

## Unity Church Reverse Offering Stories 2016

- Thank you for the reverse offering. What a unique idea. We donated the \$20 to a 15 year old who immigrated from Burma five years ago due to civil unrest. He will add the money to his fundraising efforts to raise money to travel to Sweden next summer to play in a soccer tournament called the Gothia Cup with the Blackhawks soccer club.
- We gave the 40 dollars Reverse Offering to one of my co-workers who raises money to feed a group of 160 children in Nicaragua. She travels to this site twice-a-year and has been involved in this project for over 20 years.
- Every holiday season, a friend of mine organizes a Holiday Family drive - this year she will be providing Christmas/Holiday cheer to a low income family with a mom, dad and two daughters. I am using my reverse offering to support her shopping. In addition, I am more than doubling it so she can get more of the items the family requests.
- A friend of mine is the board chair of a local nonprofit. She has been dealing with a number of difficult organizational challenges, requiring her to work 20-40 hours a week for the past month or so. She is a volunteer and gives so much to the organization, and I could sense she was very stressed. I wrote her a nice card and gave her a gift certificate to a local restaurant to let her know she was appreciated.
- I helped fund hospital bills and handicap access at home for a wonderful Richfield high schooler with Transverse Myelitis, a rare auto immune disease that attacks the myelin sheath surrounding the spinal cord.
- Last week my church, Unity Church-Unitarian, had a #reverseoffering, giving money to congregants along with a charge to bless the world with it. My husband and I matched and sent our contribution to our son, who manages and supervises an after-school program in Seattle for formerly homeless kids. He is excited about having money to buy more games, art supplies, and (yum yum!) ingredients for his very popular cooking classes!
- We have a friend, a lovely young man who attends a local college. His mother is equally a lovely person who is dying from an aggressive cancer. She lives in New England. When it is time for our friend to hasten home for his mother, we will use the church money to help make this happen.
- I decided to give the \$\$ to a neighbor who lost her husband, unexpectedly, a couple of months ago. I knew that by now, well meaning friends would not be as attentive and I wanted to let her know that I still held hurt in my heart for her. To raise her spirits also, I enclosed the \$\$ in a card that showed big eyes with long lashes on the front, and on the inside said "when the going gets tough, the tough get waterproof mascara".
- It took me awhile to determine where this money needed to go, but I found the place that speaks to my heart in so many ways. I decided to buy books for a book drive sponsored by my cousin's son and daughter-in-law. Last December, they found out that their son had spina bifida. In honor of him, and to give back to the community that has helped them so much, they are trying to collect 200 books by December 12 to be donated to Reach Out and Read which incorporates books into medical care, giving books to children at wellness visits and encouraging families to read together.

- Yesterday afternoon my neighbor came over to ask if I had any work for him to do because he needed money to buy cigarettes. He had decided that he could buy a bag of tobacco and papers and roll his own, and was thrilled that he had come up with this idea to save money. This neighbor does not have "regular" job because he cannot get one: he has too many offenses on his record, most notably 15 years in Oak Park for murder, preceded by 8 years in Saint Cloud for armed robbery. He also has to deal with mental illness. Smoking helps. I told him that God had given me \$20 to give to him -- just for occasions such as this.
- Earlier this year, I volunteered and was chosen to be a Big Sister (through Big Brothers Big Sisters) for a ten-year-old girl, the daughter of a woman on welfare with three kids in NE Mpls. It's going really, really well (I'm attaching a photo). We love to do simple things: go to the beach, for walks in nature, play frisbee and swing on the hammock in my backyard.

On Friday, Oct. 14, I took her to Pine Tree Apple Orchards. It was a beautiful evening, and we got to the pumpkin patch just in time before they closed. My "Little," picked out the biggest pumpkin in the patch - - over 35 pounds! When we got to the cash register, that darn pumpkin cost me over \$16! Together with the bag of apples (another \$16), and the long trip out there (45 min. each way), it was an expensive outing for me. I'm self-employed (in marketing/P.R.) and work has been very light lately -- plus, I'm spending a lot of money right now recording my first CD of 10 of my original songs. So I'm really watching my pennies.

I have so much to give ,my "little", and I never regret any money I spend on her. I expect nothing in return except for the joy I feel when she runs out to hug me and the adorable cards she makes for me. The \$20 I unexpectedly received at last Sunday's service was an added blessing and a virtual "thank you" for the generosity I have tried to show her over the last several months -- and will continue to show her, possibly as long as I live. Many "Bigs" and "Littles" stay connected for life, and I have very little doubt that we will be, too. This gift literally felt like a warm pat on the back... thank you. And thank you for the gift of every single service, which is always worth the drive from Golden Valley...

- We are excited to share what we did with our reverse offering. Every member of our family (4 of us) matched the \$20 that we received for a total of \$120). We then used Kiva, an international nonprofit, founded in 2005, based in San Francisco, with a mission to connect people through lending to alleviate poverty. Lending on Kiva creates a partnership of mutual dignity and makes it easy to touch more lives with the same dollar. You fund a loan, get repaid, and fund another. Since our daughter is African American we decided to fund people in Africa. We loaned half our money to Nicolas, 38 years old, in Bomet, Kenya, who is a dairy farmer with 4 children and wants to purchase another cow and build a cow shed so his 4 children can as he said "be educated to their hearts desire". My daughter loves animals and my son wanted to help with education needs. Since I am also a teacher it was a perfect fit.

