

PastorNote: from the Rev. David Pattee

WE ARE TARGETS! Especially because we are a community of generous people inclined to be helpful, we are targeted by internet scammers. And one of the most perversely effective frauds these days will play on your trust of me. Beware!

Several times over the last couple of years, there have been email impersonations of me, claiming an emergency situation and asking for financial assistance, such as the purchase of gift cards. Most recently, someone impersonating me emailed the church office to change the banking information for deposit of my paychecks.

These scammers are very clever. They troll the internet for targets and background information, looking especially for someone like me who has a large online presence and is associated with a church. They'll use an e-mail address that looks very much like mine, try to disguise it by using my real e-mail address in the body of their message, and then they'll make their move when I am travelling. They ask for something that's very plausible, and they use language that sounds like me. If you're not on guard and looking very carefully, you could easily fall into the trap and believe it's me. **But it is not me!**

Part of what makes these frauds so difficult is that they are not "hacks." These frauds are perpetrated by clever impersonation, not by hacking. We are not aware of any compromise of our financial management systems or internet security, no one has broken into my e-mail, and there's no malfeasance within the system. In the police report we just filed on the redirection of my paychecks to an online bank account (disguised as an account at a local bank) the crime was "Identity Theft." Someone has been stealing my identity to get money from people who know and trust me.

You know me, and I think you know you can trust me, but someone urgently asking you by e-mail to send money to me or redirect money for me **is not me!** The only financial "ask" I will ever make of you by email is to encourage your giving to the church, through our established ways of giving to the church!

Peace United staff and leaders will never solicit you by e-mail, asking you to purchase or send gift cards or electronic funds for any purpose. Contact the church office if you have any concerns about emails you may receive.