

February 12, 2024

Dear Fellow Congregants.

It is time for us to find out how strongly we feel about supporting UUCMP. For the upcoming 2024-2025 fiscal year, we have the daunting task of raising at least an extra 25% of what we raised in pledging last fiscal year! We do this to avoid using up our savings to pay for our operations. This year's Operating Fund Drive theme is **BE THE LIGHT**. This is a call for all of us to step up to meet the challenge of increasing our pledges as we are able and *to be the light that keeps us prospering*.

What does it mean to **be the light**? It means looking for opportunities to use our light to lift someone or something else up. It is about making a conscious effort to do things that you know makes your own light of compassion and kindness shine. That act can also help others to recognize that the light is within them. To be the light, it can mean stepping into doing things in a different way that feels real and true for you. It is about being a lighthouse. It means bringing light to remove the dark spot of the hole in our budget. Maya Angelou says, "Nothing can dim the light from within." **BE THE LIGHT** is each of using that light within to bring illumination to our faith community.

It's an exciting time to be a member of UUCMP. We have many new members, including new families. We are in the midst of completing our shared, congregant-created Strategic Plan that includes three bold areas to enhance what we are doing:

- Encouraging more involvement and participation in committees and events by all of us.
- Expanding our welcoming congregation efforts to invite more folks to join our community.
- Attracting more families with children to come and join us.

In short, we have lots of reasons to be generous in our support so we can continue to touch more lives.

The Finance Committee has put together a fact sheet about our financial situation and how we got here. It's available in the members section of the UUCMP website and is also part of this package.

(When Rev. John Buehrens was our interim minister, he announced that this congregation has all the money it needs to keep itself solvent, it's just stuck in everyone's pockets. Your Stewardship and Finance Committees are excited to see how this is true!)

Please consider how you can help us fill our budgeting shortfall. If we don't reach our goal, it could mean cutting staff time or eliminating some programs. IT'S UP TO ALL OF US to prevent such cuts. A description of a challenge grant put together by the Board and the Stewardship committee to match anyone's significant increase in pledging is included in this package.

This information is coming to most of you via email. Please use the online pledge form if at all possible, available at this link: <https://uucmp.breezechms.com/form/3d1e80>. In our new recordkeeping system, Breeze (link: <https://uucmp.breezechms.com/login>), you can look up your Giving history to see what you have pledged in the past. Consider taking yourself up to the spiritual goal of 5% of your income as your pledge. Or consider increasing your pledge 25% over last year. That could be what we need!

If you need help accessing your information or making your pledge online, please bring your questions to worship on Sundays. Someone from Stewardship will be at a table with a laptop or iPad to help you make your pledge and/or access your information. There is a cadre of Stewards that will be in touch with each of us to provide support for making our pledges.

WE CAN DO THIS!

Sincerely, Your UUCMP Stewardship Committee: Konny Murray, Chair