



Minister's Report to the Congregation

May 23, 2021

It has been pointed out that this time we have spent together as interim minister and congregation —nearly two years!— has not been what any of us expected. But, as expected, this time has been transformational as well as transitional. We've gone from "there," where we were, to "here," where we are. And we are ready to move forward to where we are going!

We have figured out new ways to be a community using technology: livestreaming worship services and memorial services; zooming meetings, social time, and other gatherings. The building has been closed, and the community has been open. Physically distant, and socially connected.

None of this would have been possible without amazing volunteers and staff. Tech experts Paul Cunningham, Brian Junker, Will Snavely, Emily Sweeny, and Andrew Papale have devoted many hours to ensuring high-quality production of livestreamed services via YouTube. (Your YouTube channel currently has 301 subscribers. I never expected to be a televangelist!) Program staff members Ellen Gozion, Director of Instrumental Music; Kris Rust, Director of Choral Music; and Erica Shadowsong, Director of Lifespan Religious Education, have brought their talents to create meaningful worship services. (And of course Erica offers religious education programming for children, youth, and adults, as detailed in her own report.)

Your administrative staff members have also stepped up to do what needs to be done, as they always do. Rita Gates, Business Manager; Cicely Moultrie, Communications Coordinator; and Dan Laity, Sexton, have been working from home when possible and coming in to the office when necessary, to keep the building safe and to support the work of the congregation.

Your Safe Reopening Task Force, consisting of Peggy Parsons, Kirk Striebich, Shelley Ross, and Erica Shadow

song, has been analyzing information in order to make recommendations about when and how it will be possible to gather in person in the church building.

Thanks to volunteers Mark Whitaker and Nancy Latimer, your website has been revamped with a new platform and template, making information about the church more accessible and attractive.

As part of your preparation to welcome a new minister, we held a workshop, "Moving Forward Into 2021 and Beyond," for church members to further process the departures of ministers from First Unitarian Church in recent years. Discussion focused on these questions:

Are there things you wish had been different or that you had done differently? Even if you have mixed feelings, is there appreciation that you would still like to express to any of the ministers who have left? Are past experiences keeping you from moving forward? Will you be ready to welcome a new minister?

Here you are, and you are ready!

Congratulations to the Rev. Dr. Kate Walker, to the Ministerial Search Committee, and to the congregation on calling Rev. Kate to be your next settled minister!

In faith and hope,

Rev. Connie Grant, Interim Minister