



## THE UNITED CHURCH IN MEADOWOOD

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### The Parable of the Rich Fool *The Message* (Luke 12.13-21)

**13** Someone out of the crowd said, "Teacher, order my brother to give me a fair share of the family inheritance." **14** He replied, "Mister, what makes you think it's any of my business to be a judge or mediator for you?" **15** Speaking to the people, he went on, "Take care! Protect yourself against the least bit of greed. Life is not defined by what you have, even when you have a lot." **16** Then he told them this story: "The farm of a certain rich man produced a terrific crop. **17** He talked to himself: 'What can I do? My barn isn't big enough for this harvest.' **18** Then he said, 'Here's what I'll do: I'll tear down my barns and build bigger ones. Then I'll gather in all my grain and goods, **19** and I'll say to myself, Self, you've done well! You've got it made and can now retire. Take it easy and have the time of your life!' **20** "Just then God showed up and said, 'Fool! Tonight you die. And your barnful of goods - who gets it?' **21** "That's what happens when you fill your barn with Self and not with God."

### A Thanks for Giving Thanks Giving!

What an honour it is to again be asked to share some thoughts and reflections during our Annual Stewardship Campaign. It really is a gift, especially considering that such a role is not always extended to Ministry Personnel during this aspect of a UCC faith community – so for that I say 'thank you.' As I consider this letter, with the theme of this year's campaign in mind – A Thanks for Giving Thanks Giving – I am sincerely struck by the openness that UCiM has been and continues to be as it lives into the crazy choices you have made. Let me try to explain what I mean ...

As the parable above alludes, Jesus' understanding of money was not ours, well not those who had a lot. Radical giving, crazy spending, throwing away good seeds or wasting oil were all ways to radically recognise that all of Creation is God's and embracing that truth has a tendency of unsettling what we humans really want to do: control stuff! UCiM, a little over 4 years ago made some very interesting decisions ... one was to increase your Paid Accountable Ministry by 0.5 FT! Here's the catch: the money really was not in place ... and then 2 years ago, with givings increasing, though not 'in place,' again a decision was to grow your ministry by 0.25 FT, in order to increase your overall ministry.

So why is this crazy – after all we are talking about a deficit aren't we? Well I suspect someone is asking that ... and taking that word neutrally – *deficit* – that is indeed what you have talked about every year in which I have been here and ... incidentally ... that's as long as you have been making these odd choices ...

If you take some time to read the Narrative Budget, I hope there is some sense about how these choices have allowed for your ministry to expand and grow, how UCiM endeavours through partners in the community to offer Good News, when the media and most things you hear/read/Google is about darkness and despair ... trust me I could wax theological about this excitement, but let me put on my immigrant-influenced-entrepreneurial family context hat for a minute: in the time that UCiM and its adherents and members have been

making financially 'illogical' choices, the amount given has increased by 40% since 2007. As well, the Stewardship letter helpfully illustrates, all that remains – yes I think it is a simple as what it says – to live into the choices that have been made to grow into these choices is to increase a family's giving by at least \$10.00/month/per family. WOW! Did I hear another person say 'wow?'

Finally – and I think this needs to be named – whenever Ministry Personnel get involved in the 'finances' of a faith community there can be a perceived conflict of interest. Let us be honest – salary, pensions and benefits are an obvious part of UCiM's budget. When imagining all of the choices and doors that open for those who feel Called into Ordered Ministry, none of us do this for the cash incentive and – quite often – might very well be compensated better out in the 'real world.' But here's the problem – that parable that started this letter, which throws 'greed economics' upside down, I believe, indicates that what you have been doing in the time I have been at UCiM **IS** the 'real world.' We have chosen (and been chosen) to help transform the energy from your givings into Christ Visible in this beautiful, but hurting world. There are many ways that together, we have seen this happen: offering your space to young families to learn skills they may never have had growing up, starting gardens for those who do not have fresh produce, actively – and not just as charity with money exchanged – becoming involved with West Broadway (one of our Presbytery's Community Ministries), is – to paraphrase from my friend Bono – a 'bloody brilliant' example of Good News. So, frame money however you want – but I for one will sign off with the excitement that your choices, in the time I have had the honour to walk with UCiM, have and do change lives and this is where I cry, "Amen!"

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Richard Manley-Tannis', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Dea. Richard Manley-Tannis

