STEWARDSHIP – IT’S COMPLICATED

I read a blog post on the UUA website about the different ways different people coming together to create a family view and celebrate Thanksgiving. Some have a mental picture of pies and birds, some think of football, and others think of family walks in local parks. The blog post focused on the different pies people liked: should it be pumpkin, cherry, lemon meringue, sweet potato, apple, rhubarb, strawberry, or even pecan pie? Everyone has different childhood memories that coalesce and create tension and messy feelings, especially when those memories clash with the childhood experiences of spouses, siblings, parents.

Now that I've succeeded in making you salivate over the whole pie idea (wanna piece? :-), let's discuss other pies. Childhood and adult experiences dictate to a large degree how we spend our money, and more importantly how we donate to causes, if we donate at all. This is the time of year of the United Way fund drive, encouraging people to designate United Way agencies to which they'll give their money via paycheck deduction. Here at North Hills Community Outreach (NHCO) we have created an incentive to donate en masse: if we have 100% participation, we all get an extra day off, so I not only give to United Way annually, but I make sure that this piece of my pie goes to NHCO.

The amount I give to United Way/NHCO is far smaller than my pledge to the Unitarian Universalist Church of the North Hills, but it is not insignificant in my family's budget - that amount I give to UW could help fund my daughter's swim lessons, my son's soccer tuition, or our home heating bills. But instead I carve it off the block of family finances and give it willingly to others.

As this is the season of pies, birds, and those few but brave eaters of seitan or mock duck, let us give thanks for the things in life that bring us together: a nation with jobs, with food, with highways, with a stable military that stays out of politics, with secondary and higher education, with clean water, disease control, and passable environmental laws. Without highways, higher ed, and plentiful jobs, I might still be where I grew up, cutting grass and unmarried. Without food, clean water and disease control, I might not have the wonderful children that Dawn and I have. Without all of you and UUCNH, I might not have good spiritual direction in my life. For you, I am thankful. For Dawn and my children, I am thankful. And for a chance to make a difference for others through my donations/pledges, I am thankful.

Happy Thanksgiving,

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