

Dear Voting Members and Friends\*\* of Westside Unitarian Universalist Church,

I come to you on behalf of your Board of Directors and would like to share some information with you that is relevant to the announcement of Dr. Russell K. Elleven's resignation. Your board has now met and has begun the process of researching and disseminating information from the Transitions Office of the UUA. This letter will serve as a way of communicating how we are getting started, the proposed Emeritus status for Russell, some plans for continued conversation and communication as well as some key dates of which we want you to be aware. Let me warn you that this is a long letter! There is a lot of information that we wish to share. So, let me thank you, in advance, for taking the time to read this communication completely. We hope to make everyone aware of the same information. We know that some of you may be feeling a sense of anxiety and/or apprehension. With the following information and further avenues of communication, those feelings may be diminished.

Before getting into the details, I will tell you that while we were all very surprised and saddened to hear of Russell and Gayle's departure, we wish them the best in their future endeavors. Your church leadership is working on several ways for the congregation to convey our gratitude and appreciation for the Ellevens' years of dedication and service to Westside. At the same time, I want to assure you that your church leaders wish to continue to move forward with the vision for Westside. Over the last several months and years, we have experienced an energy and enthusiasm that has been manifested through:

- increased programming for all ages and interests
- seam-bursting participation from our members, friends, and a constant flow of guests representing all age groups
- our recent and wildly successful stewardship campaign which we are beginning to practice as a year-round mission
- record-breaking proceeds from our 2011 auction and plans for even greater success for our auction later this fall
- increased social outreach

All of this is to say, that while our ministerial leadership may look different, our community will remain intact and the mission and vision of our church will be the driving force for our continued participation and growth.

Recognizing the needs of our unique community and diverse congregation, our desire is to carefully and critically move through each phase of this transition. There will be ample opportunities for conversation and communication along the way. Ultimately, the decision of our next settled minister will be in the hands of the congregation. So, we invite you to join with us as we band together and work even harder to maintain Westside's status as Fort Worth's progressive voice in liberal religion.

### **Formats for Conversation and Communication**

Over the course of this period of transition, our goal will be to provide relevant information as it becomes available. There are several venues for this communication that we will begin to implement over the next few months. Of course, we will add and modify as necessary.

Beginning on the first Wednesday evening in September we will hold monthly **TOWN HALL MEETINGS**. These meetings will be open to all members and friends for the purpose of providing an open forum for questions regarding the transitions process. At a future point, these meetings will be a venue for expressing desires and wishes for the future of our community. We plan to hold these monthly meetings for an indefinite period of time. As long as there is interest, your board will be there! The

first few meetings will address the specifics of the transition process and the rationale behind our initial decisions. As we move through these transitions, different topics of discussion will obviously come up. Our first meeting will be Wednesday, September 4th beginning at 7:00 pm in the sanctuary. Subsequent meetings will be held on the first Wednesday of each month.

We also plan to implement a “**Transitions**” link on our **church website** (westsideuu.org) that will provide updates on the transition process as they change and progress. Additionally, we will utilize other internet based forms of communication – the **weekly web** mailing and **Facebook**. We will also provide the same information in our monthly newsletter, **The Westside Story** and on our **PowerPoint** displays seen in Fellowship Hall and the Sanctuary on Sunday mornings.

One final method of providing for input is a **congregational survey** to be implemented in a few months – we have set a tentative goal of having it ready by January for your participation. This survey will be the product of three areas of leadership in the church: the Board of Directors, the Committee on Ministry and the Long Range Planning Committee. We hope to address such areas as providing a profile of the membership, the “health” of the congregation, and the vision of its members – desires for programming and future projects. We wish to take our time with the development of this survey so that it will be a useful tool from which to base our future decisions. This will be beneficial as our congregation moves into the time with an interim minister when we are challenged to look at our past, present and future.

### **Ministerial Transitions**

At a special, called Board Meeting on Wednesday, August 7th, your board made a few decisions regarding our transition process and how we feel Westside will best be served. After much research and consideration, we have chosen to secure an accredited interim minister whose time with us will better prepare us for the placement of our settled minister. The time frame looks like this:

- Fall 2013 – An Interim Task Force will complete the necessary framework to apply for an accredited interim minister
- April 2014 – We will select an interim minister
- August/September 2014 – Selected interim minister will arrive to begin two year service
- August/September 2016 (tentative) – Selected settled minister will begin service at Westside

We are also exploring the idea of hiring a contract minister to serve in a limited capacity (pastoral care, occasional pulpit supply, etc.) for a short term prior to the arrival of an accredited interim minister. It is not our desire to rush into any decision and we are committed to making choices that will only benefit our community. The new option of a contract minister has just been brought to our attention. Your board will continue discussion on this possibility over the next few weeks. Rest assured that we will communicate closely with other church leaders and committees that will have input on making our final decision.

### **Minister Emeritus Recommendation**

The Board of Directors wishes to recommend that our community, Westside UU, bestow the status of Minister Emeritus on Dr. Russell K. Elleven. The procedure requires a vote of the congregation to confer this status. With that in mind, we invite Westside voting members to a special business meeting to be held between services on Sunday, September 8th, for said purpose.

The title Minister Emeritus is granted to “honor long and meritorious service to a congregation where the minister has given devoted and competent ministerial leadership.” By conferring this status on

Russell, the following characteristics will describe the future relationship between Russell and Westside UU Church:

1. Official recognition of Emeritus status with the UUA (Unitarian Universalist Association)
2. Delegate credential for all future UUA General Assembly conferences
3. Permanent inclusion on church letterhead, stationery, etc.
4. Invitations to major institutional events such as anniversaries, building dedications, etc.
5. Occasional invitations to appear in the pulpit

With respect to future visits as described in numbers 4 and 5 above, these situations will only be possible following the creation of a covenant between Dr. Elleven and any future settled ministers addressing these specific situations. If Emeritus status is granted to Dr. Elleven, candidates for settled ministry at Westside will be made aware of that status.

There will be more discussion of this proposed status at the first Town Hall meeting on September 4th. Russell will be in attendance to answer questions and explain the parameters of his future relationship with members of Westside as outlined in the UUMA (Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association) Code of Conduct.

We hope that you will make plans to attend the special congregational meeting to be a part of this momentous vote. Again, it will be held at 11:10 on Sunday, September 8th. We expect this to be a very brief meeting with the express purpose of taking a congregational vote.

### **Mark Your Calendars!**

- Wednesday, September 4th – Town Hall Meeting...7:00 pm – 8:30 pm
- Sunday, September 8th – Special Congregational Meeting...11:10 am – 11:20 am
- Sunday, September 22nd – Come & Go Reception to honor the Elleven's...2:00 pm – 4:00 pm
- Sunday, October 27th – Russell's Final Reflection
- Friday, November 1st – “Progressive Dinner” and Auction...6:30 pm – 10:30 pm

Thank you for taking the time to read this first of, what promises to be many, communications from your church leadership. We do hope to see you at the first Town Hall meeting on Wednesday, September 4th...7:00 pm in the sanctuary. We will begin to share conversation and answer your questions. And, if we don't know the answer, we'll be sure to find it!!! We are in this together and look forward to the next chapter in our church's history!

Linda Ice  
President, Board of Directors

### **\*\*Section 3.4. Friends (from the Westside UU Church Bylaws)**

*A Friend is someone who is not a member, but who attends church services and other church activities, gives of their time, talent and treasures, and acknowledges the Unitarian Universalist Seven Principles. A Friend may not chair a committee nor serve as a church officer or board member, and may not vote in official church meetings.*