

# All Souls Church Unitarian

Covenant Group Guide

October 2016

## **“Generosity”**

### **UNDERSTANDING GENEROSITY**

I always think that we live, spiritually by what others have given us in the significant hours of our lives. These hours do not announce themselves as coming, but arrive unexpected.

Albert Schweitzer

We have no more right to consume happiness without producing it than to consume wealth without producing it.

George Bernard Shaw

You have not lived today until you have done something for someone who can never repay you.

John Bunyan

In gratitude we are human; in generosity we are divine.

Donald DeMarco

Rings and jewels are not gifts, but apologies for gifts. The only gift is a portion of thyself.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

You will not attain piety until you expend part of what you love; and whatever you expend, God knows it.

The Koran

One must be poor to know the luxury of giving.

George Eliot

### **THE SPIRIT OF GIVING**

Practice giving things away, not just things you don't care about, but things you do like. Remember, it is not the size of a gift, it is its quality and the amount of mental attachment you overcome that count. . . . Give thought to giving. Give small things, carefully, and observe the mental processes going along with the act of releasing the little thing you liked.

Robert Thurman

There are those who give little of the much which they have--and they give it for recognition and their hidden desire makes their gifts unwholesome. And there are those who have little and give it all. These are the believers in life and the bounty of life, and their coffer is never empty. There are those who give with joy, and that joy is their reward. And there are those who give with pain, and that pain is their baptism. And there are those who give and know not pain in giving, nor do they seek joy, nor give with mindfulness of virtue; They give as in yonder valley the myrtle breathes its fragrance into space. Through the hands of such as these God speaks, and from behind their eyes He smiles upon the earth.

Kahlil Gibran, *The Prophet*

## **SOME WAYS THAT GENEROSITY CHALLENGES US**

“It wasn’t that he was specially ungenerous but that he put things off to give his generosity a longer and more significant route.”

Saul Bellow, *The Adventures of Augie March* Quotes

In a pocket of his knapsack he’d found a last half packet of cocoa and he fixed it for the boy and then poured his own cup with hot water and sat blowing at the rim.

You promised not to do that, the boy said.

What?

You know what, Papa.

He poured the hot water back into the pan and took the boy’s cup and poured some of the cocoa into his own and then handed it back.

I have to watch you all the time, the boy said.”

Cormac McCarthy, *The Road*

Don’t touch my plumtree!

Said my friend and saying so...

Broke the branch for me”

Matsuo Bashō, Taigi, Japanese Haiku

## **GENEROSITY CENTRAL TO THE MEANING OF LIFE**

A few years ago, as I entered my 70s, I began pondering a question I thought of as a good one: “What do I want to let go of, and what do I want to hang onto?”

But the more I “lived into” that question, the more uneasy I felt about it. So I asked a few friends to help me explore my uneasiness. By the end of that session, my question had

morphed into something better: “What do I want to let go of, and what do I want to give myself to?”

“What do I want to hang onto?” is a clingy question, with a whiff of desperation about it. But “What do I want to give myself to?” is an open and generous question. That question has taken me into places where I have found new life, and I’m grateful.

Parker J. Palmer, *On Being* blog

### **A GENEROSITY PRAYER**

Lord, teach me generosity as an overflow of Your presence in my life. Help me extend it as an expression of Your love and compassion for others. Continue to create in me a heart attitude that reflects Your humility and openness. Grow generosity in my life so that it is more than for the few weeks of this season but through all seasons—a lifestyle.

Jan Kern, *Growing in Generosity*, for *The Leadership Institute* blog

### **FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION**

1. What does it mean to give generously? to live generously?
2. Are you growing in generosity? holding steady? feeling less generous? How do you explain your answer?
3. Do financial contributions meet Ralph Waldo Emerson’s criterion--that the only gift is the gift of self? If yes, is this true of all financial contributions? Why or why not?
4. How do you make decisions about charitable contributions? Do some or all of your contributions bring you joy? Why or why not? How does your relationship with All Souls fit into your answer?

Prepared by Mary Beth Hatem