

Dena's Digressions

by The Rev. Dena McPhetres

One of the most important things we do as a religious community is create sacred time and space together to consider all that is our lives and find meaning and purpose amidst the challenges we face in the world. When we are not in our building, we can still create sacred time and space at home. Some of our church families have created a home altar. Maybe you'd like to, also. The Soul Matters team says the purpose of a home altar is "to create a space that helps one stay connected to what is sacred and nourishing." Who doesn't need that in these challenging times?

How do we create a sacred space at home? First, find a small table, corner or shelf—maybe the top of your dresser or a section of your dining table. Then, find things to put there that are special to you and invite all the senses. A lovely cloth to look at indicates to our eyes that this spot is special. Perhaps a small stone or seasonal item from nature that we can touch. Maybe a favorite oil or herb that smells good. A small bell or chime ready to be sounded to mark the nourishing time we spend there.

Early November holds holidays that help people remember the loved ones they lost and hold us as we grieve and celebrate their lives. Samhain, Mexican Dia de los Muertos, and All Soul's Day fall near on the calendar.

On Sunday, November 1, we'll make sacred time during the spoken meditation to remember our loved ones and say their names. You may want to add some photos to your home altar of the loved ones you've lost. There will be a temporary home altar in the background of my screen and I'll light votive candles for their names.

We are all carrying so much. Making sacred time and space at home can help us bear it.

Yours,
Dena

Splinters from the Board

by Ben LeFort
Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees held our second meeting of the church year on September 22 using video conferencing.

We discussed Rev. Jennifer's report on monitoring progress on the Ends goal #4, adopted by the congregation during the 2017-18 church year.

End #4 reads: "Generously give and receive support, connection, and care in times of joy and challenge." Staff began measuring this End two years ago, so this was the first opportunity to assess progress. Here's how we're doing relative to the four measurements for this End.

1. The Congregational Survey: Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, this was rescheduled from this spring to October. We're assessing results now and will be reporting to the congregation by December.
2. People will let each other know what's happening in their lives, sharing stories of joy and challenge, giving and receiving, both publicly and privately: Staff measured this quantitatively and qualitatively, and noted that especially during the pandemic our congregation has been deepening our connections with each other.
3. Are people comfortable enough asking for Pastoral Care, and do they receive it? Post-COVID, more Pastoral Care contacts happened than in all of the previous church year.
4. Pledge Drive Increase Goal of 5%: The result of last spring's pledge drive was a 0.5% increase, which did not meet the goal but is better than might be expected considering the COVID-19 outbreak.

We will be monitoring other Ends at the next board meeting.

The board also discussed recruitment of a Youth Liaison to the board, as well as preparations for the Ordination of Kimberlee Tomczak Carlson. Rev. Jennifer provided an update on the Strategic Planning Team, which was in the process of recommending a consultant to facilitate that work.

Minutes of the meeting are posted on the First Church website. Feel free to share your questions or concerns with members of the board anytime.

