

## Welcome from Rev. Roberta Finkelstein, Interim Senior Minister

Dear Colleague,

I am delighted that you are exploring the senior minister position at The Unitarian Church in Westport. This is a congregation with a proud history, a positive reputation in the community, a committed and highly professional staff, and lots of enthusiastic and engaged members.

Rev. Frank Hall had a very long tenure here – 29 years! This means that an entire generation of Westport UU's knew Frank and his style of ministry and approach to 'doing church'. There was a great deal of stability in this, but it also presents challenges to those who follow him. The Transition Team and I have, along with the rest of the leadership, worked hard during this interim to sort through this legacy and to answer the classic interim questions: Who were we? Who are we? Who do we wish to be in the near future?

As a result, a great deal has changed. Embracing the concept of shared ministry, the congregation now has vibrant Pastoral and Worship Associates programs. We are experimenting with new approaches to leadership development and member integration. The staff has been reconfigured to more efficiently support an infrastructure appropriate to the size and aspirations of the congregation. The elected leadership is moving slowly and deliberately towards a policy-based governance model.

The new senior minister will be in a good position to further this work. That person will need to continue to educate, coach and support the leadership, particularly in their governance work.

I have found the congregation to be open to changes in the way we do worship, pastoral care, and stewardship. They show up with open minds and open hearts. And they do show up! Just to illustrate, more than 200 people showed up in August last year for a series of "Meet the Interim" events. I have never met that many people in August in any other interim placement.

They are eager to learn and quick to step forward when something needs doing. We just held a wonderful Auction Gala – the first in anybody's memory. It was a fun and positive event and raised significant funds for the operating budget.

As with any dynamic organization, there are many strengths here, and many challenges. Some of the challenges are actually connected to the strengths. For example, one of the first things you will notice about this congregation is the building. An iconic architect-designed building, it inspires awe, invites strong connections to the natural world, and encourages an outward focus. Like many architect designed buildings, a great deal of thought was given to the worship space, but the architect did not imagine a large staff that would need office and administrative work space. One of the challenges of bringing the congregation fully into the 21<sup>st</sup> century will be to resolve the issue of how to better house the many people who work here.

I will be happy to talk further with you about The Unitarian Church in Westport. You can reach me at [revroberta@gmail.com](mailto:revroberta@gmail.com) or 703-508-1336 (cell).

In Faith,



Rev. Roberta Finkelstein  
Interim Senior Minister