

The Widow's Abundant Gift

United Congregational Church of Westerly, UCC, Pawcatuck, CT

November 16, 2025 – Morning worship on Stewardship Sunday

Text: Mark 12: 41-44

If you're not a follower of social media, you might be unaware that one of the current trending conversations is about churches and whether or not they are truly acting like churches are "supposed to." By this, the folks promoting this conversation mean something very specific – are churches meeting the needs of those who find themselves in dire financial circumstances? Or, put even more simply are churches responding to requests for assistance from the communities in which they are located? This is a legitimate question but it leaves many other important questions unasked.

This first came to my attention about 3-4 weeks ago when I saw a post that had a photo of a young woman captioned by a story about a young mother who supposedly contacted a huge number of churches as well as mosques and synagogues in her area for assistance in her community. She supposedly needed baby formula, being totally out of formula to feed her small infant. I've heard varying numbers of churches, etc. she supposedly called for assistance and, she kept a very careful record of who was willing to help her and who wasn't. She then reported her findings on social media. To cut to the chase, only the mosque and the two synagogues offered her help immediately. One of the synagogues was even willing to deliver it to her. She also reported that many Christian churches didn't have anyone available to receive her request and that the majority of churches where she was able to speak with someone told her they only provided that kind of assistance to their own members. Others referred her to local agencies offering that kind of assistance to folks. This is about what I would have guessed would have been the breakdown of responses. No surprises to me there.

But, the online community reading this and subsequent posts were outraged by this response, to put it mildly. They accused the churches of not practicing the faith they preached because they *knew* Jesus said that the poor should always be taken care of. Again, this is true, obviously. But it's just as obvious that these folks who started all this don't really know anything about churches. First of all, I am not aware of too many churches – or synagogues or mosques for that matter – that keep regular office hours. Plus, it became clear as these conversations continued, that their goal was to discredit Christian churches in particular. As comments continued, I realized they were lumping all Christian churches together, not distinguishing between Catholics or mainline Protestants and other so-called “free” churches without denominational affiliation. I especially think they were anxious to discredit the large mega churches which expect folks to tithe and have not been known to respond to disasters even in their own backyards.