

Lunar New Year “Reverse Offering” Report

On January 26, 2020, in honor of the Lunar New Year, First Unitarian Church gave away lucky red envelopes with varying denominations of cash (that totaled \$2,000). The congregation was charged to use whatever amount of money they received to do something good with it and to report back how they used their new-found money. Here are some of the responses.

Amount received: \$20

Description: I gave it to a man who was holding up a sign at an intersection, asking for money.

Reflection: The man was appreciative, but when he saw how much money it was he was very surprised and very touched. He then really looked at me, and we made eye contact. He said he had only needed money to do his laundry but that this helped a lot. He thanked me many times and said "bless you" several times as well. He walked away, picked up his bag, and left the intersection. I was glad that I had given him enough to feel like he no longer needed to beg for money at that point. I was smiling for a long time, until I thought about how people would probably say that he's going to spend it on drugs. But, I decided that I didn't care. I will value the moment that he and I really looked at each other and saw each other, and that he felt a moment of someone being generous with him.

From: Edris, 49

Amount received: \$10

Description: I used it, with some of my own money, to make a donation to World Central Kitchen, which provides hot meals to people in disaster areas. They are currently working in Australia and Puerto Rico.

Reflection: I had read about chef Jose Andres and World Central Kitchen in an article in Smithsonian Magazine. I'd considered donating but never got around to it. This got me to do it. Here is an excerpt from the Smithsonian article:

It was Andrés' intervention in Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria in 2017 that made WCK famous. The island was without power and without fuel when Andrés arrived on one of the first flights following the storm; immediately he connected with a network of chefs and purveyors. "These things I had been thinking through and developing in my brain, we knew we could do," he said in an interview. "And we did. We went all in." In his book about the effort, *We Fed an Island*, Andrés is matter-of-fact about how he bullied suppliers to extend him credit for food and used the news media to pressure the Federal Emergency Management Agency for support. He and WCK mobilized chefs, schools, distributors, truck drivers and more than 20,000 volunteers—and served 3.7 million meals over nine months.

Traditionally, feeding disaster victims has been the responsibility of the same relief organizations that provide shelter and medical care, and most of the time the food is an afterthought: meals cooked in expensive mobile kitchens or, worse, MREs, military-style Meals Ready to Eat, such as "rib-shaped barbecue flavored pork" with a shelf life of somewhere close to forever.

Andrés acknowledges that an instant meal that can be stored indefinitely without refrigeration is "an amazing accomplishment by humanity," but says it is meant for soldiers in combat zones, not families displaced from their homes. And so World Central Kitchen strives to source food locally, and wrangles local chefs and volunteers to cook it in nearby commercial kitchens. In other words, WCK staff don't helicopter into a disaster area and pretend to have all the answers; they leverage the community's knowledge and resources, and provide support. Which is often cheaper. On average, a hot meal prepared by World Central Kitchen costs between \$2.50 and \$4—and much of that money goes to pay farmers, cooks or the guy driving the food truck. The average cost of an MRE is \$8 to \$10.

From: Brian, 51

Amount received: \$20

Description: I donated to Focus on Reading Through Flexible Seating! Project. Because there was a 2x match, my donation became \$60. Here is a description of the project: "My responsive classroom is a safe space for students to set and achieve their goals, but needs more flexible seating to help students focus during independent and guided reading, literacy-heavy instruction time, and especially during assessments. At these times, students who are prone to anxiety-attacks or severe frustration would be able to assess their seating options and practice strategies of self-care to keep on track. I teach students to choose the right tools to solve their problems and overcome obstacles in order to learn. To help students overcome low academic confidence and anxiety, we have worked together to request types of seating the students know will help keep them on task.

Having more access to and choice of varied and fidget-friendly seating in our classroom will help students to stay calm and focused on reading and practicing test-taking skills!

Students have a small number of alternative seats for reading time in the classroom, and have learned firsthand what a difference it can make. When asked what they would most like to see in the classroom, the answer was overwhelmingly options for new and different seating, especially for students who struggle to focus on reading independently, in small groups, or during instruction. Additionally, a number of students have found that working on the floor or a more mobile seat during high stress activities in math and tests helps them to regulate their emotions and get the work done!