The other half of our money we loaned to a co-op group, called Mwindi Group in the Congo to help purchase supplies of cassava, peanuts, and corn to sell. Since the Congo is a conflict-afflicted area with few opportunities we felt as a family it would be an important area to support with all the conflicts happening right now in the world. We also love to cook and my son lives with multiple food allergies and has had cassava before so we liked that connection. Hopefully, we will be able to receive our loan or part of our loan back so we can then further our funding of more loans. We had fun as a family exploring the different options together to decide where the funds would be distributed. It was interesting to see the kids reactions to the destitution and the compassion they had for these struggling people. Thank you for this opportunity to teach our children how to give back to the world.

- My \$20 went to Kiva.org Women Samoa Silaumea to buy seeds. What a fun problem to have this week!
- Hello! I was so inspired and blessed by the reverse offering this past Sunday. Having difficulty discerning where to spread the money, I reached out to friends on facebook for suggestions. A couple of people recommended offering a loan on Kiva so that when the loan is repaid, I can turn it into another, and another... in this way, the money you provided can continue to support individuals and families across the globe for years to come. I have a heart for access to clean drinking water, so, I decided to put the first loan towards that end. Thus, \$25 went to Maesaroh in Indonesia for "A loan to to build a clean water source facility at their home to improve access to water for their family". Thank you for inspiring me to find new ways of offering hope and accompaniment to others!
- We had a chance to talk with a few people from Unity who recently were at the Sacred Stone Camp. Our daughter is very upset about the past and ongoing injustices perpetrated on native people. We decided to donate the reverse offering (plus add an additional donation) to the legal fund in defense of these courageous people who are protecting all of us and the earth's resources from greedy companies. *(also another donor did this)*
- Sacred Stone Camp received my donation, Supporting this indigenous led movement to stop the Dakota Access Line seems particularly urgent. For those encamped the weather will soon grow harsh, and it takes energy to keep the world focused on a cause that seems to have so little to do with our own daily lives. But, then, as we know we are all connected. I love how this "giving" opportunity forces you to think how to make an impact with \$20. It's truly seed money.
- My husband and I decided on a Friday that we wanted to look into the Unitarian church. We went to the 4:30 mass on October 16 at Unity Church and, much to our surprise, we actually received money through the offering! Being our first time at Unity, we were thrilled to be able to do good in the world. We donated our \$20 to the Standing Rock Sioux tribe to help support the brave people who are peacefully protesting the DAPL. Our hearts are with them. Thank you!
- We forgot to tell you what we did with our reverse offering before yesterday's deadline, but here is our story just in case. We decided to use our two envelopes to send Target gift cards to Women's Advocates, Inc, an organization that provides safe space and other services for women and their children who are escaping domestic violence. The cards may not even reach their offices for a couple more days, and since we only identified ourselves as a family from Unity, they probably won't be able to respond to us directly. If they do reply, hopefully it will be directly to Unity and the church can feel the love reflected back in that way.
- We donated our \$20 reverse offering to Women's Advocates (<http://www.wadvocates.org/>) in Saint Paul. WA was the first women's shelter in the nation for domestic abuse victims. They offer advocacy, education and resources to eliminate violence and build independence. We attend their annual "Women who Soar Luncheon" in October, and it was wonderful to add Unity Church's offering to our family's annual donation.
- Hi! We used our reverse offering on a flock of chicks through Heifer International
- I used the money to partially fund a Kiva loan to a Roma woman in Albania who sells used clothing. When she pays back the loan, I will be able to lend the money again to another person.
- We are sorry this took so long to get this to you! We took your generous offering, added to it, and we each joined the ACLU at the \$35 level. Our son's favorite charity is Heifer International, because - baby

animals. :) We'll be doing that as well, but with the frightening changes in our country, we felt this was the best place to use Unity's money and some of our own. Thank you for all you do for the world, community, our family, and ourselves. Our lives would not be the same without you.

- My family and I combined our reverse offerings. We had a family lunch after church and shared ideas, then voted on who would receive our offering. The adults narrowed down the choices and picked Heifer International. The kids voted on which animal to buy and picked an alpaca.
- We were happy to attend this service this year, we usually seem to miss it. Never one to miss a chance to throw a party we decided to invite some friends over and raise some money to add to our 40 dollars. We ended up planning the party on the 4th of November right before our very important election and we decided to try and offer some healing after this divisive election. We chose to raise money for the Center American Islamic Relations Minnesota. My husband has worked with them in the past and they do just the work that is needed to educate the public and support its community as it is persecuted. We had a very generous friend offer to match the donations and we ended up raising \$900 on Friday in addition to offering a little healing. We are dropping the check off this week. Thanks for the opportunity we hope our money offers some healing for those wounds that need to be healed as a community.
- My husband and I invited friends and neighbors over for a "Games for the Cause" evening. We each took our \$20 from the envelopes and asked all our guests to each bring \$20. Everyone signed up their favorite charity or organization before we began so we all knew where the money would be going when we ended and knew who the winner or winners were. We had two stations: one for dice and one for poker.

Ten people showed up and one person sent money. She said she wasn't a gambler and she wasn't a joiner, but who wouldn't want to bless the world? Her envelope had \$100 in it! Our pot was  $10 \times \$20 = \$200$ , plus her \$100 for a total of \$300.

