



Unitarian Universalist Church of Arlington, Va.

4444 Arlington Boulevard, Arlington, Virginia 22204 | 703-892-2565 | www.uucava.org

Dear UUCAers,

June 8, 2017

With Rev. Linda's departure at the end of June I want to update you on the transition plan for our community.

It's expected to take at least a year to find her replacement. In that transition time, we are focused on three priorities—1) pastoral care, 2) a revamped coordination of service, social justice, and environmental justice, 3) a congregation-wide discernment process, including a search committee for a new Assistant or Associate Minister.

As with all we do in the church, these priorities and how they are carried out are carefully weighed according to our mission and our values that were formulated by the congregation.

Pastoral Care

Lay-led pastoral care ministry is one of the hallmarks of a healthy and growing church, and sets the tone for a caring and compassionate church.

Of course, I remain personally committed to providing personal pastoral care through counseling, visitation and officiating of memorial services for our parishioners.

In addition to myself, we are very fortunate to have three trained ministers who are currently members of UUCA, all of which have pastoral care training. Although we must be sensitive that they come to UUCA for their own nourishment, they still possess the professional skills and perspectives that can be helpful to us during our time of transition. Each of them is eager to support the congregation. Over the next month, we will introduce you to them.

Large churches like UUCA face more challenges than most in this area as one, two, or even three ministers are insufficient to address the needs of over 1,000 souls. This is why a care ministry must rely on lay leaders. Putting lay leaders at the center of pastoral care has a number of benefits. Not only does it widen the net for the needs of the church community, but it models the notion that we are here to help one another—we are interdependent, not dependent.

In the coming months, a Pastoral Care Visioning Team will be selected whose purpose will be to assess the pastoral care needs of the congregation, research successful lay-led pastoral care programs in other congregations, and then propose a structured process for delivery of pastoral care that will meet the needs of the congregation. Members to be actively recruited are those that already have some experience or skill in pastoral care or counseling: therapists, social workers, nurses, and school counselors are among the people that can add valuable insight to this important work.

Rev. Aaron McEmrys, Senior Minister
Rev. Dr. Linda Olson Peebles, Minister of Faith in Action

In the meantime, while the visioning team is put together, we continue with our existing pastoral care structure, or you can call the PASTORAL CARE HOTLINE: 703-892-2565, EXT 245.

Service, Social Justice, and Environmental Justice

It is clear how important this area is to our congregation. And if we are truly to be a force for service, social, and environmental justice, we must continue our work in this area, and deepen the partnerships we've established over the years.

Sometime in September, we will be hiring a part-time social justice coordinator to provide support for our faith in action ministries during our ministerial transition. This person will ideally be well-versed not only in traditional models of faith-based organizing, but also contemporary organizing models such as those developed by Black Lives Matter and Standing Rock.

In addition to a social justice coordinator, in September, Christin Green will begin her internship with UUCA. A seminarian at Wesley Theological School, she will work with us about 15 hours per week, and there is no doubt she can add energy and expertise to our coordination. Her term with us will be for two years.

Congregational Discernment and Search Process

In September we will begin a year-long search process for a new associate minister. Because it is vital that we have congregational input into this important step, the church will have ample time for discernment, using the Appreciative Inquiry process to get congregational feedback.

This feedback will help us identify strengths and weakness of our church's ministry, and provide the type of definition of what our ministry can look like in the future. We will not make assumptions about what we are looking for, and will not be tied to conventional norms, but will be driven by what is in the interest of the church. So, for example, it may be that after the extensive Appreciative Inquiry process, that the church would benefit from two additional ministers instead of one. All considerations are on the table throughout this important step. A search team will be assigned to help identify and vet likely candidates for this ministerial position or positions.

As always, please email me with questions or comments.

In Faith,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rev. Aaron", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Rev. Aaron

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Rev. Dr. Linda Olson Peebles, Minister of Faith in Action