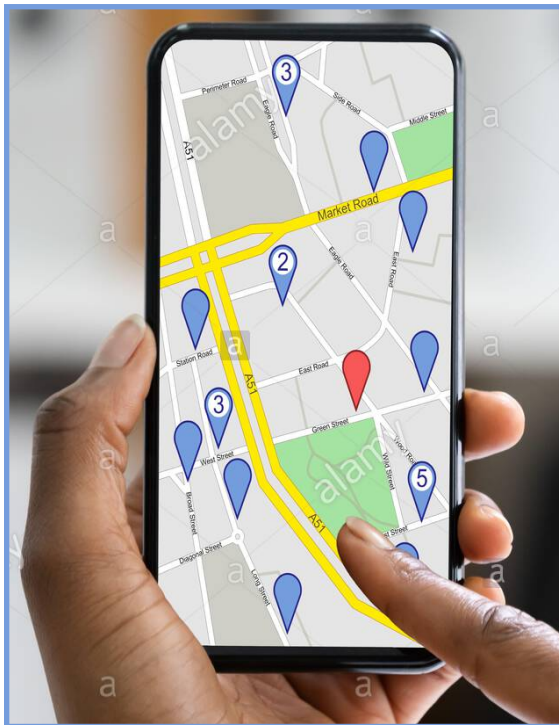


The Former Minister's Partner, The Former Minister, and The Current Minister



Recommendations For Navigating in Unfamiliar Territory

Barbara Child

Jaco B. ten Hove, Editor

NOTE: Throughout this Handbook, “partner” is used as a generic term that includes spouse.

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Part I

WHAT LED TO THIS HANDBOOK

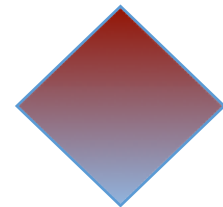
A. Multiple Discoveries at a UUMA Chapter Workshop

This handbook was two years in the making. [See **Addendum A** for the timeline.]

Momentum began when Joel Miller and I facilitated a workshop in April 2019 at the Annual Spring Seminar of the Transitional Ministers Chapter of the UUMA.¹ The workshop was entitled: “The Former Minister’s Partner: What Do We Know, What Does Everybody Want, and What Shall We Do?”

Participants divided into small groups, and each small group analyzed one section of the **UUMA Guidelines for the Conduct of Ministry**² or other related material that (1) explicitly refers to partners, (2) refers to partners only by implication, or (3) refers to them neither explicitly nor implicitly but might reasonably do so.

[For the text of the materials analyzed during the workshop and the charge to each small group, see **Addendum B**.]



B. An Amendment to the UUMA Guidelines

After hearing reports from the small groups, the workshop participants as one body decided that to seek all the Guidelines revisions they would like could become too complicated and take too long to be feasible.

They decided they would have a more reasonable chance of accomplishing valuable change if they proposed simply **adding one sentence in the Expectations of Conduct Section (item #16) in the UUMA Guidelines Code of Conduct**.

¹ Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association. Before becoming a chapter of the Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association (UUMA), this organization was known as the Interim Ministers Guild.

² Available at uuma.org

That addition would be inserted **after** this existing sentence:

If I belong to or attend a congregation served by a colleague, ... I will initiate an open and direct conversation with my colleague(s) in order to create a mutually agreed covenant, expressed in a Letter of Understanding, about the role I am to play in the church.

The proposed additional sentence, to **follow** the one above, reads:

If I have a partner, I will seek to have my partner participate in the conversation and be one of the mutually agreeing parties to the covenant and a signer of the Letter of Understanding about the roles each of us will play in the church.

This addition takes into account that the UUMA Guidelines cannot bind partners because they are not members of the UUMA. It suggests that covenanting former ministers can invite their partners into the conversation and process, rather than attempting to speak for their partners and possibly make agreements that might bind them, or else leaving their partners out of consideration altogether.

Having been endorsed by the boards of the UUMA and UURMaPA,³ the new language was adopted by the UUMA membership at its 2020 business meeting and thus became part of the Code of Conduct.