We had a blast and played for over 3 hours. A couple of folks had a few more chips than the rest but no clear winner. As we all got tired, someone suggested we throw all the chips in the pot, and winner takes all. One woman won 7 Card stud with 2 pair for the whole \$300. Then she said: my employer will match my gift, making it \$600! Our \$40 from Unity became \$600, and it all went to Second Harvest Heartland. Amazing, outrageous, easy, and so much fun!

We raised many glasses to our Ministry of Generosity. People loved the idea and being part of something so creative. Thank you for your forward thinking big hearts and minds. With gratitude and totally uplifted spirits

- Many members of Unity's music program have contributed \$300+ (contributions are still coming in) to make a joint donation to Walker West Music Academy--a place that's a huge asset to our neighborhood and larger community, and that shares our commitment to bringing people together through music.
- We are creating a Christmas jar with our reverse offerings and all our spare change. My mother contributed all the spare change from her purse. I will be asking for other people's spare change from their purse and pockets in the next couple weeks. The recipient will be determined by Christmas. Being that the donation is anonymous I don't anticipate that we will be able to share what is experienced by the recipient. I'm sure they will feel blessed.

- Another United Hospital volunteer after hearing of my challenge with the twenty dollars received a \$11.00 tip which she could not keep. She gave the tip to me and asked that I give it away. I gave the tip to one of the hospital's valets who is from Ethiopia. The service he does is extraordinary. The other twenty was broken into five dollar bills and went to:
  - A homeless lady on seventh street
  - A seemingly disadvantaged mother visiting Children's Hospital with a six day old child
  - Five dollars each to two young Hmong girls walking with their grandmother.
 I found it a challenge when deciding who to give the money to. When I discussed the challenge with cohorts be it at a Lutheran men's breakfast or with volunteers it created interesting discussions. I thank you for the gift and the challenge
- When I was shopping at Ingebretsen's on Lake Street, a woman had misplaced her wallet. She wanted the clerk to hold her purchases for an hour or two so she could drive home and get it and return later that day (a long round trip). I used the \$20 to purchase her items for her. She was astounded that someone would do that for her – as was the clerk and others in line. I asked her to please “pay it forward.”
- I was at Cub a few weeks ago bagging my groceries. I noticed one of the items was not mine and asked the cashier if it belonged to the woman who she was presently ringing up. She said yes, asked me for my receipt and the cashier continued to ring up her customer. Many coupons were presented by the customer and the cashier basically had to reject them all. Then the customer had the cashier start removing groceries the cashier had already rung up. Here was my opportunity and I pounced! I gave the \$20.00 to the customer who promptly refused it. The cashier in turn asked if “I was sure I wanted to do this.” I insisted again and told the cashier to leave the customer's item on my receipt. I have to admit that while I was insisting that the woman accept my offering, I could feel myself getting a lump in my throat. I told the customer that I really and truly wanted her to have the money, wished her a good day and quickly left.

We shared the story with our family and they all agreed that the reverse offering concept is an excellent idea. Personally, it helped me to be more open as I found myself looking for ways that I could make a contribution to someone in need. Although my husband and I have bought meals for strangers at a restaurant, and have helped people short on cash at other stores, this had a different feel, like I was representing our church even though I was too choked up to tell anyone the meaning behind the reverse offering. Thank you for this very important and meaningful experience.

- I left the service and went to Trader Joe's, chatted with the cashier about our days...mentioned coming from church, she mentioned that she had been thinking of coming to unity for a few months, I mentioned that we got 20\$ that day to 'pay forward into the world', she was amazed, so I gave her the envelope to pay forward and said I hoped to see her at unity!
- After much consideration, I decided to “bless the world” by giving the \$20 to someone who was asking for help. I tried to not judge who would be the “best” candidate (i.e. a woman, a minority, etc.) I decided I would give the money to the first person I saw standing on a corner begging. Driving soon I came upon such a person though he was on the opposite side of the street which meant I had to u-turn and circle back. I stopped on the left-hand turn lane next to him and extended my hand out the window holding the \$20 bill. His eyes widened when he saw how much it was – then he said “bless you”. I placed my hand on my heart in return then drove on. My eyes were filled with tears. I was blessed! What I learned was how much I judge and what reflection on that gives me pause! That I don't know everyone's story. That I want to trust. Even though it requires a paradigm shift in me.

