

January 17, 2022

Dear friends,

I'm writing with significant news, and with many strong emotions. After much discernment, I have decided to retire from professional ministry, and thus from the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of the Outer Banks, at the end of June 2022. This is a profoundly personal decision, one I'm making with high hopes for my family and myself in the belief that the right time has come. Yet I know very well it has an impact on the congregation's life. I'm sharing the news now, so that we'll have time to reflect on and celebrate our shared ministry, and so that the congregation will have ample time to discern and prepare for what comes next.

It's been deeply gratifying sharing ministry with you for six years, going on seven. I am very proud of all we've done together to keep the congregation strong, vital, and well known as a beacon of religious freedom and social concern in the Outer Banks. We've done a lot together, and we're continuing even now, taking on the important task of re-evaluating our organizational structure to better reflect the realities and capacities of our very small congregational community.

These past two years as we've navigated the pandemic together have been truly extraordinary. We've kept our congregation as connected and active as we could, within the limitations imposed by public safety and concern for our most vulnerable members, family members, co-workers, and neighbors. The congregation is healthy, even after the challenges of working around restrictions on our ability to gather in person. I hope that you all feel proud of that and ready for a time of renewed energy as we come together again. It will take active commitment from everyone, but I know the will and the gifts are there, and I'm confident you'll continue to grow and thrive once this catastrophic time has truly passed.

As I retire from UUCOB, my deepest hope is that the congregation will have a healthy and smooth ministerial transition. Over the next few months the congregation's leadership, with help and guidance from the Unitarian Universalist Association's Transitions Director and our Southern Region Congregational Life staff, will lead you through the process of preparing for the transition time, discerning what kind of professional ministry is best for you, and seeking a minister for the interim and for the longer-term future. A transition in ministry is an important opportunity for the congregation to come together to affirm and renew your vision for the future. I know you'll rise to that call.

As the months go by, we'll work together through the many complex feelings that arise when a minister leaves. This coming Sunday, January 23rd, we'll have a service focused on transitions, with time devoted to any questions you might have. Of course, I'm also available for conversation at any time. Above all, I want you to know that until the day I retire I am still very much your minister, sharing the life of this congregation and its members and friends as part of my own life.

I am enormously grateful for the opportunity to have shared the ministry of this wonderful congregation with you. I've been inspired, sustained, and nurtured by serving with you. My life has been enriched in relationships, in the joys and sorrows we've shared, and in the chance to experience, explore, and celebrate the life of the spirit together. The Outer Banks has become my home, and now my family's home, and that's a great gift in itself.

I thank you all. You have my everlasting appreciation and respect.

In faith and gratitude,

Rev. David