



## First Church Berkeley UCC

September 15, 2022

Dear Church,

An old story...

A dying man, working far from his home country, summons a friend and says, "I won't live to see my wife again. Here is all the money I have – about \$100,000. Please return to my home. Give what you want to my wife and keep the remainder for yourself."

The friend travels a long way to find the widow, who is overcome with grief when she learns her husband has died. The friend repeats the dead man's exact words – give what you want and keep the rest -- and says, "Therefore, I am taking \$90,000 and giving you \$10,000."

The widow is shocked and appeals to the local rabbi who calls for a meeting. The rabbi instructs the friend to tell him the dying man's exact words. Then he says, "Give her the \$90,000 and keep the \$10,000."

"Why should I?" says the friend.

"Because you did not understand the instructions," says the rabbi calmly. "The dying man said you were to give her what *you* wanted. How much did you want? Ninety thousand? Therefore, you must give that to her!"

It's a good story, showing how easy it is to become conflicted about giving money away once we have it in our possession, even if it was never truly ours.

But it need not be that way. If we begin by acknowledging that our lives are gifts from God, then all we amass must similarly be a gift. That should make giving it away easier. We don't really own our possessions but are, at best, just temporary custodians of them. Our job is to put them to good use as they pass through our hands.

It's sustaining-giver season once again, dear Church.

We'd like to start by thanking the scores of people who have been faithful givers this past year: 155 of you (singles, couples and families) underwrite our operating expenses with your sustaining gifts. Due to you, we have weathered the shocks of what has felt like a never-ending pandemic and are now poised for years of growth – even resurrection!

We have added ministers and members. The pews are looking fuller on Sunday mornings and there's more energy and optimism about upcoming programs than we've felt in a while.

We will soon begin construction on a beautiful new building that will serve our congregation and the surrounding community for decades to come. Look for an invitation in the new year to support a

capital campaign that will put us over the finish line for the new wing, including offices, classrooms, flexible worship/fellowship space and a kitchen to enable our ministries and long-term thriving.

And for right now: as we do every fall, we are asking everyone who worships with us—or who supports the work of this church—to make or renew a commitment right now: to help us continue to be a place of spiritual growth, of caring community and of service to our neighbors with your sustaining gift to our annual operating budget for salaries, maintenance and programming.

If you are already a sustaining giver, will you please renew your commitment and consider increasing it, as the Bay Area and our own costs have seen nearly 7% inflation in the past year?

If you are not yet a sustaining giver, will you please commit to becoming one? Our goal is to have every regular participant in the life of this church step up and make a promise this year to share their resources. It costs approximately \$3,000 per year per worshipping member/friend (or \$57/week) to run our church, but *a sustaining gift in any amount* will make a difference.

Many of us give through the Realm online portal that allows donations to be charged to a credit card or subtracted from a bank account, either on a regular basis or whenever it's most convenient for us. Kit Dunbar ([kdunbar@fcb.org](mailto:kdunbar@fcb.org)), our business manager, will be happy to help you get set up on Realm if you're not already using it.

Filling out the enclosed card will help us plan for the future, and be a physical reminder to you that you are an essential part of First Church Berkeley's vitality. We invite you to bring your commitment card to **Fall Festival Worship on Sunday, September 25** to be blessed (or mail it in beforehand, or fill out the digital commitment card on our Give page at [firstchurchberkeley.org](http://firstchurchberkeley.org)).

Many thanks for your generosity—giving what you want, to be part of building something much bigger than yourself.

In gratitude,

Stewardship, Finance & Administration Ministry

Nancy Campbell, Diana Graham, Bob Helliesen, Nathan Hood, Nick Kulkan, Becky Smith & Molly Baskette