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January 31st, 2021

Dear friend,

Back before COVID, back even further to September of 2019, Unity Spiritual Center of Lansing experienced a devastating fire. The journey since then has been challenging, fulfilling, frightening, courageous, and, I hope, once in a lifetime. I want to share our story with you because you are a critical part of it.

“Bondage”: Sometimes we do not know we are in bondage. In our case, it was bondage to a building that could not serve our congregation well. Then a miracle happened – a **Burning Bush** experience! The building caught fire and we were thrown into the desert of the unknown, wandering without a road map, looking for our promised land.

“Crossing the Red Sea” Right at the beginning, when we did not know what to do next, you took up the call to be part of our support entourage. The waters parted. We have kept every one of those original prayers – our manna from heaven – to feed our souls on our journey. We were led by two pillars - one a pillar of prayer and the other a pillar of financial support. When we felt low, you carried the high watch. When we saw walls, your prayers became a light to a door. When we felt alone and humbled, we had your prayers to lift us up to strength and connection. When we incurred yet another unexpected expense, your love offerings became our unexpected income.

A Visit to Mount Sinai: After the fire, we were gifted with a wonderful experience, meeting in what was a repurposed church that housed a “for-profit” called the “The Fledge”. The Fledge operates within its mission to create opportunities and pursue happiness while practicing radical inclusion; and operating from values instead of rules. They provided us space but more importantly immersed us in a culture that raised our consciousness in hands-on social action and community connection.

“Wandering in the Desert”: We went through innumerable meetings with contractors, city planning and city zoning boards to get permission to restore our building. We received final approval March 12th, 2020. Less than two weeks later, Michigan was in COVID-19 shut-down. When construction was finally able to operate again, we began receiving final quotes. What previously looked to be a \$750,000 project was now coming in at \$1.2 to \$1.5 million. It was completely outside of our reach. What would we do now? No sanctuary, our offices had to move 3 times between Sept and December and now this. Would the wandering ever end?

“Sighting the Promised Land”: As the Board and I drew up the courage to share this news with the congregation, one of our board members decided to check to see what was available to purchase. Just that day, an interesting listing had its price reduced. The property was a section of a golf course which included a club house, banquet hall, commercial kitchen, handicap accessibility, 100 parking spaces, 2 large outer buildings, and a pond on 9+ acres of land. It was below our budget. It came with tables and chairs and any number of items we lost in the fire. Could this be the promised land?

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Crossing the River Jordan: The next day we toured the property. When we went outside the building to explore the natural environment, a white egret landed in the pond. As we left the grounds, the egret spread its wings and flew off. Yes, this land was inhabited already... by all manner of birds, a family of foxes, turtles which nest there every spring, bats, squirrels, rabbits, and deer. We put in an offer, had the building inspected, ran a Phase I and II environmental test, had a vote by the congregation and all systems were a YES!

"The Land of Milk and Honey" December 27th, we closed on our new home. January 14th, we moved in. Our walls of Jericho are mainly COVID safety restrictions, but this is also a gift for it gives us time to do maintenance work and settle in with ease and grace.

"Jericho's Walls Come Tumbling Down" It is evident we are not the same ministry we were prior to September 2019. In September 2021, we will review our mission and vision statements, our core values, our ministry name, and our ministry teams.

We are hoping the virus is contained enough to have our first in-person Sunday service on April 4th, Easter – even if it is outside. Sunday, June 20th the day of the summer solstice, we plan to consecrate the buildings and property, marking the many miracles and blessings which continue to rain down upon us.

From a tiny 100-year-old building with 12 parking spaces to a campus with multiple facilities! That's our story – at least a few chapters of it. I share it with you because you were an integral part of the journey. We also share it in the hopes that if you ever face un-welcomed challenges, you will find comfort in knowing about an extraordinary ending that proves the power of our collective prayers and affirmations.

We offer you our deep appreciation for the most loving, effective, and miraculous support we could have ever imagined!

From a "hole in one" to "Whole-y One",

The Phoenix has risen!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rev. Sharon J. Ketchum". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rev. Sharon J. Ketchum

P.S. The rest of the golf course is becoming a housing development for 130 homes. Great potential for new congregants! We are blessed! Ideas are popping up from everyone – from a pickleball courts to a community garden, to a memorial forest to offer shelter to animals displaced by the development to summer markets and more. We are living in the land of possibilities!

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1. Bondage (by limitations of a building)



2. The Burning Bush Experience

September 8th,
2019 Fire



3. CROSSING THE RED SEA

Prayers part barriers of fear, uncertainty



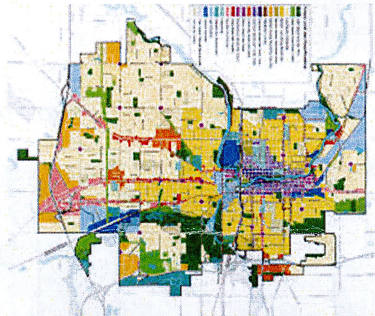
4. MOUNT SINAI

The Fledge experience of awakening to community & social action, values instead of rules and authentic connections.



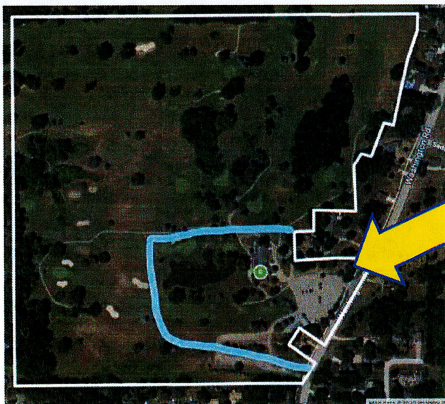
5. WANDERING IN THE DESERT

Lansing Zoning, Planning, Bylaws



6. SIGHTING THE PROMISED LAND

Realtor listing – more than we dreamed of – more affordable than any other property we had ever viewed.



The section outlined in blue is the new Unity Campus.

Our Phoenix became an Egret!



7. CROSSING THE RIVER JORDAN TO EXPLORE



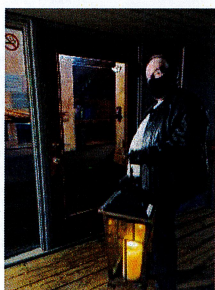
View of Banquet Hall from pond.



7200 Square foot Banquet Hall for sanctuary and fellowship

8. The LAND OF MILK AND HONEY

December 27th, we closed on our new home!



Unlocking the door and bringing in the light~!

The Lodge – Office and Small Group Space

9. The WALLS OF JERICO COME TUMBLING DOWN

Planning for an Easter Sunday opening if COVID safety procedures can be met.

(if necessary, we can always go outside – assuming the weather cooperates.)

