**SAMPLE LETTER TO CONGREGATION**

**FOLLOWING THE RESIGNATION OF THE PASTOR**

Dear members and friends of St. Paul’s Church,

Our congregation’s traditional practice of “calling” a pastor affirms the active presence of God’s Spirit in the search process. We prayerfully seek a pastor with particular gifts and skills while recognizing that candidates are also engaged in a Spirit-led discernment process. Thus our church enters into a covenant with a new pastor always knowing that God may sometimes call that pastor to a new ministry setting.

In the days that have elapsed since Rev. Janet Chandler mailed us her resignation letter, we have been keenly aware of God’s new calling for her even as we have experienced a profound sense of loss. It is not easy to think about ending a Spirit-filled eight year ministry. These next two months together will be a precious time, and we will inform you soon about our plans for special events to celebrate Janet’s ministry.

The members of your governing board/council have already been approached by some of you with the haunting question, ***“Our pastor is leaving . . . what will we do?”*** We want to assure you that we have already been in touch with our Conference/Association minister, Rev. Jackson Parker. We will schedule a special meeting of our governing board later this month to hear directly from him about UCC procedures during a time of pastoral transition. He suggested that we share with you this brief overview:

1. ***We will select an interim pastor to provide continuity in worship, pastoral care, and program/staff oversight. Rev. Parker will advise us on this process; he has assured us that he has several excellent candidates available who offer the specialized skills needed during a transition time. This pastor will not be a candidate for the “settled” position.***
2. ***After the interim pastor is in place, we will initiate a search process for a new pastor in accordance with our bylaws. We will invite all of you to be part of a self-study that will identify our church’s pastoral needs. And we will develop a church profile for our potential candidates.***
3. ***Our Conference office will advertise our vacancy among UCC clergy all across the country. Our search committee will read ministerial profiles, screen candidates, conduct interviews, check references, and eventually select a candidate who will be recommended to the entire congregation.***

We send this letter so you will know that we are taking steps to think about our future. We will keep you informed on a regular basis. For now, let us express our gratitude to God for Janet’s ministry and enter into a time of celebration with her and her family. Please keep them in your prayers even as you know from experience that she will be praying for us.

In Christ’s name,

The St. Paul’s Governing Board