

Proposal for Affiliated Community Ministry at The Unitarian Universalist Church of South County

INTRODUCTION

Currently, within the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations (UUA), there are three different recognized “specialties” in ministry: Parish Ministry, Ministry of Religious Education, and Community Ministry. While the first two specialties are well known, the third may not be. “Community Ministers” are persons qualified to perform ministries of counseling, chaplaincy, social justice, education in religious studies, or other such ministries as the UUA’s Ministerial Fellowship Committee may recognize.

Unitarian Universalist ministers who do not serve a congregation are strongly encouraged to affiliate with a congregation. Our Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations is governed by Congregational Polity, which means (among other things) that congregations (rather than regional bodies or bishops) have the sole power to ordain and call clergy. Therefore a congregational relationship is essential to all forms of Unitarian Universalist ministry. Rule 18 of the Ministerial Fellowship Committee requires that a community minister “maintain ties and receive endorsement by one or more of the following: A UUA member congregation, authorized District body, UUA Associate Member organization, or the UUA. Endorsement includes a pledge of continuing relationship and support and affirmation that the work is recognized by the endorsing body as ministry.” Ministers who are employees of the Unitarian Universalist Association are not required to form an affiliate ministerial relationship with a congregation; however such a relationship is encouraged.

Several models exist for structured relationships between UU community ministers and local congregations. The following proposal seeks to put forth a specific model that the UUCSC Board can consider as it decides whether or not it will affirm Rev. Sarah Gibb’s request for affiliation.

TERMS OF AGREEMENT

I. Duties of the Rev. Sarah Ivy Gibb as an Affiliated Community Minister with the Unitarian Universalist Church of South County

1. The primary arena of Rev. Gibb’s ministry is the nationwide association of congregations that form the Unitarian Universalist Association. She serves all American Unitarian Universalist congregations as the Association’s Adult Programs Director, developing resources for adults’ religious education and spiritual growth.
2. In consultation with the Parish Minister and appropriate Church committees, Rev. Gibb will teach two adult religious education courses per year and will lead worship two times per year. Rev. Gibb will not

receive compensation for these courses or services. However, compensation for any additional preaching, teaching, or other pastoral services at the Church shall be negotiated with the Worship Committee or Board of Directors, as appropriate.

3. Rev. Gibb's professional duties and external preaching engagements may take her out of the Mission Viejo area several Sundays per year. She will not be expected to attend the Church's worship and/or events more than once a month.

4. On a limited basis Rev. Gibb may serve as back-up to the Parish Minister: e.g. performing weddings, conducting funerals, and offering emergency pastoral care. However, Rev. Robert Jordan Ross (Minister Emeritus) will still be considered the primary back-up to the Parish minister in this manner. As the parish minister's partner, Rev. Gibb will often be unavailable on the same dates when Rev. Millspaugh is unavailable.

5. Referrals from the Parish Minister to Rev. Gibb and vice versa shall be carefully worked out so that each person's ministry is affirmed. Consistent with the UUMA Code of Professional Conduct, Rev. Gibb shall defer accepting from members and friends of the church any invitation for her services traditionally associated with the Parish Ministry, in the absence of a clear prior understanding to the contrary.

6. Rev. Gibb and Rev. Millspaugh are romantic partners. In the unlikely event that their romantic relationship should dissolve, Rev. Gibb would resign her affiliation with the Unitarian Universalist Church of South County.

7. Should Rev. Gibb's position with the Unitarian Universalist Association come to an end, she would continue to serve as Affiliated Community Minister provided she is actively involved in a search for a community-based ministry. It is expressly understood that the Unitarian Universalist Church of South County would bear no financial responsibility to her during this interim period. It is also expressly understood that Rev. Gibb would resign her affiliation with the Unitarian Universalist Church of South County should she find employment that would either (1) cause her to move out of the Orange County area or (2) not be work that is clearly understood as ministry (as defined by the Ministry and Professional Leadership Staff Group and the Ministerial Fellowship Committee of the UUA).

