



# ~ Gifts Ministry ~

## The Power of an Invitation

Third Tuesday Webinar  
The Reverend Kenneth Gordon Hurto  
15 December 2009





# Gifts Ministry



## The purpose of these seminars:

- To provide readily accessible, affordable leadership development for Unitarian Universalist congregations in the Florida District.
- Faith Development is all we do; Unitarian Universalism is all we teach; the Congregation is the curriculum
- To build the foundations for a life-transforming Beloved Community.



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## The goals for this seminar:

- To present the notion Gifts Ministry
- To consider cultivating our gifts as part of the Beloved Community
- To augment the way we do Stewardship
- To teach a ministry of service as central to Membership.
- To shift from a “needs” and “wants” base to a “call” and “service” base
- To begin moving from a consumer model of church engagement to a sharing of our talents
- To offer a practical model for implementation of Gifts Ministry as part of congregational culture





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## Chalice Opening.

*“The central task of the religious community is to unveil the bonds that bind each to all. ... The religious community is essential, for alone our vision is too narrow...and our strength too limited to do all that must be done.” ~ Mark Morrison Reed.*

*“The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet.”  
~ Frederick Buechner*

*“From you I receive. To you I give. Together we share, and from this we live.”*



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**Why Do We Come to Church?**  
**Meeting member's spiritual needs.**

- ➡ To find Meaning and Purpose ~ **Why.**
- ➡ To create an Identity ~ **Who.**
- ➡ To receive Moral Guidance ~ **How.**
- ➡ To learn Service to Others ~ **Witness.**





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**More than “meeting my needs”**

**What we do not ~ or should not do:**

1. Try to make people happy.
2. Provide mere intellectual stimulation.
3. Function as a landed cruise ship.
4. Provide hospice and chaplaincy.
5. Provide social or mental health services.





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More than “meeting my needs” What we should do:

Make manifest **Love** as our core teaching.

1. Caring at depth for one another is community and central to that love.
2. Bringing our gifts is how we build the congregation.
3. Empowering others to offer their gifts is what transforms the congregation into a ***Beloved Community***.



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*"This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine."*

## The concept of "Gifts Ministry."

1. Origins: common to religious life that we serve others & a higher calling.
2. Assumption from our Judaic/Christian roots: The holy "implants" unique gifts in each of us. We are called to know and to develop those gifts in service.

W.E. Channing: we humans carry a *"spark of divinity in (our) bosom."*





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## Scriptural references for Gifts Ministry:

**St. Paul, Romans 12:4-6a** - *“For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them.”*

**Jesus of Nazareth, Gospel of Matthew, 7:20** - *“Therefore by their fruits you will know them.”*





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## Scriptural references for Gifts Ministry:

*Ephesians 4.11-12: “And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;”*





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**Moving congregational life from consumer/user to producer/giver.**

Gifts ministry is about knowing, discovering and growing your life gifts through the invitation of congregational life.





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**“Vocation is where  
our greatest joy  
meets  
the world's greatest  
need.”**

**~ Frederick Buechner**



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## Gifts ministry asks:

- *What are unique gifts of being human?*
- *What are your unique gifts?*
- *How can you use them to build the **Beloved Community**?*
- *How can we equip one another to do just that?*
- *How do these gifts bring gladness and intersect with the world great need?*





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## Five Roles for applying one's Gifts ~

1. Apostles look for the next adventure and opportunity to spread Unitarian Universalism and its legacy.
2. Prophets discern God's voice for or the application of our ideals to an immediate context.
3. Evangelists have a clear aim to help people find our faith.
4. Pastors are shepherds loving people in all their humanness.
5. Teachers have a passion to teach or preach the truth, according to faith ideas and ideals and their own experience.





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## Unitarian Universalism's Gifters

Who teaches?

Who pastors?

Who tells our good news?

Who witnesses to our values?

Who remembers our legacy for tomorrow?



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## What is an “equipping ministry?”

- It is a way of doing and being the Church, far more than a program.
- It is the congregation’s shared effort to build systems and train leaders to:
  - **identify people’s gifts and ministry needs,**
  - **connect them into service according to their gifts.**





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## What is an “equipping ministry?”

- It prepares people to understand their gifts and live out their calling in every area of their lives,
  - with their family,
  - in the church,
  - in their community or in the world.
- It sees each member as filled with riches eager to find their use.





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“I want to be with people  
who submerge in the  
task...  
who stand in the line  
and haul in their places.”

~ Marge Piercy.



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**Faith development is leadership development.**

**How not to do it!**



Send a talent survey to all members.



Recruit members on the basis of what the congregation needs.



Put a notice in the newsletter.



Lament frequently that no one wants to serve.





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## What's wrong with our typical approach:

- It is passive with no personal outreach one to another.
- It is de-energizing, fails to build enthusiasm.
- It conveys the *work of the church* is merely *church work* and church work is unpaid servitude.
- Lowering the expectations, it makes ministry seem either easy or unimportant.





