

Gratitude Guidelines for UUC Campaigns

Winter/Spring 2018

Your decision to help offer gratitude to fellow congregants will affect the entire tenor of our campaign this year! We appreciate you taking the time to acknowledge the generosity of spirit that makes people want to be part of our beloved community! Thank you!

Research indicates that individuals do not value thank you messages that begin with “Thank you for...” It’s predictable, hackneyed, unimaginative, and unspecific. Here’s what the research says.

People want to imagine that they are the only person getting this message, so it needs to feel like it’s tailored to THEM, not the same message that could go to anyone else. They want to feel seen, and known, and valued by the organization, as an individual who just made an individual decision.

Donors want the thank you to help them understand what **difference** their gift will make – not just what it will **pay** for, but what impact that will have on end-users in the long run. So rather than talking about what their gift will “buy,” we need to focus on how it will achieve the goals the donor shares with the organization. The impact should be more emotional than practical.

Donors want assurance that the gift they just made will be spent on what they intended it for. While none of these campaign gifts will be earmarked for any particular element of the annual or building effort, we can assure them that the gift will be spent as we said it would.

We also know from copious testing that the word “donation” isn’t as effective as “contribution,” “gift,” or “investment.” So please refrain from using the word donation.

I attended a workshop put on by the woman who did this research and she challenged everyone in the room to write the first sentence of a note that did not start with “Thank you for...” We all struggled, offering our attempts, and having her reject them, until one person offered this: “We just turned on the front burner on the stove to make soup for the women at the shelter tonight, thanks to your gift.” It’s not really about the stove, as much as it’s about being present for the women, and making the donor feel like they’re part of that support team that’s present for them.

Here's one that I consider the Gold Standard of thank yous. It was crafted (by the hundred) by a professional at the Seattle Public Library Foundation.

A library patron wanted us to know how the library had helped when she and her son were homeless. She wrote us this:

We arrived each day as the doors opened. My eager boy discovered dinosaurs, befriended librarians, and developed an ongoing love of books. I devoured biographies, building myself up with stories of others who had faced challenges. We shared story time, and we played on the lawn.

Though we were homeless, the library helped me mother my son by allowing me to give when I had nothing to spend. Your gifts help put dinosaur books and biographies on the shelves, provide story times and much more, all in places which welcome everyone in our community. Thank you.

Here are some examples of previous UUC thank yous:

You've been such a steadfast member of UUC for so many years, participating in myriad ways without seeking credit or attention. We love having you in our beloved community! We're also grateful for the generous gift you made to the campaign at year-end. And we promise to put it to good use as we work to live out our mission and values with our refreshed home as our base. Thanks for all your contributions!

...Your generous commitment will help us gain momentum as we launch the next phase of the campaign. And you can be proud of the work that we'll do together in our refreshed building, bringing our principles to life in the community. Thanks!

... Your steadfast commitment to our principles, especially the 7th one, are models for the rest of us to emulate. And now this generous gift to the campaign is another model others can follow. Your pledge will help us do even more for the world from our new building. ...

..we're grateful that you care deeply enough about the work we're doing together to invest in the campaign.. OR that you've chosen to contribute to the campaign that will support not only our new building, but also the important work that will go on in and beyond its walls...

...Your recent commitment to the future of our church will ensure the strength of our congregation for years to come. Thanks for investing in our shared vision...

Ultimately, we're not thanking people for their money as much as we're thanking them for choosing to be part of our beloved community. So while we do want to mention their financial support, the most important thing is to acknowledge that they're part of the UUC family.