



Clackamas United Church of Christ
A Just Peace Church
15303 SE Webster Rd., Milwaukie, OR 97267

Tuesday, January 17, 2017

Dear Friends,

Before our Congregational Meeting this Sunday, I have something important to share, and it will affect our life together as a church. It also affects the 2017 budget which we will approve together on Sunday. Rather than having you all be surprised at what the proposed budget reveals, I want to let you know now that I have decided it is time for me to submit my resignation as pastor of Clackamas United Church of Christ. There is no easy way to announce this. My colleagues and advisors have told me that I would know when it is time, and it is time.

I'm not upset or angry with any aspect of the church. I feel that I need to move on to some different things, and I have evolving family issues that need my focused attention. I don't consider myself retiring, but I am retiring from being a parish pastor. I am going to take some personal time to explore what's next. I have been considering this for the last two years, and have been seeking counsel, so this is not a sudden decision.

For myself, the age of 60 is too young to retire. I actually can't see myself as ever retiring. I guess I'll know that when the time comes, too. I have been at Clackamas UCC as pastor for 26 and a half years. I have been at our congregation longer than any other clergy in our Conference has continually served their church, yet I am far from our oldest clergy. More than that, this year marks my 45th year on a church staff. I started as an employee of 1st Congregational UCC in St. Joseph, Michigan as a music director at age 15, and have continually served churches since then. That's 45 years of Sundays. I deeply feel that I need a respite.

For the last five years, I have been working very hard to get the church into a good place – from financially to our long-range plan efforts. We are in a very good place, and Clackamas UCC will be an attractive congregation to a new pastor. We have work to do before I depart, and now is not the time to visit that “to do” list, but know that I will work with you every step of the way. I have submitted August 31st as my last day. So we have a little more than seven months to work through what we need to do. I began in August 1990 and will resign in August 2017 – that will be 27 years in your pulpit. A pretty good run – eh?

What are the next steps? I will meet with Staff Relations on February 5th for a discussion about what this means and where we need to go from here. We will develop a timeline for what needs

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to happen for a transition in 7 months, and we will establish a transition team – which could very well be Council. Your input will be welcome and solicited, but the most important thing you can do as a member of this congregation is to be fully present, attend worship regularly and be dedicated in your support.

This coming Sunday, January 22nd, is the Congregational Meeting where we hear my pastor's report and approve the budget for 2017. I believe that a lot of your questions will be answered as we go through the budget together. That will provide clarity about 2017 staffing. I very much encourage you to make worship this Sunday a priority and to plan to attend the Congregational Meeting that will follow to ask questions and get more details. A potluck will follow, so we will also have time to be together informally.

I am being “nudged” toward something new, and I hope that you can offer me encouragement as we move through this transition. So much of my purpose and identity has been through being your pastor and a local church clergy. I am counting on your love and faith to empower me on to this next phase of my life.

Dr. Henry Cloud, in his book called *“Necessary Endings”*, which is about leaving an administrative position, wrote *“Getting to the next level always requires ending something, leaving it behind, and moving on. Growth itself demands that we move on. The departure of a leader may – and often is – the impetus for growth in the church.”* That is my prayer for Clackamas UCC and for myself – that we grow in our faith, ministry and purpose. That this will not be an ending as much as an exciting new beginning.

We are on a sacred journey together, and although we are about to take different paths, we will meet each other again when our paths cross. And, of course, they will. You are and always will be my wonderful church family. These years of growing together have been an absolute blessing for myself and the entire Andersen clan. Never doubt that you are loved.

Peace and Love to You and Yours,

Rev. Denise