- My \$20 turned into \$60 by giving \$40 to one of my friends on the corner (those who often hold cardboard signs identifying themselves and ask drivers for whatever can be shared with them). I asked the friend to keep \$20 for themselves to use how they chose but only asked and told them I trusted it would not be used for alcohol or drugs. I then said they could share the other \$20 with someone they know or an organization important to them. I told them someone gave me \$20 to share it made me feel good to be able to share. I hoped they would feel the same. We then shared that we each had voted and for a woman president :) followed by a hand hug before the light turned green and I had to go. The final \$30 was contributed to Amicus, the wonderful organization to which I was introduced by Unity.
- I passed the \$20 along to a homeless man asking for handouts at a busy intersection. I have, over time, had to quiet my internal conversation about these ubiquitous street corner presences - What's an appropriate amount to give? Will it be used for food, or alcohol or drugs? Am I being hustled? Not to mention the "Do I make eye-contact?" decision at every encounter. Panhandler and beggar are not honorable labels in our culture. I know that everyone has a story, and it's too bad that there isn't time to learn more before the light changes about circumstances that have led to this street corner. No matter what he might choose to use the money for, he obviously needs some cash. And my day is brightened by the expression on his face when he sees that I'm handing him a twenty and the brief but warm conversation, eye to eye, that we have through the car window.
- I gave my \$20 to a woman who was begging for money at a freeway exit. I just was filled with compassion for her and acted on it. I'm sure that it made a big difference in her day. Afterwards, I recalled that some advise not to give people like this money. It's hard to know how someone begging for money like this would use the money (drugs, alcohol, ...) or whether they really need it. I just decided to put all of these considerations aside. If I don't think I have donated the \$20 wisely, I will donate another \$20 of my own money to help those in need.
- I have to admit I was pretty skeptical about this twenty dollars. I put it in my glove compartment. Tuesday afternoon was waiting for my daughter's bus when a guy drove up very anxiously and said he didn't know what to do. He was out of gas and had to get to Farmington. Could I somehow help him. You should have seen the shock when reached to my glove compartment and handed him twenty dollars.
- I polled my family on what they thought would be the best way to spend the 20 dollars I received at church that morning. Helping the hungry was a common theme. It just so happened that a Girl Scout troop at my daughter's school was holding a food drive. The third grade was responsible for gathering dinner food items. My daughter and I looked at a list of suggested products for a local food shelf. With that in mind we went shopping, 20 dollars in hand. My daughter chose the items and we verbally tallied the total as we shopped. The result was quality time with my daughter, food for our neighbors and lessons in compassion, gratitude and math. Thank you, Unity, for this opportunity.
- I combined my \$20, with the \$20 my Coming of Age mentor received, and an additional \$20 of my own money, and I made a donation to the Ann Bancroft Foundation's Let Me Play Fund. This fund "offers grants for sport, athletic, and dance equipment and participation fees for girls ages five through high school graduation, giving them the opportunity to be part of a team, build strength and confidence, and push themselves farther – on the field and off." This fund also requires each girl that receives a grant to work with a mentor. Volleyball has been such an important part of my life and now having the opportunity to connect with my mentor through Coming of Age, I wanted other girls to benefit from similar experiences. This fund was the perfect fit!

- Greetings, I am going to pool my \$20 with my COA Ager to purchase new wool socks to donate to the Union Gospel Mission.
- Hi. My kids and I used the reverse offering to buy several children's books on peace and love at the Red Balloon bookstore. We enjoyed one of our beautiful fall days and walked around the neighborhood near Unity placing the books in little free libraries. Hopefully they will spread their message! PS An example of the ripple effect of something like this...as I was mentioning what we were going to do to a friend, she pulled out a \$10 gift card to Red Balloon so we could buy even more books. Thank you for doing this. It went beyond the deed itself, as it gave me time together with my kids doing something good in the world at a time we needed that.
- I used the reverse offering to donate \$20 to Shades of Yellow, a non-profit based in St. Paul that strives to create a community of empowered Hmong LGBTQ and allies to ignite positive cultural and social change. They are currently raising money to secure funds for an Executive Director. Thanks to Unity Unitarian for giving me a little something to spread the generosity to the world.
- I gave to the Carter Center
- My family has been affected by gun violence. We donated this reverse offering to Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America. Thank you for giving us this opportunity to give even more to a cause that is meaningful and will hopefully save lives.
- We more than doubled the offering, and donated to a local domestic violence shelter that was needing donations of women's sanitary products and under clothing.
- I gave my offering to Walk In Counseling, a non-profit in south Minneapolis. Walk In offers free counseling to folks who often have nowhere else to turn. It has been around for over 40 years and is a caring presence when it is needed most. Sharing the offering feels like giving our broader community a giant hug.
- We gave our reverse offering (and more) to Growth & Justice. Thanks.
- I am taking you up on sharing about the reverse offering...I was not present at this service, but when I heard about the challenge, I took it upon myself to consider a gift of \$50. As the energy in the world works, when a challenge presents itself, so too does opportunity.

Even at my age of 48, many friends and family members have lost their lives to cancer. Friends from all walks of life, a college friend, diagnosed 2 weeks before getting married at the age of 40. He lived for three years before his passing. A Lt. Col in the MN National Guard whom I met through my work at Outward Bound. He lived a life of service above self and challenged us all to do so. We now honor two staff members a year who model of service above self to keep his teachings alive.

As I type an Artist, teacher and friend is breathing her last breaths. Her laugh contagious, her spirit filled with joy and her creations inspiring. Gone too are family members. A mother who taught me about making a difference in this world, and her parents who were both educators and gave me the gift of loving to learn. These friends and family taught me to appreciate many lessons; living in the moment, and making the most of each day, for example. Their journeys helps me understand my place here on earth and more importantly in the greater world as a Spirit filled with love that is meant to be shared.

After learning about this challenge, I was contacted by a friend who was running the NYC Marathon in support of Cancer research and education. She asked me to consider giving to her cause. An easy decision. With these people in mind, I gladly contributed. The organization she raised money through raised over \$5 Million dollars for cancer research. I'm honored she ran with my family and friends in her heart and on her sleeve!

