

## MVUU 2021-2022 Stewardship Campaign: Let's Grow Our Love

February 24, 2021

Dear Mountain Vista Family,

I know I have felt your love this year.

It was an exciting year: a year my partner and I had planned to have our first child together and my first year in congregational ministry after a big move out of my home state. You were also on the verge of an exciting year: you found the building of your dreams, you were in the middle of an interim ministry period and ready to make changes, and you were hungry to begin doing "church" again.

Do you remember when COVID-19 became real to you? I remember our last gathering in person. I remember Hobie Denny arranging to make homemade hand sanitizer because it was all sold out in the stores. I remember Zsombor Zoltan and I transitioning our Flower Communion Sunday into a semi-distanced affair, arranging the flowers at Beautiful Savior to be six feet apart. I remember the awkwardness of not reaching out to shake hands or hug each other. I remember how much we talked about "flattening the curve." It was Shekela Wanyama's first Sunday with us as Music Director, and she and I sang the words of my colleague, Rev. Theresa Soto: *"All of us need all of us to make it."* I remember Ann Bowling transforming coffee hour at a moment's notice-- creating a buffet of water bottles, fruit-to-go, and snacks in bags so that those wanting to linger could stay a moment longer together on the patio. I remember many of us gathering around laptops to try Zoom for the first time with Ricky and me, and the sound of all those screens echoing in the room with our incredulous laughter.

Writing these words brings tears to my eyes. This is not the year I would have hoped for either of us. However, it is a year that has revealed who you *truly* are: a people who show up for each other, a people who learn how to do hard things and grow, and a people who love.

You held a baby shower for me and we held a high school graduation party for Derek Contreras. We brought food to each other-- sometimes for months! People did grocery shopping and got medication for each other. We dropped off pies at Thanksgiving. Caring Hearts Circles began and kept growing with new families joining our community. We engaged in deep learning on anti-racism, with twenty-five of us participating in the first round of Beloved Conversations and more of us signing up. Two new, robust justice teams emerged. The Baja 4 was nationally recognized as an innovator in collaboration among congregations. We held one of our most widely attended Congregational Meetings, ever. We kept all of our staff employed. We transformed our building into a Sonoran oasis. Some of you even bought your own Zoom accounts-- just so you could have *more* online gatherings. (See? Miracles do happen.)

What's next for you? I think you have everything you need to be the church that is called for in this world today. You have the heart, the willingness, and the people. This Stewardship Campaign is about touching into what this community means to you. It is about what you are able to give to it so that its ministries and its love grows deeper and wider in our lives and our community. After a year of heartbreak, this is our year to more deeply invest in the hope of our beloved community.

So, come. Let's grow our love together.

*Rev. Samantha Wilson*