

February 4, 2018 – A letter Senior Pastor Winton Boyd read at our congregation's Annual Meeting

Last Sunday at a New Member reception, I talked about what I call the "DNA" of this congregation. Since our founding, we've been a creative, experimental, open hearted, passionate, roll-up-the-sleeves, neighbor loving community. As one of your pastors, I stepped into this pool of grace, beauty, activism and love and have enjoyed nearly a generation of contributing to its unique progressive Christian expression in Madison. The Spirit we all feel, this DNA, long preceded you and me, and will continue on into new generations and new expressions of ministry after we are gone. At the end of 2018 I will be stepping down as your Senior Pastor, and stepping out to pursue other opportunities and ministries. In the parlance of my Executive Coach sister, I will begin to explore what "Act 2" looks for me, and the life Tammy and I share, as I complete 20 years here and as I turn 60 years old.

I love being one of your pastors, and I always have. I love our shared ministry and our sense of passion, joy and care for each other and the world. My children, as well as Tammy and I, have been deeply shaped and powerfully loved by this community. Nothing will ever weave itself into our very beings as you have.

I'm not stepping away because I have fallen out of love with you, but rather because the grace of these years together gives me the confidence to look creatively at my final years of ministry and service. Some of my time in the future will be devoted to more retreat work with the Center for Courage and Renewal, and some of it is still being defined. As I step into that uncertainty, I hope to do so with the same passion and care that you've so bravely modeled for me.

I've wrestled with when to share this news, but realize there is never a good time. I'm excited about so many of our ministries, and I want, in my remaining months, to do all I can to ensure their stability and longevity.

There are many aspects to this decision that will immediately raise questions. I will leave most of those for another day. I will say that in the past month, I recently began conversations with our leaders and my colleagues Ken and Tammy about this decision. Associate Conference Minister JoAnne Thomsen will be joining the Leadership Team at its meeting on February 20 to discuss next steps and the UCC search process. She will be a gifted guide for the congregation throughout that process. You will begin receiving information about what that involves in a timely way. Suffice it to say, there will be ample opportunity for input and information.

The long 'goodbye' process is designed to help the congregation undergo a search process sooner rather than later, thus minimizing the length of an interim period. The success of this year, that search process and a new pastor will be rooted in all of us doing our best in our roles here at ORUCC. I commit myself to full hearted ministry and appropriate distance from the search process. I commit myself to supporting our leaders and my amazing staff colleagues as we all make sense of the changes we expect and the changes that surprise us.

Finally, I know that I have had some time to make and process this decision, and that for you it is new and for most of you, probably surprising. I am also grateful that we will have time together for the necessary cycle of emotions and conversation. Today is just the beginning.

I love this congregation. I love we are, and I love who I am in your midst. And I give thanks to God for the way I feel her presence in our ministry together.

Winton Boyd