

ELIOT UNITARIAN CHAPEL
100 S. Taylor Avenue
Kirkwood, MO 63122



January 23, 2018

Dear Eliot Community:

Last October, I wrote to you about a change in my health status. I had learned that my pulmonary fibrosis had progressed, and I needed to wear oxygen for exertion. It has been a time of adaptation for Robert and me, and to some degree, for the church. In December, I had to see it was necessary to wear oxygen to lead worship. You have all been so supportive in your responses; I am blessed to serve such a caring community.

This past week, I received yet more news. After four days of extensive tests and interviews, the Barnes Jewish Hospital lung transplant team has granted me candidate status for a bilateral lung transplant. This means that I am otherwise healthy enough for the surgery and have an excellent chance of full recovery. It also means that my illness has progressed enough so that this is the only treatment left. It was a shock to hear that, as you can imagine. Things had been stable for a very long time, and we are still attempting to wrap our heads around all this. However, we are extremely grateful for this opportunity. And to be in St. Louis, which is the #2 hospital in the country for lung transplants, with one of the highest success rates. We met with two transplanted people— four and fourteen years out from their surgeries. Both were healthy, active, and very inspiring.

Once I complete a few requirements, I will be placed on the list for a pair of lungs. The average wait time is three months, though once I'm listed, we could get a call at any time. It turns out my sabbatical has become a health sabbatical. We had been hoping for France and Italy but are grateful for the opportunity to rest and prepare in St. Louis.

A few Eliot members have already asked what they can do to support us. Thank you! We don't know exactly what help we'll need yet, but I'll be talking with the Rev. Jim Crawford about what that could look like.

For now, I intend to carry out my responsibilities on a somewhat modified level, until my scheduled sabbatical start time on February 15. On the small chance that I get called for transplant before then, we have plans in place to make sure the church runs smoothly.

Beyond the sabbatical, it means my spending some time out on disability, which will likely involve Eliot contracting with an interim lead minister for a few months. The board will handle the specifics, and the UUA has resources to offer. There are ministers trained specifically for this type of assignment.

Finally, a word about you. This is a community that is healthy, resilient, and strong—and will come out stronger than before. As always, my faith is in you.

Love,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Robert H. [unclear]".