**ANNUAL REPORT FOR UNITY OF BUFFALO**

**September 2020 – August 2021**

**Vision:** A World of Love, Peace and Abundance for All.

**Mission:** Unity of Buffalo practices the Presence of God through prayer, education, service, creativity and community.

**Core Values:** Loving, Spiritually Centered, Inclusive, Respectful and Compassionate.

**Board highlights –**

* Two new Board members were elected at the 2020 Annual Meeting – Ingrid Jackson and Annabelle Ludwick. Additionally, two people were appointed to fill vacancies due to resignations – appointed Christine Bush and John Michaels to fill out the incomplete terms vacated by Randy Atlas and Mary Anne Silkes.
* Harriet Gromer-Hicks continued as our Board Keeper of the Flame.
* Reviewed our Church bylaws and recommended changes provided by Unity Worldwide Ministries, to provide a set of recommendations for our 2021 Annual Meeting.
* Researched and learned more about the condition of our main roof including what and when work will likely to be done. Much appreciation to Lonny Gibbs for helping our Board with this.
* Researched options for the parking lot resealing, postponed completed resealing for next year.
* Verified with our insurance company that activity on our Peace Park is covered by our insurance policy.
* Approved installing a new security alarm system (Amherst Alarm), was installed September 2021.
* Quarterly Congregational Updates and Sharings with our congregation were held on January 31, April 25 and July 25.

**Building and Grounds:**

* Removal of black walnut tree outside the back door (much thanks to Clem Olson for being on-site to oversee this all-day work project).
* Fix-It team activities – due to the Covid issue, the activity of the Fix-it team has been mostly dormant for the year. Despite the Fix-it team not coming together as a whole group, there still has been much activity and forward progress in many ways.
* Don Hicks has been involved with research of electric service to the Unity Peace Park, the running of water to the Peace Park along with supplying Wi-Fi access to the park. Other maintenance projects Don has helped with have included changing our furnace filters on a regular basis.
* Michelle Olandese has continued to take out the Church garbage bins and recycle bins to the curb and back.
* Barricades have been installed in the parking lot area going to Brylin.
* The Gazebo has been painted from the ceiling down.
* Mulch has been laid around the Gazebo to hopefully help with splattering issues.
* The Gazebo roof was completed, thanks to volunteer help and then hiring a company to finish the job. (again, thanks to Clem for being on-site till the job was completed around 9 p.m. on a Friday night).
* In addition, our Board invited Lonny and the owner of Blue Ox Roofing (Mike) to be on a Board Zoom call to share Mike’s assessment of the condition of our main roof and what work will need to be done, etc. Essentially we came to the conclusion that the main Church roof should last for a while yet, but will need some maintenance routinely. Lonny is following up with Mike to do another inspection this Fall.
* Cyber-security updates – Don Hicks provided computer security updates at church which included installing a new router, updating the Wi-Fi system, creating a guest network for visitors to connect through the main router, updating security programs on all church computers, etc.
* Lawn mowing/snow removal company – changed from Razor’s Edge that went out of business to Favata Landscaping.
* Hired Mike Pauly to do extensive landscaping – weeding, clearing out areas, planting on our front property and the Peace Park.
* New security alarm system approved and installed, September 2021.

**Finances:**

* Payroll Protection Program (PPP) loans – 1st draw, $28,900 and 2nd draw - $28,115. The paperwork for forgiveness of the first draw has been completed and approved. We are awaiting word from the bank when they will be open to receive the forgiveness application for the second draw of the loan.
* Bequest from the Estate of Barbara Sullivan for $10,000 – the Board has earmarked those funds for capital improvements to our building, mostly likely the new roof.
* Gift from the Andersons for Peace Park development – much thanks to Burt Anderson and family for a gift that is making possible the installation electric service on our Peace Park.

**Learning Opportunities - Classes, Study Groups, SpiritGroups:**

* *A Course in Miracles* weekly study group has continued to meet regularly and attract some new people from outside our area. Much appreciation to the steady leadership of Eve Wackett as the group facilitator.
* The Art and Practice/Quantum Living class has been offered twice and the session that was started before we closed our building was completed. Congratulations to Tiffany Jadoo on completing the training to become a certified Quantum Living Coach. We now have three people qualified to teach this transformational class – Tiffany, Betsy Rados and Lynn Tranchell.
* We continue to be blessed by the leadership and teaching skills of our Licensed Unity Teacher, Lynn Tranchell.