The second offering I contributed is to a friend who lives in St. Louis. He's an African American man who has faced the challenges of race in our society. He's been in prison; kept beyond his sentence. He's experienced homelessness and has a spirit of pure Joy. He's relied on by his elders to carry forward the family history, create annual family reunions for over 800 ppl, and supports younger family members through a college scholarship program these younger family members can resource. Always putting himself second to others. Recently, he lost a cousin to gun violence. He created a Go Fund Me account to help the mother of this victim to pay for the funeral services. Again, another opportunity to respond to the Reverse Offering challenge.

I gave each \$25 dollars. Even though it feels like so little, with the collective communities that gave to these, I believe these dollars will make a direct impact. Thank you, once again for the challenge. I appreciate the push!

- I gave my \$20 to an out state UU church so they can keep the UU spirit growing.
- I took my \$20 plus another recipient's \$20 and added \$60 more for a total of \$100 and gave it to Minneapolis Adult Education to fund transportation costs for students attending classes in the form of subsidized bus fare cards.
- We decided to take the \$20 from Unity, double it with our funds, and donate \$40 to a Columbia Heights food shelf we think does great work (Southern Anoka Community Assistance, or SACA).
- St Stephens Homeless Shelter
- I used the \$20 to buy yarn to make more Pastoral Care Comfort Shawls!
- I gave "my" \$20 to Penumbra for its get out the vote effort, and in particular for a voucher for a cab ride to and from the polls. (A clever connection to its superb production of August Wilson's Jitney)Thank you. It was fun to think about a variety of causes.
- I was inspired by the Reverse Offering in October. I decided to save my \$20 and donate it to a nonprofit called Dovetail Partners on the upcoming Give To The Max Day. I have worked with Dovetail Partners in the past and am grateful for the opportunity to reconnect. Dovetail's mission is to provide objective, science-based information about the impacts and trade-offs of environmental decisions, including consumption choices, land use, and policy alternatives. We will need the best possible science used in the years ahead, more than ever. I was also inspired to learn more about how to nominate a nonprofit for the offering and will be doing that soon!
- We attended your wonderful church as visitors on Sunday 16 October. We have used the Reverse Offering to make a donation to a charity we support here in London, called Prisoners Abroad, that supports British people who are in prison outside their home country, supports their families, and helps these prisoners to find their way when they are eventually repatriated to this country. Prisoners Abroad had this special appeal for donations last week: *Paul was arrested and imprisoned in Asia, he is unable to walk and his wheelchair is broken and unusable. To avoid crawling in filthy and dangerous conditions he*



*is forced to rely on others to help him move around. This has left him vulnerable to abuse by other prisoners. Paul urgently needs a wheelchair to restore his human dignity and move around the prison unaided.* Thank you for this great idea of a Reverse Offering.

- When I arrived home from church that day, I had an email from Planned Parenthood asking me to make a special contribution in honor of their centennial. I took this as a sign that rather than stress over how to use my reverse offering, I should act. The work of Planned Parenthood intersects many of my interest issues, so it seemed appropriate. I matched the offering money, and there was a special donor match that day, so the gift grew even more. Thank you, Unity, for helping me to spread generosity.
- Hi: We will donate our "reverse collection" to the Augsburg College Theater Production Fellowship on Minnesota Give to Max Day. The Theater Fellowship is designed for students of color to pursue careers in theater, over the next three years the fellows will work in technical production, stage and production management. There are currently three students participation in this program and the plan is increase it to 6. The ultimate goal is provide meaningful training for these students, which is consistent with Augsburg's goal of experiential learning for our students.
- I donated \$20 from the reverse offering to Sant Espwa. Our mission is to establish a foundation of hope among the community of Clercine, Haiti. Our goal is to make sure that every child has the opportunity to attend school and every family encounters Christ's love.
- My son gave his \$20 (plus a \$20 match) to World Wildlife Federation. I gave my \$20 plus a \$20 match to the Monroe County (Wisconsin) Local History Room.
- For last Sunday's reverse offering our family chose to help support Merrick Community Services' food drive at Cub Foods on White Bear Avenue last Sunday to help fill their food shelves for the upcoming months. Peanut butter, rice, and women's toiletries were among the items that our children helped gather up. Merrick Community services is where our father spent much of his life's work serving as the executive director so it felt great supporting the cause as well as supporting an organization that our family already felt very connected to. Thanks for the wonderful idea of reverse giving.
- Over the years, our niece has led many philanthropic efforts, including starting a coat drive in her community, holding many meal packing gatherings, volunteering at her community food shelf, etc. This year, her business fraternity at the U of M is raising money to pack boxes of hygiene items to be distributed to children around the globe over the holiday season — their effort is supporting "Operation Christmas Child" and is a project of the Samaritan's Purse, an international relief foundation. We have donated our reverse offering to support Operation Christmas Child.
- I donated the \$20 reverse offering to One Earth Sangha, an international network that is applying Buddhist practices to facing climate change disruption. One of the hundreds of small groups undertaking Ecosattva Training meets here in Minneapolis, hosted by Common Ground Meditation Center and River's Way Meditation Center, for a series of nine weekly classes. In these classes we share our grief, our hopes, our frustration, and our intentions to act. We listen to inspiring and informative webinar talks by some of the world's great activist leaders, people dedicated to engaged mindfulness in the cause of climate justice. The \$20 and other money given last night went into a dana bowl, a bowl of gifts expressing gratitude for the teaching and leadership and community. The local facilitators accept no money. This dana goes toward paying rent for the warm, secure space we occupied, dedicating the evening to integrity, service, and joy in the face of what we each believe to be the greatest threat to all life on earth.

