

SEARCH COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION FOR ASSOCIATE CONFERENCE MINISTER

The Associate Conference Minister Search Committee is delighted to recommend to the Board of Directors the Reverend Kelly Gallagher as our next Associate Conference Minister.

Our Process

The Search Committee of six people began its work in May and posted the ACM position in the national UCC's ministry opportunities listing and on our own Conference website on May 19, 2021. We received 10 applications by the June 30 deadline. Applicants were diverse: 2 persons of color, gay and straight, 6 men, 4 women. The committee determined that five applicants warranted a first interview. Those five individuals were asked to submit written responses to two questions ahead of the interview and then were interviewed via Zoom on July 23. Those five candidates were 3 men and 2 women and included one person of color and LGBTQ individuals. The committee then narrowed it down to two finalist candidates, both of whom were white women. Committee members conducted at least three telephone reference checks on each of these final candidates. Video recordings of each finalist's preaching were viewed prior to the final interview. They were both interviewed in person in Minneapolis on August 13, which included a meal together with each applicant and their leadership of a brief worship service with the committee at the beginning of their interview. At the conclusion of both interviews, the committee quickly discerned that ***our unanimous and enthusiastic recommendation was that Rev. Kelly Gallagher be our next Associate Conference Minister.***

Our Recommended Candidate

The Reverend Kelly Gallagher received her Master of Divinity degree from Union Theological Seminary in New York City. Since 1996 she has served in a variety of roles in local United Church of Christ congregations in Massachusetts: Director of Christian Education, Assistant Minister, Solo Pastor (full-time and part-time) and Interim Minister. From 2013-2021 she served as Associate Conference Minister with the Massachusetts Conference of the United Church of Christ, where her experience included ministering to over 100 local congregations, staffing Committees on Ministry, and overseeing the justice ministries of the Massachusetts Conference. She has received additional training as a Boundary Awareness Facilitator and as a Racial Justice Facilitator (Levels I, II, and III.)

Rev. Gallagher also has extensive experience in filmmaking. She has produced and directed several films, including: "What is God Doing in This Place: The Story of a Church Becoming Open & Affirming", "The Hope for Peace: South Sudan", and "Watching Hope Form" (CONASPEH, The Protestant Council of Churches, Haiti), and "Sheltered" (CDIA/Boston University).

The search committee experienced Rev. Gallagher as warm and funny and immediately easy to relate to. Her faith is readily apparent. Her rich experience with congregations and the wider church is laced with wisdom, compassion, a passion for justice, and a deep respect for the local church.

In her ministerial profile, Rev. Gallagher wrote: ***“As an Associate Conference Minister my work was steeped in the traditional church and the desire and hope for the future church. I have felt the deep grief of those who thought nothing would – or should – ever change, and seen the deep sighs of relief of those who had been ostracized and hurt by the church that is fading away. To be a leader in church today means grief work, and dreaming; rolling up your sleeves and sitting back and observing. And above all it means being in relationship together...The work of ministry today is to walk alongside, lead and teach; to work together to see the needs of the world today – and learn to help each other let go of what is no longer necessary.”***

Rev. Gallagher also wrote: ***“I believe the church –local and wider settings – is called to be a place of promise and hope that exhibits a way forward in even the most difficult times, that strives to live up to God’s call of extravagant hospitality, deep love, mercy and justice –in all our humanness and difference and disagreement. I am passionate about right relationship , that there are ways to be with one another regardless of our disagreements that model love and respect. Church is the most obvious place for civility, caring and kindness to be taught, cultivated, and nurtured.”***

Rev. Gallagher is married to her spouse Liza and has one ten-year-old child.

What Others Say about Rev. Gallagher

A pastor of one of the churches in the region where Kelly served as ACM in Massachusetts wrote of Kelly: ***“When Kelly visits a local church, her words and presence create a bridge between wider and local church. When Kelly visits our local church, it is as if we invited a beloved cousin over to “catch up with one another”. As ideas and conversation develop, comfort and challenge are raised side by side. Our local church finds itself wanting Kelly to be pleased with its work, and Kelly makes clear the wider church is deeply blessed by the work of the local church, when we genuinely strive to become the highest expression of ourselves, everything God created us to be.”***

A Conference staff colleague said of Kelly:

“Throughout the last five years of our work together on Racial Justice, I [have] been moved by her truth-telling, her support of me as a Woman of Color and the strength of her work as an ally. She has always been open to critique, prepared to serve and lead and demonstrative in her support of the marginalized.”

The now retired Conference Minister of the Massachusetts Conference UCC , who hired Kelly and worked with her on Conference staff for five years, said in his written reference: ***“Rarely is a minister with such prophetic gifts loved for her pastoral care and relational authenticity – but Kelly is all that and more.”*** And in a telephone reference he said simply: ***“Without any reservation, I can say that if you hire her you will be blessed.”***

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The ACM Search Committee offers this recommendation with great joy and excitement. We look forward to the Board’s approval of the Rev. Kelly Gallagher as our next Associate Conference Minister and are eager to welcome her to the Minnesota Conference United Church of Christ.

Sincerely,

Search Committee Members

Rev. Paul Bauch (Sr. Minister, Peace UCC, Rochester)

Rev. Nikki Frontz (Pastor, Solomon's Porch, Minneapolis)

Cindy Lemke (Licensed Minister, 1st Congregational, Wadena & 1st Congregational, Staples)

Dr. Lisa Lindesmith (Member, Robbinsdale-Parkway UCC, Robbinsdale)

Rev. Matt Orendorff (Pastor, Federated Church, Morris)

Rev. Shari Prestemon (Conference Minister)