***SpiritGroups:***

* We are very grateful for the enthusiastic and visionary leadership of Lonny and Millie Gibbs to spearhead this program. Also, much appreciation goes to our facilitators – Amy Barone, Lonny and Millie Gibbs, Michelle Olandese, Mary Anne Stevens, Tom DeLoughry, Rev. Allaurah Olson, Max Redlawski, Lynn Tranchell, and Mary Beth Wollenschlaeger.
* Fall series – “*Conscious Evolution*” by Barbara Marx Hubbard (September-October)
* Intermittent book study – “*White Fragility*” by Robin DiAngelo (November-December)
* Winter series – Affirmative Prayer, studied the book “*How to Pray without Talking to God*” by Linda Martella-Whitsett (January-February)
* Spring series – “*Biased: Uncovering the Hidden Prejudice That Shapes What We See, Think and Do*” by Jennifer Eberhardt (April-May)
* Summer series – “Navigating the Shift” – Lonny led a weekly discussion group based on videos from the noted physicist Theresa Bullard. (July-September)
* Service projects included multiple donations made to non-profit organizations at the conclusion of each SpiritGroup series throughout the year. Also, “Care” packages for some members of our congregation and a blessing for workers at BryLin during their shift change.

**Ministry teams:** As always, Unity of Buffalo was supported by the generous time, talent and treasure of our members. While some of our regular ministry teams were not active due to our building being closed, other teams were able to continue serving our ministry, in creative ways. We give our special thanks to all of our team leaders and especially those that participated with these teams over the past year:

Board Nominating Committee, our Board of Trustees, Bulletin Board, Finance, Fix-it team, Greeters, Music team, Prayer Chaplains, Prayer Shawl ministry, SpiritGroups, Sunbeam team, Unity Gallery, Unity Peace Park, VOICE-Buffalo core team.

And we look forward to this coming year when all of our ministry teams can begin being more active again.

In addition, some shorter term “task teams” came together to make important contributions for our ministry this past year. Those task teams included –

* *Re-Opening/Re-Imagining Team* that initially surveyed 85 people, with 68 responding, on how they wanted our ministry to function during this time. The team also developed recommended protocols for our coming together and worked with our Greeters team to provided support for our outdoor Sunday services on the Unity Peace Park.
* *Racial Justice/Oneness team –* this group came together to study the book, “*White Fragility*”, to raise our own consciousness and awareness, and to learn about how we can support others, including VOICE-Buffalo, to create greater racial justice in our community.
* *Tech team –* this team came together to develop plans for our online Sunday services, to train a team of people to support our Sunday services whether they are online or in-person, and to explore other ways we can enhance our technological capacity to serve more people.
* *Building Clean-up and Prep for re-opening –* much thanks to the hard-working crew that came together to prepare our building to host the Celebration of Life service for Ellen Anderson in July.

**Music Program: *(report provided by Mike Serio)***

This past year was certainly challenging for all involved! Since we have now been streaming our services on Facebook and YouTube, because of copyright issues, we have relied heavily on the Posi music songs of the empower music and arts community. We have been introduced to many new songs by these talented songwriters including Jana Stanfield, Daniel Nahmod, Karen Drucker, Claudia Carawan, Sue Riley and others.

I have continued to rely mostly on Anandhi and her beautiful voice as a soloist and for this I am most grateful. We have had a few other soloists including Sheila Paprocki and Max Redlawski and the wonderful quartet that Christine Ford and her friends provided for the Fourth of July service. Other highlights include putting together the Christmas and Valentine’s day events remotely with members of the choir.

**Prayer Chaplains’ program: *(submitted by Mary Beth Wollenschlaeger, Program Director)***

The Prayer Chaplains have continued to meet 2x per month on Zoom.  One week a month, we devote the meeting to praying in the  Silent Unity Virtual Prayer Vigil, which is a virtual representation of the Prayer Chapel at Unity Village.  We invite you to visit the Silent Unity Virtual Prayer Vigil online at [www.unityprayervigil.org](http://www.unityprayervigil.org/)  It is open 24/7 and is  a beautiful and healing space for quiet reflection, prayer or meditation. The second meeting of the month we devote ourselves to a book study to enhance our prayer skills.  We are currently studying the Power of Eight.

Most of our services were online this year including: a December Remembrance Service, a Silent Unity Prayer Vigil experience on Christmas Eve, World Peace Meditation on New Year's Eve morning, Ash Wednesday meditation and Good Friday Silent Unity Prayer Vigil meditation.

We were able to hold our Annual Prayer Chaplain dedication service in person, outside in the Peace Park.  We also participated in several Celebration of life services including those for Chris Milhouse, Ellen Anderson and John Scott.

