

BOARD OF TRUSTEES / 2021 PLEDGE DRIVE



Democratic Process and our UU Values

Louise Livesay-Al, Trustee

As the weather turns cold and the leaves crunch under our feet, we are bombarded with messages about candidates and the bedrock responsibility of voting in our democracy. And as the stakes are high this year, no matter which side of the aisle you stand, we are especially aware of this duty and responsibility.

Bill Doherty, a member of Unity Church, was recently on MPR with Kerri Miller talking about the growing political polarization in our country, and our choices about how we will be with one another the day after the election, and going forward. He has been working for the past four years through Braver Angels, the organization he co-founded to try to depolarize American politics by opening dialogue. Braver Angels aims for understanding of one another through conversation, especially when we disagree, rather than trying to convince or cast judgment and hatred on people who see things differently.

In trying to focus on the healing of our nation, I was struck by the pledge called "From Malice Towards None," borrowing from Abraham Lincoln's words, Bill challenged listeners to commit to this pledge, no matter whether our candidate wins or not: "Regardless of how the election turns out, I will not hold hate, disdain, or ridicule for those who voted differently from me. Whether I am pleased or upset about the outcome, I will seek to understand the concerns and aspirations of those who voted differently, and will look for opportunities to work with people with whom I disagree."

How do we wrap our head around doing this? It was clear from the conversation that people, both red and blue, were struggling with this challenge. Our divisions run deep. I later realized that this pledge is calling us to live out our UU Principles with regard to inherent worth and dignity of every person; compassion in human relations; a free and responsible search for truth; the right of conscience and use of democratic process in our congregations and society; a world community with peace, liberty and justice for all; and respect for the interdependent web of all existence. There is a lot to unpack here. Our principles do not say they are applicable only to one type of person and not others. And in our congregations, we have diversity of political beliefs. Let us not lose that diversity and be able to share our UU space with one another.

At Unity Church, we too have important congregational democratic process this month. Leading up to and during the Annual Meeting on Saturday, November 21 (see the back cover for the call to meeting), church members will vote to approve new board members, the Ministerial Search Team (MST), and the 2021 budgets. The MST consists of nine members who will represent the breadth of voices in our congregation as they search and select our future minister(s). This is important work that will have lasting impact on our congregation.

With this being an unusual year, the annual meeting will be conducted online. Voting members of the congregation will receive information on the slate of 21 candidates for the MST and will vote electronically. The five candidates receiving the most votes will be seated on the MST. The board will fill the remaining four spots from candidates on the slate. Voting information will arrive by email and will include the summary of the slate of candidates and procedure to vote. The board will announce the Ministerial Search Team on November 23. Please participate in this part of our democratic process! If you want to become a voting member, please contact Laura Park at laura@unityunitarian.org.

So let us practice democracy this month on November 3 and 21, and remember to aspire to our UU Principles no matter the outcome. Our democracy, inside and outside Unity's walls, depends on it.



Last month, we launched our annual pledge drive and asked each other to declare that we hold the church in trust through our financial support for the coming year. This year's canvass drew on the metaphor of a Brave Harbor to reflect how Unity Church is a place of refuge, repair, and new resolve for each of us. It is where we chart our course together, side by side.

It's important that every one of us contributes to the support of this beloved community with a pledge that serves to grow our ministries, maintain our church building, and ensure that Unity Church continues to be a beacon in our brave harbor.

Pledges provide 72% of Unity's annual operating income and create the foundation for the 2021 operating and capital budgets. Our operating pledge goal for 2021 is \$1,350,000 from more than 700 pledging households. As of the writing of this article, thanks to pledges from more than 450 of you, we are more than 70% of the way to our goal. Thank you to those who have pledged!

If you haven't pledged yet, it's important we hear from you soon. The 2021 budget will be presented to the congregation at the annual meeting in just a few weeks, and your pledge will make a difference in the final financial projections for next year.

Please mail your pledge card to the church or pledge online promptly. If you haven't received a pledge card or haven't pledged before, all the information and online pledge forms can be found at unityunitarian.org/annual-pledge.html.

Thank you for your generous gifts!