

## **Inviting Investors**

Shared at Shadow Rock UCC

August 21, 2011

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Last week the question our Growth and Revitalization Task Force helped us explore was “Why do I stay connected to Shadow Rock?” I suggested that we stay connected because we are invested in the values, mission, and vision of Shadow Rock. This includes the love and respect we have for each other as we figure out our communal/shared spiritual life together.

I gave the Facilities Team as an example of this reality. I said, “I was watching the people of our Facilities Team working.....None of them have a consumer or 1+1 attitude or orientation to the church. They were on ladders, hanging off the edge of the roof, trimming bushes, putting up signs, moving refrigerators, and planning their contributions for Shadow Rock’s future. They were putting their hearts, heads, and hands together to create more than the sum total of their individual team members. They are fully invested.”

Being fully invested means that if they lose a program, or they do not have the same needs or wants, or the minister says or does something stupid or hurtful, they will not leave; they will stay connected.

I shared with you that the root word for investment is *vestis* which means “garment”. When I say I am invested, I am saying, “I am committed, I have put you on and I wear you. I wrap myself up with you. I wrap you around me and I want you to wrap me around you! I feel naked without you. I feel incomplete without you.” This is staying power. This is being invested.

I left us with the questions: What are we to each other? Is Shadow Rock a foundation garment or one of many pairs of shoes?

I want to go further with this idea that we are invested in each other and invested into Shadow Rock. Our question today, **WOULD YOU HELP CONNECT OTHERS TO SHADOW ROCK?**, will help us drill deeper because it pushes us to ask, “What are we asking people to connect to and connect with?”

First of all there is the tricky part of asking and inviting without even getting to the who or what. If we ever make such an invitation it can be a simple invitation to a program or an event which is “safer” than an invitation to church but it is still problematic. It is problematic by itself because of the kind of preconceived notions people have about such an invitation. For example, we can imagine someone innocently inviting another person to a concert, lecture, class, or event like Trunk or Treat, and the other person responds by

rolling their eyes, thinking OMG I did not know this person was a Jesus Freak, and stating very clearly, “Thank you but my soul doesn’t need saving and I get just as much spiritual connection with God when I go out into nature.” The potential conversation is shut down before it gets a chance to begin because of all the preconceived notions and baggage that comes with a simple invitation to church. Also, the terms of the relationship may be altered as well.

How do we get around that? Let’s look at some options.

One: Don’t invite.....perpetuates decline.

Two: Create a church as a spiritual social club with minimum religious significance and play down the meaningfulness of a spiritual community and play up our cynicism and our critique of religion because it sounds smart in today’s cultural context. I do not think this is a viable option and while it may get us to do some inviting it does not encourage true investment. This option perpetuates consumerism within the church.

Three: Play up the spiritual significance as you experience our spiritual community in genuine ways and articulate how it helps you be a better human being. When we are able to do this then we are encouraging investment. This kind of authentic “life sharing” perpetuates genuine spiritual community which is a basic human need and we do this at Shadow Rock very well.

This third option is applicable to people in all three campfires of Shadow Rock. It is applicable because it does not require any set standard of beliefs. It only requires us to be real with each other about what is going on with our lives and what is going on with our faith journey.

Our Covenant states that we perpetuate “Those activities which eliminate age barriers, cut across religious dogma, reduce cultural parochialisms, **and engage secular people with life's ultimate possibilities**, ... these are the activities that are worthy of our best efforts.

We invite secular people and we challenge the secularism within ourselves to become fellow investors as...

Invested as sojourners. We share the journey from birth to death and we strive together to ask and answer with integrity the questions about life and our purpose.

Invested as friends who share our experiences of God, life, and love..

Invested as “bread” for the world. Connected to this is the idea of “leaven”. We are a spiritual corruption for a profane world order.

Several years ago when the stock market tanked and everyone’s anxiety was up, Louis Rukeyser’s opened his business show with a statement that said take a deep breath and acknowledge that life goes on. I want to rework his statement on Shadow Rock terms and share it with you today.

“Okay, let’s start with what’s really important this morning. It’s just your money, not your life. Everybody who really loved you a week ago still loves you this morning, and that is a heck of a lot more important than the numbers on a brokerage statement. Children will be taught. The Word about life will be studied and preached. The deeds that make life worth living will continue to happen. The choir will sing. New ministries will bloom. Youth will play, laugh, and challenge. Babies will gurgle, and puppies will curl up in your lap and drift happily to sleep, even when the stock market goes temporarily insane. Many temporal things will pass away but faith, hope, and love will endure and abide forever, and the greatest of these is love.”

When talking about connecting others to Shadow Rock I use the financial language of investing on purpose. In the uncertain economic times we can find a degree of certainty in our relationships. We are investors in a treasure that cannot corrupt, cannot rust or be eaten up by moths. We are investors for the way of life and love. We put our most valued treasures of time, talent, and money into the work of the Spirit of Life and Love, and we rightly expect a good return for our investment. We are both shareholders and the board of directors for the enterprise of Life and Love. In this uncertain time it is good to ask others to share our investment.