

## 'Partnership Place'

By Jenn Ringgold - Director of Communications

Interview with Rev Judy Goodrow ~ part time pastor St. John's UCC, Jackson MI

The congregation at [St. John's UCC](#) in Jackson has a history of being committed to unique building use and community partnerships. Located in the Partnership Park neighborhood of Jackson, their building already houses seven additional non-profit service organizations. Over the last 18 months, they have also been dedicated to an intentional process about collaborating to house another church.

Facing a large building and aging congregation, [Westminster Presbyterian](#), self described as "the little church with the big heart," received an offer to purchase their building and went searching for another nearby church that they might be able to collaborate with to facilitate a move. While St. John's was tentatively exploring additional collaboration, when Westminster approached them directly, they began a year-long process together.

Both churches formed separate discernment groups that also collaborated together. A multi-page document was created detailing plans for staffing, building use, building costs, future vision, and even a potential exit strategy. These hard discussions and important decisions were led by members of both congregations. On June 1, 2024 the pastor of 34 years retired from Westminster. Rev Jake Kaufman, who has worked in both UCC and Presbyterian churches, started a 1 year intentional interim ministry position on June 2. Westminster will spend one last month in their building with Rev. Kaufman, and will then move to shared worship with St. John's UCC on July 7, 2024.

This creative vision in Partnership Place invites one building, one worship service, one collaboration for mission, and also maintains separate identities and finances. Each church plans to separately maintain a part-time pastor, and pastors plan to share the blended worship service responsibilities. Financial teams for both churches are working diligently to share all other staff and building costs between the two churches.

Anticipating the continued needs of relationship building and collaboration, Rev Judy Goodrow applied for and received a [Genesis Grant](#) from the National Setting

of the United Church of Christ. The Genesis Fund provides seed money for faith-based projects that are innovative or experimental, and represent a new initiative in Christian mission. Funds will be used to hire both a UCC and a Presbyterian consultant from [Potentials Coaching and Consulting](#) to work with the churches through October as they navigate this next step of their shared life together.

As St. John's UCC and Westminster Presbyterian move into a new season of ministry; they will both continue to support the seven additional organizations that are housed in Partnership Place in the Partnership Park neighborhood of Jackson, MI. God's peace be upon all ministries that explore, innovate and partner in ways that allow them to share the Good News with their communities and the wider-church.

