarians like Margaret Fuller and Julia Ward Howe advocated for women's rights. Later Susan B. Anthony, born Quaker but who attended the Unitarian church in Rochester, NY; was a prominent leader in the suffrage movement.

Fuller, Howe, Anthony, along with others - the Grimke sisters, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucretia Mott, Lucy Stone and many more, dedicated their lives for the rights for women – and for a

woman's right to vote.

They dedicated their lives to the cause yet not Fuller, Howe, Anthony, the Grimke sisters, Stanton, Mott, or Stone ever got to vote themselves - their whole lives! Each one of them went to their graves never having voted! In every moment, in all that they did, they were paying it forward for us...so that we could fully participate in our democracy.

It is Justice that we too pay it forward for those who follow.

A. C. Miles writes:

Whine about money at your own peril. If you have some savings and are able to pay your normal living bills each month with money left over for movies and eating out, you are better off than almost every UU church I know. There is no amorphous "they" in a church spending "your" money. If you want to deny your friends' children new curricula and well-lit, well-heated areas to learn and play at church, then look those little kiddies in the eyes and say so. Otherwise, take part in the process to make your church successful in its mission. (Auspicious Jots)

Ouch!

"Take part in the process to make your church successful in its mission." Raising money, collecting rents and fees, doing fundraisers has nothing to do with the actual mission of the congregation. Yet it is undeniable that without money, and an organization of some sort, fulfilling that mission is impossible...it's fantasy.... You simply can't get something for nothing.

In my ministerial search process last year, while evaluating the churches to which I could potentially apply, I took it upon myself to calculate a rough estimate of each church's actual pledge level.

At the time, by my rough calculations, UUMAN's average pledge was \$1,977. This was 16% lower than the \$2,370 average of the other churches in search. This average represents about \$200/month.

On Sunday, January 15 we kicked off our 30 days of love campaign which runs through Valentine's Day. And at that time we said that we'd be kicking off two social justice initiatives where we'd be actually doing something - not just talking about issues - to pushback against this New World Disorder.

- Family Promise was here last week and we are gearing up to do our first hosting of homeless families in April.
- North Fulton Community Charities will be here on March 12. We couldn't get them in here earlier. But we will be formalizing our relationship with them where, in addition to those who are already working with them as individuals, we will be working with them as a congregation every month.
- Our new Earth Ministry group is already forming relationships with local elected officials and are knee deep in issues advocacy.
- We are beginning to form relationships with the local Citizens Climate Lobby – another thread of climate justice and advocacy.
- We had a couple dozen members attend the Women's March in DC. A couple dozen more marched here in Atlanta.
- We also had a strong presence at the MLK March. (Nice new picture of some of our children at the MLK march is on the front page of our website.)
- I happily represented UUMAN at Standing Rock in December.
- We are also looking to start a young adults program here as it still a huge hole in our mission. But we're going to give it a go.

The whole point of all this is to say that we no longer appear to be accepting the status quo here at UUMAN. We are on the move. In a political climate that terrifies many of us. We are not sitting back. We are not being passive. We are going to be active participants and resisters. And we will do whatever is morally and ethically necessary to live our principles in the world.

Many years from now, future UUMAN members will think back to this time when crucial decisions had to be made. Did the members of UUMAN accept the status quo or, as Theodore Parker said, did we "protest against this [New World Disorder] and trample it under our feet?"

We are on the move. It takes time, talent AND treasure...not time, talent OR treasure. You can pay your pledge any way you like. Most people simply pay monthly during the course of the year. Right now, all we are asking is how much you will pledge between July 2017 and June 2018. Hopefully you can inform us of this pledge level by the end of the month.

Here are the four most convenient ways to inform us of your pledge:

1. Hand your completed pledge form, sealed in the provided envelope, to your Pledge Coordinator, Mike Chambers, or Bob Popp. (They are your sacred trinity of stewardship.)
2. Place the sealed envelope in the UUMAN mailbox of Bob Popp (treasurer) or Mike Chambers (stewardship). Mailboxes are located across Fellowship Hall in the office hall across the hall from my office.
3. Mail it in. There's a label with UUMAN's address on the envelope in your pledge material.
4. Put your completed pledge form, sealed in the provided envelope in the offering basket as it passes.

Please be as generous as possible but make sure that you and your families are financially healthy first.

I'd like to give a special, heartfelt thank you for those of you who stepped up to give to the "There Campaign" in recent weeks. You raised approximately \$20,000 that we can use to complete some projects that have been left undone for a considerable time. Thank you for your generosity and for your trust.

A couple of years ago, a friend of mine was trying to get me to attend his church. I checked out their website. I knew the church wasn't for me but I noticed that they were in the middle of a capital campaign and their pastor had written the following on their website:

We ask that you prayerfully consider what you can pledge financially. If [this church] has been a blessing to your life, it is because someone in the past thought of you, prayed for you, and gave for you....[Someday, our future members] will stand upon the shoulders of your love and sacrificial giving. On behalf of those [future members], I thank you for your faithfulness (Pastor John Nuzzo, Victory Family Church, Cranberry, PA).

And I thank you for your faithfulness and for the blessing of being your minister.