- We doubled the amount and gave it to the St. Stephen's homeless shelter because our son used their services.
- We donated this \$20 to benefit the Jacob Wetterling Resource Center in honor of the good work they have done nationwide.
- Immediately, I gave the \$20 to the "Black Lives Matter" signage in the Fellowship Hall. In the yard on Como, some passerbys have placed vases of flowers! Spreading the word....
- I usually make a gift/donation to Union Gospel Mission at this time of year (Thanksgiving). Your offering helped me to double my amount (matching funds!) Together we helped 25 people to a wonderful feast – and some other needed care! What a wonderful idea!! So glad I was in attendance. I feel grateful to you – and enjoy "giving back." Thank you so much
- We supported my step sister in her efforts to walk for suicide prevention.
- I added \$80.00 to the \$20.00 and donated to the Christian Cupboard Emergency Food Shelf in my community of Woodbury. My understanding is a \$100.00 buys approximately a 1000 pounds of food.
- We added some money of our own and donated it to the International Institute of Minnesota's refugee resettlement work.
- I am currently working my way through the 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous. I have been following their program of recovery and it has worked as I have not had a drink since May 9, 2016. I am very grateful for The Retreat of Wayzata, MN opening the doors for me to a new way of life and introducing me to the AA program. I owe the program to saving my life. The Retreat offers a program called Women In Recovery. This program has helped me to join with other alcoholics and build friendships with other women. This program has made a huge impact in building a solid foundation based on integrity, self-worth, honesty, and service. It has made a difference in my life and that is why I wanted to share my offering with Women In Recovery at The Retreat. I will be celebrating six months of sobriety in November! The longest stretch of sobriety I have had since I was 18 years old.
- You gave us the opportunity to invest in important issues and work for our community, our country and our world. The choir had 3 options identified for giving - one is the Black Rhino Project supported by the Minnesota Zoo. This project works with Namibia - a country that is home to a Black Rhino population severely threatened by loss of habitat but especially poachers.

It seems any wild animal with horns is severely threatened by poachers. In the case of Rhinos and Elephants - the largest illegal/poaching trade is with China and Philippines. CITES - the international organization which is supposed to enforce anti-poaching laws can't find yet the power or enforcement of regulations that will save these animals along with snow leopards, lions, tigers, jaguars, any number of exotic birds who have become a delicacy, gorillas, orangutans - this is a partial list.

The Zoo now has a biologist who lives in Namibia and is working with the country to train people who were once herders to be wildlife rangers. They are working to create an economy around eco-tourism that will work to boost their economy and protect their natural resources.

I decided that I would try to grow that gift you gave us and pass the word about the Black Rhino Project. For people who work in fields trying to save wildlife and deal with climate change, water shortages and habitat destruction which is seriously affecting us and how we can go forward as a species, this job can

be depressing.

I talked to my niece who works at the zoo - to find out about this project. She introduced me to Josh Le - who works at the Zoo foundation. Josh provided me with links to the zoo website and other organizations who are working on projects like this. Actually the weatherman for Channel 11 (I think) Sven Sungaard has visited Namibia and will be talking about this project on the news on this Wednesday.

I decided that I would make a contribution on my own to the zoo and then see if I could get matching gifts by providing this information to acquaintances. I made a gift to the zoo today on Give to the Max because there is a zoo donor who is matching gifts over a 3 day period. It was 160 dollars which now will be 320 dollars. I have some more money to go to get the match I want.

We need to protect all parts of our environment that have no voice - because that is what makes us human and what will allow this planet to be a livable space. Our. Music started with the sounds of other living species, of our environment - when we lose that what are we?

- After considering several possibilities, I have added \$20 to the \$20 reverse offering I received yesterday and will donate the total, \$40, to Hallie Q. Brown Community Center located at the Martin Luther King Center just a few blocks from Unity Church. I plan to drop off the money, along with some other things I am donating to the center, this afternoon or tomorrow. Hallie Q. Brown Center has a food shelf and a clothing/household goods closet. I know from personal experience over a number of years that whatever I donate here is genuinely appreciated and fulfills a critical need of people who live right in the neighborhood. This will make a difference in our community.
- I added to your generous reverse offering and was able to send a gift to NAMI, The National Alliance on Mental Illness. The gift was matched by the Rechnitz Charitable Foundation, doubling its effectiveness. NAMI works to fight the stigma attached to mental illness, provide support, educate the public and advocate for equal care. Thanks for making it possible for me to support this important work. NAMI Helpline 800 950 NAMI.
- We combined our \$20 each along with another \$20 or so and spent it on our local elementary school. My mother has taught in the school district since I was in first grade, I attended school and graduated from the district, and my kids both attended this and other schools in the district. With this history we have been acutely aware of the need for support from the community. When our kids were at this school the need for clothing when children have accidents as well as many of them not having adequate warm clothing in the winter was very evident.

I stopped in and spoke to the school secretary and health aide to find out what is most needed. We were able to get socks, sweat pants, girls and boys underwear, and mittens for the school to use as needed. I have known the staff at this school for years and the care they show for these children is immense - but the resources limited. It was a wonderful thing to be able to give them some of the items they need to take care of our community's children!

