

## **Minister's Letter for February, 2026**

### **Offer Your Best Self: Give What You Can**

Once upon a time, a woman was diagnosed with breast cancer. Her husband told a true story to a blogger about how their 14-year-old son wanted to raise money to help with additional medical costs. The man explained that the teenager grabbed a pair of hair clippers one afternoon and told his father that he was going to go door to door, inviting people in the neighborhood to shave part of his head in return for a small donation of their choosing.

The boy asked his dad if he thought a goal of \$100 would be achievable. This is the father's statement from the original story, "I told him not to get his hopes up. He came back home ten minutes ago with a bald head and \$1,225. Three people gave him \$100 bills."\*

I don't know about you, but this narrative brought tears to my eyes. There were no assumptions about the economics of the neighborhood where the family lived, the number of houses the boy traveled, or the average amount given per household. It was a story about genuine kindness and generosity. I could imagine a few scenarios.

For example, maybe as the teenager traveled on foot, he knocked on one door. Perhaps an elderly woman who lived on a very limited income, opened the door and went to get a mason jar filled with change she had collected on her walks with the dog and gave it to the youngster.

Or perhaps there was a Mercedes Benz in the driveway of an individual who, when asked, pulled a \$100 bill from her wallet and handed it to him.

Wouldn't it be grand to think that another neighbor, upon hearing the story from the teenager, texted other neighbors asking them to bring any money to help the boy raise funds? Clearly, the goal was achieved more than 12 times over.

It is a beautiful demonstration of how a community can come together to make a difference in the lives of others!

This month, the UUC pledge drive launches. If you think the story I just shared is touching, wait until I tell you a few quotes from folks who expressed gratitude for what this Unitarian Universalist congregation in Clearwater has done. Through pledges, love offerings, rentals and thoughtful contributions, the 5-acre campus here on Nursery Road has provided many nearly miraculous experiences. Lives have been changed dramatically.

Some scenarios I can share with you and some I can't because of my commitment to confidentiality. What I can tell you most emphatically is that UUC, this place of meaningful

gatherings, is where we learn to manage the challenges of life in 2026. It is where we embrace our commitment to transformation, within our own lives and that of others. It is also where we can understand the power of generosity, another of our cherished values.

Consider this fact, the funding we are able to raise annually makes it possible for the LGBTQ community to meet in a safe and supportive environment. One trans individual, with tears in their eyes, held my hand and said, “I cannot thank you all enough for providing a safe space for me to be myself. It means so much.”

Individuals have learned new approaches to coping with challenges due to mental illness among family members. These folks receive support from the NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) meetings hosted at UUC. One person told me, “These Wednesday gathering have given me tools to continue to love and support my child as they struggle through bouts of anger and depression. It has been life-changing for me.”

AA groups gather weekly at UUC to support ongoing efforts for individuals to become and remain sober, leading to happier lives. “This group has saved my life,” said one individual.

These are just a few of the local groups that meet at UUC for a small donation or a “love offering.” If friends and members didn’t work hard to financially sustain this campus, this land, these buildings, and the staff, many people *who aren’t even members* would not receive the support they currently receive at UUC.

And then there is this true story.

Occasionally, UUC plans workdays, inviting friends and members to gather to spruce up the grounds. One Saturday morning, while people were volunteering their time to trim bushes and clear the grounds, an individual in a large car entered the parking lot. The person drove up to a board member who was working, and handed the person a check for the treasurer to deposit. It was for a considerable sum of money. The driver made a statement that went something like this, “You all are doing amazing things. The place looks great and I see on the online calendar (UUC.org) the many things you all are doing. Please accept this donation to support the Unitarian Universalist presence in this community. Many years ago, it made a difference in my life. I hope this congregation continues to make meaningful change in the lives of others.”

And guess what? The board member didn’t even have to shave his head!

Thank you for financially supporting UUC.

*Rev. Amy Kindred, Minister*

\*From <https://www.marcandangel.com/2021/05/24/12-stories-of-kindness-and-generosity-that-will-change-the-way-you-live/>