

June 2024 Minister's Board Report

Dear Board Members,

Thank you so much for your work during this difficult time of transition. I know the effort is enormous as SO MANY things converge at once. Like your hard working Board president, I have had a lot of meetings with various UU offices this week. I want to convey to you a summary understanding of where I believe us to be in terms of these transitions. *(Please note: there may be conversations or information I'm not up on yet, so this is the knowledge I have at the moment.):*

*The Music Director's departure is coincidental (and, I know, rather painful) timing. Because she is moving to an educational institution operating on a similar schedule, the timing just happened to mirror the church year timing, when we have lost our Intern Minister and I have given my notice. I know UUCF will miss her greatly, and we were lucky to have her with us longer than expected.

*I have worked to get the aspirant who was supposed to be UUCF's intern next year in a learning placement much closer to his home since he will need a supervisor in final fellowship with the UUMA. It looks like there's a "strong maybe" that this will work out. He sends UUCF his good wishes.

*For the Fall, there *could* be quality transitional ministerial coverage available in the area. It would be ideal if—and I know it's hard—UUCF could begin to move quickly on a few items:

*--determining if an **interim** (a minister brought in for one to two years to prepare the way before another settled called minister) or a **contract** minister (someone who is hired for a designated length of time, often with a renewable contract) is needed. (In other words: will UUCF financially and commitment-wise be ready for another settled minister in two years? Or should a contract minister be hired?)*

--filling out at least a portion of the online congregational record so that other ministers can match with this congregation. The form is extensive but my understanding is that not all of it has to be filled out to get the ball rolling.

*After speaking with the UUMA this week, I think most all of the major details regarding arranging my departure are done. The congregation is informed; we've set our farewell dates. I'm going to make myself available behind the scenes for a week or so after the farewell service to help with any transition happening at that time. As UUCF's first ever called minister, I had a few bumps in the road here and there (some of my own making, some of the congregation's making, and some shared). With that in mind, I've been encouraged to write up the challenges with the sabbatical in a gentle narrative so that future leaders can keep improving UUCF's systems for supporting the care of ministers--which ultimately can benefit the congregation by increasing the longevity of a minister's stay, though eight years is certainly considered a

successful partnership! (That document and any other helpful pieces of information can be available for future leadership and can also live with our UUA rep. who can aid in jogging institutional memory when needed. Please don't forget those good folks are there to help when needed. Sometimes I have.)

*When I got to the congregation, I didn't receive any information from previous ministries. I started from scratch with the help of some lovely lay and staff leaders in trying to figure out how the congregation worked. I will be working to put together some kind of UUCF minister's orientation guide so my successor can at least have knowledge of what our practices have been, even if they (understandably) decide to change them.

*I plan to keep reminding the congregation how hard this Board has been working this year and the fact that what has been challenging has been created incrementally by a well-meaning community over time, pre-dating your time on the Board. Your efforts are much appreciated by those who understand the complexity of what you have been working on.

Finally, I am personally very grateful for you. Please know that you are valued in this work. While I have certainly been through the gamut of emotions this past week, and some moments have not found me at my best, I have nonetheless landed in a place that feels wholly at peace that this is the right decision for all, though I feel grief at the changes in relationships ahead. But I also feel a great deal of gratitude for this experience overall. There have been great joys throughout this shared journey.

I remain UUCF's active minister through July; that means I remain *your* minister, available not just for Board business, but for pastoral care. Don't hesitate to reach out if you need it. I can put on one hat or the other as needed. I will take my study leave month during July, and that time will consist of working behind the scenes to help the transition. I will also be taking one-on-one appointments during the first half of July with those in the congregation who need to say goodbye. I am here to help with this process so please make use of that. I want to see this community rally, thrive, and be here for future generations.

In gratitude and love,

Rev. Dr. Jason Cook