

“I’d Rather Pull Weeds Than Ask for Money”

Words of Thanks and Praise for Those Who Ask!

In a few minutes I’ll be leaving for Fox Island UCC, where I’m a member, hoe in hand to pull Shot Weed from our flower beds. Our congregation’s volunteer master gardener, Neeve Norton (who helps keep Pilgrim Firs beautiful!) summoned the faithful to remove this edible but ubiquitous plant before it goes to seed. She hopes that our efforts will give the flowers and shrubs that surround our congregation’s building a better chance to thrive.

During the years of my active ministry, I asked hundreds of people to share their time and talent in a thousand different ways. I called on people to engage in tasks ordinary and extraordinary, but the hardest ask was always the same. Dozens of times I heard a refrain that went something like this: “I’ll do anything to help out Pastor except ask for money.” Sometimes these words were expressed with surprising vehemence and not a little anger...

Let me offer a few words of thanks and praise to those who did and who do ask for money. Without you I’m not sure our Conference and our congregations or caring institutions would exist. Without you there would be no mission. Without your energy and dedication, the quest for justice would be little more than words. Without your efforts our buildings would not exist, the music would stop, and the praise of the Living One would not have a chance to be heard over the noise of the world.

In Timothy Snyder’s powerful book, ***On Tyranny***, one of his points is the absolute necessity of strong independent institutions to prevent tyrants from controlling the future. He says that unless we work together to support institutions with our time and talent; unless we form strong communities with the financial vigor to meet the challenges headed our way, all that is best about the possibility of a just future will wither and disappear.

When I read those words, I could only think about the amazing miracle of people who ask for money and those who respond. Strong and vital congregations, educational institutions committed to the truth, cultural organizations that stretch our creativity and offer visions of justice that challenge assumptions and enlighten. Those who ask and all who give are partners preventing a future where tyrants have their way.

Please remember: Jesus asked, and Jesus still asks and unless we hear that ask as including our financial resources, I’m not sure that we are listening. So, I am grateful! I am grateful for those who join Jesus by asking the rest of us to embrace the godly task of sharing.

Rev. Ron Patterson, for the PNC Stewardship Committee