

One More Challenge For Us

By Marjorie Rice, SMUUC church board president

As your new board president I am looking forward to the year ahead. And what a year we're going to have! After two long years in an interim period, this August we welcome our next called minister, the Rev. Rose Schwab. The congregational vote in May for Rev. Rose was unanimous and that speaks volumes about the level of enthusiasm that I feel in this congregation at this moment. We have a lot to be thankful for. We have weathered the transition from one minister to another, we have a growing corps of enthusiastic leaders, our religious education program is thriving, and our welcoming program is the best it's ever been. We are ready to take on the future!

We do have to tidy up one matter, however, before Rev. Rose arrives, and that has to do with money.

When the annual canvass concluded this spring we had—and still have—a \$60,000 shortfall. On a \$500,000 budget, that is substantial. Your board of trustees met last week to finalize the budget. Board members worked hard to minimize the pain, but they had to reduce or eliminate funding for a number of items to create a balanced budget. We had to take out all proposed salary increases for staff. Money was also cut for a childrens' choir program and for social justice programming.

Among the cuts is one item that we should care about above all others. The board made the hard decision to let one staff member go. This decision can still be reversed, however, with your help. The person in question is Pepe, our custodian. Pepe has cleaned our buildings for many years, starting with our campus on 87th Street. He works 12 hours a week and there has never been a question about the quality of his work. It is also work that others don't exactly line up to do, and we have been grateful that he does it, faithfully, reliably, and well, year in and year out. Other staff do not have time to do this work. Without Pepe we would have to ask members to volunteer to do it. We hope it does not come to that.

Bottom line, we need \$9,400 in new and increased pledges (or outright donations) by July 1 in order to keep from letting Pepe go. Contributions may be sent to the church office, 9400 Pflumm, Lenexa, 66215 or you can call or email Deb Markum in the church office (markum@smuuchurch.org) to let her know you are increasing your pledge or making a donation—[913-381-3336](tel:913-381-3336). Contributions may also be brought to church on Sunday, of course and delivered to me or any board member or given to the person at the Welcome Table. You can also find a [Pledge Form](#) on the church website. However you do this, please indicate that your contribution is for the Budget Challenge.

Pepe knows nothing about this, by the way.

There were, of course, other cuts made by the board last week and we will certainly welcome additional donations beyond those to keep Pepe on staff. **Here's what we could do with more money.** If we had \$30,000 (half of our shortfall) in new or increased pledges (or one-time donations) we could keep Pepe, provide modest cost of living raises for all of our hard-working staff, and restore some of the most critical cuts to programming including making money available for social justice programming and restoring some cuts made to religious education.

We're in this difficulty this month in part because financial giving typically declines in an interim period. The other reason is that truly we've been financially challenged every year since we moved into our building because we've not grown quite as much as we need to comfortably support our new facilities. The good news—no, the excellent news—is that within a few weeks Rev. Rose will be in the pulpit and attendance and giving will likely increase. **But we're not there yet.** We have to get through this summer. We'd like to be in the best financial shape we can be when we welcome Rev. Rose. Please do what you can to help. Two years ago it seemed so far away until our next minister would arrive. Now we're almost there. Let's do this one last thing, for all of us, and for our future.

In other activity, this coming Sunday is the last day to bring canned chicken and tuna and canned spaghetti sauce for donation to the Salem Food Pantry.