

*First United Church of Christ  
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My Wonderful Family,

Recently, I invited you to join me in an exciting adventure; the adventure of seeking out our future. I'm ready to move forward and need your input, support, and approval. Please join your UCC family for a Special Congregational meeting on Sunday, July 27<sup>th</sup>, immediately following Worship. The meeting will be led by Mike Crawford, Vice President, with guest speaker, Reverend Rita Root from the Chicago Metropolitan Association of the United Church of Christ.

In her visit with the Consistory last month, Reverend Root was impressed with the fact that we have supported several ministers into their calling, and have attracted other ministers into our family. Although we do not consider this something special, she assured me that it is very rare for a church to have so many ministers associated with their history. This intrigued her and she designed a program with us in mind.

Reverend Root will introduce you to an exciting opportunity. She is inviting us to become a learning parish. This means that we would open our doors to a UCC student. The student would assist the interim minister in a variety of capacities, allowing us to hire a part-time interim minister, and giving us the support of two members of the clergy. The student will gain experience in the day-to-day operations of a church, participating in committee meetings, leading Worship when the interim minister is not in attendance, visitation, and other activities.

Reverend Root has contacted another UCC church in the area that is considering the same option. We would share an interim minister with this church, making it easier to find a good candidate who will meet our needs. When we are ready to call a permanent pastor, and we've determined that we are comfortable with our relationship with the other UCC church and the learning parish program, we can consider continuing in this direction with a permanent pastor.

Please join your church family on July 27<sup>th</sup> to hear Reverend Root describe this wonderful opportunity in detail. You will have an opportunity to ask questions, and voice your opinion. A vote will take place at this meeting, seeking your approval to move forward in this direction.

My friends, I will not be in attendance at this meeting, as I'll be visiting with my parents out of state. I am very excited about this opportunity. For a part-time salary, we would receive the services of two people. You are all so kind and nurturing, I'm confident that your love and support would be beneficial to a young person seeking the ministry. What an incredible gift we can give to the ministry, and to ourselves, not to mention that this young person will bring with them enthusiasm and fresh ideas.

Your attendance at this meeting is vital in determining the direction of our future. I encourage you to bring your open heart and open mind as we embark on this exciting adventure.

In prayerful gratitude,

Sheryl Marinier