



# FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

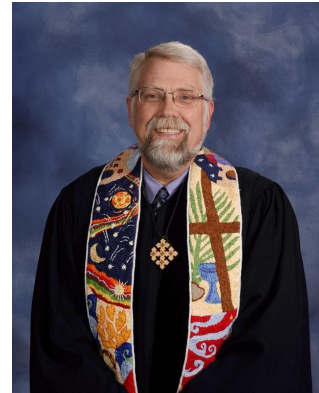
## UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Dear Friends,

Grace and peace to you through the love of God, the peace of Jesus Christ, and the gentle presence of the Holy Spirit.

The time has come for me to retire. Susan and I have prayed about this, and I find myself at complete peace with this decision.

Next year, on October 20, 2024, I will preach my last sermon and lead my last worship services as First Congregational Church UCC's 15<sup>th</sup> Senior Minister.



My last official day at First Congregational UCC will be November 21, 2024 – the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of my call as your Senior Minister. It will also mark the end of 39½ years of pastoral ministry in the United Church of Christ - in which I served 3¾ years at Bethany UCC, Cleveland, Ohio, and 10¾ years at North Congregational (now Just North) UCC, Columbus.

Susan and I look forward to more time together and so much more time with our family and friends. I have dreams and plans to serve God in settings beyond the local church. But this retirement will mark the end of my pastoral ministry.

It has been an honor to serve as your pastor and teacher. When you called me on November 21, 1999, I never dreamed that I would be blessed with such a long and meaningful ministry among you. Thank you for all you have done to support me through so many years. Thank you for listening, learning, working, disagreeing in Christian love, and spending so many hours of our lives together in worship and praise of God, in the study of faith and life, and the mission and ministry of mercy and justice in this congregation, the larger community, and the world.

Our time is not yet complete. Over the next 14 months, I will continue to give you everything I have in my heart, mind, and soul for loving service in Christ's name. I will continue to join you each week as we "enter to worship and depart to serve" God. I will assist in the transition where it is helpful. I will move out of the way where it is helpful. In late October 2024, I will move out altogether.

Let me add, in faithful covenant with the practices of retiring United Church of Christ pastors, and to allow the interim and new pastor the space and time to bond with you, I will not return to the church during the interim period and for the first full year of the new pastor's time among you. It may be possible that I will return for a specific event or service, but only by invitation and after agreement by Church Council and the new Senior Minister.

For me it will be a grieving process. I will miss you every day. But God is in our absence from one another as well as our presence with one another.

This congregation has not had a Senior Minister retire since Dr. Coe in 1982. That is a long time. And I have never retired. We will learn to do this together over the next 14 months. I look forward to spending time with you. Please be in touch to help that happen, via email at [tahrens@first-church.org](mailto:tahrens@first-church.org) or by phone – 614-228-1741, ext. 113.

May God bless and keep you as we make this journey together. I promise you, when we reach October 2024, I will walk away, filled with gratitude for the time we have had together.

May God bless you now and always.

Love and blessings,

Tim Ahrens

Rev. Dr. Timothy C. Ahrens, Sr. Minister

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