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**Forward in Faith:
Vote for Closure & Our Next Steps**

April 18, 2021

Dear Members & Friends of Faith United Church,
On Sunday April 11th we held our Special Congregational Meeting to vote on three resolutions concerning the dissolution (closure) of Faith United Church. All three of these motions passed unanimously. This means that we will now formally begin the legal and logistical process of ending the 125-year-plus ministry of Faith United Church in its various forms.

There is a tremendous amount of work that remains in order for us to see this process through with integrity — work that might also bring us some healing and “closure in the midst of closure.” This letter will share some general information about our next steps, including some decisions for you to make personally, plus some invitations.

Brief Meeting Review

Our Special Congregational Meeting was held on the video conferencing platform Zoom. Between proxy votes and those present for meeting, we had 28 out of 41 possible members voting. This included three of our longest-term members. We were also joined by a few friends of Faith, along with Area Conference Minister Rev. Terry Yasuko Ogawa and Hampden Association Church & Ministry Chair Rev. Chip Hurd.

The meeting was recorded, and has been uploaded to our YouTube page. However, the video can only be accessed by a specific link. If you would like to view the video of the meeting, please contact me and I will send you the link.

Closing Worship Service

We will hold our closing worship service on **Pentecost Sunday, May 23rd at 10:00 am**. As of right now, our plan is to have this be a hybrid worship service, which means that it will be led from the sanctuary and will be live streamed and recorded. It is the leadership’s intention at this time to invite people to be physically present in-person. We have a lot to plan in order to make this work and to ensure we

follow health precautions. Please keep a look out for more details about how you can join us either in-person or virtually.

Transferring Church Membership

All Faith United Church members will receive a Letter of Transfer following our closing worship service. These can serve as a letter of introduction to a new congregation of your choosing. There are two options for these letters.

If you know which church you would like to join, the name of that church will be included in the letter, and we will send a copy of the Letter of Transfer directly to that church. If you would like this option, please notify me by phone or email by **May 16th** so I can have the letter prepared for you by our closing worship.

If you are unsure of which new church you would like to join, you will receive a general Letter of Transfer which states that you have been a member at Faith United Church, and that we support your membership at another church. This will also be the default option if you have not informed me of a specific choice by May 16th.

My Church Recommendations

While we did not choose to seek a formal relationship with another area United Church of Christ congregation, I have been in conversation with Rev. Barbara Schenk at **Foster Memorial UCC** and Rev. Marisa Brown-Ludwig at **First Church of Christ, Longmeadow UCC**.

In our conversations, I stressed the need for a caring and compassionate welcome, free of judgement or pressure. I also sought congregations that are vital, healthy, and stable. It is my opinion that Foster Memorial and First Church Longmeadow meet these criteria, and I wholeheartedly recommend both congregations to you equally.

Many of you know Rev. Schenk from her time as an Associate Pastor at Faith United. Some of you may also be familiar with First Church Longmeadow. Each congregation has its unique strengths and cultures, and I believe that many of you could find a new church home at one of these two churches.

Sometime in early May, we will be offering two Coffee Hour sessions on Zoom where leaders from both churches will be present to invite you to their church and to share information about the congregation. Please look for details on those events soon.

Our Worship & Fellowship

Between now and our closing worship service, we will pause our regular worship videos, Coffee Hour, and Joys & Concerns so that our time and effort can be focused on the myriad tasks ahead of us. I will be posting some denominational worship videos and links to other worship services.

Building Visits

If you would like to come to the church building and spend some time in the sanctuary or other sacred spots, please contact me or Eduardo Ortiz, and we can make arrangements for visits.

My Departure From Faith United Church

On April 15th, I formally notified Moderator John Robinson of my resignation effective June 15th. I have chosen to depart my call as your Designated Term Pastor in recognition of the fact that my pastoral responsibilities will come to an end shortly after our closing worship service, and in light of the congregation's pending dissolution.

As I have shared before, I have never felt more valued and affirmed in my ministry (and as an individual) than I have during my time with you all at Faith United Church. And while we had all hoped for an outcome different than the one we are facing now, I feel honored and privileged to have served the Faith United Church community through this season of the church's life.

My time at Faith United Church has helped me to further discern my call to transitional ministry. This is an unexpected turn in my professional ministry career, but it is exciting and uniquely necessary. I am grateful to the church for helping me to accidentally discover this specialized call!

In the remainder of my time as your Designated Term Pastor, I will focus on the pastoral tasks related to closure and Legacy. These tasks will include some kind of plan concerning the Memorial Garden, assisting members in transferring membership to another congregation, creating and leading a closing worship service, and making proposals for various administrative and logistical tasks.

Once again, my gratitude to you and the people of Faith United Church for trusting me to lead with you all over the past 2.5 years. This has been a challenging journey for all of us, but we did not go it alone.

In Closing

I thank you for your dedication, patience, support, and participation through this emotionally challenging time. Please keep a look out for more detailed information about the events mentioned in this letter, and please contact me or one of our leaders if you have questions or concerns.

Peace & Blessings,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pastor Chris". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath.

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