

June 2020

The UNITY Messenger

Unity Church of Peoria

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Issue 06

Due to Covid-19 all services, classes, and support groups are cancelled. We are constantly checking in with our state government for information and will assess when it is deemed safe to open.

ON THE NEXT PAGE SEE STATE GUIDELINE FOR REOPENING
No date has been determined.

Greetings to all of you,

Each night, during our time apart, I light a votive candle with the Prayer of Protection encircled around the top edge. Then in silent prayer I call your smiling faces to memory and bless you over the distance.

The Light of God Surrounds You. The Love of God Enfolds You. The Power of God Protects You, and the Presence of God Watches over You.

Wherever you are, God is.



UNITY OF PEORIA

PURPOSE STATEMENT

*Honoring Oneness,
celebrating life,
and expressing love*

MISSION STATEMENT

*Being all that God
created us to be.*

VISION STATEMENT

Creating heaven on earth

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

*Teresa Barnard, President
Roy Pitts, Vice-president
Edie Godby, Secretary
Juanita Burton, Treasurer*

You are invited to attend
Board Meetings held each third
Sunday of the month at 1:30pm
in the Center!

In this newsletter...

Page 1 Announcement
Page 2 Covid-19 Guidelines
Page 3 A note from Elmira

COVID-19 Guidance for Places of Worship and Providers of Religious Services

- **Capacity limits:** Set a capacity limit for the place of worship that allows for extensive social distancing (six feet or more) between congregants. Consider attendance to 25% of building capacity or a maximum 100 attendees, whichever is lower.
- **Avoid Riskiest Activities:**
 - Singing and group recitation: Strongly consider discontinuing singing (and post signage discouraging singing), group recitation, and other practices and performances where there is increased likelihood for transmission from contaminated exhaled droplets.
 - Food and beverages: Discontinue offering food and beverages.
 - Greetings and person-to-person contact: Discourage staff, congregants, and visitors from engaging in handshakes, hugs, and similar greetings that break physical distance. Take measures to remind people to wave or use other greetings.
- **Individual control measures and screening:**
 - Ensure proper use of face coverings.
 - Congregants/visitors and staff should be screened for temperatures and/or symptoms upon arrival to places of worship and asked to use hand sanitizer and to wear face coverings.
 - Encourage staff and congregants/visitors who are sick or exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19, or who have family members who are ill, to stay home.
 - Post-signage in strategic and highly visible location, to remind congregants/visitors that they should use face coverings and practice physical distancing whenever possible.
 - Have a clear plan to facilitate contact tracing if an attendee later tests positive for COVID-19
- **Cleaning and Disinfecting protocols:**
 - Discontinue passing offering plates and similar items that move between people. Use alternative giving options such as secure drop boxes that do not require repeated opening/closing and can be cleaned and disinfected.
 - During meetings and services, introduce fresh outside air, for example by opening doors/windows (weather permitting) and operating ventilations systems.
- **Physical Distancing guidelines:**
 - Implement measures to ensure physical distancing of a least six feet between workers, staff, congregants/visitors, etc. This can include use of physical partitions or visual cues (e.g., floor or pew markings or signs to indicate where people should sit and stand). Members of the same household may be seated together but should maintain at least six feet apart from other households.
- **Guidelines for re-configuring places of worship for social distancing**
 - Dedicate staff to direct guests immediately to their seats upon entry to places of worship rather than congregating in lobbies or common areas. Consider using ushers to help people find places to sit and stand that are at least six feet apart from other guests/household groups.
 - Avoid assembly line type greetings at the beginning or conclusion of services.

MY MEMORY OF PAIN & SHAME

It was February 2012, I clearly remember being in Children's Church at Unity with our small group of boys and attempting to explain how Trayvon Martin, an unarmed, 17 year old Black American boy was murdered by a White American, neighborhood watch volunteer. Its been 8 years. Now look at the level of this horrific violence of over 26 similar murders of Black Americans! And there are so many different understandings and views on each case.

As a small girl, my dad told me and my sisters what the Peoria police did to him when he was growing up. There was such shame & degradation in his voice that it was hard to believe, let alone understand. As a young person, I wanted to close my ears and make believe this could not be true! I would have rather accepted that my dad did something wrong than to believe that the institution that pledges to protect and serve would ever commit such violence against a young boy.

Years later, I would see the same kind of beatings happen to my little brother. He finally left Peoria and vowed to never return. But when our father was dying, he came back to find himself in another situation with the police. Where he recalls, "I can remember the police pulling over to beat me and taze me while I'm in the back seat handcuffed telling me to SHUT UP and talking to me like I was nothing."

And more personally, I had an incident with my own son when he was not even 2 years old! There is so much shame, anger and pain that comes with these stories that no one wants to remember them or speak them. This pain then hides in the shadows of our hearts and eats away at our dignity every day of our lives! These dark stories must be told so that we can share in the compassion and empathy of each other. Empathy is the root of the Love and Compassion that will begin to disrupt the systems that creates the harm.

We can clearly see how Mother Nature is healing but the tyranny in our world is healing too. It is in the darkness that the Light shines brightest. It is in finding the pain that we can recognize where to heal.

Thank you GOD for this mass healing! May ALL be lifted up to see the Truth and recognize the Love each person.

We are ALL One,

Elmira A. Akama

