

May 2022 Minister's Report
Rev. Jason Cook

Dear Board,

Here we are in May, with much movement forward to celebrate—and yet COVID is still very much with us. This past Sunday, I heard from or about five members of our congregation who are currently COVID positive; some others are dealing with long haul COVID. And some UUCF members are still not comfortable with in-person gatherings. In the busy-ness of church activities (which have picked up significantly in the last month), it can be easy to lose sight (at least, it's been easy for me) of the fact that these concerns are still with us on a daily basis.

As we begin our stewardship campaign this week, I am both hopeful and pragmatic. I think we have members who are able and willing to give generously at this time, and others who are either feeling disconnected (because of all of the current circumstances) or who simply aren't in a position to give as generously as they would like. We have cut many expenses in the past few years, but nonetheless are looking to fund a robust RE program, so we may need to push a little bit harder during this pledge to meet even our fairly modest goals. That's to be expected during this time.

I'm grateful we were able to partner with First Christian for *The Laramie Project* which raised close to \$1000 for The Trevor Project, which provides suicide prevention interventions for LGBTQ youth in crisis. I hope we can have 3-4 big projects annually that we work on cooperatively with First Christian as it will help to build and nurture that relationship.

Rev. Judy Tomlinson has been working very hard as our RE consultant. The number of parents involved is perhaps less than we would ideally like, but her research shows that even a small sampling can provide the necessary input. The timeline she has proposed for hiring a new DRE stretches across the summer with final interviews taking place in September when I return from my annual study leave.

UUCF's operating systems continue to need work as we adapt to these new circumstances. We are operating with a smaller pool of active volunteers than before the pandemic, and everything is just a little harder than it was. Nonetheless, more and more people have been stepping up to the plate and making things happen. We are also at a time when we need to consider putting more effort again into our membership practices and engagement ministry, which, I believe, is still in need of a new chair. If the leaked Supreme Court ruling comes to pass, then we can expect more people will be seeking a progressive faith community; I also plan to raise my voice as liberal clergy during this time (as I'm doing this Saturday at the Planned Parenthood gathering) and it's likely we will see new faces in the coming weeks. We will need to be ready to welcome in those new people.

I appreciate the support as I have moved through both a second Master's Degree (in Interfaith work) and a Doctor of Ministry with this congregation during the six years I have been here. I

graduate on Tuesday, May 17 and am happy to say I will be done with school. I'm not sure what it will be like to minister to this congregation while not being in school simultaneously—but I'm looking forward to this new experience!

All in all, this is not an easy time for UUCF, but it is a potentially generative one. We will need to continue to adapt as we move forward—but the last few years have proved that we are capable of doing just that.

In gratitude,

Rev. Jason Cook