I am so proud of how far my students have come this year in making positive and responsible choices in the classroom, and we believe that this donation request could make the second half the year even more focused and productive. Having varied, flexible seating will offer students with challenges more choice to remain active in the classroom."

Reflection: This felt amazing to be able to give back unexpectedly to student education.

From: Nancy

Amount received: \$20

Description: Put in the Youth trip fundraiser box

Reflection: Loved the service. Felt maybe I took an "easy" way, but figure the youth will appreciate it

From: Linda, age 67

Amount received: \$20

Description: I chose to donate the \$20.00 cash (#MG 62484040 F) in my "Rat money gift" to the Brandywine Valley SPCA (1212 Phoenixville Pike, West Chester, PA 19380): "Founded in 1929, the Brandywine Valley SPCA exists to end animal suffering and to involve the entire community in the welfare and well-being of animals. The mission is to put the "human" back in humane animal treatment and advocate on their behalf. Our vision is to be the recognized leader in animal welfare that empowers communities to treat life with respect and dignity."

The Rat is very shrewd and resourceful, and he is kind. He would have made my grandfather proud! He wrote the following message to the BVSPCA: "The donation includes re-gifting of \$20.00 contributed by the First Unitarian Church (730 Halstead Rd, Wilmington, DE 19803), and Reverend Pam Wat, at the occasion of the celebration of the Chinese New Year on Sunday, January 26, 2020."

From: lb

Amount received: \$1

Description: I donated it to a fund for my cousin's pastor, who is being treated for Merkel Cell Carcinoma. His treatments will keep him and his family in Boston for several weeks and away from their congregation. He and his wife have supported my cousin and her family of six since they relocated to Quincy, MA. I wanted to replay the favor. Thank you for helping with that.

Reflection: I love this idea. It has been special to reflect on how we would spend each envelopes contents.

From: Crystal, 41

Amount received: \$10

Description: In my car in at the red light coming out of Shoprite on Concord Pike I saw a young man holding a sign saying he needed help getting his life together. I rolled down the window, said "Happy New Year! Here`s some kindness" while handing him the red envelope. He said "Thank you". Then I drove away, looking in my rear view mirror I saw he continued to hold the sign.

Reflection: Now, I wish had taken more time to ask him about his situation and tell him that I hoped his situation would change soon.

From: I am an 83 year old woman member.

Amount received: \$10 (Paul) and (\$20) Nancy

Description: Since we each had an envelope, we gave \$10 to the kids raising money for their service trip, and serendipitously, we received a request from a friend to help fund her daughter's school project experimenting with tailoring classrooms to benefit disadvantaged students. We gave them the \$20.

Reflection: Have always been supporters of our First U kids. When they raise money it is always for a positive contribution. We are also very supportive of education as one of the best ways to address disadvantage and inequity.

From: Nancy (66) and Paul (72)

Amount received: \$2

Description: Added it (on top of a 20% tip) to the tip jar at Brew Haha

Reflection: It felt good to give it away.

From: Pam

Amount received: \$40

Description: We added \$60 to what we all got in our red envelopes and donated \$100 to the Food Bank of Delaware's Backpack Program

Reflection: This was a great opportunity for us to learn about giving to others and a great program that helps kids get enough to eat on weekends and holidays when they're not at school.

From: Felicity (age 6) and Verity (age 3)

Amount received: \$10

Description: I purchased games for a fifth grade teacher at Warner Elementary for indoor recess.

Reflection: I LOVED it! What a great way to make a direct impact on our community.

From: Kim

Amount received: \$20

Description: I made a \$125 matching donation to UUSC before the 1/31/2020 deadline.

Reflection: Great opportunity to force multiply - \$20 became \$250

From: Phil

Amount received: \$20

Description: donation to Main Line Animal Rescue

Reflection: Felt good to do something useful without a request from the organization

From: Carolyn

Amount received: \$20

Description: I gave it to a woman at an intersection asking for money (Homeless or needing money? I don't know)

Reflection: She was so grateful? Previous times I have only given \$1 or \$2. This red envelope with \$20 made her very happy.

From: Jan

Amount received: \$20

Description: Faithful friends donation

From: David, age 67

Amount received: \$1

Description: I added \$ and contributed to a political campaign.

Reflection: I enjoyed the experience. I used our empty envelopes to start the tradition with our grand-daughters.

