**SAMPLE LETTER TO CONGREGATION**

As members of the Search Committee, we want to express our gratitude for the trust you have placed in us. This past week we concluded our orientation meeting with Rev. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, our Conference/Association Minister who will work closely with us. The purpose of this letter is to share with you a brief summary of the Search and Call process in the United Church of Christ.

1. We will seek your perspectives on our church and its ministry through a questionnaire and a series of small group meetings; as a result of this listening process, we will incorporate your ideas about new pastoral leadership into the “Local Church Profile” that we will develop.
2. Our vacancy will then be listed in “UCC Employment Opportunities.”
3. Persons who have been authorized to complete a UCC Ministerial Profile will submit profiles for our committee through the Conference/Association office. The Ministerial Profile includes information about the candidate’s educational background, experience, a detailed faith statement, eight written references, a background check form, and a criminal background check.
4. While the work on the Local Church Profile requires the input of many in the congregation, the names of candidates are held in strict confidence within our committee; we ask you to respect the essential confidentiality of this process. We will make every effort to keep you informed—on a regular basis—about our progress.
5. We will share our Local Church Profile with candidates, and we will begin to follow up with persons in whom we have particular interest. The follow up will include telephone reference checks, telephone interviews, and requests for sermon tapes. While pursuing these steps, we will also continue to evaluate new Ministerial Profiles.
6. We will select a small number of candidates for personal interviews, following which we will make arrangements for our Search Committee members to worship with them, most often in a church setting arranged by our Conference/Association office.
7. We will invite at least two candidates back for second interviews, following which we will seek God’s guidance and prayerfully make a decision on a candidate.
8. If the candidate we recommend chooses to accept, compensation arrangements will be clarified, and a date for a “candidating Sunday” will be established.
9. You will have an opportunity to meet the candidate (and family) that weekend in an informal setting as well as the formal worship service where the candidate will preach. A congregational meeting following the worship service will offer each member an opportunity to ask questions of the Search Committee, and to vote on the Call to our new pastor.

We are grateful during this time for the excellent interim leadership of Rev. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. We profoundly trust that God will guide both our candidates and the members of our Search Committee. We ask you to pray for us regularly. We are blessed with a wonderful church community; with hard work and God’s guidance, we will be blessed with a wonderful pastor to guide us as we minister in the name of Jesus Christ.