

February 15, 2023

Dear Friends,

During her nine and a half years with us, Rev. Linda Simmons gave her heart to us and to her ministry throughout the island. When she came to us, as a newly minted minister, Rev. Linda served as our teacher, minister-confidante, collaborator, colleague and friend. Both she and we have grown into a strong and loving congregational “family”. Linda helped us develop the skills we will use as we go forward. Now, as we face the future without her, we have the chance to use those skills to practice our love for each other, this congregation and the wider community.

Right now, we are experiencing a time of mourning for the impending loss of Rev. Linda as our minister. We are also embarking on exploring new possibilities for our congregation’s “way of being” as we move forward. We would love to have everyone in our congregation participate in imagining what we may become and how we will accomplish our goals for the future.

The time is drawing near for Rev. Linda to say her last goodbyes to us and turn all of her attention to her studies and training so that she may become the best counselor she is able to be. This moving forward requires a “leap of faith” for both Rev. Linda and for us. We must hold onto the belief that, with work and commitment, all will be well for both Rev. Linda and for our congregation as we part ways and each find our own path.

As you all know, Linda will be staying on island for several months and you may see her “out and about”. No one wants this to create any awkwardness. If you run to Linda or Gary, feel free to greet them warmly as always. To help us and herself, Linda has created some guidelines for the time when she is still here, but no longer our minister. She wishes to be able to chat freely when she runs into one of us, but also wishes to stay away from discussions of church politics or congregants as that will no longer be her responsibility. Linda, herself, will let you know if she feels you and she are drifting into murky territory.

Your Board of Trustees and Rev. Linda understand that there may be certain situations, **before we get a new minister**, where it might benefit the congregation for the Board to ask Linda, if she is available, to provide a specific ministerial service (for example, a memorial service for a congregant). Rev. Linda has graciously agreed to be on our list of resource clergy to call upon in case of an urgent need. By her last day as our minister, Rev. Linda will leave her minister’s phone (508-680-6498) with Board President, Carl Borchert. She will also forward her email account(s) to Carl who will check them for messages. Should an urgent situation arise, you may leave messages on the phone she leaves with Carl or get in touch with Carl directly. Carl may contact Rev. Linda so she may check her availability and take any requests under consideration.

Now, as Rev. Linda prepares to embark on her next chapter and our congregation enters into a time of discernment and change, we are all being asked, **for a time**, to loosen the familiar tethers that have bound us to one another. Rev. Linda’s “Open Heart” has formed the foundation for her ability to share the sadness we all feel at her parting.

Now, we are counting on all of you to come celebrate Rev. Linda (and Gary) and send them off with our love and best wishes at a party on February 18th from 5pm – 8 pm at Faregrounds and/or come for Linda’s last service with us on February 19th.

Sincerely, your Board of Trustees,

Carl Borchert, President
Susan Richards, Clerk
Paul Stewart, Treasurer

Carol Benchley
Barbara Elder
Suse Robinson

Randi Allfather
Kristina Strand
Lora Stewart