

To the UUCS Board of Trustees,
March 29, 2020

On Thursday evening (3-36-20) the Team on Ministry met with Todd, Rev. Rick Davis (Todd's Good Officer and Senior Minister of the Salem UU Church) and Eric Schuman (Chair, Committee on Ministry, Salem UU Church).

The outcome of that meeting is the point of this letter. The Team on Ministry, together with Todd, extend this email as an invitation to the Board of Trustees to join with us to help make this truly perilous time in our entire world into "Our Finest Hour" for our congregation.

Perspectives from Rev. Davis and Eric Schuman have been especially helpful—as "observers" of what has been occurring in our congregation and as attentive listeners now in two of our meetings—as we have been discussing our struggles, and concerns. After much consideration of their thoughtful input and weeks of deliberation amongst ourselves, we would like to respectfully urge the board to recommend that we all take this mandated social distancing time to hit the "pause" and "reset" button.

Over the course of many months, it has become quite clear that there are multiple perspectives within our congregation and from friends of our UU Church. Somewhere along the way, it seems that some of us have forgotten that this is who we publicly claim to be on our church website—diverse in thought, spirituality, and faith, but united in our love and compassion for each other and a desire to make a difference in the world. Even more importantly, during this time of stress, it has been difficult for some of us to recall that we have a clearly stated Covenant of Good Relations for how we will interact with each other when disagreements arise related to our diverse ideas.

Today we find ourselves in frightening and uncharted waters as the whole world is facing a public health crisis related to the Coronavirus. Because of this situation, the Team on Ministry is requesting a "pause" and "reset" in the following ways:

1. Todd has agreed that this is a time to step back from local commentary about the Gadfly Papers/GA/UUA issues and instead focus on guiding us through caring for ourselves and others during these troubled times.
2. We request that for the next 3 months the board abstain from addressing issues with Todd related to contractual matters (for example: vacation, sabbatical, sick leave, etc). This will not only allow the "Documents" group from the Implementations Team to prepare their recommendations, it will allow space and time for Todd to bring his full self into ministering to a congregation who needs and deserves him right now.
3. Lastly, we are hoping that you, our church leadership, will write/send a letter to all congregants asking for us all to take this pause as a time to re-examine our covenant, to offer forgiveness and compassion to each other, and to reflect on all the things that keep us together in community—"even when it's hard."

Many people within our congregation are coming together (virtually) to do the difficult and good work as outlined by the Implementation Team co-chairs, Mary Lou Johnson and Rachelle Strawther. We are not asking for a pause in this important work of “getting our house in order” if you will—In fact, the members of our Team on Ministry were invited to view a recorded Zoom meeting between Todd and some of the members of the newly named Creating Community Team. We noted that their discussion also included the concept of a “pause” associated with the C-virus. We were inspired by their model of civility and their sincere efforts to find creative ways to move forward in love—with an understanding that no single person is responsible for (or even capable of) the satisfying ministry of everyone in a church as diverse as ours. Rather, we are each responsible for our own search for truth and meaning, while respectfully supporting the endeavors of others in our individual and collective journeys.

This pandemic is unsettling for some and terrifying for others. It has become clearer to us how much we truly need each other. The distance we’re experiencing now will eventually come to an end. It is our hope that when we’re finally able to be together again, we will do so with a renewed sense of compassion, respect, civility, and understanding. If we can do this, we may be able to look back on this time and view it as “Our Finest Hour.”

Respectfully,

Lynn Jinishian
Nancy Avery
Tom Mosher
Sue Stirtz
Lannie MacAndrea, Dissenting

cc Todd Eklof

Attachments:
Covenant of Good Relations
TM Mission Statement
Lannie MacAndrea’s dissenting statement