

3rd Thursday Seminar

Stewardship & the Operating Fund
A Practicum ~ 15 January 2009

The Reverend Kenneth Gordon Hurto

District Executive Florida UUA

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Stewardship & the Operating Fund Overview

- ▶ Minding the Store: Coping with Recession.
- ▶ Learnings from Our UUA
- ▶ Kenn's Learnings.
- ▶ The Operating Fund.
- ▶ The Nature of Stewardship.

- ▶ Practical Steps of Sustaining Our Ministries.
- ▶ Best Practices.
- ▶ Further Resources.

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Minding the Store: Coping with Recession.

- Statistics on giving during the seven economic recessions since the Great Depression indicate that what happens in the economy has less of a negative influence in giving than one would think.
- The factor that carries more influence is how effectively congregations ask their people to give.
- Pay close attention to:
 - ▶ Interpersonal relationships are central.

- Donors give for their reasons [not yours!]; don't forget.
- Focus energy on the individuals who demonstrate the greatest interest in the organizations and who have the capacity to give.
- Effectively involve the high level staff and leaders of the organization.

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Tips for Unitarian Universalist Congregation Leaders.

By Laurel Amabile, Director APF

- ✓ Appealing Mission Statement—a dynamic and unique mission appeals to people's interest in the value of the congregation.
- ✓ Acknowledge the impact of the economy on the organization's ability to fulfill its mission.
- ✓ Avoid dramatic shifts in fundraising methods and changes in staffing.

- ✓ Keep public relations and marketing strong.
- ✓ Keep the organization “recession-proof” by spreading the enthusiasm about what the organization is doing.
- ✓ Practice openness and accountability.
- ✓ Meet regularly with donors, if possible, informing them of the organization’s needs. Invite questions.

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Minding the Store: Coping with Recession.

➔New Found Opportunities:

- Deep review of core values: what is essential to our work?
- New program ministries: e.g., financial & investment advice as part of soul journey.
- Leveraging assets: obtaining newly affordable acquisitions.

➔New Found Dangers:

- Tweaking the edges in a zero-sum game.
- Breakdown of trust.
- Escalation of minor irritations into higher level conflict.
- Looking for a goat to scape!

➔ **Leadership matters, particularly around anxiety.**

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Learning's from our Unitarian Universalist Association

- ◆ Research clearly shows that the decisions of consumers, voters and investors are primarily controlled by beliefs.
- ◆ Generosity is an outward expression of understanding the blessing of abundance.
- ◆ Generous behavior is an expression of love and compassion.
- ◆ Typically, among congregations....
 - 5% give 25% of the budget
 - 10% give 25% of the budget
 - 25% give 25% of the budget
 - 65% give 25% of the budget

◆ Of the Americans attending worship services regularly...

- 35% do not give a regular amount
- 20% give round dollar amounts (\$10, \$20, etc)
- 16% give a percentage of income less than 10%
- 26% give 10% of their income

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Learnings from our Unitarian Universalist Association

✓ People who put their financial commitment in **writing** give, on average, two times as much as those who do not pledge in writing

✓ People who make commitments based on a **percentage of their income** give three times as much as those who base their giving decisions on dollar amounts.

✓ **Younger donors** give about as much to charitable causes as older donors, expressing a particular desire to “make the world

a better place.”

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Five Common Characteristics of Effective Stewardship Congregations

1. View stewardship as rooted in faith principles and beliefs. Focus on a message that inspires generosity.
2. Are aware of the theological, ethical and cultural issues that can make the value, possession, and uses of money more complicated and challenging for people.
3. Demonstrate the role and importance of pastoral leadership in fostering genuine stewardship. This involves empowering, inspiring and equipping congregants with the knowledge and resources to be intentional about giving as a reflection of their individual ministries.
4. Encourage individuals to express gratitude for all the benefits and meaning they experience through their faith community involvement and are bold in calling one another to give back out of gratitude.
5. View stewardship as a commitment to service in the wider world.

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Kenn's Learnings:

Stewardship is a Faith Issue:

- Identity: Who am I?
- Purpose: Why am I, why are we here? What do I believe, about me, us, the world?
- It matters: Can I, can we make a difference through our ministries?

