

November 19, 2015
From the Board of Directors

Dear Beloved Rocky Mountain Conference,

Greetings from your Board of Directors on a cold and blustery day, when we surely feel the Spirit blowing in that wind among us and connecting us across three states in ministry and covenant together.

We want to share with all of you a recent development in our search process for a settled Conference Minister. As you know, a Search Committee was appointed and commissioned in June 2015, and a process developed and implemented by the Board of Directors in conjunction with the Search Committee. The Search Committee developed a Conference Profile in September, then shared it throughout the conference.

The next step was to consider our Acting Conference Minister, the Rev. Sue Artt, as the first candidate. As the interview approached, Sue prepared her profile as well, and engaged in a season of discernment. In deep reflection and dialogue with mentors, Sue determined that the best future health and vitality of the Rocky Mountain Conference would not be helped if she continued her candidacy in this process, at this time.

On October 29, the Board and Search Committee received her withdrawal from candidacy.

Following that decision, the Board of Directors entered a time of exploration and discernment of its own, in consultation with the Search Committee and with experienced resources from the national setting of the United Church of Christ. We determined to explore carefully and thoroughly the complexities of emotion, sentiment, and experiences that have been part of this search process up to this point.

What has become clear is that there is unresolved history around previous search processes, and there is suspicion and concern for the integrity surrounding our current process. Each configuration of the Board throughout this process—beginning with Rev. Dr. Tom Rehling's retirement—has sought to act with the best of intentions and out of great love for this conference. However, our actions nonetheless contributed to this current situation which put Sue in a no-win situation.

The ongoing narrative of our conference is that we can never get it right. The perception is that our Conference Ministers tend to be brought in the back door, without a proper process. Because of decisions made by the Board to make Sue an Acting Conference Minister instead of an Interim Minister, and then to consider her as an internal candidate first, it felt to many like we were repeating history. This of course was never the intent of the Board. The Board came to these decisions honestly and with purest of intentions. Sometimes however, even our best intentions fail us. As a Board, we want to emphasize that Sue had nothing to do with any of these decisions, and that she has served with nothing but integrity and character throughout this whole process.

On November 14, the Board met at length in Executive Session with a member of the Search Committee who serves on the Board, as well as via conference call with Rev. John C. Dorhauer, General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ. Here is what we know from our meeting: We want to get it right this time. We want to make the right decision for the long-term health and vitality of this conference. To do this, we have made the following steps forward:

- The BOD has been in conversation with the Search Committee, and the Search Committee has been asked to pause the search process and not move to the next step of creating an open pool of candidates for the Conference Minister position.
- The BOD will be working with Gayle Engel, a consultant from the national setting, who will provide wisdom, guidance, and external perspective as we seek to discern what is right.
- The BOD invites the entire conference to join us in this season of discernment—listening, sharing, exploring concerns from our history, and bringing to light residual unrest within the conference—so that we might truly move into a bright, hopeful, and vital future of one accord.

We covet your prayerful engagement with us in this time. We want to hear from you, to listen and to dialogue, and we will be communicating a structured process for that in the coming weeks. In the meantime, though, please connect with us, come to the table, and covenant with us to make this a health-giving, fruitful, life-changing season in our beloved conference, so that we may move strong and sure into our mission and envisioned future a house united.

To contact the members of the Board of Directors, please visit rmcucc.org.

In Christ's hope and healing power,

Rev. Rebecca Kemper Poos, Moderator of the Board of Directors,
Rocky Mountain Conference of the United Church of Christ