

Dear Friends

Every year each fall we commit some time in our life together to carry out a Stewardship Campaign and invite your pledges for the year to come. This has taken the form of announcements, slogans, songs, pledge cards, special events, and what I teasingly refer to as my annual “money” sermon. For the most part, we attempt to keep the message light and encouraging because, after all, we have much to be thankful for.

But this year is not like most years (something we can all agree on). Nonetheless I would like to ask you to take a few minutes to read this letter and listen to our appeal, and prayerfully consider your support for the church in 2021.

WHO WE ARE

I gladly take a little bit of ribbing each year because parts of my ‘money’ sermon can sound like bragging. But the truth is I want you to know and understand that Charleswood United Church is a both growing concern and a major undertaking. There are 2711 congregations in the United Church and according to the 2019 Statistics, Charleswood is in the top 3 in both households affiliated and number of households supporting financially. This is a position that has risen steadily over the last few years. And we do this primarily through your gifts to the church. There are many other congregations who support themselves through endowments and foundations, through the leasing of land and space, or by other revenue streams. We are dependent on offerings for 85% of our operations. We do a lot and we do this together.

WHERE WE ARE

No one could have foreseen what 2020 would bring. In fact, we passed our 2020 budget at our annual meeting on Sunday, March 8 and suspended worship on Sunday, March 15. And yet, the suspension of worship has not resulted in the suspension of ministry in any meaningful ways. We moved to online services and launched a YouTube channel. We are reaching out with email and phone calls. Every one of our staff people adapted to the new reality and found new ways of delivering their aspect of our shared ministry.

Financially, your response has been amazing. Many of you switched to e-transfer as a means of support. Many of you continued to support the church through PAR (Pre-Authorized Remittance). And many of you increased your givings beyond your pledge to ensure the healthy and viable operation of this ministry. The results are nothing short of inspiring.

At the **end of October** we had received **\$282,746 in offering for local operations** which is **\$24,500 ahead** of the same time last year. We have received **\$38,704 in building and property** donations which is **\$11,000 ahead** of last year. At the same time **expenses** (staff, building, office, programs) until the end of October were **\$377,244** or **\$17,500 less** than same time last year. Combined with the earlier announced **grants of \$14,572** we have accounted for the loss of rental and fundraising revenue. And as long as we continue on the same pattern, we should end the year on budget. Thank you for this wonderful response!

Because we have remained committed to our intentions, the ministry of Charleswood United Church had adapted and flourished. In an exercise with our Ministry and Personnel Committee last January I identified our three major goals for 2020 as 1) continuing as a learning site for a student ministry

practicum, 2) strengthening our partnership with Operation Ezra and the Healing Farm Project and 3) improving and increasing our use of technology and online ministry. In spite of a global pandemic and without the capacity to gather in person for over six months, all three of these goals have been advanced far beyond expectations.

WHAT WE HOPE

You can imagine that planning and budgeting for 2021 is difficult given the uncertainty with which we are living. At this point no one is sure when our worship and community life can resume or what it will look like when it does. We will be developing a budget for 2021 which will attempt to hold onto everything we have been doing. But let it be said, *staying the course implies increasing our donations.*

For the sake of this appeal let us presume that we won't increase the overall budget from this year. That would mean our **local offering goal for 2021 remains \$358,000** and our **building and property goal remains \$45,000**. We will enter 2021 unable to expect any revenue from fundraising (including Care and Community hosted funeral receptions) and half of our usual rental income (assuming Community Ventures Day Program is able to continue). It is unlikely we will qualify for pandemic support grants similar to 2020.

Which brings me back to pledges for 2021.

WHAT WE ASK

Attached to this email you will find a pledge card for 2021 entitled ***A Time To Build Up***. This phrase from Ecclesiastes 3 serves to remind us that this is not the time to turn away from the growth, outreach, and joy that is the hallmark of Charleswood United Church but rather to embrace the challenge of the present moment. I also hope that it serves to remind us that these circumstances are confronting each of us differently and that if you need to decrease your donations we understand with the deepest gratitude for you. But perhaps together...collectively...as each is able...as one body, we can continue to offer worship and comfort and education and inspiration and celebration and outreach to the world that God so loves.

To that end would you please:

- Look to the Pledge Card attached to this email
- Respond by email or letter mail by November 30, 2021
- Consider moving to PAR (pre-Authorized Remittance) if you are not already doing so
- Avail yourself of the e-transfer donation option (information at: www.charleswoodunited.org/donate)
- Let us know if you prefer to continue using envelopes as we have not ordered a full complement of 2021 envelopes to save costs. Alternatively feel free to use 2020 envelopes you have leftover.

Thank you for your time, your prayerful consideration, and your ongoing support.

Grace and peace,

Michael