



The CommUUnicator

Newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist
Fellowship of Waynesboro

Who counts?

If you're like me, you probably thought that the primary purpose of the national census was to get a complete and accurate count of how many people are where in this country in order to shape all manner of decisions, but especially congressional and electoral college apportionment. That is, an accurate and complete census count is essential to having fair representation of the country in the House of Representatives and in the selection of the president, among other matters of basic fairness in government.

The Census Bureau had extended the deadline to October 31 because of the extraordinary difficulty in collecting data amid the restrictions and risks of the pandemic. My partner Walter's sister Judi was hired as a census worker in California, and was really looking forward to the extra income in retirement, but her start date was pushed into the future multiple times because of COVID-19. With each push to into the future, it became more and more evident that it would be difficult or impossible for the Census Bureau to meet its December 31 deadline for reporting the complete census results to the president.

But on Tuesday this week, the US Supreme Court ruled, with only Justice Sotomayor dissenting, that the administration could end the count early. As a result, Thursday, October 15, was the deadline for completing your census data online or by mail. The data collection effort of the 2020 Census is now over.

There is speculation about a variety of political shenanigans this change will make

possible, if not likely. But what is definitely true is that this constitutional safeguard of our democratic representation will now be less accurate that it could and should be. The court has spoken, so there is nothing that can be done about it in this census year. We can only make long plans for the 2030 census and act for truer representation nationally, in the Commonwealth, and in local jurisdictions.

The Fifth Principle that all Unitarian Universalist congregations have covenanted to affirm and promote is: "The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large." The democratic process includes the voting that I have encouraged you all to do, that you have encouraged each other to do. This is especially consequential this year. But it is far more than this. It includes engaging in the public discourse and debate on issues that impact our values, not just the simplistic fallback of just voting our pocketbooks. It means holding elected officials feet to the fire and requiring them not to act in ways that actually represent their full constituency rather than shutting people out of the process.

The vote is crucial. But if that is all we do, we are not doing enough. We don't any of us have to do everything. We have different aptitudes and training, different time availability and access to influence and influencers. But we have to plan beyond the current election.

If you haven't already voted, vote! I won't tell you who to vote for. Our tradition, our government, and my personal commitments do not allow me to do that. Vote your informed

conscience, your enlightened self-interest, your own and everyone's inherent worth and dignity, and your/our interdependence with all people everywhere, with all nature, and with all reality! And encourage others to do likewise. It is a crucial step toward actually being represented. And it is a religious commitment.

And then buckle in to continue the work of the democratic process, the free exercise of conscience, and full inclusion of everybody. For the long haul.

Peace and Blessings,
Rev. Paul

Board Update

By Diane Ganiere, Board President

Greetings to all of you from your trusty Board of Directors! We are masking, distancing, without symptoms, and doing our best to serve. As we are sure you are, too, within your own spheres.

As a new president, I want to tell you, I am surprised at all that goes on behind the scenes. I am somewhat overwhelmed but grateful for all of the support our Fellowship receives from so many volunteers, and also for the dedication and congeniality of the Board members.

So, what have we been up to?



Meeting each month via Zoom, your Board developed a detailed plan for how to safely reopen our facilities for small group meetings in

October, but, given the recent rise in the virus in Virginia, even that small step is not going to happen anytime soon. As the Fellowship Hall will continue to be unoccupied, we have agreed to offer it to a consortium of community agencies looking for space to provide supervision for school-age children of working parents until they can return to their classrooms. We are still waiting to see if there will be sufficient need and staffing by the Waynesboro YMCA to justify our participation. We will keep you posted on this initiative.

Our Capital Campaign projects are moving along with the installation of Board approved locks, emergency doors, and lighting. We are now seeking bids on a restroom for the Chalice House that will meet the needs of people with disabilities. Encouraged by the \$10,000 donation in memory of Virginia Edwards, we will be pricing solar panels, one of the tier-two capital improvements.

The Board formed a task force to further develop our safety policy, especially in relation to children's safety. We already have in place a criminal check on anyone working with children or youth. Now we are looking at how other congregations are dealing with prospective members who have a record of sexual offense. The task force will recommend a policy and a set of guidelines for dealing with sex offender situations, should they arise.

Thank you all who have contributed to our consistently inspiring, artful online Sunday Services. It is heartening to be reminded of you in pictures and to hear your voices and songs. Thanks to those who are keeping us together in weekly reminders, newsletters, virtual coffee hours, adult education, book and UU World discussions, and simple park get-togethers. We are alive and kicking!

