

The Rev. Dr. W. Frederick Wooden,
Interim Minister

August 2021

Greetings,

What a time to be searching for your next call! So much is uncertain and unknown thanks to Covid-19 and much more. But liminal times, as Susan Beaumont calls them, are also rich with possibility.

Valley UU Congregation is abundant with possibility. First, consider where it is. Greater Phoenix is among the fastest growing areas in the country, with growing diversity as well. While the pandemic has trimmed their sails for the moment, they have a history of growth and a desire to grow, including a capital plan to expand their campus to help them. Covid has delayed these plans but not squelched them. VUU has a future and they know it.

And yet, there is a keen and cherished memory of their beginnings as a fellowship over fifty years ago. Community is deeply held here, evidenced in the many ways members are involved with each other. For a congregation of about 350 there are nearly fifty groups, from chalice circles to book clubs, committees to classes, advocacy groups and service groups. Leading this boisterous group is a challenge, to be sure. But I have felt genuine appreciation for clergy wisdom and guidance, institutional and well as spiritual.

I must add the growing sense that their core mission is about justice as well as community and spirituality. Previous leaders, lay and ordained, have planted well and deeply here. When Covid closed down the sanctuary to worship they immediately offered it as a 24/7 shelter for the unhoused. That continued for over a year, and continues now on a more limited basis. VUU has long term relationships with other groups from UUJAZ to Paz de Christo. They have leaned into LGBTQIA issues and are wrestling with the deep demands of antiracism.

You will discover all this in the packet. You will, and should, have questions. I invite you to be in touch with me directly. But what I most want you to know is that this community welcomed me and they will welcome you as well. Whoever receives their call will be fortunate indeed.

Yours,

Fred Wooden