

## **Elizabeth Neva**

*Beth is in her 80s and lives with her cat Jezzie in the Park Hill neighborhood of northeast Denver. She retired as a systems analyst from the Colorado Medicaid Program. She has been with FUSD since 1969 where she has been a committed social justice advocate for the duration.*

2020-2021 has been a difficult time for me with the death of my 55-year-old daughter, Heather, with whom I had been very close, and the loss of companionship of friends and FUSD which we had considered family. Heather and I had found FUSD 51 years ago looking for an RE program whose guidance I could support and one in which she could flourish as her own person. I have been an active member since 1969.

2020 started out well as Heather had found more mobility and energy through exercise at the rec center and we were enjoying Lia Davis' concert series and the FUSD dance night. Then COVID hit and staying couped up in her little house brought back her depression and her mind began to fail. Heather passed away July 19 which was a blessing for her but left me with a huge hole in my heart. Stu Ferguson and Carol Welsh were there immediately, enduringly, shoring me up during a devastating time. Her friends and mine and all the wonderful FUSD friends who rallied around me with cards and Robin Reed's beautiful flowers helped me realize that I still have a wonderful family here that supports me. Church has been a holding place for me. I remember early on, in August-September, Patrick Wharton and Trudy Glidden came over with a box of goodies from a donut place around the corner. Lovely people who had just moved to Park Hill stopped by with a plate of Christmas cookies and a tree ornament at holiday time. Really sweet things.

I knew I no longer had the energy to be a landlord for Heather's house and so in selling it I was able to make contributions for FUSD social justice action and the Denver Foundation's Reparations Fund in Heather's memory. I redirected the efforts I had devoted to Heather's care to making a difference in the larger world. The presidential election became my primary focus. Thanks to FUSD folks who were plugged into the postcard writing network, I wrote postcards to folks in Pennsylvania, Georgia, and the Western Slope – all key battleground areas in this election cycle.

After feeling such relief with the election results in Georgia on January 6th, I was horrified to see the support for Trump's big lie erupting in an insurrection at the Nation's Capital on the same day. So besides losing Heather, January 6, 2021 was one of the worst days in my memory. I am frankly still reeling from it.

However, our virtual services have inspired and nourished me, with Rev. Mike Morran's thoughtful and provocative homilies, Lia's creativity and our wonderful singers and musicians, and Erin Dougherty-Kenworthy's *Time for All Ages* as well as her own thoughtful homilies. Our church's Racial Justice leadership and now our Climate Justice Circle have helped to reconnect me to our larger community and world. I appreciate Mary Sullivan (Board President) and the rest of church leadership during this year. I am grateful to the Covenant Committee that completed important work to focus our understanding of white privilege amidst the external chaos. All have been remarkable during a very difficult time. I have such gratitude for our FUSD family and am not sure I would have come through this difficult year-and-a-half with any optimism and or a renewed desire to contribute without our FUSD community.