



Rev. Matt Alspaugh
Minister
First Unitarian Universalist Church of Youngstown
1105 Elm St. Youngstown, OH 44505
330-746-3067 (office)
330-333-1456 (mobile)
uuyo.org

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Dear Members and Friends of the First Unitarian Universalist Church of Youngstown:

I am writing to let you know that I have decided to make a transition in my life and will be ending my ministry with UUYO on July 15, 2017. My future intentions are to continue to serve Unitarian Universalism in Interim Ministry, and I will be seeking an Interim position to start in the fall.

Please know that my decision to change my direction in ministry does not arise out of any dissatisfaction with UUYO. If anything, UUYO seems stronger, more focused, more energized in the last few months than I have perhaps ever seen. You are a gem of a congregation and will be attractive to the next minister you call.

I have become aware over time that my gifts and passion in ministry focus on working with congregations in transition. Some of you may remember that I came to UUYO originally as a developmental minister, helping the congregation work through questions of growth and vitality. I've realized I miss that kind of ministry, and want to reengage in it.

At the same time, I am filled with sadness having to say goodbye to a congregation that has been exceptionally kind and generous to me. It has been a delight to see the congregation become more welcoming, warm-hearted, and energetic over the nearly eight years I have been here.

While my time as your minister comes to an end, the ministry at UUYO will endure. You will make choices about how to proceed in ministry, with great regional staff available for advisement. Typically, congregations engage an Interim Minister as they make decisions about the kind of settled minister they seek for the longer term. I am confident that UUYO will be able to attract good potential ministers who can guide you to an even more amazing future.

Over the next few months, we will have time to remember our years together, to share our feelings, and to express our gratitude and our grief as these may arise -- and I expect they will. I will speak more about this transition this Sunday, March 12.

With great love and hope,

(signed)

Rev. Matt Alspaugh