From: Kathi, age 64

Amount received: \$20

Description: We donated to an organization that supports adults with intellectual disabilities.

Reflection: Satisfying

From: Pam and Keith

Amount received: \$20

Description: I am donating it to the children at Meadowood Behavioral Hospital

Reflection: I think it's amazing to give back and do something big or small to help others. Thank you.

From: Empress

Amount received: \$20

Description: I gave to Empress, my ILYA care package student - now graduated from UD.

Reflection: It was especially meaningful. She passed the money along to a charity.

From: Betty, 80 years old

Amount received: \$5

Description: Added \$ to the \$5 to contribute 'dignity' items (toothbrushes, paste, etc) to DE Center for Justice for the Adult Reentry Program of men and women for when they are coming out of prison.

Reflection: Feels good. I let them know about the kindness program here at UU. I have had prior very good experience with the DE Center for Justice. My story: A young 16 year old girl was caught by camera & tape stealing money from the company. DE Center for Justice helped with a mediation room, monitored community server & received payments to reimburse for the camera rental and then reported back to me and the company. She learned her lesson & was reprimanded but she could start her young life again with no police record.

Amount received: \$10

Description: I gave it to the young man who dances with the advertising sign on Concord Pike @ light with Giant store. He waves and dances exuberantly with his sign. I see him every Sunday and he makes me smile. I wanted him to know appreciate him.

Reflection: I waited to see what opportunity would arise for me to use the gift. I was resigned to donate it to Delaware Humane Society for their work and in gratitude for the dog, my sole companion, who I adopted last April when I saw the young African American man dancing again this week. When I gave him the gift he was smiling and thankful.

From: Angela, 54 years old

Amount received: \$10

Description: I chose to give my lucky red envelope money to the 1st U youth group. My total giving was \$34.00. I felt happy to add the extra \$10.

Reflection: Passing ahead good fortune is a delightful happy experience.

From: MJ, 74 years old

Amount received: \$2 + \$5 = \$7

Description: We added to our lucky dollars to make a \$25 donation to Urban Bike Project of Wilmington. This amount can provide one of their free bike recipients with a lock and lights so they can get to work safely.

Reflection: It felt like quite a responsibility to decide since there are so many worthy possibilities. We've been supporters of UBP (local non-profit our son helped found), so this was an incentive for us to make an additional contribution toward their work here in Delaware (UBP has also been a recipient of First U special offerings)

From: Judy and Randy

Amount received: \$20 + \$10 + \$10 + \$2

Description: We pooled our money to purchase a new winter parka to donate to a coat drive at P.S. duPont middle school for the Sunday Breakfast mission.

Reflection: The four of us in my family pooled our \$42 and enjoyed purchasing something for someone who may not be able to.

From: Gabriel (15), Mason (12), Holly (46), Joel (51)

Amount received: \$20

Description: Gave to Brandywine S.P. youth summer camp tuition.

Reflection: Felt good to pass on. Matched with my own donation.

From: Clete, 78 years old

Amount received: \$20 + \$1

Description: Donation to the Ministry of Caring for the Child Care program. We add \$29 to make a \$50 donation in total.

Reflection: We were encourage to reflect on our community needs and felt joy in receiving and joy in giving.

From: Ann and Chad

Amount received: \$10 + \$10

Description: Donated it to the National Alliance of Mentally Ill of Delaware (NAMI - DE) + \$80

Reflection: Glad to help people who are mentally ill.

From: Barley & Helga, ages 84 & 82

Amount received: \$20

Description: School had a fundraiser for Australia to recover from the fires. All \$20 went to that.

Reflection: I felt helpful.

From: Sebastian, 7 ³/₄ years old

Amount received: \$5.00

Description: Add it to a donation to support a newly formed non-profit group - DAASV - formed to address sexual violence in Delaware.

Reflection: Pleased to be able to contribute to the new agency.

From: Phil, 86 years old

Amount received: \$10

Description: I am in touch with a young person who aged out of foster care. I sent it to him to help with his school supplies since he is attending college now.

Reflection: It was a beautiful thing to be part of.

From: Joan, 77 years old

Amount received: \$5

Description: Added to the \$5 and donated to a new 50103 - DAASV - Delaware Alliance Against Sexual Violence. DAASV is a sister organization with DCADV Delaware Coalition Against Domestic Violence, that 'supports survivors through advocacy, intervention and awareness'.

