

PLEDGE DRIVE 2020

My Dear Ones,

I can't believe that it has been less than a month since I stood in our pulpit and launched our 2020 Pledge Drive on Sunday, March 8. Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, our lives have changed dramatically. Our new normal affects all aspects of our lives: school, work, family, healthcare, financial security, caregiving for our children and our elders, recreation, the US presidential election, vital resources, and even church.



To say that we are living in a once-in-a-lifetime period is not an exaggeration. My grandmother, Nanie, was born in October of 1918, the year of the last pandemic, the Spanish Flu. Even if she was alive today (she died in 2014 at the age of 95), she would have no conscious memory of it as a newborn. Our country hasn't been asked to sacrifice to this degree since the end of World War II, 75 years ago. The COVID-19 Pandemic is a once-in-a-lifetime horror. Of course, we are scared. Of course, we are stressed. Of course, we are filled with despair. Of course, we need each other.

Now more than ever, with our physical building closed, we are learning that a "church" (or "fellowship" or "congregation") is much more than a building—a church is a community—a church is its people. We are Miami Valley Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, together in-person or together in our separate homes.

During this world crisis, we need each other. We know that some of our congregants will have increased support needs beyond connection, more specifically pastoral, practical, and financial needs. Even separated by physical distance, we have each other.

The MVUUF Disaster Relief Team is collecting funds for our congregants and community members who are being financially affected by the pandemic, either by COVID-19 infection, business closure, reduced employment hours, or the worsening of their already precarious financial security. Our food pantry has already delivered food to three of our families.

I am especially grateful for our Board of Trustees and the many lay leaders who have sought to embrace our congregants by rapidly enacting a phone tree to personally call every MVUUF member and active friend. If you have not received a call or voicemail message, please contact Rev. Kellie (call or text 847-804-4614).

The staff is working hard to move as much as we can to an online video conferencing platform called Zoom and the Board is still investigating how to better include our congregants who are not able to join us online. In addition to changing how we do "church," we are adding additional small groups (for adults, children, youth, and parents), weekly Coffee with the Minister sessions (Wednesdays at 10:30am), and a new Worship for the Weary (half-an-hour Wednesday evenings at 6pm, starting April 15).

Although our lives have changed dramatically since we launched our 2020 Pledge Drive, our regular operating expenses remain. As people of faith, our operating expenses will not go down because we will still be paying our employees and vendors. In fact, some of our operating costs have already increased, such as purchasing Zoom accounts. We also remain committed to becoming an equitable employer and offering affordable healthcare to our part-time employees. This means our operating cost per adult congregant has risen slightly. As we did last year, we ask congregants to pledge what they can afford. For some, this will be less than the operating cost per congregant. For some this will be more. Last year, our annual pledges ranged from \$12 to \$15,000. We need each other to keep MVUUF alive and thriving. Every single one of us, members and friends alike.

Since 1910, our ancestors have provided the Dayton area with a liberal religious voice and a commitment to social justice, with the forming of First Unitarian Church of Dayton in 1910, Miami Valley Unitarian Fellowship's split from First Church in 1958, and the reunion of our two congregations in 1998. Although we have several younger and smaller UU siblings in the area now, MVUUF is the largest and most successful UU community in the Dayton metropolitan area.

Now more than ever, it matters that we are here. It matters that we stay. It matters that we grow and thrive. We need each other. Dayton needs us. Unitarian Universalism needs us. The future needs us.

I can't wait to see how love transforms us!

With MUCH love, gratitude, and faith,

Rev. Kellie