

What does this congregation get from being part of the UUA?

It's pretty easy to answer that question in financial terms—at the moment we get help to pay for our new home via the MAP grant, a first home award, chalice lighters funds, and a mortgage guarantee. And there are clear answers in terms of more abstract gains—we get access to Sunday school and adult RE curricula; training for our professional staff and our lay leaders; district, national, and international conferences; a wide variety of consultants, guidelines, and worship resources. That's all stuff I value highly. It's worth a lot to all of us, and it's stuff the UUA produces or distributes directly, more or less in return for the money we send.

I am officially a Friend of the UUA, which means I contribute money, both for a ministerial scholarship and for general purposes. And I could tell you much more about all that. I could tell you about how the UUA connects our Fellowship with a religious tradition more than 450 years old.

But it's not the best part of my answer. I want to show you the best stuff this congregation receives from the UUA. At our building dedication last month Rev. Terry Sweetser, who, yes, came from the UUA, told us that Unitarian Universalists are people who stand up. Please join me in standing if this Fellowship was not your first Unitarian Universalist congregation. Look around, everyone.

This is the best part of what our Fellowship gets from the UUA. This is why I'm most glad to be part of our Association. Thank you, UUA, for the fact that these people were looking for Unitarian Universalists when they sought out a religious community here in the Conejo Valley. Thank you, UUA, for putting them on the fast track to this congregation because they already knew the brand name. Thank you, UUA, for jump-starting everything these people have done for our Fellowship. Ok, folks, you're out of the spotlight. Of course there was nothing automatic about your commitment. Your previous connection to Unitarian Universalism just got you through the door here—but, hey, getting you through the door was a very good thing.

(And by the way, all the folks who stayed seated just then, they're the best part of what the UUA gets from us).

We need to acknowledge also some CVUUF stalwarts who did not stand up today because they've moved on. I won't name them all, there isn't time, but I want to invoke in particular two couples who couldn't stand up with us just now. Jean & Jerry Sohl and Jim & Susan Bray didn't invent Unitarian Universalism, and they didn't discover it here, but they did a lot to make this Fellowship what it is for us today. Thank you, UUA, for jump-starting the Sohls' and the Brays' contributions to our community. They, like others, found this Fellowship because they knew what to look for, and then they transformed what they found.

And I also want to acknowledge the people who can't stand up because they aren't with us yet, the people who are going to come sometime later, already knowing they're

Unitarian Universalists, who are going to help us as a congregation realize their vision of what Unitarian Universalism can be.

Thank you, UUA, for the fact that we don't have to do it alone.

Thank you, UUA, for all the ways you help us introduce Unitarian Universalism to people who are discovering it right here. And for all the ways you help us embody Unitarian Universalist values within our community and toward the wider world.

And thank you especially, on Association Sunday, for the folks who come through our doors already knowing this Fellowship should be where they belong and determined to make it so. We are better together.

From Thousand Oaks, CA