Reflection: Rich, rewarding conversation with a dear friend after the January 26 service who said the 50103 was now set up. Another amazing mutual friend has been instrumental in getting DAASV started.

From: Marie

Amount received: \$20

Description: Books for the library

Reflection: Very interesting. I never heard of the tradition.

From: Richard, 69 ¾ years old

Amount received: \$20

Description: Donated to Alzheimers Association.

Reflection: My father died from Alzheimers and I am concerned

From: Karen, 69 years old

Amount received: \$10

Description: I gave a gift card to a co-worker who has breast cancer and is starting chemo next week. This way she can have one easy meal.

Reflection: I was inspired by Rev Pam's sermon so gave a lot of \$ to nonprofits this week. Gave to Habitat for Humanity, Amnesty International, Planned Parenthood and Ronald McDonald House.

From: Debbi

Amount received: \$1

Description: Gave towards handy table for friend who needs a place to put his phone.

Reflection: He was very appreciative. I felt great.

From: Miss Dale, 71 years old

Amount received: \$10

Description: Added \$15 to donate \$25 to BVSPCA

Reflection: Gave me the incentive to finally begin volunteering there after wanting to for a long time.

From: Jessica, 33 years old

Amount received: \$11 - we pooled our resources for this project.

Description: We bought some yarn to make a scarf for the UUSC knitting ministry. I (Lori) contacted Jean for patterns and was welcomed to their meetings by 2 church members in addition to getting information.

Reflection: The yarn has yet to arrive and then the knitting will start. I may end up joining this group of people.

From: Jim and Lori

Amount received: \$10

Description: Contributed to ILYA

Reflection: A nice idea.

From: Ruth, 90 years old

Amount received: \$10

Description: I am giving it back to the church plus an additional \$5.00. I am keeping the envelope as a memento through the give+ app.

Reflection: It's nice to get something unexpected. I would have liked to get \$100, but its better then getting a one \$1.00.

From: Carl, 55 years old

Amount received: \$5

Description: I supplemented it and sent it to the newly formed non-profit called DAASV - Delaware Alliance Against Sexual Violence. Their mission is to address Sexual Violence in Delaware by creating an inclusive community that supports survivors through advocacy, intervention and awareness. Then I put another contribution into the very pretty red envelope and sent it to my adult niece with Rev. Pam's instructions.

Reflection: At first many ideas popped into my head but how to use most effectively? How to help others? Then a friend and I thought of this new non-profit that needs so much to get up and going. They will eventually be handling the rape crisis line and related services.

From: Cinda

Amount received: \$50 + \$20 + \$2

Description: We donated it to the youth group trip

Reflection: NA

From: Weiss family

Amount received: \$20

Description: Youth group at FUC

Reflection: Delightful

From: Debbie and Ed, ages 73, 80

Amount received: \$10

Description: I bought \$50 worth of \$5 gift cards from Wawa and started to give them out when people asked for money.

Reflection: It left me feeling very good to respond to someone asking for help. I had been thinking about doing this for a long time and the gift led to action.

From: Gynnie, 73 years old

Amount received: combined \$62 (additional donations of \$163)

Description: Donation to the Brandywine Creek State Park for a scholarship for one child to attend a week of summer camp.

Reflection: It was exciting to realize that we could come together as a group to provide an adventure for a child who might not otherwise have this outdoor experience.

From: Maggie, Barbara & Barry, Helena, Frank & Sylvia, Clete

Amount received: \$10

Description: Donated to Make-A-Wish Foundation

Reflection: I wanted to help kids who are sick.

From: Nora, age 6 and a half

Amount received: \$20

Description: Donated to a local nonprofit, S.O.A.R. (Survivors of Abuse in Recovery)

Reflection: I appreciate the evidence-based trauma-focused services as well as safety planning that this organization provides for children and adult survivors. I want to help grow/expand their services in this area.

From: Becca

Amount received: \$15

Description: Donation to Choir School of Delaware

Reflection: This motivated me to seek out a local cause that I care about, and I learned more about my community in the process.

Amount received: We pooled family \$\$ together for a total of \$50

Description: We talked about it as a family and chose to help our fellow church members as well as animals. We split it evenly between a donation to Faithful Friends and purchasing food for our FirstU food pantry.

