

SLIDE #1 **TOWN HALL MEETING**

September 4, 2013

SLIDE #2 WELCOME

Good evening. I am Linda Ice, President of the Board of Directors, and am pleased to welcome you to this first Town Hall Meeting. Of course the news of Russell's relocation to Chicago came as a surprise to all of us a few weeks ago – it came as a surprise to Russell and Gayle as well! We are so very excited for the opportunities that this move will make possible for them and above all, want to wish them our very best. That is certainly not to say that they will not be missed tremendously here at Westside. We can probably never adequately express to them the gratitude that we feel as a congregation. Their dedication and service to this community has gone above and beyond and the magnitude of this time together will be felt for many years to come.

While this time of service on the Board looks very different than I, and my fellow board members, thought it would, I have been so pleased with the support that we have received and the generally positive comments! We are all in this together and that is why we are gathered here this evening. It is our intent to keep you informed of information and decisions that we will make along this journey toward a new settled minister to serve Westside. There is a lot going on – a lot to absorb – a lot of emotions to feel – and thankfully, we've got time to take things step by step in an effort to make the best decisions for Westside's future.

Russell has been a great teacher of method and process through the years. He has prepared us for many changes in growth as they have approached. He has already shared many more lessons about these ministerial transitions even in these brief few weeks since his announcement. It is my hope that we will be able to take

those lessons to heart, try to remain the non-anxious community that he desires us to be, and work together through these upcoming changes.

As is our tradition as we gather in community, we will begin this time with the lighting of the chalice. This evening, the chalice will be lit by Board Director, Tricia Bowes.

SLIDE #3 CHALICE LIGHTING – Tricia

SLIDE #4 GENERAL INFORMATION

This being our first time to meet in this manner, and the first opportunity that we have had to share much of this information – I am going to take some time at the beginning to define some terms that you have been hearing – Interim Minister, Emeritus status and Contract Minister.

When Russell first sent me several links to information that “might be helpful”, I was overwhelmed with all of the jargon and verbiage that was presented in the material. It took me a few times of reading some of it before having it all clear in my head! So, we hope to clear up a little of the same for you this evening as well! We will then open the floor for questions following this time of information sharing. I will try to make it comprehensive, yet as brief as possible...thank you, in advance, for your patience!

Many of you were members or friends at the time of transition between Reverend Lillie Henley and Dr. Elleven’s calling as a part time minister. So, you have been through the “process”. But if I may say...only sort of! I say that because while admittedly, I was not here, I know that Westside is a totally different community than it was in January of 2005. There was a membership of 85, not 228. There was one service, not two. There was a minimal RE program that is now bursting at the seams – literally! We were meeting in a strip shopping center! But, the spirit of energy and enthusiasm IS THE SAME and the desire to grow IS THE SAME, though we are not a

small church any longer and the discussion and decision making processes will be vastly different.

So, thank you for being here. It is our hope that when the “facts” are shared, your own curiosity will be somewhat relieved and then further, we hope that you will be able to take some of the information you hear this evening into the Westside community and help relieve other’s potential anxieties! Tonight we wish to share the things we “know for sure”, as well as some of the things that are “on the table” that we will continue to discuss with the anticipation of making decisions over the next few weeks.

So, let’s begin with talk about an Interim Minister:

SLIDE #5 INTERIM INFORMATION

The Interim Ministry program is designed to bridge the transition between a departing minister and a new, settled minister for a congregation. It is a time to look back and to look forward to find the best fit for a congregation. The UUA, as well as many other church denominations, has developed a program, based on Alban Institute studies, to train UU ministers to address the specific needs of a congregation in transition. There are advisable phases that a congregation should address before hiring the next settled minister. It has been shown that congregations that make decisions too quickly, “often find themselves having called an unintentional interim minister instead.”

So, your board has made the decision to pursue the interim ministry process and the details of that process look like this:

SLIDE #6

- First, and soon, we will form an Interim Task Force made up of selected board members and a few other congregational members to develop an application

package. This package basically includes a “profile” of Westside, and a proposed contract for our interim ministry.

- ✓ We will be applying for an “accredited” interim...someone who has been specifically trained to address the needs of a transitional congregation.
- ✓ The suggested time for an interim process is two years. This is not carved in stone. This has not been determined yet, but we could request an 18 month interim, with a possible extension to two years if we feel it is warranted.

