

[Article on *Share The Plate* for the newsletter]

### **A New Orientation With Community: *Be The Change You Want To See***

*Share the Plate* represents a sea change in how money that members give to the church gets routed to specific charitable causes, and how recipients of those causes experience our giving. The process is direct, immediate, personal and effective.

Traditionally, the congregation has used a weekly pledge process to collect donations from members. It's a ritual process that's convenient and well understood. But it's not very meaningful, nor is it always clear how much gets routed to social action – and where, by whom or how much?

*Share The Plate* was initially created by The Unitarian Society of New Brunswick, New Jersey.<sup>1</sup> The process involves a clear separation between pledged payments for budgeted needs like building, administration and program costs – and direct giving. Logistically, *Share The Plate* is a separate donation, managed in the same way that usual pledge donations are managed - in a basket, at a Sunday Service. However, 50% of the money is tied to a specific, local recipient, who sends a representative to speak for a defined segment of the service on the need. Relationship is immediate, and the spiritual practice of giving becomes palpable.

An approximate example of how *Share The Plate* can look occurred on Sunday, September 8, 2013, when we welcomed Mr. Guss Morrison, our local NAACP Vice President, who spoke personally about the 1963 March on Washington, as well as the chapter's current efforts in the Valley. It was moving and meaningful and created an opening for members to attend the NAACP'S Freedom Fund Banquet the following week-end to raise further funds for the chapter. A special collection was gathered at the end of the service, and we were all proud to have been able to make an on-the-spot donation of over \$900. It was a moment of high congruity with our values.

An established *Share The Plate* program would not involve an entire service, nor would it typically involve politically aligned organizations or an on-the-spot donation. But it will involve human beings from local organizations, speaking about the people and causes they represent. The ongoing nature of the program assures that any interested member can take part in the decision-making process by submitting an application to the Social Action and Justice Committee. Applications will be at the back of the Narthex – and, soon, online.

In sum, outcomes of the program include: 1.) A separation of “tithing,” or pledged donations to the church, from spiritual giving to the community 2.) Establishment of a living relationship between the church and its members, to recipients in the community - and, by extension, increased community awareness of who we are, beyond the impressions our signage may suggest. Said differently, *Share The Plate* is an opportunity for regular giving, as a spiritual practice, to honor the need each of us has to be connected to something larger than ourselves.

To learn more, check in with members of the Social Action and Justice Committee during coffee time. We'd love to chat!

---

<sup>1</sup> Sharing the plate increases giving. Donald E. Skinner. July/August 2003. <http://www.uuworld.org/assets/php/printer.php> on 10/19/2003.