

For me, committing to UUCG is a no-brainer. Finding this church was the third-best thing I ever did.

The first-best thing that happened to me was to be born to my parents, supportive and smart and kind and relatively sane, at a place and time when the American middle class was growing and prospering.

The second-best thing I did was to finally find and recognize the right person to marry, after spending a number of years having "learning experiences" in how to be the right person for him to marry.

Then, after 45 years of being unchurched and not missing it (except for the music), I finally came here one Sunday and was immediately at home. Rev. Ann Marie's sermon and the words of the affirmation all were meaningful and made sense about the same things that matter to me, and the music was indescribably wonderful. We unexpectedly saw 2 old friends here, and so many other lovely people seemed to be ready and more than willing to become new friends. Of course we came back, again and again, and joined this congregation. The feeling of recognition, connection, meaning, joy never wore off.

The Sunday morning we stood up and committed to this congregation and were welcomed as members felt like a wedding.

My original family is shrinking with the years. America has become a harder place to grow and prosper. But this church challenges and helps me and my partner to be better, and to make the world better, and shows us how.

So you can understand why the continuing health of this church is, to me, essential.

So, making a commitment. As has been pointed out before, commitments are not necessarily just money. Can you commit some time and effort? Working with the RE program involves a significant commitment. So do singing in the choir, leading the ministry teams and board committees. But some commitments can be small or large, for example fixing coffee after the service for a single occasion, or for a whole month. You can help with building and grounds maintenance on one or

several Saturday workdays (actually more like half a day, with lunch), coordinate a social event, usher occasionally or often, help to clean up after potlucks, assist on a team or a committee if you can't lead it. There are many other possibilities, and Rev. Ann Marie is quite willing to point you toward them. We have more that needs to be done than we have volunteers to do it. Once you're aware of the variety of needs, you make decisions like this in lots of areas of life. You've probably gotten pretty good at figuring them out.

Money commitments are useful too -- in fact necessary for us to continue, even more necessary if we actually want our church to grow. Deciding how much money to contribute can be harder than deciding how much time we can give. So I will tell you how I learned to make money decisions that weren't about obvious necessities like food and shelter.

When I was about 30, for the first time I had more money than I absolutely needed, enough for a few little luxuries. I had learned years before to walk through shopping malls as if they were museums with interesting things on display that I could enjoy looking at. One picture in an art gallery was different, though. It called me back to see it again and again. Other pictures there were beautiful or interesting, but this one was different to me. I would go specifically to see it. Finally I asked the price: \$115.00. I debated for weeks whether this piece of art was worth it. I didn't know how to determine the value of a piece of art! What if it were really only worth \$75.00?

Finally I realized something: What it was "worth" on the art market didn't matter, because I wanted to live with it, I didn't want to sell it. If the price had been \$10, I'd have bought it the second time I came to see it. If the price had been \$1,000, which I didn't have, I wouldn't even wonder. What it was worth to me was the real question. Then the question turned around: what was \$115 worth to me? It was money I didn't have to spend to live. In Chicago, my husband and I could go out for a nice dinner 3 times for that amount of money -- or I could live with the picture. Which would I prefer? The picture, no doubt about it. (By the way, I still have it 35 years later, and still love it. The "value" is still irrelevant.)

So I had to look from a different angle, and ask the real question: of the available

options, which would I rather have for my money?

The insert sent with the purple pledge form suggests some amounts. Don't be afraid to look at them -- just looking isn't a commitment. Look and find a number that could be possible for you. Think about what else you would do with that money if UUCG were not a part of your life. Then ask: which would you rather have for your money? Deciding how much to pledge may not be as hard as you think.

Kay Bishop