Stewardship is a matter of Self-Esteem:

- "Full" souls have no trouble being generous;
- Scared, insecure, self-centered people are self-ish and not generous.
- The same is true for congregations.

Stewardship is inclusive:

- Anyone and everyone has gifts to offer.
- When the congregation fails to honor this truth, they do not receive much.

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Kenn's Learnings:

Stewardship campaigns are educational:

- ▶ Why the congregation exists. Articulating what's right among us.
- ▶ Making the case for new directions.
- ▶ Informing or reminding members how ministries are underwritten by members' time, talent, and treasure.
- ▶ Providing clear means of accountability for the use of members' gifts.

Stewardship is at the core of ministry and is demanding work:

- ▶ Plan to spend more time and energy on it than you do on your rummage sales or service auctions!
- ▶ Every "make it easy" short-cut "costs" your Operating Fund.
- ▶ It is NOT about selling the line-item budget.

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Kenn's Learnings:

Stewardship is a matter of trust:

- **In the Congregation:** Members are in the Ministry.
 - Membership is about life-altering commitment.
 - Ministry is not a purchase of service agreement.
 - Ministry is the direct expression of interdependence, respect for one another.
- **In Leadership:** Leaders are reliable and credible.
 - Are our leaders in touch with what's important to the membership?
 - Are leaders handling our gifts with integrity?

▸ **In Our Faith:** That Unitarian Universalism matters.

All else being equal, your Stewardship effort tells

you how well your ministry goes.

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The Operating Fund: Definition.

- The ministry expressed as a financial plan for the current fiscal year to fulfill the congregation's Mission.
- Presents the story of the congregation's intentions.
- It is a plan, a roadmap.
- It is not real money.
- The **Balance** sheet describes real money: cash on hand [usable], assets [property, endowments], and liabilities [who and what you owe].

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The Operating Fund: Budget.

- A numerical story of values & goals.
- Details the ways and means you plan to live them out.

- The **Budget** reveals:
 - the **Why**,
 - the **How**, &
 - the **Difference** You Make.
- It should be readily understandable to anyone:
 - Use clear, self-evident categories, no code or acronyms.

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The Operating Fund: Accounting.

- Routine, monthly report on what is happening with the plan.
 - Should be part of quarterly review of goals.
 - Provides a check against reality.
 - Allows for adjustments in the plan.
 - Boards have the power to revise as necessary.

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The Operating Fund: Reporting.

- **Simple IS good:** make it readily understandable.
- Make it fit one sheet of paper.
- Clearly states *Money In; Money Out*, with a comparison against expectations.
- Derived from but not the same as the line-item

Bookkeeping Report used by the Finance Committee

& Treasurer.

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The Operating Fund

Money Out by Service Ministries:

- Worship
- Spiritual Discernment, Children, Youth & Adults

- ▶ Congregational Life
- ▶ For the Community [incl. U U A, etc.]
- ▶ Administration
- ▶ Paid Staff
- ▶ Physical Plant [incl. Mortgage]
- ▶ Contingencies

The Operating Fund

Money In by Resource Areas:

- ▶ Stewardship Gifts
- ▶ Cash Gifts
- ▶ Facilities Use
- ▶ Named Fund Raisers/Date
- ▶ Endowment Transfers
- ▶ Interest
- ▶ Other

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The Operating Fund: Sample

Report

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The Operating Fund: Monthly Communications.

- Treasurer's Audit of Bookkeeper
- Treasurer's Narrative to Board
- Treasurer's Narrative to

Congregation

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Stewardship: Definition.

About choices to bring our lives more in line with transcendent values.

About personal responsibility to take care:

- Of one's self and soul;
- Of other's well-being, property of financial affairs.
- Of one's community, broadly.

Function of early life experience.

- Function of connection to others.
- Discerning who is your "other."

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Stewardship: Coming Home to Soul.

Coming home to one's life call.

- To ask: what will I live — if need be, die — for?
- The giving of one's self in service.

