

To help facilitate our conversation I have summarized several thoughts and compiled informational updates for you to review at your leisure. The one thing I would like to discuss and get Council to affirm or adapt is the covenant language that will be used during the installation.

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I. Installation Service and Covenants

The draft of the installation service is in the Worship Planning Google Drive. In several parts of the service, we are using words and prayers from the congregation's search profile. You can review the full service here:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1LY7MrqhlU-UHUwsgD75zpowJpucNv25H0fGYx6EbSuM/edit?usp=sharing>

As part of the services, we will share words that define the covenantal promise that we are affirming. Rather than use the generic covenantal language, we have tried to develop words that speak to our realities and reflect the search profile and our covenantal agreement.

I ask that Council affirm (or amend and affirm) the following language **in BOLD** that will be used for the covenant commitment as pastor and congregation during the installation service:

Rev. Elizabeth Garrigan-Byerly or Rev Dr. Sue Foster (Addressing the pastor)

"Rev. Downer seeing that you are called to ordained ministry by the grace of God and that First Congregational Church of Woodstock has been led to call you as pastor and teacher, are you willing to affirm this covenant with its members?"

Pastor:

"With God's guidance, I am willing, and I promise to serve this congregation faithfully, according to the faith and order of the United Church of Christ. I will pastor, teach, preach, lead, and minister in ways that are radically hospitable, caring, and forward-thinking, collaborative and invitational, grounded in the gospel and guided by God's playfully disruptive Spirit.

I promise to walk with you, and work with you, and wonder how God is calling us to more fully reflect God's love, Christ's compassion, the justice of Jesus and the Spirit of healing and hope."

(Addressing the congregation)

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"Will the people of the First Congregational Church Woodstock, United Church of Christ, rise as you are able and affirm your covenant with your pastor and teacher?"

People: "We, the people of the First Congregational Church Woodstock receive Rev. Dr. Kevin Downer as our pastor and teacher, promising to pray for him and his family, to participate in conversations, to explore questions and new ways of being and doing "church," and to express love and grace amid uncertainty and messiness.

With God's guidance, we promise to walk together and work together and wonder how God is calling us to reflect more fully God's love, Christ's compassion, the justice of Jesus and the Spirit of healing and hope.

We gather with him and with the United Church of Christ as a sign of our mutual ministry in Christ's name."

Here is why:

I believe that good ritual should speak to our hopes and realities. In the Search Profile you

In the Congregational Search Profile, you summarized the mission as:

We are seeking to embody God's grace, mercy, forgiveness, compassion, hope and joy and we want to do that in three areas: DEEPEN RELATIONSHIPS within our congregation; COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT - to connect with our neighbors in new ways; and FAITH in ACTION - to broaden our work in our community and in the world.

And the following is a list from the search profile of what you were seeking in a Pastor:

We are seeking a pastor who has the leadership skills that will challenge us to go beyond technical fixes toward adaptive and transformational changes.

A good listener who can lean in to ask probing, clarifying questions; who empowers our capable and committed membership, as well as someone who can build collaborative relationships in the community.

A Shepherd who will lead us with creativity, compassion, wisdom and passion to help us Deepen our relationships, connect with our neighbors in new ways, and broaden our work in our community and in the world.

One who is a caring and forward-thinking leader,

One who is a creative shepherd, who inspires and influences others to use their energies and resources towards a common pursuit.

One who communicates the vision in a clear and convincing manner; helping people move from current realities into new visions for church growth and health.

One who is supportive and healing, revealing that loving relationships are the heart of a healthy, growing church

One who provides intentional structures that are pastoral in nature,

One who is an effective pastoral visitor.

One who inspires and challenges us to dig deeper into our faith and to grow in discipleship.

One who explores new ways to express the gospel message and extend outreach to community members.

One who uses technology more effectively as a way to help build relationships within the congregation and to share our message of inclusion.

One who extends radical hospitality to all, especially those who are marginalized.

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One who preaches the gospel message with courage and honesty, in an effort to "comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable" and

One who keeps us steered toward mission and ministry, rather than simple maintenance.

One who leads us in caring for all creation. This includes self-care, boundary setting, wellness, balance in our own lives and recognizing that our planet is in dire distress we need you to use our agency to protect God's creation.

The standard language of the installation covenant is so generic it could be spoken by any pastor and congregation since at least 1957 – and earlier if you remove the reference to the UCC:

“People: We, the members of the ___ (church Name) receive _____ (name) as our pastor and teacher, promising to labor with him in the ministry of the gospel, and to give him/her due honor and support. We gather with him/her and with the United Church of Christ as a sign of our mutual ministry in Christ’s name.”

II. 2023 Ministry Planning

As discussed in council the last two months, we will be using a mission/ministry driven approach to develop plans and the budget.

As demonstrated in the chart below, planning by ministry requires greater coordination as there are many teams whose activities and plans overlap these four ministry areas. That is not a bad thing, it just means that we need to intentionally foster multi-team conversations to explore opportunities to enhance our ministry.

	<i>Ministry Area</i>			
	Worship	Discipling	Care	Heal World
Primary Plan Leader =>	Creative Worship	various	Deacons	Outreach
Plan contributors √				
Deacons	contribute	?	Primary	
Friendly Visitors			contribute	
Cards			contribute	
Outreach				Primary
Community Kitchen				contribute
Bible Study		contribute		
Youth Ministry		contribute		
Children and Family Ministry		contribute		?
Creative Worship	Primary			
Music	contribute			
Heather		contribute		
Maria	contribute			
Leilani	contribute			
Spiritual Formation		contribute		
Adult Spiritual Formation		contribute		
New Comers sessions		contribute		
Hospitality	contribute			
Intergenerational Worship	contribute	contribute		?

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Pastor	contribute	contribute	contribute	contribute
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Existing committees, teams, and groups have been/are being asked to reflect on our current ministry and develop a high-level/basic plan for 2023 using the planning worksheets for each ministry area.

Planning meetings will be called for each area to which the existing teams and others with a passion or interest in an area will be invited to share their plans and ideas. At the end of the meeting priorities will be established for the coming year and assignments made to estimate any remaining items or activities needed to submit the plans and initial budget request.

It has been observed that the ministries represent a small amount of our budget. This is true. The value of this activity is less about budgeting and more about thinking collectively about ministry.

III. FYI: Upcoming Activities

October 16 Baptism Vincent Copeland

October 18, November/December Newsletter articles due

October 23, 10am Intergenerational service and Baptism Levi and Hudson Turner

October 23, 3pm Installation/Celebration of all who make ministry happen

October 24 – Oct 30, *REV KEV on Vacation*

October 30, 10am All Saints, Rev. Debbie preaching

November 6, Pledges Blessed

December 24, Christmas Eve (Saturday) 7:30pm

December 25, Christmas Day is a Sunday this year (Deacons discussed a prerecorded message and opening the sanctuary for a hymn sing and reflection if congregants are inclined)