

To: the Board of Trustees of the Carbondale Unitarian Fellowship
From: the Rev. William Sasso, Minister
Date: November 10, 2004
Subject: Ministerial Sabbatical Proposal

Purpose: The purpose of a ministerial sabbatical is to provide a period of refreshment and renewal for both the minister and the congregation.

Background: My agreement with the Fellowship specifies that I accrue a month of paid sabbatical leave for each year of service, up to a maximum accumulation of six months. My term of service with the Fellowship began on August 1, 1999, so, as of July 31, 2005, after six years of service to the Fellowship, I will have accrued six months of sabbatical time. I propose to use three months for this sabbatical, with the other three months remaining available for future sabbatical use.

Sabbatical Timeframe: I propose to take three months of sabbatical leave, including June and July, 2005, with an additional month of sabbatical preparation taken in increments of less than one week at a time between August, 2004, and May, 2005. These small increments will be used for sabbatical-related research and planning. I have already spent two days, August 26th and 27th, at the Meadville/Lombard Theological School library establishing that there were, indeed, both Unitarian and Universalist congregations in southern Illinois in the latter half of the 19th century.

Statement of Minister's Sabbatical Intentions:

1. **Historical Study:** The major element of the sabbatical will be a preliminary historical study of early Unitarians and Universalists in Southern Illinois. As noted above, I have established that there were Unitarian and Universalist congregations in this part of the state, with a concentration of Unitarians in the Shelbyville-Mattoon area, and several concentrations of Universalist congregations in the Effingham and Mt. Vernon areas, as well as some as far south as Mt. Pleasant (between Anna and Vienna). If preparations indicate that this is a promising approach, I will begin with research of the southernmost congregations and work my way northward, using local sources to the greatest extent possible. The results of this work will be made available to the larger public in one or more of the following ways: development of an internet site on "Early Unitarians and Universalists in Southern Illinois," publications of articles in local news media, state and regional historical journals, and/or appropriate UU journals (e.g., UU World, Journal of the UU Historical Society, CMwD Messenger, etc). If appropriate, this research may inform the development of one or more Sunday services at the Fellowship.
2. **Attendance at a Retreat and/or Continuing Education Program:** Up to one week of the proposed sabbatical will be used to attend a retreat or continuing education program, to be selected by me in consultation with the Committee on Ministry.
3. **Attendance at a Hammered Dulcimer Workshop:** At my discretion, up to one week of the proposed sabbatical may be used to attend a hammered dulcimer music workshop or program of interest to me.
4. **Participation in the Fellowship's Summer Children's Program:** At my discretion, I will have the option of participating in the Summer Children's Program during the sabbatical period.

Communication of Sabbatical Intentions to the Fellowship: I will take responsibility for informing the Fellowship of my sabbatical plans and the arrangements that have been made to ensure that the Fellowship continues to function smoothly during my sabbatical. During my absence, the Committee on Ministry will take responsibility for these communications.

Coverage of Ministerial Responsibilities

1. Leading Sunday Services: The Sunday Services Committee will plan and take responsibility for leading services during June and July. Prior to the sabbatical, I will collaborate with the Committee in developing this plan and help to ensure that those responsible for leading and presiding at these services are well prepared to do so.
2. Pastoral Care: The Fellowship's nine current Pastoral Friends are willing to accept the responsibility of providing first-line pastoral care. I will work with them to arrange a coverage schedule prior to the beginning of the sabbatical. Since I will be in the Carbondale area for most of the sabbatical period, I will be available for pastoral care in case of a Fellowship death or any other situations of extreme need.
3. Special Services (weddings, unions, memorials, dedications, etc): I will not accept any invitations to conduct weddings or unions during this period of time, but will refer such requests to other clergy within the Fellowship (e.g., Jack H., Ken S.) and the Carbondale community (e.g., Kim M., Hugh M.). I will consider requests to lead memorial services on a case by case basis.
4. Religious Education, Teaching, and Group Facilitation: Director of Religious Education Roy S. will continue to coordinate our children's religious education program, and will serve as acting chief of staff in my absence. Before beginning my sabbatical, I will ensure that any covenant groups that plan to meet through the summer have sufficient resources available. I do not usually teach or lead groups during the summer, but the Program Committee will continue to offer appropriate summer programs.
5. Social Justice and Visibility/Outreach: The Social Action Committee and Welcoming Congregation Committee will continue to function as active social justice agents. Any immediate responsibilities of mine relating to Rainbow Café will be handled by other members of the Rainbow Café Board of Directors. The Membership Committee will conduct the June, 2005, "Invitation to Fellowship" orientation on its own.
6. Administration: Fellowship office volunteers will refer questions to the Fellowship Vice-President (currently Judy A.) and Secretary (Vennie A.). Outgoing (JoAnna J.) and incoming (unknown at this time) Fellowship Presidents may also be expected to participate in administrative decision-making.

Some Further Comments: During the sabbatical period, I hope to visit other Carbondale area congregations on Sunday mornings, so it is unlikely that I will be present at the Fellowship on Sundays (which would probably interfere with my "separation" in any case).