

Thoughts on Giving

Bill Richter, October 18, 2015

This is the time of year when our church (like many other organizations) encourages people to make financial commitments for the coming year. People differ in their views toward giving. I appreciate having this opportunity to share some of mine.

1. Willamette University, where Linda and I did our undergraduate study, has a Latin motto: *Non nobis solum nati sumus* – “We are born not unto ourselves alone.” I have been the beneficiary of the generosity of others, and believe it is important to pay that generosity forward when possible by supporting worthy endeavors.
2. I like being part of something larger than myself. My gifts are only a small portion of the support received by the church or charities to which we give. I have come to recognize that I don’t have the training, skills, or time to do what Caela and others do for this church, what Judy Davis and her colleagues do for the Crisis Center, what the staff of Doctors Without Borders do around the world. These people are changing lives – indeed saving lives – in our community and around the world, and our support can help make it happen.
3. The older I get the more aware I am that life is short and that I will not be around forever. I would like to be able to support the work of this church long after I am gone. Fortunately, there are ways to do so, through planned giving and endowments. Part of our giving to this church each year goes to the First Congregational UCC endowment at the Greater Manhattan Community Foundation. Earnings from that endowment now provide the church more money than what our family’s total giving to the church used to be – and those endowment returns will continue and will grow indefinitely, long after all of us are gone.

The church I attended in junior high school taught us a poem:

Isn't it strange that princes and kings
And clowns that caper in sawdust rings
And just plain folks like you and me
Are building for eternity?
Each is given a bag of tools,
A pile of bricks, a book of rules,
And each must build ere the setting sun
A stumbling block or a stepping stone.

I hope that you share my perception of this church as a stepping stone and giving to it as an opportunity to participate meaningfully in the pursuit of peace, justice, understanding, and the values we profess in our mission statement.