C. The Realization that Something Other than More Guidelines was Needed

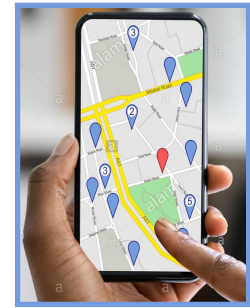
The attention that the Transitional Ministers UUMA Chapter and the boards of UUMA and UURMaPA had given to issues related to partners made it evident that the way to address most of these issues productively would not be by way of making multiple additions or changes to the Guidelines or lining up a new task force to study things at length.

Both organizations agreed that what was needed instead was an informal handbook that looks at the current realities regarding partners and makes some easily useable recommendations regarding (1) the covenanting process and (2) the design of an ad hoc support group for a retiring minister and partner. This is that handbook.

³ Unitarian Universalist Retired Ministers and Partners Association

Part II

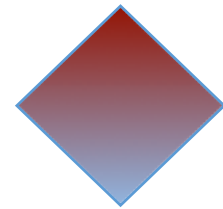
HOW PARTNERS CONTRIBUTED TO THIS HANDBOOK



A. Responses to a Questionnaire

I knew that my perspective as an Accredited Interim Minister needed to be augmented by hearing from other ministers and the partners of former ministers. It was evident that issues are more likely to arise if the former minister and partner continue to reside in the community of the previously served congregation, but their moving away does not guarantee the absence of continuing issues.

Consequently, I developed a questionnaire [see *Addendum C* for the text of the questionnaire and its accompanying cover letter], which I sent far and wide, with special publicity help from Jaco ten Hove, editor of *Elderberries*, the UURMaPA newsletter. This led to my facilitating focus groups at two UURMaPA conferences as well as having numerous one-on-one conversations during conferences. Thanks are due to Janette Lallier, UUMA's Director of Operations, who facilitated outreach to UUMPs.⁴ Some partners sent me email responses to my questions, and I had some telephone conversations as well. In addition, there was an exchange among several ministers via the UUMA Chat list-serv.



B. Emerging “Home Truths”

Although there was certainly not complete agreement on all points, a number of “home truths” did gradually emerge from the collected responses to my inquiries:

- Perhaps the starting point should be to recognize that some people, including former ministers and partners, have clear and appropriate boundaries, and others do not. It is the latter who give rise to at least some of the concerns that may well be addressed by covenanting or some other explicit means.

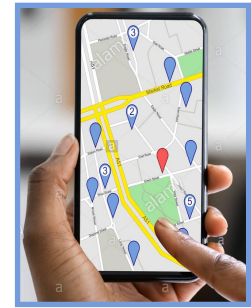
⁴ Unitarian Universalist Ministers' Partners

- In general, it may be in the congregation's best interest for the former minister and partner to stay away during the period of interim ministry. It would be a big help to all concerned if the interim minister would explain to the congregation why the former minister and partner are staying away.
- A partner who was a member of the congregation before the former ministry began has connections that the partner may well believe should be honored after the former ministry has concluded. The partner might well want to be seen as an individual and treated by the current minister just as any other member would be treated, with gifts and talents put to use for the good of the congregation. It should not necessarily be assumed that the partner of the former minister will speak or act inappropriately and thus for the good of the congregation needs to be kept away or kept silent during the period of the interim ministry, even if the partner's membership preceded the former ministry perhaps by many years.
- If the former minister has been named emeritus/a, that may signify entitlements for both the former minister and partner that another former minister and partner might not be expected to have.
- There may be fewer difficulties ahead if the former minister and partner continue as friends of the congregation rather than members.
- It is probably less problematical for the former minister's partner to attend Sunday services and social activities and to take part in congregational committees and other groups such as choir or book groups or social action projects. It is more problematical for the partner to serve on the Board, Committee on Ministry (however named), or Ministerial Search Committee, or to hold a position of leadership in any congregational group, at least for some considerable period of time.

