



January 19, 2024

Dear Members and Friends of UUC,

This year is the 25th anniversary of my service to you as your senior minister. This occasion has allowed me to reflect on how it all began years ago. I had been serving the Unitarian Society in Hartford, Connecticut for thirteen years. My wife, Annie, and I had two daughters who were not yet in middle school. The timing of a move for them was good, so we wondered if there might be another church I might serve for an extended period.

I entered the search process and interviewed several of our larger UU congregations. While each search process was a learning experience, none of these churches seemed to be the right fit for us. Then University Unitarian opened up. I applied and was eventually asked to be a pre-candidate (semi-finalist). That meant flying to Seattle for a weekend interview and leading worship and preaching in a neutral pulpit. That pulpit for me turned out to be in Vancouver, British Columbia.

On Saturday afternoon the search committee members and Annie and I drove up to Vancouver. I led the service and preached the next morning. We had lunch. As we drove back to Seattle we encountered all kinds of changing weather – sun, wind, the sky turning dark as pitch, rain, hail, sun. Was the weather giving us a sign? Annie and I hoped it was a good one!

The next morning Annie and I flew back to Connecticut. At one point during the flight, we turned to each other and said, “I hope this one turns out to be our next settlement or we will be very disappointed.” We had fallen in love with the search committee. They were the best committee I had interviewed with. And they had done their homework! I had no surprises once I started my ministry in Seattle. We thought that if the committee was a sample of the kind of people who made up the congregation, the congregation would be a very special one indeed.

Here we are 25 years later. And that fact invites me to think not only of beginnings but also about endings. I have been a Unitarian Universalist minister for 43 years. Annie and I will each turn 68 this spring. And the little girls who came with us to Seattle are now adult women, both out of graduate schools, and we have two grandchildren.

Thus, I have made the decision to retire from active ministry effective June 30, 2024.

No doubt this decision will evoke varied emotional responses in the congregation as our relationship has been a healthy and significant one. Sadness and grief, for sure. Some confusion. Maybe even anger. And for a few, relief! As I have anticipated making this

announcement, and as I enter the remaining time we have together, I have felt and will feel all these things. But we will have opportunities to process these feelings together, collectively and individually. Let us make amends, as necessary, share our thoughts and feelings, and find a fun way to celebrate what we have done and become together.

Of all these responses, though, the paramount feeling I have had over all these years has been gratitude: gratitude for the privilege of serving with you, gratitude for the support and affection you have given me and my family, gratitude for your sharing so much of yourselves in our work together.

This coming Sunday, January 21, I will lead both services and preach and talk a little more about my decision. Then on the following Sunday, January 28, after the second service we will have our annual mid-year meeting when the Board of Trustees will share with you the planning that has started for this transition.

I look forward to seeing you in church. Thank you!

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jon Luopa". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Rev. Jon Luopa, Senior Minister