Dear OUUC Community,

I am so grateful for the ministry we have shared for these past seven years. It has been a privilege to serve as your settled minister.

I'm writing to let you know that this will be my last year as the minister at OUUC. I plan to retire from full-time ministry at the end of July 2027. This decision is personal and what is best for me and my family. I am weary and looking forward to more time to care for myself and my relationships. I will also take some time to see what emerges next for my ministry.

This may come as a surprise and will likely bring up many different feelings. I have many feelings, too. Transitions are hard. Over these next 10 months, we will have time and space to practice the spiritual work of celebration and saying goodbye.

We can be proud of the work that we have done together these past seven years. We have weathered many storms, including a pandemic and massive political and cultural upheaval. Amid all this, together we have created beautiful and inspiring worship services, crafted a new vision and mission, deepened our shared covenant, strengthened our organization, cared for our building, focused our justice work, created welcoming space for visitors and new members, and revitalized our program for children. Through it all, we have cared for each other and deepened relationships within and beyond our walls.

I am especially proud of our work to build physical and social infrastructure at OUUC. We have made Thursday evenings a time of sharing food and fellowship, learning together and connection. Due to your generosity, the congregation is debt free, and the building is fully electric and well maintained. The staff team has expanded to include support for online ministry and member engagement. OUUC has robust teams of volunteers to support our shared ministry. The Board of Trustees has created committees to support the work of sharing power and making decisions. In a time when much of what we counted on is being dismantled, we have been building OUUC to be strong and sustainable well into the future.

I have been in touch with UUA regional staff and Transitions Office staff, who are ready to support both you and me through this transition. On Sunday, October 18, OUUC's regional liaison, Isaac Castro, will be onsite to co-lead the worship service with me and offer an after-service forum at 12:15 about how the region can assist over these next months. Please join us!

OUUC board leaders and I have talked about the next steps and how to best support a healthy goodbye. Board leaders are already hard at work taking the next steps regarding this transition. (See board president, Sally Alhadeff's letter below.)

Over the next months, I'll offer opportunities to drop in to share tea, cookies, and stories about OUUC and our time together. And, if you would like an appointment with me, please reach out by email.

Ministry is always shared. Thanks to all of you and the staff of this congregation, many who do so much, visible and less visible.

I will be leaving after serving you for eight years, a bit longer than average. That you have had several long-term and dedicated ministers speaks well of you as a congregation and offers hope for the minister that you select next and your ministry in the future.

I feel so fortunate to have been part of your congregational story. I love you and I believe in you as a congregation. You are what makes the church, and I think you will face this change as you have faced the challenges of these last years---with thoughtfulness, courage, and care.

Thank you for the opportunity to partner with you in this meaningful ministry. For the next 10 months, let's celebrate our shared ministry!

With gratitude,

Rev. Mary Mangione Gear

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