

Leadership Gifts and Style

My leadership style is grounded in deep listening. I aspire to be present with others amidst complexity, working to understand fully what is said and to notice what remains unsaid. In my hospice chaplaincy setting, I work collaboratively with coworkers and patients, paying attention to which interventions work well and adapting my approach when I miss the mark. I tend to bring humor and playfulness to staff meetings, as I find that being able to laugh about the quirkier aspects of our jobs helps to make this work more sustainable.

Aspirations for Ministry

I feel a particular call to the ministry of chaplaincy. This work seems to fit me, drawing upon my gifts for holy listening and for supporting others in individual and small group settings. I have worked in my current position as a hospice chaplain since 2015, and to borrow some language from Frederick Buechner, I feel like this work is “where my deep gladness meets the world’s deep need.”

Spiritual Disciplines and Study

Individual prayer and communal worship are important to me, and I am an active member of both my UCC church and the Community of St Martin, an ecumenical community centered around peacemaking and social justice. I love engaging with scripture with both the mind and heart through preparation for preaching, practices like *lectio divina*, and through hearing the Word creatively broken open each Sunday at church. Reading a broad array of books is important to my spiritual life, and I am typically immersed in several books at a time as I try to better understand my own experience and the world around me. I am grateful to be a part of a small group that meets monthly to listen deeply to one another and to the movement of the Spirit in our lives, and to laugh uproariously.

Ministry Passions

I enjoy providing spiritual care that honors the intersectionality and complexity of each person’s life. It is especially meaningful to me when I can support people living with both mental and physical illness. I love helping people to create rituals to mark life’s transitions.

Ecclesiastical Council
October 13, 2024 - 3 p.m.
First Congregational Church of Minnesota,
United Church of Christ

Introducing
Schanan Harris



Family

I grew up in a small town in southern Indiana. My parents divorced when I was in kindergarten, and as a child I lived with my mom during the school year, and often spent summers with my dad and grandparents in southern Illinois. I was an only child, and both of my parents have now passed. My “chosen family” consists of my dear friends and a sweet and ornery cat, as well as a few extended family members scattered around the country. My two faith communities are also integral parts of my circle of care and support.

Education

I have a B.A. in Politics from Oberlin College. After feeling a call to attend seminary after college and fighting against that for a year, I enrolled at United Theological Seminary, graduating with my M.Div. in 2001. While in seminary, I was introduced to chaplaincy and felt an immediate excitement about this ministry path. After seminary, I completed a CPE internship at City of Lakes Transitional Care Center, followed by a 4-unit CPE residency at Fairview University Medical Center. I additionally have completed significant graduate level coursework in counseling psychology.

Vocational History

I currently serve as a Spiritual Counselor with North Memorial Hospice, where I have worked since April 2015. In this role, I work as part of an interdisciplinary team to provide spiritual care for hospice patients and families at the end of life.

Other Employment or Ministry Related Work

Prior to my time at North Memorial Hospice, I served in several part time chaplaincy roles in hospital, hospice, and addiction treatment settings, and also worked in the mental health field for about a decade. I completed a yearlong parish ministry internship at Falcon Heights UCC, gaining experience with preaching, worship leadership, pastoral care, and faith formation. Additionally, I served for a few years as youth education coordinator for the Community of St Martin. In a volunteer capacity, I previously served on the worship team for the Community of St Martin and am currently a worship team member at First Congregational Church of Minnesota, continuing to preach occasionally in both settings.

Service and Community Involvement

I value speaking out for justice and peace grounded in the prophetic roots of my faith tradition. Prior to experiencing some physical mobility challenges, I attended vigils and protests, showing up in solidarity with others in grief and in active hope. Now, claiming this prophetic voice more often looks like reaching out to my elected representatives and continuing to grow in my understanding of the experiences of communities other than my own.

Theological Perspective

As a college student in the 1990s, I was influenced by the writings of Jim Wallis and the Sojourners Community, especially how they articulated the idea that Christianity has something important to say about our public life and struggles for justice. In seminary, my faith deepened through engaging with the insights of liberation, feminist, womanist, and queer theologies. It was formative for me to learn that theology is contextual and to notice whose experiences are being privileged or ignored in our discussion of the sacred.

My present approach to theology centers stories: inhabiting the stories of scripture and the Christian tradition, wrestling with their complicated gifts, and also bearing witness to the stories of people’s lives. I hold as sacred the stories that my hospice patients and others around me share as they navigate the beauty and loss inherent in everyday life. I work hard to listen with particular attention to the stories and voices that are omitted in the narratives of the dominant culture.

Call to Ministry in the United Church of Christ

I am drawn to the non-hierarchical and covenantal polity of the UCC, and particularly to the way in which the UCC holds space for continuing revelation and for deep listening for the ongoing movement of the Spirit among us. I have been a member of First Congregational Church of Minnesota, UCC since 2010, and continue to be moved by the prophetic witness and rich spiritual life of this community of faith. I have discerned a call to ordained ministry in the UCC, which has been affirmed by my local church and at each stage of the Member in Discernment process.