

UUA Transitions Office
Interim Ministry Appraisal

Interim appraisals should be completed separately by congregation and interim minister with results shared. Appraisals are due after 6 months, after 12 months, and at the end of the second year of interim ministry. In the case of a three-year interim, a final appraisal should be conducted at the end of the ministry. Please email completed form as an email attachment to transitions@uua.org.

1. Congregation Name (please enter full name)

Unitarian Coastal Fellowship

2. Congregation City and State/Province

Morehead City, NC, USA

3. Name of Interim Minister

Reverend Micah Ma

4. Date Interim Ministry Began

August 1, 2021

5. Names of Persons Completing Appraisal

Susan Fetzer, President

Thomas Wentworth, Vice-President

Jo Ellen Essex, Secretary

David Hughes, Treasurer

Linda Rudd, Chair of Leadership Council

6. Email of Persons Completing Appraisal

sgfetzer@gmail.com

twentwo@ncsu.edu

jolnsx@yahoo.com

terpfan71@hotmail.com

lerudd@ncsu.edu

7. Role(s) of Person(s) Completing Appraisal

Board of Trustees, please see above.

8. When was this appraisal conducted?

after 6 months

after 12 months

at end of second year **X**

at end of third year

9. Date of Appraisal

TBD

10. How did the leadership and congregation prepare itself for interim ministry?

Leadership prepared a self-study for review by prospective Interim Ministers. Leadership identified potential members for the Transition Team. The congregation then conducted a successful search for an Interim Minister. UCF also had a lovely and meaningful farewell celebration for Rev. Sally White. We do feel that the congregation as a whole was initially not well-informed about the nature and purpose of interim ministry, but we feel that such an "update" has been successful.

11. Had previous interim ministries affected how interim ministry is viewed? If so, please describe.

No. Unitarian Coastal Fellowship had only one previous settled minister, Reverend Sally White, who retired at the end of June, 2021 after 17 years of service. Thus, the current Interim Ministry is our first. Prior to Rev. White's ministry, the congregation had several part-time ministers and informal interims who were retired or semi-retired UU ministers.

12. Goals of the Interim Ministry:

- continuing routine ministerial duties, such as: leading weekly worship; participating in meetings of committees and leadership; supervising staff;

providing pastoral care; representing UCF to the community and to UUA; and presiding at weddings, funerals and the like.

- identifying and leading a Transition Team during interim ministry (before arrival) – members of the Team were invited
- helping UCF create its history (timeline) and coming to terms with that history
- helping UCF identify any issues that might impede its future success
- identifying who we are and where we want to go in the future, to inform the kind of settled minister we would want
- bringing new ideas and energy to UCF
- offering leadership and support during UCF's transition to a new church property
- serving as UCF's connection to the UUA Transitions Office
- preparing UCF for the process of searching for a settled minister
- assisting with the search for a settled minister

13. Please assess the congregation's work toward engaging and acknowledging its grief and conflicts.

Through the work of the Transition Team, the congregation identified areas of past conflict and disappointment. In order to identify areas of friction or concern, Reverend Ma reached out to former members who resigned from their membership. The Pastoral Care Team has expanded the scope of its activities, by being more proactive in reaching out to people who might need an intervention but haven't asked for it. Grief identified by the PCT was often related to COVID-19 and the current political situation, but not to internal UCF matters.

14. Please assess the congregation's work toward recognizing its unique identity and its strengths.

The creation of a historical timeline has been useful in documenting UCF's identity, but thus far, this has been mainly a product of the Transition Team's efforts. More work remains to identify pivotal events in the timeline and to flesh out details with the assistance of the congregation. The ability of the congregation to navigate the complex process of fundraising, planning, and supervision of new construction is evidence of UCF's inherent strength.

An activity during the Board Retreat on September 24, 2022 identified the following as our top five values:

- community

- justice
- wisdom
- reverence
- inclusivity

A “Coffee With The Board,” held after the worship service on March 5, 2023 also identified key traits and attributes recognized by members of the congregation. These included: **TBD**.

15. Please assess the congregation’s work toward recognizing its needs and challenges.

An activity during the Board Retreat on September 24, 2022 identified eight challenges for the 2022-2023 church year:

- completing the work of the interim*
- enhancing stewardship, funding our future, including supporting a full-time minister*
- clarifying our Mission and Vision*
- volunteer/leadership development*
- completing all steps to be a Welcoming Congregation
- establishing a UCF position on the Eighth Principle
- developing Safe Congregation policies and procedures
- becoming a truly intergenerational congregation

*highest priority

16. Please assess the congregation’s work toward understanding the appropriate role of the minister(s), church staff, and lay leaders.

Much of this work lies ahead. We have determined that we will actively enter search later this year (2023) for a full-time contract minister. In the coming months, we will identify the desired roles/traits of our future minister and the staff needed to help us realize our dreams.

