

Unity of the Valley Congregational Meeting February 28, 2021

Welcome: Board President Serenee Smith opened the annual meeting on Facebook livestreaming which was linked to the presenters who were on Zoom. She asked those watching to submit questions and comments on Facebook that would be collected by Brian Alexander and forwarded to the presenters.

Opening prayer and comments: Jon West and Sherry Lady made comments and Inge Tarantola led the opening prayer.

Introduction of current board members: Serenee acknowledged our two retiring board members, Steve Smothers and Michael Lampe, and noted that Alice Sparks was appointed by the board last year to assume Steve Smothers' remaining term. Board members John Garrett, Vicky Hills, Heather Breckinridge, Alice Sparks, Alice Burch, Michael Ticknor, Ted Taylor and Geneva Miller introduced themselves on video. Serenee noted that the three-year terms of Vicky and Heather ended in 2021 but they have agreed to run again. Heather turned over the task of recording minutes to Ted this past fall. Our administrator Géna Duel counted the mailed-in ballots and both Vicky and Heather were reelected.

Nominating committee update: Jon said the nominating committee includes ministerial and board members and congregational members, but the committee did not have anything to do this past year. Justus Grose and Barbara McKie have agreed to continue on this coming year. The committee hopes to talk to people who might be interested in serving on the board in the future.

Minutes approval of 2020 congregational meeting: Serenee noted no concerns or corrections have been submitted, and she asked for a motion on the livestream to approve. Ani Sinclair so moved and Shirley Marc seconded. This voting was done online and all who responded said "yes."

Ministerial report: Jon gave the report from the ministerial team that includes Jon West, Sherry Lady and Inge Tarantola. Jon highlighted three main areas of activity in 2020: safety, service and support, and said the team is exploring new ways to serve as we move forward.

Board report: Serenee presented her report on the activities of the board and said, "the Unity spirit is alive and well," despite the pandemic and other challenges of 2020.

Treasurer's year-end report: Board treasurer Vicky Hills submitted her report. Highlights were the year-end total income of \$11,746 compared to \$7,891 in 2019. We also ended the year with \$75,132 in checking and \$135,810 in our money market "rainy day fund." She voiced appreciation for the automatic deduction Simple Giving program and other donations, large and small, that have kept the church going through these difficult times.

Administration report: Administrator Géna Duel did not submit a written report, but said she appreciates all the creative work done by the Board, Shared Leadership Team and ministers. She was involved in various video productions this past year, and noted the behind-the-scenes work of Brian Alexander. She said she missed working with Ellen Ticknor, our innovative and much-loved volunteer coordinator who passed last year. Géna also said she is "proud to work at a place that takes safety seriously" during the pandemic.

Shared Leadership Team report: Sunny Schneider gave the SLT report. The team is made up of representatives from the Ministerial Team, the Board, staff members and volunteers, to deal with the day-to-day needs of our spiritual center. Current SLT members are Laura DuBois,

Géna Duel, Rev. Sherry Lady, Geneva Miller, Sunny Schneider, Serenee Smith, Rev. Inge Tarantola, Jon West and Gary Wymore.

Facility report: Gary Wymore gave his report about our building, its improvements and its ongoing needs. Largest concerns are water under the sanctuary, the need for new stage lights, and cleaning during the shutdown.

Prayer Ministry Team report: Inge Tarantola reported increased activity with prayer requests during the pandemic. She talked about the different ways members of the congregation can ask for prayers, how the prayer teams work, and the availability of prayer shawls. “It’s our joy, our privilege, to pray with you,” Inge said.

Music Ministry Team report: Music Director Laura DuBois gave her report and said our “music team has risen to levels we never dreamed of before the pandemic,” with livestreaming, and high-quality music video productions available on Facebook. She presented a bouquet to Ryan Zimmer, our “brilliant, patient and kind angel of technology.” Ryan also spoke from the control room at the church, saying he appreciates being involved in our Sunday services and video productions. “I’m loving this and hope we keep doing it forever,” he said. Laura also gave an update on the generous endowment of our music program, and the financing of our sanctuary’s grand piano.

Remembering those who have passed: Jon said that among the many hardships of this past year, the congregation lost MaryKay Alexander, Ellen Ticknor, and just recently our longtime great supporter Jack Vollstedt. “It’s hard to say goodbye to these friends of Unity,” Jon said. “Whatever situation you are in, if have lost loved ones, if you have been impacted financially, or psychologically because of isolation, our hearts are with you. That’s one reason why we have this community. Please reach out to us.”

Questions from the congregation: Brian Alexander collected comments and questions from the livestream and passed them along to the presenters. Brian said about 30 people were watching the livestream, but “there may be hundreds who watch it later” on Facebook.

- Jody Taylor asked if the church will have virtual classes for new members. “We look forward to that in 2021,” said Serenee. Jon added, “We’re eager to try something like that, but there’s a lot going on behind the scenes to keep us busy now.”

- Rev. Dick Everts asked if we would continue livestreaming the Sunday services when the sanctuary reopens, and Ryan said “absolutely.” Serenee observed that an “unexpected blessing” of the pandemic is our vastly improved livestreaming and music production, enabling us to reach people both near and far away.

- Shirley Marc asked if the board has thought of opening the church on a rotating schedule with social distancing. Serenee said the topic comes up at every board meeting. “Our policies have been hard for some,” she said, “but they were done with loving concern for everyone.” When and how the church opens depends on multiple factors such as new COVID variants. Jon said it’s difficult to forecast opening since so many in our community have compromised immune systems. “We’re taking a very cautious approach.”

- Serenee encouraged people watching the meeting to email additional questions and comments anytime to her, Jon or Géna.

Closing prayer: Sherry Lady closed the meeting with a prayer celebrating the “river of spirit, love, kindness and generosity that keeps alive our spiritual community.”