

We beg to differ

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Despite the apparent enthusiasm of many in our Congregation, we've long been skeptical as to the propriety of the currently conceived UCOT outreach program. What our congregation labels "outreach" basically consists of first aggregating monies donated to us presumably in support of our particular mission. We then pass these bundled funds along as Congregation grants to a few annually chosen causes. Though most likely pursued with benevolent intent, the activity nevertheless raises troubling questions of legitimacy.

Foremost among our concerns is the matter of relevance to our Congregation's covenanted mission and *de facto* pledge to be "...an ***illuminating beacon*** and an ***active force, promoting liberal religious values...***" In only the most abstract and tangential sense would bundling and redistributing the charitable donations of others appear to be in alignment with this mission. Doesn't it go without saying that any and all of Congregation sponsored programs should be aligned with our stated mission? Can it be seriously argued that our current outreach program meets this test? We doubt it. Similarly, can it be seriously asserted that our program has effectively projected our liberal religious values beyond existing group boundaries? Isn't this precisely what outreach should do?

Our mission statement's implicit *de facto* pledge constrains us from simply doing as we please, even if a majority favor it. As a community of faith, we are particularly compelled to keep our promises. Our stated mission is a promise made. It must be a promise kept.

Then there is the associated issue of opportunity costs incurred—the missed chances to reach out to the Taos community in projecting our mission. Instead, we divert and distract ourselves with an under-resourced token effort that imitates a role far better played by others whose mission and expertise is funding community causes (e.g., Taos Community

Foundation). Shouldn't we be devising, developing and delivering programs that advance our mission and bring our liberal religious values to the awareness of the many who never reach our Congregation doors? That would be reaching out.

Let there be no misunderstanding. We are not opposed to outreach *per se*. Our concern is with the specifics of what currently constitutes UCOT outreach. We expect our outreach program to reflect and execute our avowed church mission. Though we believe our congregation should support outreach, future funding should be conditioned on a thorough review and revision of our program to ensure that it is not merely outreach in name, and that its activities are squarely in the service of our congregation mission.