

**Board of Directors Pleased to Introduce
Transitional Conference Minister,
The Rev. Jonna Jensen**

June 30, 2020

Dear friends in Christ and in the Maine Conference,

As we enter into this next season of ministry together: a time of transition, and a time of discernment as we prepare to call the next settled Conference Minister of the Maine Conference, we give thanks for the gifts which God grants us to sustain us in our ministry and mission. As a Board, we give thanks for the grace and trust you have shared with us in the last weeks in this time of change. As a Conference, we turn to seek and receive the gifts of faithful leaders who may assist us and journey with us in the paths ahead.

Supported by our partners in the National setting of the United Church of Christ, most especially by The Rev. Lee Albertson, Conference Minister Search Coordinator, the Board has worked quickly to insure steady and consistent ministerial leadership for our Conference, creating a Transitional Conference Minister Search Committee tasked with discerning and developing the pastoral contract that will shape our ministry during the transition, evaluating profiles of possible candidates, interviewing and discerning, and then recommending to the full Board of Directors a final candidate for their affirmation and approval.

Almost immediately in our work, one candidate drew the attention and focus of our discernment. In the conversations, prayers, and sharing that followed—both with the Search Committee and the Board of Directors—we have felt the movement of the Spirit and the abundance of God’s provision in all times through her gifts and ministry, and through her warm and welcoming way as a pastor.

The Board of Directors is therefore pleased to announce that we have contracted with **The Rev. Jonna Jensen** to serve as Transitional Conference Minister of the Maine Conference. Her work with us will begin September 1, 2020 and continue for the next 18-24 months as our Conference discerns our future calling in ministry and the job description of the next settled Conference Minister, constitutes a search committee and search for the candidate that God is calling to join us, and rejoices in the calling and celebration that will mark that new season of our life together.



Jonna comes to us with deep history, experience, and shared gifts within the United Church of Christ. She is a gifted pastor, writer, and interpreter and communicator of the Gospel, and of the mission of the wider Church. As an Associate Conference Minister for the last 12 years, first in the Iowa Conference, and now in the Tri-Conference Ministries (Iowa, Nebraska, and South Dakota) she has tended to the care and connection of congregations in numerous ways. She has accompanied and supported the conferences she has served as they have wrestled with the challenges and opportunities of the changing world of church and done bold work to minister in new ways. She has excelled in faithfully and creatively assisting congregations in the search and call of authorized ministers. She has cared for and nurtured the spiritual formation, growth, and care of pastors and leaders with a pastor’s heart herself.

By way of greeting, Jonna sends along these words of introduction about her life and work, and her excitement in joining us in the Maine Conference:

Iowa has been my home for all but a few years of my life. I’ll always have served as a parish pastor longer - twenty-six years - than I’ve served in Conference ministry. My heart persists in parishes. I’ve cherished hours spent listening to the stories that rise from our pastors and congregations. I’ve found great joy in helping our congregations seek and call gifted pastors and in helping our pastors to tie and tend strong nets of support for their ministries. Time to be still and listen in the company of the divine is what nourishes my life as a disciple of Jesus.

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In re-creation time, I am glad to be writing or reading. I like to clear inner clutter with walking and contemplative labors like knitting and soup making. While I'm with you in Maine, I look forward to finding some very amateur tap dancers and some cross-country ski trails with slow lanes. The World's (well, at least Iowa's) Greatest Preacher's Kid, Noah, and his wonderful wife, KC, look forward to visits to Maine, as do my dear friends, Noah's dad and step-dad.

I pray you all blessings, dear saints of the Maine Conference, in this season of faithful farewells and faithful hellos.

We give thanks for the ministries and settings which have nourished and developed Jonna's gifts and journeyed with her through the years. We wish her, and the Tri Conference Ministries, blessings in these tender times of saying good-bye. Jonna is in the midst of securing and preparing to move to housing in Maine, and so we especially pray for traveling mercies in those moving tasks that are never easy even under the best of circumstances!

Special thanks for their thoughtful and prayerful service go to the Transitional Conference Minister Search Committee: The Rev. Linette George, Mr. Bob Sandman, The Rev. Steve Hastings, Mr. Hariph Smith, and The Rev. Joshua Fitterling.

As we approach September 1st, please watch for Conference announcements for opportunities to meet, welcome, and connect with Jonna as she begins her ministry with us. We trust you will find, as we have, that she is gifted leader and pastor to individuals and congregations, and that you will endeavor to partner with her as she works with us: discerning and calling out the gifts of the Spirit here in our midst. We will also be able to formally welcome Jonna and worship with her during Annual Meeting 89 on the weekend of October 23 and 24. More details on Annual Meeting will be forthcoming.

In the gifts and callings of faithful servants of the Church, and in the resurrection joy and hope we share as a people, we find God ever with us. In the months and seasons ahead, may we all continue to experience the joy and presence of the Holy Spirit in our shared ministries: in our lives and vocations, in our congregations, and in the Maine Conference.

Blessings to you, this day and every day... and the peace of Christ be with you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Geoff Parker". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

The Rev. Geoff Parker
Chair, Board of Directors – Maine Conference, UCC