

John O'Connor – Why I Give

I'm here to speak with you about the annual spring fund drive...No, wait a minute, that's NPR and I'm not Robin Young! I'm John O'Connor and this is Arlington Street Church. That's right, it's time again for Covenant Renewal. Now is when we plan to make our pledges of service and financial support for the upcoming church year.

Why give? That's a good question. I suppose I could speak about how expensive it is to open the doors each week, to pay staff salaries, and to fund our charitable efforts both near and abroad. I could pull an Ira Glass and call one of you from the pulpit right now, put it on the speaker phone and say, "You know, I've been given this list of people we see each week at services but who don't pledge... And guess what? Now don't be surprised: You're on that list. And we're all wondering here, can you tell us why you don't give?" I have a cell phone and I have a list right here... **That** would be kind of fun.

But I won't do it. Shame and guilt just aren't part of our seven principles. So you're off the hook for now. Well...maybe. If the thought of getting that call inspires you to fill out the pledge card and write a check, I won't stop you.

Seriously, there are many reasons to pledge and we each have our own. Let me tell you just one of mine:

Community.

That one word, community, sums it up for me. Here at Arlington Street Church I have found **my** community. Here is where, years ago, I met Alan Helms at the Wednesday Literary Salon. We read Homer's *Iliad*. When Alan found out I was a Classics major in college, he had me read and translate the first page of the original Greek for the group. Now **that** was a challenge. I hadn't picked up a Greek grammar in twenty years. Then, Alan invited me to be part of his book group where eventually we took a year and read all of Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*. It was **the** most significant reading experience of my life.

Where else could this have happened but at Arlington Street Church?

Community.

And there's George Whitehouse. George, with Gabby's prodding, had me way up on a clown ladder. **Way** up there changing light bulbs before the Easter service. Next, he's going to show me how to check the water table levels on the 999 pilings that support our beloved sanctuary. How cool is that? Then, it's on to learn to play the bells. What fun.!

Community.

And there's Kim, who we all know and love. A couple of years ago she called me when she knew I was looking to hire someone for my real estate team. She asked me to consider hiring Holly Hendricks, whom I didn't really know at all. Kim's ringing endorsement was, "She's **mad** smart, but I have no idea if she's cut out for real estate." So, I hired Holly, and can I just say, having mad smart people in my life is something I love. Now, we're so busy we need to hire an assistant for Holly. Is there anyone looking for a job?

Community.

By definition it includes a sense of participation and here at Arlington Street Church I enjoy participating in several ways. As part of the Worship Committee, I'm privileged to help design and lead the weekly services. It's an honor to read and uplift your candles each week. And it was a thrill a couple of years ago to preach a summer sermon. And then, since we didn't have a piano player that week, I got to play Debussy for you all.

There are so many ways for you to participate in this, **your** community, Arlington Street Church. Won't you begin your renewed participation by joining me in the coming weeks? Fill out the card. Write the checks. It's the right thing to do!

Thank you.