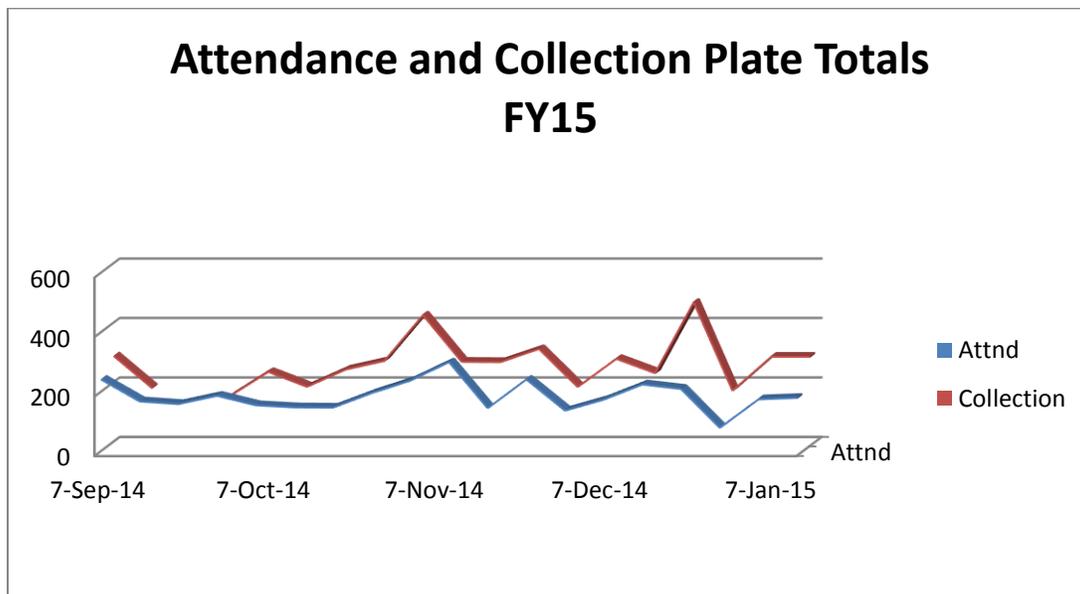


## Partner Plate Pilot Project

### Background:

UUCR has a regular practice of taking up a collection at Sunday service. Occasionally, the collection is intended for donation to a particular organization or effort, but most of the time, the collection goes into UUCR coffers. Most people place cash in the basket, while others use the collection to submit funds to UUCR by check – these funds include monthly pledges, UUCR events (e.g. Novemberfest), or donations for special issues (e.g. Haiti). The cash amount collected each week is roughly proportional to the number of adult attendees at service, though cash giving usually increases significantly if the collection is specified for a particular use.

In recent months, the cash average has been \$269/Sunday, which corresponds to \$1.44 per adult attendee. This represents an increase from FY14, when the average cash amount over the same period was \$222/Sunday, or \$1.14 per attendee. The annual total from cash collections is ~\$11,000, or around \$27/member annually.



Clearly, our congregation is compelled to respond generously to a specific “ask” by deciding in the moment to place cash in the basket as it passes. For instance, in the chart above in which collection spiked most significantly (21 Dec, recipient: Soldier’s Heart), the cash donation total was 2-fold higher than the average. This suggests that congregants respond with generosity to a collection that is connected to a particular purpose or organization. Connecting the weekly collection with a purpose provides an important opportunity for each of us to practice mindful giving. By aligning the recipients of our collection with our mission and strategic priorities, we can provide a moment in weekly worship for all of us to reflect on our purpose as a congregation, and engage in collective action in support of our community.

### Description:

Partner Plate is a method of conducting Sunday service collection in which the weekly plate is shared with a named community organization. When the plate is passed, congregants are reminded that the collection will help to support the congregation and a local community organization. The distribution, typically 50:50, is understood, so that as congregants place their donation in the plate, they know what

portion will go to the named organization and what portion will support the church. Several UU congregations in our district who have adopted this practice have observed significant increases in the Sunday collection over their former practice of collecting only for the church.

**Proposal:**

To pilot a partner plate for UUCR for the 2015-16 church year (Sept15-Aug16). At the end of the pilot, the Board will evaluate the success of this approach and determine whether and how to continue it.

**Objectives:**

- To better connect UUCR's spiritual and social justice commitments through worship practice
- To stir collective awareness about mindful giving
- To act on our commitment to support our local community
- To encourage generous and visible support of our congregation

**Selection process:**

Six community service organizations will be selected by a congregational process coordinated by the Social Justice Committee (SJC), with the Minister and Assistant Minister consulting. The SJC will solicit recommendations from all committee chairs in May 2015, and will make final selections in time to be announced in the Quest in August 2015.

Criteria for selection will be developed by consensus of the SJC, in consultation with the Minister and Assistant Minister, and will reflect UUCR's yearly worship theme, strategic priorities, social justice commitments, and our commitment to supporting partner organizations working in our local community. Partner organizations must have registered non-profit status. These criteria will be shared in May when the call for recommendations goes out in the E-weekly and Quest.

*If the approach is continued beyond the pilot year...* As UUCR grows and changes, it is likely that our priorities, commitments and interactions with the local community will shift; each year, the SJC will review and revise selection criteria for that year so that partner selection continues to reflect our focus in the community. The work of selecting each year's partner organizations is a seasonal task, so the SJC would begin its work in May and conclude its work in July each year.

**Distribution:**

The SJC will schedule each organization for a 2-month period (e.g. Sept-Oct, Nov-Dec, Jan-Feb, Mar-Apr, May-June, July-Aug), and cash collections taken during that time will be shared with that organization. The bi-monthly selection of partner organizations does not preclude the occasional scheduling of single-Sunday special collections – such as Soldier's Heart, disaster relief, or Legacy Sunday (UUCR endowment) – in place of the shared collection.

On the first Sunday of the period, a representative from the named organization will be invited to attend the service and speak for 5 minutes about their work. This gives a face and a voice to the partner organization. On the final Sunday of the period, the partner representative will be invited to return to the Sunday service to receive the donation amount. UUCR will present the partner organization with a check and celebrate their good work. The total amount of the donation will be published in Quest to inform the congregation about our collective contribution.