

President's Message: Stimulus for the Community

It is just about time to put a period to the pledge drive to fund our operations for next year. At this point, we have received pledges of \$110,880 from 43 households. Our goal was (and still is) to receive pledges of \$135,000 from at least 76 households. It is still not too late to get in your pledge—the Board will give a final number to the Finance Committee at the end of April, so we can prepare a Budget recommendation for the Annual Meeting on May 31. And, as always, we would be grateful for a pledge even of \$0, if that is what you are able to commit.

And, speaking of funding our operations, we have some really good news. We have received notice from our bank (Community Bank) that we have been awarded a Payroll Protection Loan from the Federal stimulus funds. These funds must be used over the next 8 weeks, mostly to cover payroll expenses (including benefits like health care) although ¼ can be used to cover utilities and similar overhead expenses. If we continue to employ these positions over next two years, the loan is converted to a grant. The Board committed early on to care for our staff and to continue to pay them through this crisis; these funds will help us in that commitment.

But my message is not all about us. The pandemic our world faces this year poses serious health risks and has caused large scale job losses, destabilizing a great many households. Basic food and shelter are uncertain for many. Congress has authorized a one-time stimulus check, intended as a lifeline for families, Checks are going out this month, via direct deposit. For some, these stimulus funds might be literally a life-saver; for others, a godsend that makes hard times bearable. Others face less fragile circumstances; fortunate to be secure in our homes and sources of food. How is it for you? Are stimulus funds disposable income or a critical lifeline? If you are fortunate to be comfortable and secure, please consider **how to best steward these resources?** Revisit that daily question: “How Will I Touch the Web of Life Today?” What vibrations will I send, to ripple through the universe? Shall I recognize our humanity as being singular or do my actions reflect a duality of “them” and “us.”

I want to share with you that some UUFM Board members have already made a personal decision to “pass it on.” Specifically, they intend to contribute their US gov. stimulus funds to a central fund to serve as a lifeline for those in our community experiencing need. Our Board has been asked to authorize creation of a designated Crisis Fund to serve as a collection point for donated stimulus funds. We would intend to direct our minister to disperse available funds (in consultation with the Pastoral Care Team) to help support our most vulnerable members and friends in need. Under the proposed Crisis Fund, the Board would consult with the minister and the Pastoral Care Team to re-evaluate community needs at year end. If they recommend that conditions have stabilized, the Board would close the fund and allocate any excess to ECHO Food Shelf and our local United Way. I would be happy to receive your suggestions and comments prior to discussion of this proposal at our May Board meeting.

In the coming weeks, please give thought to whether your basic needs are met? If so, I invite you to consider donating part or even all of the stimulus funds you receive to our proposed Crisis Fund so they may serve as a lifeline to meet urgent needs of families in our community. Urgent needs require urgent action. Local ministers are even exploring the possibility of making a similar appeal their congregations and pooling our resources to support a major project that might more permanently assist needy members of our community. If a broader community effort is a

conversation you would like to be involved with, please get in touch with me. In all events, be assured, I will keep you informed of any initiatives that develop. May you be well.