Unitarian Universalist motto: *Heal*

the

Spirit, Nurture the World

Parable of Talents, Time, &
Treasure.

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Fund**

**Who is “Other” in
Congregational
Life We Serve?**

Fellow members.

The Living Tradition of Unitarian
Universalism.

The Larger Faith: Truth, Love, Ways of
Peace & Justice.

Our neighbors, narrowly & broadly
understood.

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**Stewardship & the Operating
Fund**

No immediate gain is assured.

It is an investment, not a purchase.

Satisfaction lies in faith and hope, not fact or reason.

Generosity is in our nature.

Gifts come from the heart, not the head.

Stewardship is a Trans-Rational Act Of Faith.

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Stewardship in NOT Fund-raising!

Fund-raising is getting money from a donor to allow someone [else] to do some benefit for others [not the donor].

Stewardship is our ministry together,
for
one another, our communities, and
ourselves.

It is intensely personal, not an
intellectual
calculation [Feelings! matter].

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Congregational Stewardship:
Getting in Right Relationship with
Money.

Making the connection between values
and
ministry.

- ▶ To give what's right, not what's left.
- ▶ A call for reflection on what really matters to you.

- ▶ Not a tax, not a bill, not dues.
- ▶ Not a utility or means to an end, an end in and of itself.

If you don't speak to the heart, you will not be gifted.

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The Stewardship Campaign:

➡ Exercise in Values-clarification, self and congregation.

➡ What is right balance of Time, Talent, & Treasure.

- ▶ What portion of your well-being is **fair**?
- ▶ What portion of your well-being is **necessary**?

▸ What portion of your well-being is **transformative**?

▸ When you are **proud** of your gifting!

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Stewardship: Practical Considerations.

There is NO salvation in technology!

▸ This is NOT about technique per se.

▸ The best campaign will fail if not faith based and heartfocused.

Money follows ministry.

▸ The question is: How much ministry is going on?

▸ Intention: What is our congregation called to do?

▸ Mission: Where do our “gifts” meet the “needs” of the world?

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Stewardship: Practical Considerations.

How well is the “spirit” among us?

- Are we clear about our “**Why?**” [Purpose]
- Are we clear about our “**Who?**” [Identity]
- Is our “**How?**” consistent with our “Why” and “Who?”
- Do we know “**Whom?**” we are seeking to serve?

Assertion: Money follows ministry.

- If ministry trumpets an uncertain call, money will be harder to come by.

▶ Gifting is a question and function of how much ministry you provide, not how many dollars are in the budget.

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Stewardship: Practical Considerations.

Simple survey for Planning Assessment:

▶ + = we're proud of our work in this area and might want to expand.

▶ 0 = we're doing ok and should continue.

▶ ~ = we need to shore up this area.

These questions should be part of

ongoing
planning.

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Stewardship: Ways Unitarian Universalists Make It Hard. We ...

- ✓ Talk about money only at the time of the annual campaign.
- ✓ Talk obsessively about budgetary allocations.
- ✓ Keep gifts a secret!
- ✓ Leave it to the Board of Finance Committee.
- ✓ Talk about the congregation's needs rather than how gifts will transform lives.
- ✓ Ask too little. & then ask for % increases well in excess of cost of living changes.
- ✓ Fail to ask for a "tithe" of any sort.

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Stewardship: Ways Unitarian Universalists Can Make It Easier. We could ...

- ✓ Make it a year-round conversation.
- ✓ Relate money to Mission, Vision, & Values.
- ✓ Invite the congregation to talk openly to itself about priorities.
- ✓ Assume an abundance of possibility rather than a scarcity of resources.
- ✓ Hold the congregation & leaders responsible for results on goals.

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Stewardship: You Need to Ask!

- Why? “Ya don’t ask, ya don’t get!”
- Why do people give?
 - To feel needed.
 - To know their gifts make a difference.
 - To get “gold stars.”
- To teach: cannot assume younger generations understand how congregations are financed.

