



THE UNITY MESSENGER

Unity of Santa Rosa
4857 Old Redwood Highway
Santa Rosa, California 95403



However We Gather..There is Love

By Meg McConahey

It has now been five months since we last gathered together in person. When I occasionally visit the church for business I look around at its quiet emptiness and feel a longing for Sundays when it was filled with smiling faces, warm hugs, and song.

But we know that a church really is not the place. It is a sacred gathering of spirit coming together in prayer, love, and gratitude. So I try to refocus my attention on appreciation that we still are able to share fellowship on Zoom. We can see one another's faces and talk and learn and sing and pray, and these moments are no less sacred. We know that we are blessed with the capacity to adapt. And we know our church building is being well tended—thank-you Charlie—and waiting for the time when it is safe to return.

The board recently issued a survey to see how our members and friends feel about the current situation and the possibility and timing of returning. Some churches are assembling once again, following social distancing guidelines. This would be difficult, given the relatively small capacity of our hall—less than 100. Since indoor gatherings only allow a 25 percent capacity maximum, we could not have even 25 people in our main sanctuary, so to accommodate our usual 30 to 40 Sunday congregants, we would have to open the doors and move some chairs into the social hall.

The vast majority of respondents to our survey are not yet comfortable returning to church, given the still high infection rate of COVID-19 in Sonoma County. Most who responded are over 70, which is a high risk group for coronavirus. All but one of the respondents are over 50. Most said they would wait 6 months to a year before returning. Half want to wait until there is a vaccine readily available. Even those who said they would be willing to return as soon as possible said they would do so only when the number of COVID-19 cases in Sonoma County is very small and health officials deem it safe. They want to see us guided by state and local officials and to rely on experts. Only one person said they would return at the first opportunity with no qualifications. Virtually everyone who responded said they would support Zoom or live streaming services in the interim.

The board has formally voted on re-opening. There is consensus that this is a wait and see situation. We prefer to err on the side of caution and safety. We know that even if we were to re-open, we would have to follow strict safety guidelines, which means that most of the things that make coming to church in person so joyful would not be allowed, from sitting together and hugging to holding hands, singing and sitting down for a social potluck afterwards.

Based on feedback, we are looking at some options. More phone calls to stay in touch. More socializing on Zoom after the service. Classes or other enrichment gatherings on Zoom. Possibly some very small group gathering in person for those who feel comfortable coming together with safety precautions.

We will be having a Town Hall Meeting on Zoom after services on Aug. 23, an opportunity to talk about this in real time, as well as to offer an update on our finances and other matters. We hope you will join us.

Let us all hold one another and our Unity community in prayer, knowing that Divine Spirit is available to guide us to make the wisest decisions for ourselves and our community.

Upcoming Events

August 2020 (All events and services via Zoom until further notice)

- Sunday the 16th: Rev. Dr. Patricia Keel; Music by Guy Richards
- Sunday the 23rd: Karen Drucker; Friendship Sunday; Music by Karen Drucker
- Sunday the 30th: Rev. Dr. Bob Brach; Music TBA

September 2020 (All events and services via Zoom until further notice)

Wednesday the 2nd: Prayer & Meditation Circle from 5:30 to 6:15 p.m.

- Sunday the 6th: Rev. Dr. Barbara Leger; Music TBA

Sunday the 6th: Writing Group from 12:30 to 2:30 p.m.

- Sunday the 13th: Rev. Larry Schneider; Music TBA
- Sunday the 20th: Rev. Dr. Patricia Keel; Music TBA
- Sunday the 27th: Rev. DeeAnn Morency; Friendship Sunday; Music TBA

Did You Know?

You don't have to have any experience or be a professional writer to join the *Unity of Santa Rosa Writing Group*. Any and all experience levels are welcome. In fact, some folks just listen and don't write at all. It's an open Zoom meeting and Unity membership is not needed. Feel free to tell a friend!

Our tag line/prompt for next month (September 6th) is: "Everything was going well until..." You may want to start your piece with those words, or you can write something completely different—it's up to you.

Contact Tye at tye2012a@gmail.com for more information.



The *Prayer and Meditation Circle* generally meets via Zoom the first Wednesday of the month from 5:30 to 6:15 p.m. Set to gentle calming music, the experience is a soothing mid-week tune-up and reminder of the transformative power of prayer and meditation. Contact the office at info@unityofsantarosa.org or 707-542-7729 for more information. We hope you'll join us on September 2nd!