This year we have seven active prayer chaplains including Amy Barone, Mary Jo Foley, Harriet Gromer-Hicks and Victoria Anstead.  Additionally, Rev Allaurah Olson and John Michaels are Prayer Chaplains as well as Trainers. and  Mary Beth Wollenschlaeger continues to be a prayer chaplain as well as the Director of the Prayer Chaplain program .  We also have about 14 prayer chaplains emerita who regularly attend services.  Each month we make approximately 115 wellness calls to members and friends of our spiritual community.

All of the Unity of Buffalo Prayer chaplains are honored to serve and support our community through prayer.

**Special Events –**

* Virtual Posi Music concert – September 12
* Remembrance service – December 16
* Winter Solstice – December 21
* “A Metaphysical Christmas” music service online – December 23
* Silent Unity Prayer Vigil experience on Christmas Eve
* World Peace Meditation – December 31 at 7 a.m.
* Ash Wednesday meditation online
* Black History month – presentation by Regina Jackson
* Good Friday – SU Prayer Vigil experience
* Celebration of Life services for Chris Milhouse (June 12), Ellen Anderson (July 24), and John Scott (August 14).

**Sunday service guest speakers included:**

* Daniel Nahmod – September 6
* Lynn Tranchell – September 27, October 11, July 18
* Rev. Allaurah Olson – November 8, March 28, June 27
* Rev. Ed Welch – January 17
* Rev. Chantell Welch – February 28
* Brother Sam Radford – March 18, August 8
* Tom DeLoughry – August 22
* John Two-Hawks – August 29

**Unity Peace Park:**

Unity Peace Park has been used for both church activities and by community groups more this past year than ever before. This really has been the fulfillment of our vision for this Park in many ways.

*Church-sponsored activities on our Peace Park have included –*

* Outdoor Sunday services began last Fall (August 30)
* Seasonal celebrations - Autumn Equinox celebration (September 22, 2020), Spring Equinox celebration – March 20, 2021.
* Drum circles
* Gentle Strength Yoga with Annabelle – weekly classes
* SpiritGroup celebration potluck
* Celebration of Life services for Chris Milhouse and John Scott

*Community group use of our Peace Park -*

* Qigong class – last Fall and this Summer, with Margo Moulin
* Poetry group – weekly on Tuesday mornings
* Conversational French group – weekly on Saturday mornings
* Helping Parents Heal grief support group – monthly
* Linwood Preservation District – community gatherings
* C. Jung Center Women’s Study Group

*Enhancements we have made for use of the Peace Park include -*

* Gazebo – roof work has been completed. Thanks to many hours of volunteer labor and a company we hired to finish the roof. Also, much appreciation to the volunteers that have painted the gazebo to give it a fresh look and those who help with regularly emptying the trash cans and tidying up the area.
* Added signs on the gazebo to encourage respectful use of the property.
* Installed a motion-sensitive light (twice, the first one was stolen. Second one was placed up higher.)
* Purchased portable sound system for outdoor services and events.
* Park benches re-furbished and painted bright colors – thanks to Steve Thoren. One bench has been dedicated to Ellen Anderson. The bench outside the back door has been dedicated to John Scott. Also painted the picnic tables so they look much better.

In addition, we have established a more regular connection with the Linwood Preservation District group. They have been helpful in volunteering time to do clean-up on our Peace Park and helping to monitor activity.

Also, thanks to a generous donation from Burt and Ellen Anderson, and our approval for an AV Grant from the Templeton Foundation, via Unity Worldwide Ministries, we now have the funds to pay for electric service on our Peace Park.  We are in the process of arranging for that work to be done.

**Other notable items –**

* Two mailings – Christmas mailing with Advent booklet and 2021 Unity calendar; and Lenten booklet mailing.
* Christmas outreach – provided 12 gift bags for young people involved with the MAP along with some additional financial contributions.
* Easter flowers and cards delivered to members of our congregation.
* Office support – Miranda Hyzy provided transitional support and in April, we hired Christie Stevens as a part-time Media Specialist.
* Personnel review appointments were held with all three staff in August, with a Board member present. We express our heartfelt gratitude and appreciation for the steady, consistent and high-quality work that all of our staff are performing to support our ministry in fulfilling its mission and purpose: Lorraine Eads (bookkeeper), Mike Serio (Music Director) and Christie Stevens (Media Specialist). The Board will conduct a review with Rev. Mary this Fall, who is in her 19th year of serving our ministry.