



ransforming Times



Stewardship
January 2011

*The Journal of the
Unitarian Universalist Church of Tucson*

Stewardship in congregations has been equated with financial giving. Yet, stewardship is about something more than charitable giving. It's also about caring for what we've been given. Think about this: Not a one of us alive today raised a single finger to create the earth and all her abundant resources. These gifts are given to us simply by virtue of being alive. Traditional theology uses the metaphor of God's good creation being entrusted to human care. In turn, humanity must trust in the continual abundance of God's good gifts. Taken as metaphor, these ideas ring true.

We are entrusted with gifts that come from sources beyond ourselves. We, in turn, must trust sources beyond ourselves for our continued existence.

I don't know about you, but I'm pretty darn certain that I can't cause the earth to turn on its axis, can't create a beautiful sunrise, nor can I cause a seed to germinate and grow into fruit or grain. I may be able to create favorable conditions for seeds to germinate and plants to grow, but germination and growth are processes beyond my control, as is the rotation of the earth.

I can develop in myself a sense of awe and reverence that these things do indeed happen. I can allow awe and reverence to deepen into an attitude of trust. I can recognize the power I do have in creating environments of care for these miraculous gifts.

This is the heart of stewardship: care and trust – trust and care.

There's a paradox in the idea of stewardship. It requires both holding on and letting go. Much as we are called to be stewards and protectors of what we've been given, we also must trust the abundant flow of earth's bounty – trust that there will always be more. There will be another harvest. There will be more seeds to sow. There will be another day of sunshine. There will be more rain.

The giving of financial resources is part of stewardship. Giving is an expression of trust as much as it is an expression of care. Generous giving obviously fills a practical need. After all, money is the currency of exchange in our culture. It's the means by which we make things happen, the means by which we acquire the necessities of life. When we give, it means that we trust in the flow of abundance. Even in lean times, if we are alive and breathing, it means that we have indeed been given the necessities of life.

The opposite of stewardship is reckless disregard, or lack of care for what we've been given. We live at a time when the reasons for acting as good stewards of the earth's resources are clear. Too great to ignore is the evidence that we've pushed the limits of the sustainability of human life on our precious planet too far – depletion of old-growth forests, pollution of air and water and land, diminishing farm-lands and disappearance of fertile top-soils, unchecked human population growth, extinction of diverse species of life – and the changes to global climate patterns that our lack of care has wrought.

The opposite of abundance is scarcity, a condition caused by hoarding, or holding on to more than is needed, lacking trust. We live at a time when more and more wealth is held by increasingly fewer and fewer people – creating conditions of true scarcity for great masses of humankind.

Care and trust are at the heart of stewardship – caring for what we've been given – trusting there will be more.

With care,
Diane

Celebrating Stewardship of the Heart

*Submitted by Kathleen Hogue-
Lifespan Faith Development Director*

Stewardship can be defined as a responsibility to take care of something owned by someone else. When thinking about stewardship, consider the future of our church community. It is easy to understand stewardship when we think of property such as our church buildings and land. We do not really own the church and yet as good stewards, we pledge and give money to ensure that the buildings and land are taken care of. We trim the trees, make repairs, and keep the property clean. But stewardship is so much more than that. As good stewards, we need to care for one another as well. We must be stewards of the heart.

In my last article on the topic of grace I wrote “if not for grace, our church community would not be a place where we all feel safe, welcomed, and ministered to.” I also believe that unless each of us practices being good stewards of the heart, our church community will no longer exist. What does this mean? Does it mean the church buildings and land will cease to exist? No; not at all. The buildings and land will always be there as long as the money keeps coming in but the people who gather there will be perpetual strangers not really knowing or caring for one another.

We need to remember that which brings us to church. We come together in friendship and in sharing. We come together to partake in mutual sponsorship for our common goals. Most importantly, we are a community supporting each person's spiritual journey. Anyone who has children knows that not only do they need to care for the body of the child; they also need to provide for their emotional and spiritual well being. Wow! That sounds like a great deal of responsibility, doesn't it? Consider the words of Jake Bohstedt Morrill, contemporary Unitarian Universalist minister:

“In this generous world, love will come our way now and then. But if we do not plant the love that we have in the firm soil of living relationship, we may be in danger of supposing that it will grow on its own, without our nurture or our small acts of concern. Therefore, let us tend to our small plots, that this harvest may flourish, enough to share not only with our neighbors, but with our enemies as well.”

In our congregation we can celebrate an abundance of good stewards but we are always in need of more in order to achieve long term sustainability. Each and every one of us needs to be a good steward of the heart by offering our love, acceptance and acts of kindness to all who enter our sanctuary and fellowship hall. Through grace we have our church; through stewardship we can ensure that our church remains a place where people feel loved and spiritually nurtured. Are you a good steward of the heart?