17. Please assess the congregation’s work toward successfully navigating leadership shifts that often accompany times of transition.

For the UCF members more involved in congregational activities, we seem to have adapted well to the Interim Ministry. UCF has experienced relatively few changes in leadership during the transition. In those few cases where a leader has had to step away from duties because of

illness, relocation, or family emergency, other obligations, others have stepped in to continue those duties.

18. Please assess the congregation's use of appropriate external resources, e.g. the UUA, Regional or District Resources, etc.

UCF remains connected to the UUA through the Interim Minister, Reverend Micah Ma. Members have participated in leadership training offered by the Southern Region of UUA. Our President and Vice-President attend the Southern Region Presidents Gathering and some ToolBox Webinars and a webinar on the new compensation guidelines. The Board worked with a Compensation Consultant, Rev. Ruth Lillian, and held a joint meeting with nearby New Bern UU Fellowship and Christine Purcell in a discussion of perhaps sharing a minister. We also remain connected with ministers in eastern North Carolina and beyond through pulpit exchange, guest worship leaders, etc. We continue to be well-connected in the community and region through our network with leaders in social action, community service, environment, food security concerns, etc. We also have opportunities to expand our connections with the LGBTQ community, such as Crystal Coast Proud.

19. Please assess the congregation's ongoing work about being engaged in the wider world e.g. service to others, social justice, anti-oppression.

This area has been a particular strength of UCF, and our efforts continued where possible during the pandemic through efforts of a vigorous Social Justice Committee that has sponsored a variety of successful events. We have a two-pronged anti-racism group, ARG, that supports an active reading group and positive action.

20. Is the Interim Minister capably ministering as preacher, pastor, and teacher? Have there been difficulties or have constraints been put upon the minister's ability to do so?

Yes, Reverend Ma has been an active contributor to our worship services, leading approximately three-quarters of these. They are a member of our Pastoral Care Team, and they have led services at funerals of deceased UCF members. The dual constraints imposed by the global pandemic and the ongoing construction project initially placed limits on these traditional ministerial activities, and a substantial portion of their time was appropriately dedicated to managing these challenges during 2021-2022. During 2022-2023, Reverend Ma has grown as a preacher, pastor, and teacher, creating many worship services that have been extremely well received by the congregation. A recent program of semimonthly Vesper Services has also been well-received. We are not aware of any constraints posed on the minister by the congregation.

21. Has the Interim Minister been attentive to self-care and to a spiritual practice of choice?

From the perspective of the congregation, this appears to be the case. Reverend Ma is clearly attentive to people's needs for self-care. They adhere to their days off and anticipate their summer break and important vacations with family and friends. They have had, and will have, opportunities to participate in UUA meetings, such as the General Assembly. Reverend Ma has

been supported by members of the congregation who have introduced her to recreational and other activities unique to our region.

22. Is the interim minister courageously raising the needful issues in the congregation?

Reverend Ma has been mindful of our larger goals of establishing a new church home. They also raised issues, such as the possibility of extending the interim ministry by one year, so that we would have time to attend to our ongoing challenges with the global pandemic and new construction, plus the “quality time” needed to prepare ourselves for a ministerial search. They understand the needs of UCF’s hard-working volunteers in leadership. They frequently speak about UCF members’ needs for balance and compassion in their lives.

23. Is the Interim Minister gaining the cooperation of the church leadership in addressing those issues?

Yes, The Board of Trustees and Leadership Council have been quite cooperative in working with Reverend Ma to address our goals and challenges.

24. What would you like to see addressed during the remaining interim period or in the future? Are there any adjustments that need to be made to the initial goals or anything else?

UCF has rededicated itself to unfinished work that would have normally been completed during a typical two-year Interim Ministry. The adjustment of adding a third Interim year will facilitate this effort. How is Reverend Ma going to help us determine what UCF needs from a minister? This will include input from both active UCF members and those who haven’t been particularly active in the fellowship during the pandemic. The Transition Team and other long-term UCF members could assist with this. We are reaching out to potential new members and groups that might find UU membership attractive, and we have been successful in recruiting new members

25. Any additional thoughts or observations?

UCF has been and remains a vital and loving community. We have met substantial challenges and we have persisted. We are tired, no doubt. Many of us need to rest and recharge, so we can resume our efforts to move toward the unfinished work of the Interim Ministry and proceed to a successful search for a minister. Another important need for UCF is to reach out to members who have been “dormant” during the long pandemic.

26. Has this appraisal been shared with the minister if being completed by the board or with the board if being completed by the minister?

Yes.

27. If appraisal has not been shared, please explain.

N/A

Respectfully submitted as draft "straw person," by Tom Wentworth, first draft March 3, 2023.