

STEWARDSHIP AT THE FIRST UNITARIAN CHURCH OF PITTSBURGH  
May 1, 2008

*Are my contributions to First Unitarian Church tax-deductible?*

Yes, financial contributions to First Unitarian Church are tax-deductible, and each January the church sends out a contribution statement to every individual who has made a contribution during the preceding year. However, your contributions will appear on your statement only if the office staff can identify you as the contributor. Thus, if you simply place cash into the offering plate, the office staff will not know the source of your contribution. Therefore, we recommend that you write a check or use a contribution envelope, making it possible for the office staff to identify you as the contributor.

*What is a pledge?*

A pledge is simply a statement of intention to make a financial contribution to First Unitarian Church. We ask that new members fill out a pledge card when they sign the membership book. During our Annual Every-Member-and-Friend Canvass, which takes place in the fall, we ask all members and friends of First Unitarian Church to fill out a pledge card for the following year. Members and friends generally need to fill out a new pledge card each year. The Canvass Committee earnestly requests that pledge cards be returned as soon as possible once the fall canvass begins.

*What is so important about a pledge?*

First Unitarian Church, like many other organizations, draws up a detailed spending plan, or budget, for each year. It helps tremendously for us to have an accurate picture of how much income we can anticipate. When our members and friends fill out pledge cards, we are better able to balance income with expenses.

*I have made a pledge to the church. When should I make my contribution?*

Many people divide their pledge into twelve parts and write a check to the church each month for one-twelfth of their total pledge. For example, if your pledge is \$1,200 per year, you might write a check to the church each month for \$100. However, some people prefer to make quarterly contributions, and some prefer to make one annual payment.

*What is the preferred mode of payment?*

Most people contribute by writing a check to the church and either placing that in the offering plate on Sunday mornings or mailing it to the church office. However, it is possible to pay your pledge automatically from your bank account by Electronic Funds Transfer. Please contact Rita Gates, our Business Manager, to set this up.

*What if my financial situation changes and I cannot follow through on my pledge?*

Your pledge is a statement of intention, not a legal contract. If your financial situation changes and you cannot follow through on your pledge, we simply encourage you to contribute what you can. It would be helpful at some point to communicate with the Chair of the Canvass Committee or the Treasurer about your change in plans.

*What is a pledge unit?*

Most households make just one pledge which covers the entire anticipated contribution from everyone in that household. This household would then be considered one pledge unit. In some cases, however, two partners in a couple may prefer to make separate pledges. Each partner in that couple would then be considered a distinct pledge unit. Currently, First Unitarian Church has about 275 pledge units.

*How much am I expected to pledge?*

We are an economically diverse congregation. Each household has its own particular financial situation. Thus, we do not expect everyone to pledge the same dollar amount. However, we have set a standard of three percent (3%) of annual household income as a general pledge expectation for members and friends of First Unitarian Church. Many households can manage three percent or even more for their annual contribution to the church. Some households are steadily working their way up to the three percent standard. Others simply contribute what they can. Obviously, the greater our financial resources, the better able we are to fulfill our mission (1) to provide a satisfying and worthwhile experience for everyone who is part of this religious community, and (2) to promote our religious values in the larger community.

*We are moving to another city and we plan to join the Unitarian Universalist church there. Are we expected to complete our pledge to First Unitarian Church? Do we need to have a letter of transfer?*

We wish you well with your new congregation! If you want to complete your pledge to First Unitarian Church for the remainder of the year for sentimental reasons, we certainly would appreciate that, but you may prefer to discontinue your pledge at the time of your move. It would be helpful at some point to communicate with the Chair of the Canvass Committee or the Treasurer about your change in plans. Because of our congregational tradition, the Unitarian Universalist denomination does not use letters of transfer. You simply resign from your former congregation and then sign the membership book at your new congregation. At the time of your move, it would be helpful if you would send a letter of resignation to our Minister or to our Membership Coordinator. Otherwise, we may not know to remove you from our membership list.

*I understand that First Unitarian Church has an endowment. Why not use the endowment to cover church operating expenses instead of asking the members for contributions?*

We are fortunate that perhaps fifteen percent of our annual budget comes from our endowment (in the form of investment income) and from rentals. This revenue helps stabilize our budget and allows us to include some things in our budget we would not otherwise be able to afford. However, we definitely want to resist the temptation to become too dependent on our endowment. We believe that our church is much healthier when the members and friends of First Unitarian Church derive a sense of shared ownership of what happens here through their generous and sustained giving.

*First Unitarian Church asks for money for many different causes. Am I expected to give to everything?*

We do offer many opportunities for you to put your dollars to good use, and we can all be glad that so many people want to accomplish so many wonderful things here! But please do not feel that you must be highly generous with each and every fund-raising activity. Your pledge to the annual church budget should be your basic priority for giving to First Unitarian Church; but beyond that, we simply encourage you to choose which fund-raising activities will fit your personal priorities and your household budget.