

HOMELESS IN PARADISE

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SHARED OFFERINGS

How To Succeed On Both Sides Of The Aisle

By Wanda Sue Parrott

SURVIVING a presidential election isn't easy, as evidenced last Tues. when the 45th President-elect of the United States, Donald Trump, was named before all votes had been officially announced.

If reaction across the US wasn't a shockwave, what was it?

Instead of becoming America's first woman president, Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton telephoned Trump and conceded the election after ending her watch party and sending everyone home without making an appearance or speech.

In his conciliatory speech, the Republican candidate promised, "The forgotten men and women of our country will be forgotten no longer... While the campaign is over, our work on this movement is just beginning."

Are the homeless among those forgotten people Trump vows to put to work? He said, "This political stuff is nasty. And it's tough." He promised results that benefit every American.

If, indeed, his administration fulfills Trump's not-so-nasty promise, it won't happen tomorrow. So, while anticipating the extreme turnarounds Trump says will "make America great again," it's we who must run things now, including helping the homeless.

One way to do so is for your church, club or other organization to practice Shared Offerings at your services, fundraiser or special programs. How?

Works On Both Sides Of The Aisle

Why not adapt Shared Offerings to fit your club, church, school or other group needs? It's inexpensive, easy and it really works to raise funds for everything from helping the homeless to all social justice causes.

The only prerequisite for launching your own Shared Offerings project is that you select one or more worthy causes to which to contribute donations; then, announce it.

All that's basically required is a central aisle, one or two ushers willing to collect contributions, and one or two baskets, bowls or jars to be used as money containers. Or, if it's easier, pass a hat!

Regardless of which political parties those on both sides of the aisle favor, this apolitical practice beats the wrangling that goes on in Washington, D.C. because everyone benefits.

If you're willing to participate, you could even wind up as both a giver and receiver. Politics aside, the system works and is catching the attention of peninsula churchgoers since it was kicked off seven months ago.

The Shared Offering Program

In summer 2015, the Unitarian Universalist Church of the Monterey Peninsula welcomed Reverends Axel and Elaine Gehrmann from Illinois to serve as UUCMP's new co-ministers.

Last winter, Rev. Elaine suggested one-half the weekly collection money (excluding contributions for pledges or other specifically designated causes) be earmarked for a non-profit recipient-of-the-month. The other half would remain as income to the church.

Loose change, dollar bills and checks made out especially for the recipient would be collected throughout the month and disbursed to the nominated organization at the close of the collection period.

The social justice committee approved the suggestion, announced it to the congregation, and requested suggestions for various non-profits that would benefit from such collections between March and December 2016. Almost instantly a plethora of suggestions was received. There was, in fact, so much response that not all worthy organizations that serve the needy could be included on the 2016 beneficiaries roster.

Now, each Sunday that kicks off a new collection month features, a speaker from the designated beneficiary of that month who introduces his or her worthy cause.

Midway through the service each week, a team of ushers walks up the aisle and passes baskets to congregants on both sides. To date, donations roughly ranging from around \$500 to \$1000 per month have been gathered for this well-received program.

This year's recipients include agencies that serve the homeless as marked by asterisks:

- March—*The Fund for Homeless Women.
- April—Planned Parenthood
- May—International Convocation of Unitarian Universalist Women
- June—Equal Justice Initiative
- July—*Gathering for Women
- August—*Interdenominational Homeless Emergency Lodging Program (I-HELP) for Men
- September—*Interim, Inc.
- October—*Housing Resource Center
- November—*Women Alive! Emergency Shelter, Salinas
- December—Communities for a Sustainable Monterey County

Visitors are welcome to attend Shared Offering services at the Unitarian Universalist Church of the Monterey Peninsula, 490 Aguajito Rd., Carmel, Sun., 10:30 a.m., or visit www.uucmp.org.

You may watch UUCMP Sermon Broadcasts on AMP Media (Channel 24 on Comcast) Thurs. at 8 p.m., Sat. midnight and Tues. at 8:30 a.m.

For information, or to recommend a non-profit organization to be considered for inclusion on the 2017 Shared Offering list, contact Mibs McCarthy, UUCMP social justice chairperson, mibsmccarthy@comcast.net.

If you survived Election 2016, congratulations! If not, well. . . you wouldn't be reading this column now, would you?

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