

## Stewardship Conversations

### **Membership Comes with Strings Attached**

(Adapted from a sermon by the Rev. Peter Friedrichs, Unitarian Universalist Church of Delaware County, 05/22/2012.)

In his sermon, Rev. Friedrichs discusses the contents of an email that he received from one of his congregants, in response to an email he sent in which he asked how her family was doing, why he hadn't seen them in church all year, and why they haven't offered a pledge for next year. In that email, the congregant said, "I think we [my husband and I] are both in desperate need of a place where we can have quiet and reflection with no strings attached and we just aren't finding that at UUCDC anymore. *"A place where we can have quiet and reflection with no strings attached."*

Rev. Friedrichs continues: "Our faith, and membership in this church, comes with strings. To belong to this church and to be a Unitarian Universalist is to say "yes" to those strings. We say "yes" to life. We say "yes" to hope. We say "yes" to a belief that all people are worthy, all people carry a spark of the divine. And more than that, we say "yes" not just to these principles, but we say "yes" to doing the work of our faith, the work of this church, when we're asked. We can be that "place of quiet and reflection" my correspondent longs for only if, only when, we all commit ourselves to creating that place, sustaining that place, loving that place, and working that place into existence."

"I am often asked by newcomers to our church what is expected of our members, and this is what I tell them. I tell them that to be a member of this church and to claim this faith as one's own, you must do four things. First, you must commit to showing up on Sunday mornings. Worship is the central, communal act of the church, and members should participate in worship on a regular basis. Second, you must commit to actively engaging in your own spiritual growth..."

"The third thing that's required of all our members is that they will support the church financially, to the best of their ability. Generosity is an important spiritual practice, but it's not *just* a spiritual practice. It is a practical necessity. We cannot keep the lights on and the doors open, we cannot offer self-sustaining programs without your financial contribution. Give us your pledge...."

"Finally, the last string that's attached to membership, or maybe it's the first string, is that you will get involved. That you will serve others...."

"Membership comes with strings attached. Those strings bind us to the church. They bind the church to us. And most importantly, those strings bind us, each to the other. With those strings we are woven together into one body, one spirit, one united Whole. You can't sustain a congregation, or any community of meaning, without them...."

Gary LaBedz

Chair, Stewardship Team