

Rev. Josh Simon's Departing Liturgy

Introduction and Greeting

Church Clerk and Past President Brenda Dawson: Our church family is constantly changing. People come and go. Babies are born. Children grow up. People commit themselves to one another. Loved ones and friends come to the end of their lives. Individuals move into our community and church life while others leave us, moving away to new places, new experiences, and new opportunities. It is important and right that we recognize these times of passage, of endings and beginnings. Today we share the time of farewell for Rev. Josh Simon, our Associate Pastor for the last five years.

People: Members and ministers come and go, yet Christ's ministry at First Church continues. Today, we celebrate the good ministry Rev. Simon has done among us for five years and celebrate the unique and talented gifts Josh has brought into our midst. We love you Josh and wish you well in your new call to ministry at Emanuel Church.

Rev. Simon: Thank you all for supporting and loving me during my time here at First Church.

Remembrance and the Sharing of Gifts

Rev. Mark Mendes invites Folks to Remember a story about Josh
Rev. Simon shares a story or two from his time as our Associate Pastor
Terry Livak offers a Parting Gift for Josh's Future Ministry

The Recognition of the End of Rev. Simon's Ministry

Brenda Dawson: On November 19, 2017, this church called the Reverend Josh Simon to serve as the Associate Pastor of the First Congregational Church of Essex Junction. We voted unanimously and enthusiastically to have him join our family of faith.

Rev. Simon: I thank the First Congregational Church of Essex Junction, its members and friends, for the love, kindness, and support shown me these last five years. I ask forgiveness for the mistakes I have made. I am grateful for the ways my leadership has been accepted. As I leave, I carry with me all that I have learned here.

People: We receive your thankfulness, offer forgiveness, and accept that you now leave to minister at Emanuel Church in Hales Corners Wisconsin. We express our gratitude for your time among us. We ask your forgiveness for our mistakes. Your influence on our faith and faithfulness will not leave us at your departure.

Rev. Simon: I forgive you and accept your gratitude, trusting that our time together and our parting are pleasing to God.

Vows of Release

Brenda Dawson: Do you, the members and friends of First Church release Rev. Josh Simon from the duties of Associate Pastor?

People: We do, with the help of God.

Rev. Mendes: Do all of you offer your encouragement for Josh's future ministry as Lead Pastor at Emanuel Church in Wisconsin? Will you pray for Josh and offer your love as a gift for his ongoing ministry at Emanuel Church? Do all of you promise NOT to ask Josh to perform any pastoral duties in the future and only contact Josh as a friend?

People: We do, with the help of God.

Brenda Dawson: Do you, Rev. Josh Simon, release First Church from turning to you and depending on you for any type of ministry whatsoever? Do you promise to refrain from performing any weddings, funerals or baptisms of people you have ministered to at First Church? Do you promise to no longer provide any pastoral care to the members and friends of this church? Finally, do you promise to move from being their minister to being their friend?

Rev. Josh Simon: I do, with the help of God.

Rev. Mendes: Do you offer your encouragement for the continued ministry at First Church and on the current and future staff that come to serve after your departure?

Rev. Simon: I do, with the help of God.

Witness of the Association and Vermont Conference of the United Church of Christ

Rev. Dr. Lyn Bujnak: On behalf of the Vermont Conference of the United Church of Christ, I witness to the words spoken here today: words of thankfulness, forgiveness, and release. The member churches of our conference hold each of you in prayer. As your covenantal partner, we pledge our support in the transitions signified in this service.

Champlain Association President Lou Daniels: On behalf of the Champlain Association of the UCC and its member churches, we witness the departure of Rev. Simon from our midst and know that healthy boundaries in the future between him and the members of this church will offer both parties health and wholeness.

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Dr. Lyn Bujnak: O God, we give thanks for the covenant that ties this local church with the Champlain Association and the Vermont Conference of the UCC. We are grateful for the years in which we have shared the life of faith with Josh, the Champlain Association and this church. We ask your blessing to be with Rev. Simon as he moves on to Emanuel Church and to this congregation as they continue to do ministry in this place. We acknowledge the shift of relationship from pastor and parishioner to friend and warn that from this day forward no ministry will occur between the two. This is the healthiest way for all covenantal partners to move forward. Help all of us God to honor these promises.

People: God, whose everlasting love for all is trustworthy, help each of us to trust the future which rests in your care. The time we were together saw our laughter and tears, our hopes and disappointments. Guide us as we hold these cherished memories, but move us into new ways of relating so that each of us might be stronger for the relationships garnered in this place. We pray this in the name of Jesus Christ, who invites us into relationship, amen.

Final Blessing by Lou Daniels: Go now, surrounded by our love and led by the promises of God, the presence of Jesus Christ, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Amen