Seeing money from our place of worship come back to our local community was important to us. We do not live in the St Paul area and at times struggle with where our money should go, the offering or our local community. This week we had the best of both worlds with the money coming back to us and into our school district. This is just one more reason why Unity is such a special place - no - home!

- I used my \$20 to propel my team's participation in our official Penny Wars charitable drive to victory. Once my team chose to donate the Penny Wars proceeds to the Saint Paul Domestic Abuse Intervention Project - our whole department opted to give proceeds from charitable chili cook-off as well for a total contribution of \$202.82 to this cause during October Domestic Abuse Awareness Month.
- Added \$30 and made a \$50 donation to the Humane Society.
- The Textile Arts group pooled their money to purchase additional yarn for our Pastoral Care Shawls.
- Donated the \$20 to MPLS (imPulse) after hearing their wonderful choral music.
- The Unity Singers pooled our monies and added some private funds and donated \$400 to ComMUSICation, a wonderful non-profit operating in the Frogtown neighborhood. Their mission, and more detail is [here](#).
- I was so grateful for the prompt provided by the reverse offering! I added some of my own money to it, and donated \$100 to the Stigma Relief Fund.
- The Stigma Relief Fund is an abortion fund serving patients in each of seven Whole Woman's Health locations, including Minneapolis. Assistance with the Stigma Relief Fund goes directly to offset the price of abortion for those who cannot afford it, who don't have insurance, are undocumented, or cannot pay for the additional logistical requirements put forth by state legislatures. Whole Women's Health is an organization that provides abortions, and has worked to fight TRAP (targeted regulation of abortion providers) laws, which make abortion even more inaccessible and unaffordable to many.

This is very personal to me. I found myself unexpectedly pregnant last year. I already have children, as well as serious health issues, and I knew I could not have another child. I turned to Whole Woman's Health and received the compassionate, professional abortion services I needed. It is so wrong and unfair that these services are not available to all women who need to take control of their health and their bodies. It's also wrong that the stigma around abortion persists - I felt it myself. I was astonished and ashamed that I had an unplanned pregnancy at this stage of my life. I felt too embarrassed to tell anyone, and yet somehow I felt a community of women at Unity supporting me and loving me and helping me feel empowered, as a woman, to make choices that I knew were right for me.

- I shared with several people the Unity giving campaign with paired that with words about the work of the Latino family center, discapacitados abriendo caminos and turned it into \$100 for the center!
- As a result of the \$20 received in the reverse offering we were able to increase our donation to the Breast Cancer Research Foundation. We did this in memory of my husband's mother.
- We decided to give our offering to Great River School (where our children attend) because not only do they teach through the Montessori style we prefer, and not only because they were rated the #1 high school in the state according to US News & World Report for their focus on college readiness, but they also teach OWL and activism. They recently won an award for being the most peaceful school in MN (through PeaceMaker Minnesota). They talk about real life topics and situations with the students affecting them today and teach them proactive ways of making a difference and helping their fellow youth.
- The gift from Unity was so timely, as we were moving into our 7th grade service projects at school. The frustrating element of trying to give every student in a school the gift of engaging in service is that it's

EXPENSIVE to purchase the supplies they need to do service! The money from Unity became the seed money to create a Service Learning kit, available for teachers or groups of students, that is stocked with things like scissors, poster markers, supplies for a button-maker, and other durable goods that can be used over the years. As people saw me creating the kit, they were willing to add their own donations. This gift of \$20 will bless the world over and over in ways we cannot even imagine....

- My kids and I used our \$20 to buy food for their elementary (Expo Elementary) school's food drive.
- To maximize our giving, my daughter and I decided to donate through "Give to the Max" to the Saint Paul Animal Humane Society because our two separate \$20 donations will be entered into a drawing for an additional \$1,000 and \$10,000 for that nonprofit. Our fingers are crossed. Stay tuned! We'll certainly let you know.
- We gave our \$40.00 to the Alano Club of Minneapolis. Housed in an old Washburn family mansion, the club is one of the oldest continually operating Alano clubs in the country and is home to more than 45 weekly 12-step meetings. It serves hundreds of people who are trying to live with their addictions to drugs and alcohol. The building is old and in need of repairs and updates. We hope that our contribution will go toward preserving the structure and making it more comfortable for the people who come through its doors every day.
- My Ager and I decided to give back to the elementary school where we first met. I contacted the social worker and she had just received an email that day of a family that needed help with thanksgiving dinner. We were able to provide a full dinner for the family. Thanks for the reverse offering!
- My husband and I each got an envelope so we had \$40. We decided to match the offer so we had \$80 to work with. After discussing it with our kids we decided we wanted to spend \$20 toward someone's groceries at the store. That was fun! The rest was going to go toward making care packages for homeless people we pass on the Interstate exit ramps.

On the day I was going to buy supplies I saw a friend and she asked what we were up to that day. When I mentioned what we were doing she said she had been wanting to do something like that but wasn't sure what. We ended up making an event of it by inviting other families to make some as well. There were 10-12 families who participated. Each family brought their own supplies to make their own packages and the kids made little cards of support and love.

One of the unexpected parts was how many adults thanked me for this idea and told me that this was stepping out of their comfort zone. Many of them had given donations to charities or shelters but they had never done anything with the expectation that they actually interact and personally had the supplies to a homeless person. Some were worried that the person would be ungrateful or see their gesture as puny in the grand scheme of things, but I assured them this had not been my experience.

