

Good morning.

So, some of you know about star words, but for those of you who don't these are words that members of the UCC Church have the opportunity to choose randomly at the beginning of the year and use as a guiding principle throughout the year. Not being a member of this Church, that's probably a somewhat crude explanation, but I hope you'll bear with me. I don't really go to any church right now, but my wife Jo, who has been coming to the UCC Church, oh so kindly, took the liberty of choosing a star word for me. The word she chose was delight.

Yeah, delight.

It's not a word I would have chosen for myself, but it is a word that I've taken to heart and tried to live by. In Puerto Rico, I tried, and succeeded to some extent, in finding delight even in the things that were difficult or frustrating. It was a good exercise and the experience turned out to be life changing.

Today though, I want to focus on a different word because it is the word that keeps coming to me when look back at my experience on the trip. This word is generosity.

Generosity was the focus of the quote that Lucia chose for our garish, blue T-shirts, and while it was not the word I really focused on during the trip, it is the word that exemplifies my experience.

First there was the generosity of all you who gave what you could in form of dollars, or other assistance, to support the trip and make it possible. Thank you. There was the generosity of the Byrne Foundation who gave an overwhelming gift that allowed us to not fret and worry about funds when we were on the ground in Puerto Rico. Their generosity also allowed us to leave behind substantial gifts to continue the relief effort. There was also the generosity of Carlos and Gretchen and the staff at the Skunk Hollow Tavern who hosted a fundraising event and donating way more of the proceeds than we anticipated. Thank you.

There was the generosity of the TSA officers who were doing their jobs without pay that allowed us to make our flights on time. There was the generosity of the homeowners we worked for who fed us lunch despite their own desperate circumstances. There was also the generosity of all of the people I worked with on hot roofs, in the rain, fixing a flat the tire on the

van without comment after I drove into a pothole, and the generosity of the teams fixing dinner, prepping lunch, or running vespers at the end of a seemingly endless day.

But it was also the conscious generosity of setting my own self aside and making room for others that made this such a profound experience. The conscious process of stepping back from a job to consider someone else's vision for how to approach the problem. The conscious process of supporting someone who was struggling emotionally or physically. This making space in my own heart for generosity, whether giving or receiving, created a sense of inner calm that I carry with me even three weeks later.

I won't lie, it hasn't been easy to maintain this conscious generosity in the face of everyday life. But, each time I lose sight of it, and I do, I reach back to the generosity I felt and received on the trip. It's become a touch stone, a way of re-centering.

I will leave you with this thought. Whether in the Bible, the Quran, or the Unitarian Universalist covenant, the Ten Perfections of Buddhism, generosity plays a part in all religion. Sometimes, as in the Hinduism, it means the sharing of knowledge and sometimes, as in Proverbs it means giving of your time or your riches *Whoever is generous to the poor lends to the Lord, and he will repay him for his deed. (19:17)*

This trip ran on generosity. The world runs on generosity. Live generously. You might even find delight in doing it.