SLIDE #7

- This application will be submitted to the UUA after the first of the year

SLIDE #8

- The optimum time for selection of an interim minister is April with a start date of August or September.
- Our application will be reviewed by the UUA Transitions Director, Keith Kron and his office. They will match our package with 3 to 5 potential candidates.

SLIDE #9

- The Ministerial Records of these candidates will be made available to our Interim Task Force who will determine the level of interest in each candidate.

SLIDE #10

- Contacts will be made and interviews conducted between the candidates with a mutual interest in Westside.

SLIDE #11

- Then the Interim Task Force makes a recommendation to the board for approval.

SLIDE #12

- If the decision is affirmative, contract negotiations are tweaked as needed, and a copy of the contract is sent to the Transitions Office finalizing the collaborative relationship between Westside and an interim minister.

SLIDE #13

- All of this happens incredibly quickly – over the course of a few days! So, this is why the board makes the final approval based on the recommendation of the Task Force. There is simply not time for a congregational review and vote. This will not be the process when making a call for our settled minister – the congregation will be involved along the way and will have the final vote.
- As it has been explained to us, the “best” and most qualified candidates are available in that first round of applications. So, we fully believe that Westside will present itself as an attractive opportunity for someone who will wish to join us in our transition! I’d come to Fort Worth to be a part of this community – wouldn’t you?!?!?

SLIDE #14

- If by chance, a match is not made in that first round then the same procedure will happen in the second round and potentially, a third. But, again, we feel confident in our ability to attract a wonderful candidate in that very first week of candidacy.

SLIDE #15

- The selected interim minister would then begin their time at Westside in August or September depending on their negotiations with the congregation that they will be leaving.

I must share with you that I have heard from a couple of Westsiders who have shared very positive interim experiences from other UU congregations where they have been involved. Talk to Al Migdal or Linda McConathy – they both have wonderful stories to share! And, there are also wonderful print resources available that detail the many reasons why an interim is beneficial. We would be happy to share these with you as well if you wish.

Many of us know that historically, Westside has not always followed the prescribed process! That is what makes us unique and individual and we will continue to modify the process as we feel best suits our needs. But, your board feels that the general and basic design of an interim ministry will prove beneficial for our congregation. It will provide us an opportunity to:

SLIDE #16

- ✓ Claim and honor our past and heal any grief and potential conflict

SLIDE #17

- ✓ Come to terms with our unique identity, our strengths, our needs and our challenges – in other words, assess the general health of our congregation

SLIDE #18

- ✓ Clarify the multiple dimensions of our leadership, both ordained and lay, and navigate the shifts in leadership that accompany times of transition

SLIDE #19

- ✓ Renew connections with available resources within the UUA and beyond

SLIDE #20

- ✓ Renew our vision, strengthen our stewardship, prepare for new professional leadership, and engage our future with anticipation and zeal

EMERITUS INFORMATION

And, what is this about granting Emeritus Status for Dr. Elleven?

SLIDE #21

Information taken from the Unitarian Universalist Ministerial Association website states that: 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.

SLIDE #22

A formal resolution prepared for a congregational vote is one way to express the congregation's appreciation, and to create a permanent record of the decision.

Your board feels that based on Dr. Elleven's tenure at Westside, he is most certainly deserving of this recognition. And, it is customary to bestow this status, when deserved, at the conclusion of a minister's service to a congregation.

SLIDE #23

That being said, we will hold a congregational meeting this coming Sunday between services to conduct a vote on this recommendation. We chose a Sunday between services out of consideration for the convenience of the congregation. We would like as many voting members as possible to convene and share your voice in this decision. It should simply mean a motion and a vote from those present and should not take more than a few minutes.

The scope of this recognition for Russell would include the following:

SLIDE #24

- Official recognition of Emeritus status with the UUA

SLIDE #25

- Delegate credential for all future UUA General Assembly conferences

SLIDE #26

- Permanent inclusion on church letterhead, stationery, and the website

SLIDE #27

- Ceremonial presence at major institutional events such as anniversaries, building dedications, and the like

SLIDE #28

- Occasional invitations to appear in the pulpit

The final two characteristics would be possible following the development of a covenant between Russell and future ministers called to Westside.

SLIDE #29 CONTRACT MINISTER INFORMATION

And finally, after learning that we would not have an Interim Minister in place before August or September of next year, the suggestion was made to look into hiring a "Contract Minister" to provide limited ministerial leadership for some of the months between Russell's departure and the arrival of an interim. Your board is still in discussion and has not reached a final decision on this matter. But, please allow me to explain what this might involve.