It has just been such a great experience overall. Thank you for the offering and I'm so happy to report that it spread further than I could have hoped.

- My daughter struggles with Alcohol addiction and this has been a part of our family for the last few years. We are involved to the extent we can be and are aware of the challenges many young people face with addiction. Our daughter is doing very well with about 16 months sobriety and is currently running a sober house and doing her own meetings.

I wanted to do something within this alcohol dependence context but I was at a loss of what to do. I

then talked to my daughter and asked her if she had any friends in need where \$20 might be a welcome boost. She said she had a friend that was very poor and often times does not get to be as involved in her programs as much as she would like due to the lack of resources. I explained that she could not give her cash and that she needed to be with her, such as a meal, activity, etc. when she uses the \$20. I also said that you may want to explain the origin of this money but that is your choice.

The final piece was that my daughter was able to share a meal with her but she would only accept \$10 because she wanted the other \$10 to go to buying resource materials for her meetings. I thought this was a nice "pay it forward" kind of concept.

On a related note, I was in the courthouse paying a fine for a speeding ticket with a few others in the same situation. I explained that I will be getting parking ticket as well because I could not get my credit card to work in the meter. Instantly, a few of the folks went into their purses or pockets and handed me a bunch of quarters. They insisted I go out to the meter so I would not get another ticket.

When I got back, I thanked them and explained about our church's reverse offering and how you all just did the same thing for me. The day before, my wife had given her \$20 to a woman in line at Cub who could not pay for her groceries. The woman and the cashier were in disbelief at what my wife had done. I shared this story and we got talking and two of the woman wanted to continue the conversation. One said she was a Buddhist from Cambodia and that goodness and doing good is what her religion teaches. I explained that I am Unitarian and I believe that how we live our lives matters and that there is a common thread that runs between us all. The Christian woman offered that the common thread is love.

On a day when we should have all been "not so pleased" with paying a traffic violation fine, this group had the most special time each living our lives and values and sharing our experiences. I was proud to share of our churches "reverse offering" which played a major role in this wonderful conversation. These women were blown away by the concept and had never heard of it before.

- On Wednesday night my son asked if I would drive him to the toy store. I did but I stayed in the car... still glued to social media and news media covering the election. We were all feeling scared and worried and I was shifting through any story I could find to provide some bright spot in what I consider a bleak and dark future.

After my son got back into the car, I continued to sit and read. He was getting impatient. A young man approached the passenger side window and asked me to roll it down. I did and he proceeded to ask for money for uniforms for his basketball team. I think the w. 7th team. He said he went to Harding High School. Generally I don't give cash out to people who ask me. We are charitable in many different ways and I am generally slightly suspicious (after having a terrible incident happen to me just this way when I was in college). But I remembered the \$20. And on Wednesday night we had such a need to reach out to each other, to make some kind of connection. So opened the envelope and gave it to him. Of course the young man was thrilled and thankful. As we drove away, my son asked why I gave the young man the money even though I wasn't sure if he was being honest. I told my son that even if the young man didn't need the money for uniforms, he needed it for something and was brave enough to approach a car, ask us to roll the window down and make the request... and I did it as much for my peace of mind as I did to try to be helpful.

- Religious education at the Northfield Unitarian Church yearly goes to the apple orchard. The following Sunday they make apple crisp for donations. Bring your own dish and they fill it up with apple crisp! I donated the 20\$ to the group at the Northfield Unitarian church and then served the apple crisp to St. Olaf nursing students at my home after they went out trick-or-treating for canned food donations for

the food shelf in Northfield. I was able to bless several groups with the \$20. Thank you!

- I added \$140 of tips, collected from 2 busy days at the salon, to our \$40 from Unity. After brainstorming with the kids we decided to donate to Second Harvest. Our \$180 will provide 540 meals!
- My husband and I teach at Open World Learning Community, a public secondary school in St. Paul Public School. Our school spends about \$50,000 per year on field work - meaningful learning experiences that take place outside of school walls. Many of these are overnights. For example, Leo brings the 8th graders to Itasca State Park for a week in the fall to kick off a year of studying and writing about the human and geologic history of the Mississippi River. Almost all of the field work fund comes from our students' families, either through direct contributions or PTO fundraisers. There are not normally district funds for this kind of learning. Our principal asked that staff contribute to the field work fund as a gesture to parents, showing that we believe in field work enough to invest money along with volunteer planning time and nights away from our families. So we agreed to give the reverse offering to Open World Learning Community's field work fund.
- I hosted a lunch meeting at my clinic to look at how we could better serve clients of color.
- I gave my gift to Whittier Clinic's (my employer) small emergency fund...managed by social workers for support of emergent needs like co:pays for medicine or transportation. I might have liked to be more random & spontaneous about it but know the gift was truly appreciated.
- We contributed our \$20 to the Christian Health Service Corps, through which my colleague Dr. Jason Como will start serving as a volunteer medical director in Haiti.
- We used our \$20 to pay for someone's groceries at Aldi's in the midway.
- My ager and I are giving our money to the first grade teacher whose classroom I volunteer in at Obama Elementary. My ager's mother added some more money so the teacher will have \$55.00 to buy school supplies/books for her classroom. Teachers are often supplementing their classrooms so this seemed like a wonderful way to give back to the community.