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Stewardship: *Whom Do You Ask?*

- Begin with Congregational Leaders, Board!
 - First gifts are Lead gifts.
 - Ask the Pillars & Elders: “**Faith Investors.**”
- Ask the Activists: “**Producers.**”
- Ask the **Beneficiaries**: All book members.
- Ask the **Supporters**: non-member “friends.”
 - Friends = regular attenders, often with equal commitment.
- Ask the **Children**.
- Ask your **Guests**, invite them in.

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Stewardship: *When Do You Ask?*

- ➔ Every time someone joins the congregation [yearround].

➡ Two months in advance of canvass, seek lead

gifts from Board/Elders:

➡ One month before launch, seek commitments

from committee leaders:

➡ Ask all others during canvass month.

Every Sunday.

The *Offering* a Sacred Element of Free Church

Know your history as to why this is so.

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Stewardship: *What Do You Ask For?*

- Weekly or monthly gifts.
- For the “Ministries of Our Congregation”
- For “Special Gifts” — Endowment, Living Trust, One-Time Projects, Capital Campaign

- ▶ For Matching Monies.
- ▶ For Windfall Giving: Tax Refunds, Lottery Winnings, Garage Sale proceeds.
- ▶ For Designated “off-budget” gifts [caution: strings attached!]
- ▶ Periodic value-added efforts: e.g., new hymn books.

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Stewardship: *How Much Do You Ask?*

➡ “Until you are proud!”

➡ “From your heart, a gift that will transform your life and empower our congregation.”

➔ “From your heart, a gift that truly will make a difference.”

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Stewardship: *Who Asks?*

- 1st “pledge,” Minister or Board member, in person.
- Lead gifts: Board members, in person.
- General solicitation: Stewardship team.
- Follow-up: Finance Committee and/or Board.

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Stewardship: *How Do You Ask?*

- Make it personal! One to one interview, every 3 years.
 - Consider small group [6 to 10] pledging as substitute.
 - “*Stewardship Commitment Sunday*,” as part of the worship service.
 - Staff a “*Commitment Desk*.”
- Less effective:
 - Use US Mail, E-mail, or putting pledge cards out on a table.

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Stewardship: Giving Guidelines.

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The Stewardship *Calendar*

▶ **6 months out:**

- ▶ Leadership sets canvass goals tied to strategic plan.

▶ **3 months out:**

- ▶ Staff & train Stewardship team.

- ▶ Hold Town Meeting/s soliciting congregational input.

- ▶ Board adopts *Stewardship Ambitions*.

▶ **Two months out:**

- ▶ Finance committee creates Stewardship Goal budget.

- ▶ Solicit lead gifts

- ▶ Prepare & distribute promotional materials.

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The Stewardship *Calendar*

- **One month out:**

- ▶ Make calls or send letters to out of towners.

- ▶ Add *Pulpit Testimonials* to worship.

- **1, 2 weeks out:**

- ▶ Host Congregational Celebration Event.

- ▶ Review *Stewardship Ambitions*; announce Lead Gift results.

- **Launch Stewardship Month.**

- ▶ Set aside 4 Stewardship Sundays: 1st Week: BIG Hurrah!

- ▶ Stewardship Promises are collected as an “Offering” in the service.

- ▶ Post “Thank You For Your Gift” roster, each week.

- ▶ Close campaign: after 4th week.

- **Hold a post-canvass “celebration party.”**

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The Stewardship *Calendar*

- Send *Thank You* confirmations: no later than 2 weeks after close of canvass.
 - Signed by Minister, Board President, Stewardship Team Leader.
- 2, 3 weeks after:
 - Hold congregational town meeting, hearing on revised planning budget.
 - Distribute thank you gifts to stewardship team.
- 1, 2 months after: Congregation adopts Operating Fund budget
 - Monthly or Quarterly: send “Stewardship Promise” reminders.

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Liturgical elements for Stewardship Sundays:

- Pulpit Testimonials: Personal statements on theme: “Why I am promising my gifts.”
- Sermon: Minister or guest focusing on Stewardship Ambitions and link to Unitarian Universalism at this time.
- Offering call: “To nurture and to sustain the living ministries of this congregation as it nurtures our souls and empowers us to serve and heal the world, this day’s gifts now will be generously given and gratefully received.”
- Share the Plate Offering call: “Ministry is not just about us. It is about

our gifts healing
a broken world. Today's offering will be [shared, given in whole] with
[name of community
group]. May your gifting be as generous as your soul. Thank you for
healing the world as
we nurture our spirits."

