

North Chapel

North Universalist Chapel Society

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Dear Members and Friends of the North Universalist Chapel Society,

Our North Star

What started as a one-off visit grew into regular attendance over a couple years' time. Snail's pace, really. But part of why I felt comfortable attending was that no one was keeping track! No one was counting my days, monitoring my offerings, turning church into a guilt laden and competitive sport. I do a good enough job of that on my own, thank you very much!

It was perhaps even a couple years after that that I started to feel compelled to help at the North Chapel. Honestly, I'm busy. I wasn't especially interested in helping. I had been cruising merrily along feeling like my attendance was as much as I could offer. And all was well and good.

Then I heard a few things. Whisperings about the state of the finances of the Church, or random musings about Leon's tenure there...and it dawned on me that my special little, easy, touchpoint with Community and Spirit could face potential threats. That didn't sit well. It also got me asking questions...Where does the money come from? Why doesn't it appear out of thin air like it used to in my old Catholic church? Who is doing the work? Why? What *is* the work? And was this my call to action?

In digging in, just a little at first, and still hardly enough, I have learned the answer to some of those questions. **They are** as follows:

The money comes from us and what we raise. The work also.

No, it didn't appear out of thin air in my old Catholic Church. I just didn't see how much work was being done behind the scenes (and how much money my father gave to that church!)

Who is doing it? Many people you see every Sunday are doing the work, and some of them are tired and need a break!

Why? They do it because they love it and they love North Chapel.

What is the work? It varies, from physical labor (Laird brings his plunger everywhere) to fundraising, from cooking to decision making and everything in between.

And yes, this is your call to action.

I also saw that the giving, the work, was both harder and easier than I imagined. Harder because it doesn't stop and there are so many behind-the-scenes details to consider. Once you peel back the layers, it is so much more fragile than I realized. If we don't give back, this thing may not stick around. But even more importantly, if we do give back, it will serve as a north star to our moral, spiritual and human self. **It will neatly align our interests in serving ourselves and serving others and it will lift us all.**

The work was easier, because it's much more fun than a day job. Unless you're Joanne, and it is your day job. We love you, Joanne. Selling soup to a tourist in the Fall who tells me in her southern drawl that we have '*a little slice of heaven*'. Sitting in a Board Meeting chatting with lovely people about maple creemees. Meeting with a great guy who wants to provide aftercare in the church for a bunch of adorable little pre-kindergarteners. These are the building blocks of a functioning church. Yup.

What I did not anticipate in all this was the ways that the giving, often mundane or tedious, enhanced the 'taking.' And the ways it would change my relationship to the church and deepen my spiritual practice by doing both in more equal measure. When the 'rubber hits the road' we get to see the results of our practice.... Does our community step up for us? *Well, did we step up for them?* Does anxiety get the best of us? *Or can we keep it reasonably at bay with mindfulness, perspective and rest we've cultivated?* Is our church thriving in a time when churches are being sold as homes and businesses? ***Well, what did you do about it?***

As it turns out, you can purposefully hit the road with the rubber by contributing to the church. How easy is that!? I'm writing this letter to encourage you to contribute financially. Because money matters and it adds up. A little bit from everyone enables the board and Leon and Michael and many others to do things to continue to inspire, unite and engage us. It really is that straightforward. And it really is that important.

But if financial contributions aren't a possibility right now, I'd also throw in a pitch for you to get involved. Sign up to help in some little corner of this community that could use your help. You'll see firsthand how the giving contextualizes the getting, and **how rich a spiritual practice is when it is infused with a reality practice.**

You know what I am doing instead of working right now? Writing this letter. It's on my 'North Chapel' to-do list. And even this, this little, tiny thing, has made my day brighter. I'm thinking about all of you. I'm thinking about Leon's words, about the choir singing and especially about how the light shines outside of those big windows while I sing Spirit of Life and look at them, crying, most Sundays.

Don't give because you're supposed to. I guess this Church doesn't *do* guilt, and that still feels weird to me after four years. Give because we all need to play a part to keep this beautiful collective endeavor alive. And because I'm competitive, and I want my letter to bring in the most dough.

Just kidding. Sort of. Give if you can. And let's keep this thing going...I'm pretty excited about where we have been, where we are now and where we are headed. **Morning is breaking, folks, and the light of the North Chapel, our collective North star, is shining bright and leading our way.**

We are so grateful for your time, your consideration and your generosity. Thank you.

Your friends,

The Hale/Rondeau Family - Dana, Rafael, Santiago and Nicasio

For the North Chapel Board