

The Little Engine That Could

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We at the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Central Nassau (UCCN) in Garden City, NY had a tough year and almost didn't make our fair share and full share payments. "Fair share" relates to payments to the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations (UUA), and "full share" relates to payments to the UU District of Metro NY (UUDMNY). We struggled to pay both the UUA and UUDMNY ... As we neared the end of the congregational year, our thoughts turned to all that needs attention – the boiler that needs to be replaced; the alarm system requiring updating; better signage, loss of rental income...

The Board of Trustees, Minister, and Finance Committee were of one accord: "We'll simply have to find a way to do what we know is right. We have a lot to cover. Not just the bills, the emergencies, but also our fair share and full share payments. Taking a year off is not an option. Though we don't have much time, we have imagination, creativity, and a challenge that we can meet!" Over the past five years we have benefited greatly from a strong relationship with the UUA and UUDMNY. We made a commitment to becoming fair share and full share because it was the right thing to do. Mindful of the many services that we have received from both the UUA and UUDMNY, we *hoped against hope* that we would find *a way out of no way* ... We were determined that UCCN would make the right decision and honor all of our commitments. *All of them*. UCCN's leadership worked hard to ensure that we did "the right thing."

June 2008 – UCCN's check was received just in time for each of us at General Assembly to get and proudly wear our purple ribbons indicating that UCCN is an Annual Program Fund Honor Congregation – a fair share congregation. This was not only for the world to see but, more importantly, for each member of UCCN to know that we had fulfilled our responsibilities. Being an Honor Congregation for five years in a row is a cause for celebration of our years of ministry *together*. Through that effort there were extra appeals, generosity of some anonymous members of the congregation, a multi-generational "Stimulus Party," a "Mile of Quarters" that all ages contributed to – each effort made a big difference. Each effort showed the spirit of generosity. Each effort *mattered* ... There is much to be thankful for.

Yet, that led us to other questions, each one difficult to answer: How on earth will we be able to take care of the rest of our bills? We had already received a Chalice Lighters grant. Will we still be able to support our sibling congregations as is not only expected, *but required*, in congregational polity? We have already received both the UUDMNY and the UUA Eugene Pickett Awards for Growth of Unitarian Universalism. How will we sustain this?

There is no doubt in my mind that we will cover the rest of our responsibilities – known and unknown – because we will remember that good stewards can do more than they think they can do, even, *or perhaps especially*, when "the going gets rough." Creativity. Dreams. Growth. Imagination. Love. Reaching in. Reaching out. Risk-Taking ... All of these, and more, will help us to realize our dreams – big, small, and in-between. We will continue to do all possible to keep our little engine humming happily as we face the many peaks and valleys that lie before us. We can do it. More importantly, *we will do it* ...