**ANNOUNCING ARRANGEMENTS FOR A CANDIDATING WEEKEND**

NOTE: This particular all-church mailing often contains two or more documents. The first is the formal “Call” to a congregational meeting; such a notice should be crafted in accordance with your bylaws and signed by the elected leader (secretary/clerk/president) who customarily announces such meetings. (Some bylaws also require announcements from the pulpit on Sunday or Sundays prior to a congregational meeting.)

Church bylaws usually will specify who is eligible to vote for a new pastor and the percentage of affirmative votes required to extend a call. It is often helpful to summarize those bylaw requirements in the letter. Some church members may have no previous experience participating in this process; such would particularly be the case if the previous pastor’s tenure extended over many years.

The second letter usually comes from the Search Committee. The committee may also choose to prepare a brochure with more information about the candidate and family.

**SAMPLE LETTER FROM SEARCH COMMITTEE**

Fifteen months ago, the members of this church entrusted the Search Committee with the responsibility of prayerfully selecting a candidate for your approval. We gathered “input” from many of you as we assembled our Local Church Profile. We carefully reviewed the UCC Ministerial Profiles of 24 candidates; after checking references, we interviewed four candidates and arranged to hear three of them preach. Following second interviews with two candidates, we unanimously selected—through prayer and mutual consent—The Rev. Sandra Johnstone as our candidate for the ministry of our church.

Sandra was raised in Iowa and has been part of the United Church of Christ since childhood. She pursued her undergraduate studies at Carleton College in Minnesota; following college she returned to Des Moines and worked in health care administration for ten years. She often wondered whether God was “calling” her to consider pastoral ministry, but she was actually at the point of applying for graduate work in business administration when she realized that God was clearly leading her to enroll in the UCC United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities. She received her Master of Divinity degree from the seminary this past May. Her seminary field education experience included opportunities to preach regularly, plan special worship services, conduct funerals, support and train church school teachers, and work closely with the stewardship drive. Following our candidating Sunday, Sandra will forward a copy of the terms of her pastoral call to her Committee on Ministry in Iowa and move toward completion of her ecclesiastical journey toward ordination.

Sandra met her husband, Patrick, at Carleton College. He is a copy editor for a publishing house in Minnesota, and he has continued to do this work from their home during their 10 years in Iowa. He competes regularly in marathons, and Sandra is an enthusiastic gardener; they both enjoy sports, outdoor activities, movies, a wide range of music, and volunteer work with an affordable housing project in Des Moines.

Sandra will bring many gifts to our church. She is wise and mature, a strong preacher and a creative worship leader. She possesses a compassionate spirit and a keen sense of humor. The following comments were made by some of her references:

*“. . . an amazingly deep sense of faith . . .”*

*“Sandra is trustworthy and confidential.”*

*“The Bible study sessions she led made the prophet Jeremiah ‘come alive.’”*

*“Sandra was a natural at preaching; she was always well prepared and comfortable in the pulpit. She is one of the finest public speakers and best story-tellers I’ve ever encountered.”*

*“She is comfortable with persons of all ages. I’ve observed her interacting with noisy toddlers and withdrawn teens, overwhelmed single parents, and the long-time members of our church. She built strong relationships because she focused on each one individually.”*

*“You experience Christ’s love when you talk with her.”*

The members of our committee look forward to talking with you about our joyful interactions with Sandra. We hope you will make every effort to attend the Saturday night potluck supper where you will meet Sandra and Patrick in a more informal setting as well as the Sunday morning worship service and congregational meeting.

**Saturday night, February 3, 6:00 p.m** All church potluck. A program will be available for young children following the supper; older children and youth are encouraged to participate in this opportunity to become acquainted with two wonderful people.

**Sunday morning, February 4, 10:00 a.m. worship** Sandra will conduct the worship service. Following the service, a congregational meeting will be held to hear a detailed report from the Search Committee, discuss the terms of the Call Agreement, and vote on the recommendation to call Sandra Johnstone as our new pastor. Assuming a positive vote, it is our hope that Sandra will start with us on April 15.

We believe that God has led us to this exciting moment in our ministry . . . and so does Sandra. We look forward to growing together as a faith community, serving others and proclaiming the good news of God’s love.

Thank you for the privilege you have given us.

Sincerely,

The Members of the Search Committee