Stewardship as a Spiritual Journey

Chris Wallace, Stewardship Committee

Stewardship encompasses a view of giving and receiving, how we understand and appreciate what we have earned, what we have been given, and how we effectively use or manage those gifts and treasures according to our values. Thus stewardship involves how we live our lives, value our resources. It is very much a spiritual journey.

In the next several weeks the Stewardship Committee will be asking questions like: What is so important to you that you allocate your resources to it? How would your giving make you feel more a part of something? What can you contribute and what do you, yourself, need? Hopefully, these questions will encourage self-examination, appreciation and valuation of ourselves and our church community. Stay tuned.

B and G Means Blessings and Grace

Two friends entered the Awareness Room, turned on the lights, and set the cooler. After heating the coffee pot and using the tea, one remarked, "I sent \$250 to the Food Bank, but I'd never give this place anything." As the Buildings and Grounds chair, I suggest we all consider the fundamentals. Despite a good year, we still need more volunteers and material resources. However, let's take a deeper look.

Our committee is about respect. We like one another and enjoy spending time, talking and working with each other. We use a consensus decision-making model to include every voice. We balance obligations and aspirations. Our respect is a statement about UUCT's self-respect. If we value ourselves, if we value our religion, if we honor our traditions, we value and honor our sacred home.

Our committee exemplifies a doctrine not usually discussed in Unitarian Universalism but worthy of contemplation. In Wesleyan-Arminian theology, there is the notion of prevenient grace. We have all perhaps experienced the "Ah-hah! Moment" of a freely given felicity. But what had to occur before we became aware of even the possibility of grace?

This is prevenient grace. A good analogy is Karchner Caverns; we view the grace of the visual beauty, but the work of the natural forces on just the right kind of terrain over so much time, everything that is slow and unseen, is prevenient grace.

Right now, the world is becoming a harsher place for many. One way to mitigate these conditions is to have an attractive, lively, functioning church which embraces its members and friends. Nothing can be done without the foundation which our Buildings and Grounds Committee creates, renews, builds, and repairs. I urge you to join us. No contribution is too small, and if you feel you cannot build and repair, you can create and renew discovering all the time your own limitless capacities and wisdom.

Stewardship reaches beyond money and objects. It entrains relationships and growth—within the self, with others, with the community and with the cosmos. We do not have to feel defeated or overly challenged, but we do have to develop our resources and make our love real in the world. So be generous with your talent, your material gifts, your abilities, and your aspirations. We need you.

Hospitality for the Homeless 2010

Our church, along with countless other churches, partner with the Salvation Army to provide 200 beds a night for homeless men, women and children during the coldest months of the year. We are a part of **Operation Deep Freeze**. I along with Beth Newhouse, coordinate a cadre of volunteers to provide and serve three meals during a series of overnight stays in Goddard Hall.

We are fortunate that a loyal core of folks step up year after year. However, the most difficult job is that of overnight chaperones (man and woman). We've had a valiant few agree to sleep over on multiple occasions. I asked a friend to serve as a chaperone with me on Nov. 29th. He is still thanking me for the opportunity to be a part of this soulful experience. We helped with dinner, slept over, worked the breakfast shift and still managed to put in a productive day at our perspective jobs.

Please consider donating an item, prepare or purchase a dish to share, work a dinner or breakfast shift or serve as an overnight chaperone.

Here are the dates & details (Wednesday evenings thru Thursday mornings):

Dec. 29th & Dec. 30th

Jan. 19th & Jan. 20th

Feb. 16th & Feb. 17th

How can you help? Volunteer to serve and/or provide one of the following for one or more of the dates above:

Dinner: main dish, side dish, dessert, fruit, beverages
Sack lunch: lunchmeat, bread, cheese, chips, cookies, fruit

Breakfast: main dish, breakfast meat, fruit, beverages

What to Donate: package of new socks, travel size soaps, shampoos, toothpaste, toothbrushes

Why did Beth and I decide to coordinate this effort 4 years ago? Because John Stevens asked us when we visited his table to put our names down for one of the dates. He asked if we two would be willing to get the program up and running again. It looked as if our church was going to cancel the program. How I will miss John's dedication and enthusiasm for providing a gracious and welcoming environment for our guests.

We are both single moms, working professionals and try to have a personal life, yet we make time for this... Won't you?

Contact: Erin Deely at edeely@cox.net or at 520-320-7688 Visit our table, in Goddard Hall after the 11:00 am Sunday Services to sign-up

Transforming Times is organized around theological themes. Each theme plays a part in the development of a well-grounded religious and spiritual life. The church's offerings are by no means limited to the themes. They do provide common ground for Community conversation, a way to gain more meaning and depth. We want to hear many perspectives on each theme. You are invited to submit your original poetry, artwork, or short essays of 400 words or less. Be warned: seriously engaging these themes could transform your life!

September: Vision
October: Trust
November: Community
December: Grace
January: Stewardship

February: Justice
March: Hope
April: Credo
May: Ritual
June: Beauty

