

Stewardship Testimonial – 2/21/10

We have changed the name of the annual canvass this year to the stewardship campaign. Stewardship is about taking care of something we value and enabling it to grow. When we become stewards, we take responsibility for --- and contribute our time, talent and treasure to --- something we value. It is our goal that this be the start of a process in which we at MUUS can begin to think in the broader terms of committing ourselves and our resources to taking care of the Mattatuck Unitarian Universalist Society, its members, the community in which it exist, and the world we all live in. The seventh UU principle urges "respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part." Stewardship extends this concept to include our religious community as an object worthy of respect and care.

As Unitarian Universalists we share a reverence for life and at the same time accept the responsibility to love and care for the gifts of life. This concept of stewardship calls for us to actively share and invest our resources in the things and people we value, in our families, in our friends, in those in need whether we know them or not, and in the congregation and faith to which we belong. But stewardship is not just about caring for the present. It is also about investing in the future. We hold what we value—including our Unitarian Universalist congregations and institutions—in trust. As stewards, we work to ensure that what we cherish will be there in the future for the benefit of others. Finally, successful stewards not only protect, but help what they value to grow. The message of our liberal

religious tradition is important, it is vital. As stewards of Unitarian Universalism, we share in a message that can bring about positive change in the world.

Stewardship is not about sacrificing. It is about giving. Freely and joyfully. Religion has a role to play in helping people make the connection between making a living and living a meaningful, spiritually satisfying life. It helps us clarify what is truly important and care for and contribute to those things we genuinely value. The act of giving can start a whole cycle of positive events in our lives. We see that we can make a difference. We can become more confident, hopeful, and empowered to take the next step. We create new relationships, discover new perspectives, and make more meaningful connections to our surroundings, all of which helps us to grow spiritually. The giving cycle is positive, affirming and joyous. MUUS provides us with an extraordinary place for this kind of exploration and growth to take place. Kennon L. Callahan, author of Twelve Keys to an Effective Church, says, *“Living is giving. We live life best as we give our strengths, gifts, and competencies . . . We are called to serve, not survive.”*

We hope at the very same time we begin to think about and talk about and practice stewardship in terms other than money, we also can become more comfortable in thinking about and talking about money as a natural part of stewardship. The way we earn our money and the way we spend our money are important ways in which we interact with the world. As Unitarian Universalists, we realize we express our values not by the things we say but by the things we do.

Perhaps some of our attitudes toward money have been shaped by our past experiences with money. Our worst experiences with money are those that make us feel cheated or taken advantage of. Our best experiences are those that make us feel we have “spent wisely,” gotten something of value, or contributed to a greater good. When we commit our money as effective stewards, we take care of and nurture and contribute to something we feel is worthy of such effort, maybe is even a greater good. In these instances, giving is a joyous process, and it has the potential to help us grow spiritually.

It will only be possible to go down this pathway of transforming how we assume the mantle and privilege of stewardship if we go together. Everyone counts. The stewardship campaign itself will consist of one-to-one conversations between members of our congregation about why each of us came to MUUS, the difference we want it to make in our own lives, the lives of others, and the world, and the kind of commitment of time, talent and treasure each of us is prepared to make. We will need some of you to help us in organizing the stewardship campaign itself. If you are willing to help with this task, please let my co-coordinator Ed Edelson know. His email address and phone number are in the directory. Most parts of the campaign effort fit within the area of expertise and enterprise of one of our existing committees. Your committee may be asked to carry out an event or task in support of this process. We need you to help us do this. Some who are invited by another member to join them in a conversation about stewardship may in turn be willing to talk with another member themselves. If you can do this, please do so. Finally, each of us will be given an opportunity in this campaign to think about our own call to

stewardship, what we are able to commit to that, and the potential it offers for increasing the joy and meaning in our own life.

Thank you.