**Unitarian Church of Hinsdale 2020-21 Minister Report**

Rev Pamela Rumancik

We have reached the end of an unprecedented year. The Covid 19 pandemic continued to have an enormous effect on the life and function of the church in ways large and small. Some changes are expected, and some have been surprising with a remarkable number of silver linings.

After a rocky start with our virtual worship services, a small cadre of talented people stepped up to help us put our best foot forward with our online presentations. Suzanne Williams, Gene Schafer, David Mrazek and Jamie Pastman worked out the best programming and we incorporated both zoom and Youtube to be able to bring people together on Sunday morning and have a record on Youtube so that folks could view the service later too. Jamie offered to take on an additional ten hours a week and developed an engaging format which gave our services a better flow and presentation. We eventually developed a hybrid Sunday service with many elements being recorded ahead of time and the welcome and sermon being live. At the end of each service, Paula Sejut-Dvorak took on the task of dividing people into small breakout groups so that we could reproduce a virtual coffee hour.

Attendance leveled out at an average of 60 people viewing on Zoom which, with family members, brought us to about 80 people attending per service. Most of our elders found their way online but it continued to be a challenge for our families, and we missed seeing them much of the year. Pam Fodor kept touch with communications and small gifts, but we really look forward to being together again in the summer.

The tech team folks researched and consulted and have come up with a plan to maintain our livestreaming capabilities even after we are all back in church. This will allow folks to stay connected despite poor weather or restrictive health issues. We are excited about the possibilities this will offer to the congregation.

We had a major restructuring of our staff this year. Linda Liberacki retired, and her position was redistributed to provide more coverage. Cherita Axel was hired as the Social Media Manager and took on maintaining the website, our social media presence and producing the Touchstone monthly and News & Notes weekly. She’s brought a level of professionalism that seems to be bearing fruit as over 15 new people made contact with the church, a handful of them getting immediately involved in different groups and classes.

John Cooperrider was also hired as Facilities Manager and has taken on maintaining inspections, gathering quotes for repairs and maintaining the buildings. He brings a great eye for detail and is supervising the removal of the old Head Start playground equipment from the east church yard as it was decayed in in extremely poor condition. He has developed a list of projects that will be done in the coming months including replacing the church fire alarm system and following up on repairs for a Derecho storm last year. A strong building tech team is working with John to assess needs and make sure the church systems are working efficiently. Much of that continues to be a work in progress but I am confident in the good work that is being done.

We have been thrilled with the response to a new Soul Work initiative this year. A number of talented people stepped up to lead fellow members in deepening our experience of being human this year. On top of the regular small group ministry led by Nancy Keane, Lenny Edgin continued to lead weekly meditation group while also co-leading a program called “Spirit in Practice” with Gene Schafer. Forest walks were shared by Linda Karlen, a Spiritual Book club started off by Cathy Blanford and Debbi Daniel Wayman with members taking turns leading. Paula Sejut Dvorak also hosted Pagan rituals during the year.

There was also a new Wise Elders group which gave some of our members a new way to deepen friends and learn more about the folks they had gone to church with for year. Other groups continued to meet online and work together in creative ways.

Personally, an agreement with worked out with the board to continue to serve as your called minister. Ironically, the pandemic opened ways to engage in new and creative ways and the staff reconfiguration offered some space to imagine new opportunities. While still in flux as we adjust to a changing landscape, it is exciting to be looking at ways to bring the unique voice and gifts of this church community to a changing world. I look forward to finding our way forward together.