SLIDE #30

Your board could hire a part-time minister with very specific responsibilities for a set period of time between the period of Russell's departure and the arrival of an interim next fall. I know that sounds very vague, because at this point...it is! For instance, we could seek someone to serve as a contract minister for six months beginning in March to fill the pulpit two Sundays each month and serve in the area of Pastoral Care. Or we could seek someone to serve in the capacity of pulpit supply, pastoral care and a few administrative responsibilities for four months beginning in May. Or we could hire someone to serve in specific areas beginning in January for three months with the possibility of extending the contract through August.

SLIDE #31

These are just possible scenarios – NOTHING HAS BEEN DETERMINED!!!

If we decide to seek a part-time, contract minister, we would likely assign the responsibility of developing a job description and salary package to the Interim Task Force as described earlier. So many of the necessary elements will be duplicated in seeking a contract and an interim, that we would have them develop two job descriptions and two salary packages.

The bottom line...we are not going to find someone just to have a position "filled" at any level of this process. We are going to make decisions and choices that will be in Westside's best interests. Decisions that will allow us to continue to move forward in our vision and mission. We appreciate the trust that you have placed in us and we promise to have you, and the congregation as a whole at the forefront of every discussion and every decision that we make.

We are about finished with the "presentation" portion of the evening!

SLIDE #32

But, I would like to take an opportunity to remind you that there will also be a comprehensive congregational survey developed over the next few months to be distributed for your completion after the first of the year. It is our hope that this survey will provide an updated profile of our congregation as well as the desired and unique needs that we may have.

SLIDE #33

This survey will be the collaborative effort of three areas of church leadership – the Committee on Ministry, the newly developed Long Range Planning Committee and the Board of Directors. Feel free to share your ideas with any members of these committees as they move forward in the development of this survey.

To wrap up all of this information, I would like to share an approximate timeline of some major steps as they will transpire:

SLIDE #34

- Fall, 2013
 - ✓ establish Interim Task Force
 - ✓ make decision regarding the prospect of a contract minister

SLIDE #35

- Early, 2014
 - ✓ Mid-Year Congregational Meeting
 - ✓ submit interim minister application package to UUA Transitions office
 - ✓ congregational survey

SLIDE #36

- April, 2014
 - ✓ interim ministry selection process

SLIDE #37

- June, 2014
 - ✓ Annual Congregational Meeting – survey results presented

SLIDE #38

- Fall, 2014
 - ✓ arrival of selected interim minister

SLIDE #39

- Summer/Fall, 2015
 - ✓ establish Ministerial Search Committee to begin search for settled minister

SLIDE #40

- Summer/Fall 2016
 - ✓ arrival of new, settled minister

And now, I would like to give Russell an opportunity to add any “pearls of wisdom” to what has been presented. He will also be assisting in answering your questions as we move forward through the evening as well.

SLIDE #41 RUSSELL

SLIDE #42

As a matter of housekeeping and format, if you have a question that you would like to present this evening, please line up alongside the south wall of the sanctuary and as it is your turn, state your name and question into the mic. We will ask you to hold your question or comment to two minutes this evening to better ensure that everyone will have the opportunity to ask their question. Time will be allowed for response from me, Russell or another member of the board. Past President, Caroline Nixon will serve as our timekeeper.

If you prefer to write your question, please state your question on one of the provided notecards and place it in the basket here at the front table. Director, Ric Hansen will be reviewing the questions to avoid duplication and we will allow time toward the end of the evening for these questions to be answered.

Secretary, Reed Bilz and Vice-President, Cindy Fountain will be taking notes on the discussion this evening and we have arranged for James Finn and Bill Terry to make an audio recording as well! All of this is to ensure that your questions are answered completely, either this evening or after further research and review!

Q & A

WRITTEN Q & A – Ric

SLIDE #43 WRAP UP

Again, on behalf of the board, Russell, and myself, I would like to thank you for your attendance this evening. I will ask Bill Terry to post the informational portion of my presentation to the newly established, transitions link on the church website – under Church Business. The next Town Hall meeting will be on Wednesday, October 2nd and we invite you to come back that evening as we continue to keep our lines of communication open!

And now, as we rise in body or spirit, Director, Karen Moore will offer our Closing Words.

SLIDE #44 CLOSING WORDS – Karen

EXTINGUISH CHALICE

SLIDE #45 CONGREGATIONAL CLOSING

Let us go in peace,

believe in peace,

and create peace in our lives and in the world.

SLIDE #46