

Pastoral Message regarding the Special Congregational Meeting— Discernment Together on October 7

Wed, Sep 24, 2025 at 10:55 AM (emailed to members & partners)

Beloved Sanctuary family,

In our Congregational tradition, we are both autonomous and in covenant, seeking to follow Jesus as our Way. When the stakes are high, we practice communal discernment—prayerful listening that gives priority to the Holy Spirit’s movement over any one person’s preferences. Discernment is not debate; it is worshipful attention to the question, *“What is God calling us to do now?”* (cf. Acts 15:28; Romans 12:2).

We will hold a [Special Congregational Meeting](#) on Tuesday, October 7, 2025, 7 - 8:15 pm, [on Zoom](#). The [official call](#) issued September 19 lists a vote to dissolve the congregation as the actionable motion for this meeting. But, to avoid any confusion: our gathering is a time of discernment between two faithful possibilities—either

1. to recognize that The Congregational Church of West Medford, dba Sanctuary UCC’s call as a congregation is complete and vote to dissolve the congregation and proceed with the Legacy Process to that end (our bylaws require a two-thirds majority for this action), or
2. to recognize that there is still ministry for Sanctuary UCC to do. If the motion to dissolve does not pass, we will bring a proposal to a subsequent congregational meeting for a right-sized budget and ministry plan for Fiscal Year 2026.

How we will listen together. Each participant will be invited to share a two-minute reflection addressing two questions:

- Do you believe Sanctuary should dissolve at this time or continue its ministry?
- Why? Please name concrete impact—on you, on those we serve, and on those with whom we share our ministry.
- We will keep time so every voice can be heard.
- Our conversation covenant: speak from your own experience, listen to understand, be concise and kind, and let the peaceable, open-to-reason wisdom from above guide us (James 3:17).

You are encouraged to prepare your heart and words. In the days ahead, please pray with one or more of these scriptures: [Romans 12:1–2](#); [Philippians 1:9–11](#); [Acts 15:28](#); [James 1:5](#). Consider a brief story of impact you can share. A simple prayer for your preparation: *“Holy Spirit, give us wisdom, gentleness, and courage. What would You have us do now—for the sake of the Gospel and the common good?”*

Meeting at-a-glance.

- Date/Time: Tue, Oct 7, 2025, 7:00 - 8:15 pm
- Place: [Virtual Zoom Meeting](#)

What happens next.

- If the motion to dissolve passes ($\geq 2/3$), we will follow our bylaws and guidance from our UCC Association, pursue the Legacy Process, and steward a faithful wind-down, provide pastoral care, and tend to our ministries and assets with integrity. This will include further discernment about a budget and the resources needed to implement the Legacy Process and legal Dissolution.
- If the motion does not pass, we will convene a subsequent meeting to consider a right-sized ministry and budget plan for fiscal year 2026..

Whether we are discerning an ending or a next chapter, our aim is faithfulness—to one another, to our covenant, and above all to the living God who leads us. If you desire conversation or prayer, please reach out to me directly at 617-592-5853.

With love and care,

Wendy Miller Olapade