

I'd like to share parts of a sermon written by the Rev Dr Carl Gregg of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Frederick MD. His title? "Who's in Charge Here?"...

The term "Shared Ministry" is a buzzword in some circles for what congregational life at its best should be. Basically, it means that we should avoid a perception that ministry is only something that paid, professional ministers do — or the equally harmful perception that my job is to simply tell you what to do, and then sit back and relax as you do it. To me, naming "Shared Ministry" as our way of being together is the difference between asking someone, "Will you do this *for me*?" and "Will you *help me* do this?" And to me the difference between those two approaches is all the difference in the world. Shared Ministry is about *partnership* — and *power-with* instead of *power-over*. The approach of **shared ministry says that we are *together* in this work of transforming ourselves and of transforming this world.**

There are 10,000 worthy things that we could do as a congregation at any one time, but if we try to do all 10,000 of those things, our attention and energy will likely end up scattered. And we will likely accomplish less than if we were to join in a focus on only three, four, or five goals"

As we continue to discern our own vision of shared ministry here at the UUCOB in the coming weeks, months, and years this reflection, written by Catholic Bishop Ken Untener and adapted by Rev Gregg resonated with me:

"It helps, now and then, to step back and take a long view. No statement says all that could be said. No [covenant] fully expresses our faith. No confession brings perfection. No pastoral visit brings wholeness. No single program accomplishes the [congregation's] mission. No set of goals and objectives includes everything. It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way.

We may never see the end results. We are workers, not master builders, ministers, not messiahs. We are prophets of a future not our own. This is what we are about. We plant the seeds that one day will grow. We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold

future promise. We lay foundations that will need further development.

Rev Gregg ended his sermon with the following:

We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that. This enables us to do something, and to do it very well.³

The transition team (Gwen, Rosemary, Nellie and Immie) kept many of these thoughts regarding shared ministry foremost as we began the work of transitional ministry that you, the members of the UUCOB, entrusted to us. We submitted a well-written, collaborative application for a full-time contract minister. We were and are doing this work as religions across the board are experiencing an unprecedented reduction in the number of professional ministers. During this time, I found myself turning inward to a school of philosophy I frequent in times of introspection – song lyrics of 60s and 70s classic rock:

You can't always get what you want
But if you try sometime, you'll find
You get what you need

We challenged ourselves to “think outside of the box”. We had already discussed possible creative solutions given the housing crisis that our region is experiencing, and we were determined to find an individual with the right skills and personality to assist us as we simplify, refocus, and connect with our wider community.

Today I am excited to share that we will be welcoming a part-time contract minister into our Meetinghouse for the church year 2022-2023. Rev Roger Butts, who has asked that we call him “Roger” is an ordained Unitarian Universalist minister with nearly 20 years of experience. His wife, Rev. Marta Fioriti, is minister of Black Forest Community Church, a United Church of Christ congregation. They have three teenagers and a black lab named Gracie, who likes to dig up her bed. He attended Appalachian State for his undergraduate degree, worked on Capitol Hill for a while and felt a calling to change his career plans. He received his master’s in divinity from the Wesley Theological Seminary (DC). He has worked as a hospital chaplain during the height of

COVID, as a minister at large and small congregations, and is also a published author. He describes his ministerial style as follows:

My experience as a senior minister, as a chaplain and as an organizer enable me to bring that expertise to worship, pastoral care and community outreach, all in the service of letting the congregation learn how to do all of this in more and more skillful ways.

We have, together with Roger and the UUA, developed a unique approach to part-time contract ministry. Roger and his wife are remaining in Colorado Springs for another year – during this year, he has an agreement with the UUCOB as a 25%-time minister. He will be providing approximately 20 Sunday services, 4 extended in-person visits, weekly hours to work with the board, the Worship Planning Team, and monthly seminars available to all of us. The transition team will be leading an open discussion next Sunday and we will be sending out an email early next week to explain more about this creative plan. Today, I want to close with the following description of the UUCOB, written by your transition team:

“We are a congregation of people from diverse locations, pulled by the beauty, calm energy, and unique environmental geography of this barrier island. It has been said that people are drawn to the Outer Banks to heal, to create, and occasionally to change the world – we are in search of a minister who understands the importance of connection, wonder and hope and will create a shared ministry with the new vision needed in this post pandemic world.”

We are excited about a new voice to help us move forward with this vision – I hope you are as well.