Reflection: It was a good exercise to have the twins think about what they wanted to support. Their list was much larger, but they learned they had to make choice having only a certain amount of money to work with.

From: Tracy and Keith, Rhys and Bryn (age 9)

Amount received: \$30

Description: The \$30 we received was sent to the Natural Resource Defense Council that works to protect our environment.

Amount received: \$10

Description: Doubled it and gave it to an Asian physical therapist who provides balance classes for free at a local senior center.

Reflection: Nice to give back to someone who give so generously to senior citizens in an important way.

From: Dick, 81 years old

Amount received: \$20

Description: Double it and donated to the volunteer English program that works one on one to help immigrants learn English and enable them to better get medical care, employment, etc.

Reflection: Important to help immigrants without regard to their legality

From: Catherine, 80 years old

Amount received: \$20

Description: I purchased 4 pairs of men's winter gloves and gave to the homeless/out of work street people.

Reflection: Positive. Some surprise when being offered gloves (instead of money) but everyone took them.

From: Connie, 80 years old

Amount received: \$10

Description: Gave \$5 each to 2 homeless men on the street corner.

Reflection: What a good idea! I appreciated being reminded of the many ways we can make a difference in our community. I haven't stopped since then - it encouraged me to 'up' my efforts and possible impact.

From: Remaining anonymous!

Amount received: \$20

Description: Donated to 'Empty Bowls' - a national organization where bowls are made, simple food served in it and money given to Kennett food cupboard.

Reflection: Done by residents of Maris Grove who make the clay bowls and give to each donor.

From: Donna, 74 years old

Amount received: \$10

Description: Bought socks for the homeless and turned them in to Emanuel Dining Room and gave same to my grandson to do something too.

Reflection: I always love going to EDR and taking the socks gave me a really warm feeling.

From: Lois, 65+ years old

Amount received: \$20

Description: \$5 - ILYA, \$2 - Ronald McDonald House, \$13 Various homeless people in Elsmere area (\$1 to \$3 per person)

Reflection: Excellent - I'll try and keep a few \$ in my vehical at easy grasp when I see a fellow person who looks to be down on his or her luck.

From: Todd, 64 years old

Amount received: \$20, \$10

Description: We combined our money and matched it with \$30 to make 10 care kits for people who are homeless. Kits contained socks, water, snacks, bandages, alcohol wipes, lists of community resources and a card.

Reflection: Had idea a year ago. The reverse offering motivated us to do it. Online research showed what to put in kits. Kits are offered to homeless people on the street. It is a way to make contact and see people on the street as fellow human beings.

From: Janet and Richard, 71 years old

Amount received: \$10

Description: Bought a card and chocolate for a friend. Bought aroma therapy oils for me and to share with clients.

Reflection: Heart warming

From: Jacqueline, almost 57 years old

Amount received: \$10

Description: Brandywine Creek Scholarship

Reflection: Got to pool resources to create an opportunity.

From: Ed

Amount received: \$20

Description: I made a donation to The Village Delaware.

"The Village Delaware" hosts events in Wilmington, usually at the Central YMCA, for LGBTQ+ youth and adults and their allies <https://www.thevillagedelaware.org/>, contact person is El Mora, emora@aidsdelaware.org, 302-652--6776. Central YMCA is located at 501 W 11th St., Wilmington, DE 19801. Upcoming event on February 28, in the Wilmington Room. They also have a Speakers Bureau and a Youth Leadership Team.

Reflection: As I thought of places to donate the money I remembered an intention that I hadn't yet followed through with. Receiving the red envelope motivated me to pull together information inspired by a session I attended at the Delaware NAMI conference back in October so that I could share it with others. Gathering the information, I learned more about The Village Delaware and two of the session's panelists. I'm glad to have completed the task!

From: Julia, 58 years old

Amount received: Joan, \$10, Lee, \$20, Dalel, \$10

Description: An amazing couple we are friendly with has been blind since birth. They use a service called AIRA (Artificial Intelligence Remote Assistance) that helps them by phone do a million things they can't do without sight. There is a monthly fee and we have contributed to that.

Reflection: I am always looking for ways to help them and when this money became available, I knew IMMEDIATELY where it would go!

From: Joan, Lee