

Special Offering for Association Sunday 2008

Rev. Peter Luton

When I was growing up, I thought my parents were okay, but frankly, they weren't that important. They fed me and housed me and clothed me and kept me safe, but realistically they were more like slightly embarrassing furniture in my life. It wasn't until I moved out and grew up and had children of my own that I recognized my parents were very special and core to my life.

While the UUA does not wield over us anything commensurate with the authority our parents wielded over us, congregations and individual members of congregations sometimes feel about the Unitarian Universalist Association the way I felt about my parents. We are so involved in our own lives, that we forget the larger, wider circles of life that make ours both possible and fuller. As our parent organization, the UUA creates the larger foundation upon which East Shore is founded.

It does for congregations what congregations cannot do for themselves or more correctly by themselves—such as develop outstanding religious education curriculum like Our Whole Lives, the sexuality curriculum for middle school aged youth and hymnbooks like the grey and teal volumes we use every Sunday. Like a loving parent, the UUA is there to support and help East Shore when we need it. The UUA was instrumental in assisting in our ministerial search through which we found Joan and the DRE search through which we found Michelle. It generates useful resources on how to run a church, raise money, pay staff, prepare for disaster, get the word out to the wider community through advertising and PR.

This morning I am asking you to do something more significant than sending the obligatory sappy card to your mother and to your father in May and June, when we acknowledge their “special day.” This morning I am asking you to show your deep gratitude and renewed awareness that we are part of a larger family, a wider community of faith, that we are connected not only to the Unitarian Universalist Association and the people who work for it, but to the more than 1000 other Unitarian Universalist congregations who come together and are the UUA. I'm inviting you to show your appreciation for and support of our larger religious tradition by making a generous donation to Association Sunday.

But this morning's collection, like all our second Sunday collections will not go to the basic budgets either of East Shore or the UUA, which are properly funded through pledges. The UUA wants to use this morning's offering to support some things which the normal operating budget cannot. Things like new and exciting programs for theological education and spiritual growth for lay members of congregations such as yourselves, and for support of ministers and seminarians, and in particular for ministers and seminarians of color as we seek to minister to the whole population of people with our liberal religious faith.

The UUA suggests that congregations think about setting an Association Sunday goal of \$50 a member. That sounds like a good place to begin. Every gift, of every amount, in every form (cash, check, credit) is most deeply appreciated. If you are writing a check this morning, please make it payable to the UUA.. The church office will not be opening these

envelopes. We're simply shipping them off to Boston. So if you came with your East Shore pledge check in hand, please don't use the special envelopes, simply place it in the basket as the offering plates are passed.

I would like to ask the ushers to please come forward now, to receive today's special Second Sunday offering in support of the Unitarian Universalist Association and all our brother and sister congregations.

Benediction

Our time together has nurtured our spirits. We have found courage and connections to live in the world with a fuller measure of wholeness. We are grateful for this community and for the larger community of faith to which we belong. We are grateful for the world which is our home, a world broken yet beautiful, hungry yet abundant.

Mindful that our living vision of a just and peaceful world calls us together, that a community of commitment, courage and care sustains us, and that a life transformed by depth of spirit illumines our way, let us carry out into the world the light we have kindled and the hope we have evoked as proof of our faith and our love.