

Money—UUFVB Covenant Groups—December 2015

Chalice Lighting

May we know once again that we are not isolated beings,
but connected, in mystery and miracle,
to the universe, to this community and to each other.

Check-in: How is your spirit right now?

Opening Readings

Money has only the power that we assign to it, and our society has assigned it immense power...we have given it almost final authority. Rarely in our life is money a place of genuine freedom, joy, or clarity, yet we routinely allow it to dictate the terms of our lives and often to be the single most important factor in the decisions we make about work, love, family, and friendship. For most of us, this relationship with money is a deeply conflicted one, and our behavior with and around money is often at odds with our most deeply held values, commitments, and ideals. (Adapted from the book *The Soul of Money*, by Lynne Twist)

The author of *Money and Class in America* and former editor of *Harper's Magazine*, Henry Lewis Lapham, claims that

“Money is like fire, an element as little troubled by moralizing as earth, air, and water. [We] can employ it as a tool, or...dance around it as if it were the incarnation of a god. Money votes socialist or monarchist, finds a profit in pornography or translations from the Bible, commissions Rembrandt and underwrites the technology of Auschwitz. It acquires its meaning from the uses to which it is put.”

Topic Exploration

While Lewis Henry Lapham (above) approaches money as value-neutral, we know that money is the stuff of wealth and poverty, an indicator of well-being for an individual or a nation, a common topic for domestic discord, and a term that in many churches carries discomfort, embarrassment, and avoidance. It may be value neutral, but we are rarely neutral about the topic of money.

However, despite the huge role that money plays in our lives, most of us remain uncomfortable even discussing the topic, as if even talking about money somehow makes us unclean. This feeling is transferred to our churches as well, placing stewardship committees in the unenviable position of having to ask for money without mentioning the word.

Questions / Sharing

1. How was money dealt with in your family of origin? For example, were money issues resolved successfully, or did conflicts over money become never-ending sources of tension?
2. What experiences have you had of perceiving that you had enough, not enough, or more than enough money? How did you decide what was enough?
3. Do you agree with the authors of our opening readings that money is value-free?
4. How does money help or hinder you from being your best self?
5. Has the lack of money ever caused trauma in your life? Did that lack affect your happiness?
6. To what extent do you link money with your idea of success?

Closing Readings

Money is a paradox in our culture--it enslaves, yet it also frees; it is intensely private, but it is also very public; it measures worth, yet it is no measure of real worth; it destroys, yet also creates. (anonymous)

Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also (*Matthew 6:21*)

Extinguish the Chalice

We extinguish this flame but not the light of truth,
the warmth of community, or the fire of commitment.
These we carry in our hearts until we are together again.

Housekeeping