

I want to thank you all for taking the time to stay today to vote on our budget proposal for the Stewardship Campaign which we are officially kicking off today. And I want to thank the members of the Board and the Finance Task Force who have put in the hours of discussion and planning that result in what we have before us. On January 31st we briefly reviewed the proposal you have here today and we said we would vote on its content as a goal for the Stewardship Campaign as it began. The members of the Board have made themselves available to the MUUS community to take comments and questions, to listen to your concerns and your hopes regarding this proposal. We have stayed after services and accepted e-mails and phone calls. We wanted to give you time to consider the budget proposal because we know it is a somewhat lofty goal. But it is not this way without good reason in our minds. We wanted you to have the opportunity to consider its content and to consider what it would mean for you personally to commit to such a goal.

What we found was that most of you, save I would say three or four, didn't have much to say to us about the proposal. I was struck by that because we are considering a pretty big step here and I thought there might be more feedback – more questions about this or that line item – more inquiry into our larger goals – you know, to see if what the Board was thinking really represented what you were thinking.

So, we have brought this budget proposal back to you today for a vote. It is unchanged from what we gave you in January because there was no overwhelming outcry to do so. We sat down last Thursday night prepared to make changes to bring to you today, but we realized that no one had suggested that we make any real changes. We were left to believe that you are, for the most part, behind what we have offered as a goal.

Voting yes to this proposal means that you believe that the goal set forth is an important one; a goal that you are willing to work toward. It is not a vote for this budget for the coming year. That vote will take place at the Annual Meeting on May 23rd and, depending on the results of the Stewardship Campaign, that budget may be different than what we have set out to accomplish. But, I want to be clear about this, we have this “aspirational” budget today and we will have a final budget in May. There will be no

“second ask” like last year. We are only doing this once. That is why we have presented the goal to you in advance.

I want to talk for a minute about some of the things that this proposal includes that I think are important. First of all, it is a compromise between the amount of time Rev. Jeanne has admittedly spent with us on a weekly basis and the amount of time that we would like her to be able to spend. We are not in a financial position to support a full time minister right now, but that doesn't mean that I don't hope for that for us. I most certainly do! This is a step in that direction; one that is realistic for us now. It acknowledges that we need a minister's presence for more than twenty hours a week while keeping in mind that we can only afford so much.

This proposal says that we value the work of our other paid staff. We have a dedicated Director of Religious Education who works hard to tend to all of the pieces of her job description in only ten hours a week. If you haven't seen the list I would be happy to share it with you. We are fortunate to have a bookkeeper who has taken on administrative tasks as well; who rarely says she can't do more when asked and usually does it in fewer hours, and thus for less pay than expected! Our Choir Director and Pianist is still underpaid if we go by the standards set by the UUA, but we always have music in our services and I am forever amazed at the sounds that arise from our small, but vibrant choir.

It has been a goal of mine to get us back on track with both the UUA and the Clara Barton District in payment of our dues. While we have always been faithful to the District, this has not always been the case with the UUA. The Board has taken steps to make payment to the UUA in amounts as we are able, still not fully paying, but attempting to do so, which is honored by the Association. This proposal includes full payment to both the District and the UUA, both of which are incredible resources for us as we endeavor to grow and to be nourished spiritually.

There are a couple of areas that may be new to some of you. One is the concept of “giving away the plate.” Research has shown that congregations who practice this type

of giving for community and social justice work increase in both membership and in giving in general. It is an opportunity for us to do some outreach; to put our money where our mouth is, so to speak. And some of you may not know that our upstairs RE space is being used this year free of charge through an arrangement with our landlord. But we can't expect that this will continue to be the case and the Board feels that if we are to be responsible tenants, we need to consider paying for this space that is so vital to our RE program.

I would like at this time to entertain a motion to accept the proposed budget put forth by the Board as a goal for this year's Stewardship Campaign. If there is discussion I would ask that you come forward and speak either for or against the proposal to my left or my right respectively. A microphone will be provided so that we can all hear one another.

Is there a motion?