

September 30, 2020

Dear

We live in unusual times. In January it was thought that the horrific wildfires in Australia might be the defining story of the year. Two months later, we were locked down in the worst pandemic in a century.

Life stopped and, at the same time, accelerated – “Already September? Where did the summer go?” And yet, with your support, in only 6 short months we have been able to:

- Restructure our Sunday service to be completely virtual. A lot of learning (and, yes, uncertainty and stress) was involved, but we now have vibrant virtual services with a much greater outreach. We are approaching 50,000 views in the last six months.
- Recreate our SGD program for the same new environment.
- Experiment with Sunday virtual pulpit sharing with the Church of the River in Memphis.
- Create a “building of Zoom rooms” for our congregational activities to continue.
- Restructure our staff to address the planned departure of Rev. Lindasusan, and then make additional modifications to have the right people in the new environment.
- Complete our year-long discernment with the congregation, and present to the Board the Vision 20/50 study that defines the priorities of the congregation over the next 30 years. We are called to work on three priorities: climate justice, anti-racism and anti-oppression, and radical welcome. Operational priorities include work to strengthen our beloved community, our financial stability, and communications.
- Launch a planning process to include the congregation in identifying how we translate these goals into actions that will achieve them.
- Begin work on the 20/50 Goals:
 - A group of students from the Graham Sustainability Institute at the University of Michigan has launched a study to make the UUAA site carbon neutral. And we installed 30 new solar panels on the roof, for a total of 102 panels.
 - We now have a part-time employee to help improve congregational communications.
 - We are launching a new information system, Realm, to strengthen bonds (beloved community goal) and improve operations (financial stability goal).

At the same time, congregational groups have adjusted. Chalice circles and other groups can still meet. Congregants are building Habitat houses, staffing Alpha House, working at Farmer Bill’s, and selling scrip and Fair Trade coffee and chocolate. UUCivs are getting out the vote. The Immigration Action Coalition (IAC) provided \$14,000 to help undocumented people affected by the shutdown, and we helped shelter a woman who had been separated from her husband at the border and detained for 10 months. They are now reunited.

Yes, since our last in-person service on March 8, together we have done much.

And now we plan for 2021. We obviously don't know how the year will unfold (2020 fully cured us of any forecasting delusions), so we will need to remain flexible. When can we have in-person services again? Or a hybrid service – both virtual and in-person? We don't know.

What we do know is that with the assumed loss of rental income, and the probable loss of auction income (although an online version is being considered), pledge income will constitute over 90% of our revenue.

In addition, every year a certain number of members die, move, or leave, while others join. With the building closed, opportunities for formally joining our community were placed on hold and subsequently reorganized. Compounding this uncertainty is the status of our donors. The economy and employment have been volatile; we have no idea how this might affect us.

In brief, at the moment when we, as a congregation, have embraced uplifting goals for our future, and have structured our staff to help the congregation achieve these goals, we face a world in upheaval.

But just as we did not stop when the pandemic erupted, we shall press forward now. As Rev. Manish said at the end of the Water Communion service on September 13:

We hold that power and potential to bring alive dreams and possibilities that none of us could ever bring alive alone. . . . The world longs for and needs who we are as Unitarian Universalists . . .

And our plan is to continue to be Unitarian Universalists for the world, whatever that means, and whatever that takes.

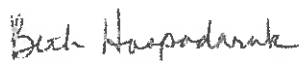
Given the centrality of pledges to our income, our 2021 budget begins with pledge income. Last year, between the pledge drive and the Stone Soup Campaign, we raised \$1,076,000 to be of service to the world. This year our goal is \$1,100,000. Additional details are in the Attachment.

We recognize that given all the uncertainty and upheaval mentioned above, with potentially fewer pledgers and the economic uncertainty, this is a challenge. But the world around us is in pain and upheaval, and we are called upon to be a force for healing.

The world longs for and needs who we are as Unitarian Universalists.

Thank you for your generosity.

In faith,



Beth Hospadaruk
Chair, Stewardship Team



Erik Stalhandske
Board President



Rev. Manish Mishra-Marzetti
Senior Minister