

August 28, 2014 Highlight article

Planning for Rev. Rodgers' Retirement - Shared Ministry Committee Update

IMPORTANT DATES: *Sept. 14 – Informational meeting after worship; Sept. 21 – Congregational vote*

All members should have received a mailing at home with more information about the pastoral transition following Rev. John Rodgers' planned retirement.

On **September 21**, at a special Congregational Meeting after the 9:30 service, the Congregation will vote on whether to approve the Shared Ministry transition model for calling a new Senior Pastor when Pastor Rodgers retires. *You must be present to cast your ballot.* We share some more questions and answers below.

Q: *Why not have a new minister start right away after Rev. John retires, with no overlap period?*

A: There are two primary paths to pastoral succession in the UCC: the traditional and most prevalent *Interim Ministry* model, and the more contemporary *Shared Ministry* model. Eliminating the Interim period, without providing an overlap between the retiring and incoming Senior Pastors, loses all advantages of both established approaches, and *is not supported by the UCC.*

As a Congregational Church, we the members select our new Senior Pastor. This will be one of the most important decisions this Congregation will make in shaping the future of our church, and is quite a lengthy process: see also the Pastoral Search Committee article in this Highlight.

Under the Interim Ministry model, Pastor Rodgers would give the Council 90 days notice of his intent to resign, at which point a Search Committee would be formed to call an Interim Pastor. The search process cannot start until Rev. Rodgers gives his retirement date; it is not feasible to find a new Senior Pastor in such short order.

Both the Interim Ministry and Shared Ministry models provide for a period of transition, in different ways: the former via a time of separation between the outgoing and incoming ministers; the latter via the shared ministry overlap period, during which the new Senior Pastor will work with Rev. John. Having an abrupt change of leadership, with no transition, would be difficult for the staff, congregation, and Pastor.

In our conversations with members, this question appears to stem primarily from a concern about cost. The church Council and past Presidents considered this issue when making our recommendation. Certain costs are entailed with either Interim or Shared Ministry (search expenses, salary, moving costs, etc.). The Interim model would have the extra cost of another search committee, for the Interim pastor; and the significant costs of extended disruption to the life of the church. The Shared Ministry model would have the added cost of a few months of overlap in salary and benefits during the transitional leadership period. The past Presidents and full Council concluded that the relatively small known monetary cost of Shared Ministry is preferable to the considerable cost of disruption to our church posed by the traditional Interim model. An abrupt change of pastor without interim or shared ministry is not supported by the UCC or our church Council.

Q: *What is the purpose of the shared ministry period / how will it work?*

A: The purpose of the overlap period is to pave the way for the new Senior Minister to have as smooth a transition as possible. We will hire an experienced Senior Pastor who has the skills and vision to lead us. With Rev. John's help in sharing our congregation's history, the new Senior Pastor can begin working to shape our future. Rev. John will build a bridge of trust between the Congregation and the new Senior Pastor.

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Q: *How do I find more information about the transitional models? What if I have questions?*

A: The Shared Ministry task force has compiled a variety of documents to educate members about the options. There are several informational binders available for check-out in the parlor library, and more material is on our church web site under **Downloads > Pastoral Transition Documents** (cuccstc.org/?p=1380).

A representative of the Shared Ministry Committee will be available on Aug. 31 and Sept. 7 to answer questions after 9:30 worship. Feel free to contact any member of the Committee (composed of Council members and past Presidents): Janet Bell, Ted Hardison, Mike Klopmeier, Rebecca Reber, Charlotte Surta, Lisa Sidor, John Speck, and Kathy Westman.

You may also submit questions or comments via the Shared Ministry Box in the parlor; we will address these during the Congregational discussion downstairs after worship on **Sun., Sept. 14**.

Remember: Only those present on **Sunday, September 21st** will have their ballot vote counted.

- Lisa Sidor