

Good morning. For those of you who don't know me and as a reminder for those who do, my name is Paul Campbell. I have been a member here for almost 4 years. I am a deacon as well as being on the church council and am the council's liaison to the church's financial team.

For the next few weeks, members of the congregation will be speaking to you about their individual experiences as they may pertain to God, previous church life and particularly how they came to this little church on the hill. Everyone's path is as different as the individuals themselves and I know it will help all of you to get to know each of them a little better by participating in their stories.

The reason for this as well as the letter you will soon receive from Pastor Tracey and I and the messages in our bulletin each week is that this is stewardship season here in the church. So just what is stewardship? The dictionary, and for those of you unfamiliar with the word dictionary, back in the dark ages before the internet, a dictionary was a large book filled with words and the definitions of those words. We used to actually have to open a book to look up meanings of words. In any event, I did get this definition from the internet, not the old fashioned way. So there were a couple of examples for the definition of stewardship The one that is more to my liking and I believe more appropriate for

us, “The responsible overseeing and protection of something considered worth caring for and preserving”. I believe that we can all agree that UCCPH is worth caring for and preserving.

In the time that we have been members, we have received so much more than we ever expected. We have made great friends here, Pastor Tracey has exceeded all of our expectations not only for what we all see and hear during her sermons but in all she does in the background working with the various ministry teams and the church council, her involvement with the greater area UCC church council and ministry and her many visits to those of us within the congregation who need her support. She truly lives the word stewardship every day, preserving and caring for the church and all its members.

How many of you are noticing that you seem to have a little less room in the pews than you used to have? Well it isn't your imagination. In 2016, we averaged approximately 66 adults at each service. Obviously, there were fewer in the summer and more around the holidays, but 66 or so on average. Do you know that we are now averaging 85 people per service in 2017 and we haven't even reached our peak time for attendance yet. This is great news, more people finding out about this fantastic thing we have going at UCCPH. More people for

us to welcome, more kids to attend the excellent Sunday school programs that we have every week, more opportunities to exemplify the open and affirming values and mission of our church. Look at some of the great things we have accomplished this year.

- Refurbishing of the nursery
- The construction of a Memorial garden
- New commercial dishwasher for the kitchen
- Concrete patio outside the kitchen
- Designation as an Accessible to All church, one of the first four in the UCC church.

Just to mention a few. There are so many wonderful things about growing when so many other churches are seeing declining membership and attendance. We are very blessed to be in this situation but growth comes with a price. We are putting somewhat of a strain on our resources perhaps best illustrated by our need for a new well for the church. There have been a number of Sundays when we have overwhelmed the water supply and actually run out of water. Dick Sherer, with his wealth of experience has researched what it would take to have a new well dug much deeper into the Dawson aquifer thus being able to guarantee

a water supply for many years into the future for our church. No the aquifer wasn't named after Chris and Tracey, but it somehow seems an appropriate name doesn't it? The reality of the situation is that the new well will cost about \$16,000 and we don't have that amount in our budget nor our reserves. We have applied for a bank loan or line of credit but were denied mainly due to lack of cash flow. There are also a number of other projects we would like to undertake. We are currently in the process of forming a Visioning team for the church to determine the priorities for ideas such as resurfacing and restriping the parking lot, purchasing a more recognizable monument sign where we could post the times of our services allowing passersby to know when they are welcome to attend and many other ideas both large and small to ensure our future. Again, the responsible overseeing and protection of something considered worth caring for and preserving.

How many of you know what the letters OCWM stand for and what it means?

(Recognize someone in the audience if anyone is willing to speak up). That's correct, Our Church's Wider Mission. So just what is that all about? Here is just one example. UCCPH is part of the Rocky Mountain Conference of the UCC.

Among other things, The Conference connects kids to our La Foret camp, provides scholarships and grants to churches and gives us a voice in the National UCC

Church. For instance, this past summer the conference actually paid half the cost for the kids we sent to La Foret. In addition, they subsidize the cost of attending their meetings during the year. Without this, we would have been unable to send Tracey and our Moderator Angie Law to many of the meetings which include seminars and excellent speakers which can give us many great ideas for improving our church. They also helped send Angie, Tracey and our vice moderator Randy Mann to a conference meeting in Wyoming. The truth of the matter is that they cannot continue to do this without support from the individual churches in the district. Our challenge and opportunity is to figure out a way to balance all these needs both for our own congregation and for the UCC as a whole.

Here is something I didn't know and you may not know either. The average amount given to OCWM by all UCC congregations in the Rocky Mountain Conference in 2016 was \$30 per adult member. That figure doesn't include the other special offerings during the year which I will go into here in a minute. UCCPH gave much less than the \$30 figure and I think that maybe part of the reason is that not all of us understand why it is so important. I'll be very candid with you, I have felt in the past that it seemed like every week or so there was a special offering being collected for something. I felt this way because I didn't really know what all these special offerings were for. So here they are: One Great

Hour of Sharing supports partners in countries for health, education and agricultural development, and emergency relief Neighbors in Need supports the Council for American Indian Ministry and a variety of justice initiatives, advocacy efforts and direct service projects, The Christmas Fund provides direct financial assistance to retired and active UCC authorized ministers and lay employees and their surviving spouses and lastly Strengthen the Church which supports church growth, pastoral and lay leadership development, youth and young adult ministries within conferences. We also collect for support of the National UCC and the Rocky Mountain Conference for the work they do for the churches. This is the target (expected) contribution of \$30 per adult per year and is under the umbrella of OCWM. These special offerings are requested and taken at intervals throughout the year and support the missions of the UCC and merit our stewardship. In preparing for this presentation, I came across a number of ways to look at stewardship. Each revolved around a number of things beginning with the letter T. The one that makes the most sense to me is three "T's" Time, Treasure and Talent. Each of us can offer these things toward the stewardship of UCCPH in various ways. Some of us have more time than either of the other two, others may have more talent to offer or treasure, it all depends on each person's individual situation and ALL are necessary and welcome The unfortunate fact

however is that if all of us only gave time and talent, we wouldn't have the funds necessary to operate the church. By making a strong pledge of time, talent money and other resources, we reinforce others who have already done so and we encourage those who have not done as much to do the same. Included in the bulletin this week you will find a chart showing projected weekly giving for individuals based on annual, monthly and weekly earnings. I invite you to take a look at this and compare it with what you are giving. We currently have approximately 70 "giving units", our members who have made pledge commitments and would certainly like to see that number increase. We have not completed the budget as yet for 2018, however it looks like it will be somewhere in the range of \$150K to \$170K which will be about a 20% increase over this year. A significant portion of the increase is budgeting for the new well which is a top priority.

Most if not all of you have participated in the missions and projects of the church. Examples run the gamut from bringing toiletries and clothing for La Puente, taking a weekend to go to Alamosa and pick potatoes after the harvest for the food bank, contributing to the purchase of Christmas gifts and bicycles for the children of servicemen and servicewomen at Buckley and many others too numerous to mention. You all know how great you feel when you participate in these projects

or in other charitable giving and acts you do throughout the year for other organizations. Let's all intentionally take on the responsibility of stewardship of our church and the UCC as a whole by making commitments both material and symbolic to help this congregation love God and love our neighbor in the days, weeks months and year ahead