II. Terms of Understanding

1. The duties of the Affiliated Community Minister are initially set forth in this document (see I.) Changes to these duties shall be agreed upon by the Parish Minister, the Community Minister, and the Board. The Parish Minister clearly has overall responsibility for ministerial leadership within the church and, thus, appropriately shall take the lead in seeking clearer delineation of responsibility, accountability, and channels of communication as responsibilities, roles, and relations are negotiated and, as needed, renegotiated. As stated in the Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association's (UUMA's) Code of Professional Practice, the Affiliated Community Minister "...will in all ways honor the priority of the [Parish Minister's] call to the ministry of that congregation, and...will avoid influence which other members may tend to yield to me in the light of my experience, status and prestige." At the same time the Parish Minister shall earnestly seek to respect the calling, strengths, and sensibilities of the Affiliated Community Minister, taking care to work collaboratively in a spirit of mutual cooperation and consultation.
2. Referrals for pastoral services such as weddings, funerals, child dedications, and emergency pastoral care to the Affiliated Community Minister shall be in such a manner as the Parish Minister and Affiliated Community Minister shall agree.
3. The Affiliated Community Ministers is neither employed by, nor paid by, the church on any continuing basis.
4. The Affiliated Community Minister shall have access to the church facilities, photocopier, telephone, etc. for services rendered to the congregation. Secretarial services will not be provided, however.
5. The Affiliated Community Minister shall be identified as such on annual reports to the UUA and other regional institutions. The Affiliated Community Minister may serve as a Ministerial Delegate from our congregation at the annual UUA General Assembly. This, however, would not reduce the number of lay or Ministerial Delegates apportioned to our congregation.¹
6. The Affiliated Community Minister shall meet with the Parish Minister at least four times a year in order to review their working relationship with one another and within the life of the congregation. Responsibility for initiating these meetings shall rest with the Affiliated Community Minister.
7. The Affiliated Community Minister shall write an annual report of his/her activities, which shall be included in the congregation's Annual Report.

8. The Affiliated Community Minister will have access to a Ministerial Relations Committee to assist the Affiliated Community Minister toward completing requirements of Final Fellowship, and to further professional development.²

9. The UUMA Code of Professional Practice shall be carefully observed by all ministers of the Church. If difficulties arise, various resources may be called upon, including the Good Offices program of the UUMA. The Affiliated Community Minister may resign upon 30 days notice. Upon recommendation of the Parish Minister and/or with the concurrence of the Board of Directors, the Affiliated Community Minister's relationship with the congregation may be terminated upon 30 days notice. Since the Parish Minister's relationship with the congregation is primary, should the Parish Minister resign, the Affiliated Community Minister shall be prepared to resign and will serve or not serve at the Board's discretion, with respect to the preferences of the incoming Interim Minister.

10. Changes in this document may be made by agreement between the ministers concerned, and shall be effective 60 days after written notice of the change is given to the Board of Directors, unless the Board votes to delay, or reject the change.

The parties recognize and acknowledge that this Covenant represents an official offer to the Affiliate Community Minister when the affiliation is approved by the Parish Minister, the Affiliated Community Minister, and the Board of Directors, and affirmed by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the congregation at a properly called congregational meeting with a quorum present, and shall become final upon the occurrence of those events, evidenced by the signatures of the Parish Minister, the Affiliated Community Minister, and the Board President, below.

¹ Rev. Gibb, however, is ineligible to serve as a delegate to the General Assembly as long as she is serving as staff of the Unitarian Universalist Association.

² Rev. Gibb's Ministerial Relations Committee will be composed primarily of staff from her workplace, the Unitarian Universalist Association. However; if called as Affiliate Minister, she would like to recruit one to two members from UUCSC to join the committee. Rev. Gibb estimates that the committee would meet by conference call on a quarterly basis.