



**A Message from Rev. Gail Lindsay Marriner  
and Mary Ellen Gonzales, President, Board of Trustees**

February 20, 2021

Hello Friends,

Just holding on and getting through this past year would be cause for celebration, what with the civil and political unrest in our nation and the hardships created by the pandemic. But we haven't just gotten through. Although many of us are grieving the loss of family and friends beyond our faith community we have been deeply fortunate not to have lost any current UU Santa Fe members or friends to the virus—and that too is cause for celebration. But even more than that—UU Santa Fe didn't just survive the past year, we have been thriving. It's been a time of amazing creativity and innovation as we have learned all sorts of things about on-line community—everything from Zoom etiquette and live streaming to the importance of old fashioned “high touch” activities like phone calls, notes and socially distanced walks. When this pandemic is over we will have a whole new tool-box of technologies for staying connected and living our values.

- Did you know that since the start of the pandemic we have only had one Sunday where worship was delayed? Thanks to the patience and expertise of a stalwart team of volunteers our worship gatherings have not only continued they keep getting better as we learn new techniques and include more people.
- Most of our small groups continue to meet on-line and many meet more often than they did before (Mary Ellen rightly calls us a “Zooming” congregation).
- We have lots of Social Justice activities happening on-line including our solar project, initiatives from our domestic violence prevention task force and our ever evolving First Sunday Giving opportunities.
- Our adult programs have been well received and well attended.
- Throughout the summer and the fall we experimented with a number of outreach programs for families and youth – from the Treehouse Stories on Sunday mornings, to courtyard Yoga

and our COVID-safe Study Hall in September and October. As the weather warms we hope to offer some new programs for this cohort.

- Your membership team has been busy staffing our virtual welcome desk, hosting the chat on Sunday mornings and reaching out to welcome new people—some of whom are joining our congregation.

The energy of UU Santa Fe is as strong as ever. Which is a good thing because there are still challenges ahead. As the numbers of folk getting vaccinated increases and the infection rates in our larger community drop, our staff and our Board of Trustees, our program council, our worship team and our COVID Task Force are all exploring what it will take to create a safe, lively, loving community that meets both in person and on-line. As has been true throughout the pandemic, it's all an experiment and you can expect things to continue to evolve and grow throughout the year ahead.

We *will* figure out how to safely gather again in person—first in small groups outdoors, then in small groups in our large indoor spaces, then in medium size groups with some folks participating in person and some participating on Zoom. Eventually, we will *all* be able to gather again and there will be potlucks and in-person lectures and on-site fundraisers like the book sale. The recovery groups will be able to meet again, and we will be able to host public meetings in Fogelson and live stream them for the community. There will be marches again and concerts and live theater and all the other things we do when we get to be together in the same space.

And the challenge in this next transition will be to hold on to the useful and positive connecting practices we learned during the pandemic even as we expand to in person community again... Can we do it better than we did in the past? It will take time and energy and people and money to create a congregation with the best of life on-line and life in person.

As you think about your pledge, please remember that we are a people-serving institution; and therefore our program is only as good and strong as is our staff. We have an excellent staff who needs our support so that they can continue to support us. Thank you for your support this past year and the one coming!

Blessings,

Rev. Gail Lindsay Marriner

Mary Ellen Gonzales, President, Board of Trustees