- Affirming our members vis a vis gifting at the Offering: "If you cannot make a gift at this time for any reason and feel the need, please take one of the gift certificates you will find in the Offering basket as our gift to you."
- Unison response upon receiving Stewardship promises: We give thanks for our many blessings, For one another's presence, For generous gifts, For the opportunity to stand by this faith, For what, together, we can make possible. To the work of the church Which is weaving a tapestry of love We call community We dedicate our lives and these, our offerings. Amen. [Unitarian Universalist Church of Berkeley, California]
- "Thank You!" roster: each week publish names of givers.
- Progress gauge: some visual report on pledges received against goal.

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Best Practices Stewardship Congregations.

- Make a commitment to stewardship in ways that will transform individual givers and enhance congregational life and health.

- ▶ Individuals experiencing personal transformation influence congregations as transformational forces in peoples' lives.
- Define a clear and engaging sense of mission and vision for the congregation, inspiring members and attracting newcomers.
- ▶ The mission and vision statements are reviewed every one to three years and commitment is renewed.
- Develop case statements and print materials that effectively convey:
 - ▶ The congregation's story,
 - ▶ Express its mission and vision, and
 - ▶ Explain how contributions will be appropriated and used.

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Best Practices Stewardship Congregations.

- Conduct year-round stewardship programs that involve person-to-person conversations about appropriate levels of annual gifts.
- Offer personal financial stewardship education,

with small group dialogues about money that open individuals to deeper and greater self-understanding.

- Provide multiple opportunities and venues for generosity to be expressed, through financial contributions, “stretch giving,” planned giving, and volunteer service.

- Recognize, thank, and celebrate contributions in a wide variety of ways including personal contacts, dinners, letters, thank-you cards ... [Letters of appreciation are sent to those who contribute.]

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Best Practices Stewardship Congregations.

- Tell the story of how contributions are transforming the world.

Financial accountability with reporting at regular intervals to members

about how the money is being used.

- Professional staff and lay leaders are well informed on

matters of
stewardship and engaged as stewardship leaders and
educators.

- Explicit messages about money, giving, and religious values are

regularly communicated in the contexts of worship,
membership

development, and religious education for all ages.

- Demonstrate a commitment to fair compensation and appropriate

staffing levels.

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Further Resources:

***Fundraising: A Complete Guide to
Congregational Stewardship***

Wayne B. Clark, 2007, UUA.

This book outlines the “*Forward Through the
Ages*” (FORTH) program of year-round
congregational stewardship.

"Without a significant change of focus from fundraising
to stewardship, and without a new vocabulary to use,
there is no reason to think that we will become more
successful in growing our congregations," says Clark. "

Fundraising emphasizes the need of the recipient,
while stewardship addresses our spiritual need to give.
Leaders understand that stewardship is an act of

worship."

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The Abundance of Our Faith

Edited by Terry Sweetser and Susan Milnor

This book offers nineteen winning sermons from the Annual Program Fund Sermon Contest that demonstrate how to inspire while talking about money. Includes reflection questions for small group stewardship conversations and worship planning.

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Fundraising With A Vision:

A Canvass Guide for Congregations

Edward B. Landreth

Based on the belief that fundraising is deeply affected by a congregation's vision of what it wants to be, this guide provides step-by-step tips for planning and running a well-organized annual canvass.

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***Beyond the Collection Plate:
Overcoming Obstacles to Faithful Giving***

Michael Durall

Analyzes how many prevailing practices in stewardship campaigns have lost their effectiveness. Provides strategies for encouraging more giving.

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May your Spirit inspire the Tree of Living

Faith to Grow all the money you need.

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Whatever else you may do, remember stewardship begins & ends here:

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Good Night & Thank You!

Next Month, February 19th: Capital Campaigns, Endowments & Trusts

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