

A Stewardship Moment

Elaine Roberts @ Westwood Unitarian Congregation 2009

I've been asked to speak of my commitment to Westwood as part of this year's Stewardship Campaign.

During the sexual revolution in the 70s I realized my sexuality was central to my existence. By that I mean I am a woman and because I am a woman my view of the world and my response to it is biased. Being a woman influences everything I do.

Nearly 40 years later, I realize being a Unitarian Universalist is now central to my existence and it colours my view of the world and my response to it. Unitarian Universalism has seeped into my bones.

I am an institutionalist. I want the Unitarian Universalist institution to be here long after I'm done. A while ago at a Spinning the Web dinner, the central question of the evening was “ what is your passion?” Not an easy question. I don't necessarily think of myself as passionate. But it came to me that night for the first time that I'm passionate about being a Unitarian Universalist. I love this religion and what it stands for.

I particularly want Westwood's brand of Unitarian Universalism to be a presence in this city. The Winter Solstice service at City Hall this year made me cry. “Look at us”, I thought, “our little south side church has gone big time!” I'm proud of our record in social justice, in the denomination and here at Westwood. I think that what we do in our children's programs is absolutely the right thing to do, both denominationally and here at Westwood.

I want our doors to be wide open. I know there are lots of people out there who want our kind of religion but who don't even know we exist. I want to tell them about us. I know

there are Westwoodians who are reluctant to change, to grow our numbers. To you, I say, “How would you have felt if you'd arrived at the door and found a sign on it saying, “There's no room here. We're full. Go away.”

.....This place.....you..... are very important to me. You are part of my extended family, which means I feel cared for by you AND you challenge me to be authentic and to grow. So..... I contribute time, skills, energy and money - that's what this stewardship moment is all about.

My 39 years of sharing the ministry here and at the Unitarian Church of Edmonton has included most of the volunteer jobs going - except Treasurer and Buildings and Grounds! I know that our religious organization needs everyone to share the ministry and I've happily done that. I know that people need to step back from time to time and I've done that too. I've brought my organizational skills, my listening skills, public speaking skills, discernment skills and my passion to bear here and in the Canadian Unitarian Council, and before that for the Unitarian Universalist Association. That's the skills, energy and time part. But let me be clear. I learned some of those skills in the service of Unitarian Universalism. There are amazing opportunities here.

And my money – Well, in 2007, 14% of my gross income went to charitable organizations with Westwood getting the biggest chunk. My contribution to Westwood was 3.5% of my gross income at just under \$2000. For the last few years my pledge has increased but at the moment I think I've reached my limit. Unless, of course, there's a compelling reason – like a new building!!

I invite you to think about what Westwood brings to your life and how you might help to keep the doors wide open and welcoming, using your skills, energy and your money. In March you'll have an opportunity to declare how you will support this congregation in the next church year and so will I.