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## What's wrong with our typical approach:

- It soon relies on “any warm body will do” syndrome.
- It increases the saying “no.”
- It tempts do-it-yourselfers to continue to go it alone.
  - It scares away the insecure or inexperienced.
  - It fails to set limits to the power-needy.
- It requires a few to hyper-over-function.





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Biggest failing of current practices:

1. Not grounded in spiritual awakening.
2. Not tied to congregational mission.
3. It simply does not work: An inept plan for staffing the church's ministry.



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**Gifts or Equipping Ministry  
serves the community  
by developing the person  
as a growing soul amidst  
a profoundly caring  
community of love.**



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“Whoever you are, no matter how lonely, the world offers itself to your imagination, calls to you like the wild geese...over and over announcing your place in the family of things.”

~ Mary Oliver.



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▶ Redefining **Stewardship** as *Faith Development*,  
Gifts Ministry provides:

- Opportunity to know and to grow one's talents.
- Opportunity to practice, improve.
- Opportunity to serve others.
  - Being human is to be needed and to give.
  - Being human is to ask: how can I help?
  - Being human is not knowing what to do.





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## Gifts Ministry provides:

- Opportunity to serve others.
  - Being human is to be needed.
  - Being human is to give.
  - Being human is to ask: how can I help?
  - Being human is not knowing what to do.
- Gifts Ministry reminds us it is blessed to give ~  
in the totality of our living.





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## Practical steps for changing Unitarian Universalist congregational culture.

Introduce Gifts Ministry across the congregation's life ~ including the kids!

- Provide a segment on giving (beyond money) in your path to membership. Pledge for:
  - Time
  - Talent
  - Treasure





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## Practical steps for changing Unitarian Universalist congregational culture.

Add gifting to your annual stewardship canvass:

- Ask: *What excites you about your ministry?*
- Ask: *How much time can you, will you pledge to give to it?*
- Ask: *What gifts do you have to share with our congregation?*
  - Publish the results.
  - Show frequent appreciation for how people give to the community. Provide members a chance to brag.





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## Practical steps for changing Unitarian Universalist congregational culture.

- Include naming and identifying gifts as part of **leadership development**.
- Include as part of every small group ministry meeting: *“How have I honed and used my gifts since we last met.”*





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## Practical steps for changing Unitarian Universalist congregational culture.

For all task groups, create the expectation that identifying participant gifts will be part of each task group's conscious work.

- Move away from “having an agenda” to sharing one's Self.





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## Practical steps for changing Unitarian Universalist congregational culture.

At any organizing meeting, after reviewing Mission, the convener should invite members to name:

- *What I am good at.*
- *What I would like to try, to further my growing edge.*
- *What I am not good at nor interested in doing.*





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## Practical steps for changing Unitarian Universalist congregational culture.

Delegate the team's tasks on that basis.

- Include gift development as part of the team's assessment process.
- This is **especially important** for the Board of Trustees.



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## Bringing about a culture change in the Beloved Community.

- Remember: Community norms trump stated policy
- Affirm always: we are in a **covenantal** not creedal connection.

We unite "to walke together in all God's waies, according as he is pleased to reveale himself to us in his Blessed word of truth." [Salem, 1629]





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“Revelation is not sealed: we’re all still learning, growing.

Relationships are consensual, never coerced: we’re all here voluntarily.”

~ James Luther Adams





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## Bringing about a culture change in the Beloved Community.

Create *Covenants of Right Relationship*:

Make clear the reasonable expectations of belonging to a Beloved Community.

- Agree on what to do when we failure to honor one another or engage in community disrupting behavior.
- Recognize souls-growing may need to be called back into right relationship as part of their faith development.





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**Bringing about a culture change in the Beloved Community.**

Use *Covenants of Engagement*, work agreements.

- To be steadfast at working truly to become a crucible for discerning our place in the world.
- To remember we cannot do this work alone.
- To hold and to coach, to affirm and to challenge.



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Use *Covenants of Engagement*:

To confess and promise to one another in work groups:

- *I am here to serve this group and the “good of the order.”*
- *I am here to share and cultivate these gifts of mine.*



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## Use *Covenants of Engagement*:

To offer each other presence and willingness:

- Always, the answer to a request for help will be “yes” absent my inability or demands in my life.
- Those asking will not ask lightly: knowing me well enough not to ask me to do what I am not able to do.



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3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday in January (19<sup>th</sup>)

## *Creating a Covenant of Right Relations*

Suggested Reading:

*Behavioral Covenants in Congregations:  
A Handbook for Honoring Differences*

Gilbert R. Rendle Alban Institute Publication

AL199 [www.alban.org](http://www.alban.org)



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"He who loves with purity  
considers not the gift of the  
lover,  
but the love of the giver."

*Thomas a Kempis (c. 1380 - 1471)*