- Although it is appropriate to expect the partner of the former minister to keep silent as to the current ministry and the operation of the congregation, this silence may come at the expense of the partner's sense of authenticity.
- The partner of the former minister may feel uncomfortable at coffee hour where there is always the danger of being drawn into awkward conversations or, worse yet, triangles in which someone seeks to have the partner serve as "rescuer" from the "bad behavior" of the current minister.
- The partner of the former minister can feel reticent about inviting members to their home or otherwise participating in social activities for fear of being seen as having favorites.
- The partner of the former minister, if continuing to be present in congregational life, has a tough decision to make when meeting any newcomer: whether or not to share right away the information about being the partner of the former minister.
- The partner of the former minister is likely to feel the same constraint as the partner of someone in politics, the requirement always to be friendly, never to be a real friend.
- Some former ministers and partners believe that covenanting should be exclusively between current and former ministers; in other words, that even a covenant regarded as voluntary between those entering it carries with it some sense of constraint. According to this view, even if some degree of constraint may be appropriate between ministers, it is not appropriate with respect to a partner who is not a minister.
- Virtually no one views it as appropriate for the current minister to put pressure on the former minister's partner to create a covenant between them.

Part III

Recommendations



A. Including Partners in the Covenanting Process

Personal friends don't need anything so formal as a written covenant, even though "right relationship" undoubtedly matters greatly to them. They figure things out as they go along. Some things about the shared understanding of their relationship get expressed out loud. Many things are never spoken; they nonetheless function and may change often over time. And nearly everybody benefits from such informality.

Relationships that exist in an institutional context need to be understood as different from personal friendships, including when people who are friends take on institutional relationships as well. Then their shared understandings need explicit expression with intentional preparation. Thus, Unitarian Universalists are people who thrive on creating and honoring covenants, and even understanding that the covenants we make are likely to be broken in small ways if not large ones.

In fact, one of the most important things about people sharing a covenant is what they do when somebody breaks one of the promises they have made. And this may be the heart of what makes covenants essentially different from codes, rules, and guidelines. Break a rule, and you might incur some penalty. Break a covenantal promise, and you may not incur a penalty but you may well be invited to acknowledge what you have done, accept that it is a breach of covenant, and renew your promise to honor the covenant in the future.

It is common for people who anticipate creating a covenant to ask for models. And indeed there are models to be found for covenants between current and previous minister and even between current minister and previous minister's partner. There are varying opinions as to whether it is better to have one covenant among current minister, former minister, and former minister's partner or two covenants—one between current and former ministers and the other between current minister and former minister's partner.

This choice is of course best made by the parties themselves, taking into account whatever power dynamics may be in play. Being pressured to enter a covenant does not bode well for its happy fulfillment. The one covenanting arrangement that seems entirely inappropriate, however, is a covenant with only two signatories, the two ministers, that nonetheless attempts to bind the former minister's partner to either do or not do certain things.

In any case, **this handbook does not recommend beginning the covenanting process by studying someone else's model.** Begun that way, the process is likely to turn into a series of decisions about what to keep, what to discard, and what to change. It is a kind of shortcut, and it does not lead to real ownership of the covenant. It's no wonder that covenants created in this way tend to get called "guidelines" or "best practices" or even sometimes "rules." The parties did not create them. Someone else did. And thus it's no wonder if the covenantal promises are accepted and even followed thoughtlessly or grudgingly, not with high regard and self-respecting care.

Instead of beginning with a model, this handbook recommends beginning with a process that may need to involve multiple conversations, perhaps over an extended period of time, among the three people involved. How much conversation the process requires will depend in part on whether the current minister has known the former minister and that minister's partner for some time or whether these people are essentially strangers. Some trust needs to become established among them so that they can speak candidly about what they need from each other, what they can and cannot reasonably promise, and what they understand to be in the best interest of the congregation and its current ministry.

One hopes at least that for all three parties the best interest of the congregation and its current ministry will take precedence over what may be the perceived needs, interests, and rights of any one of them.

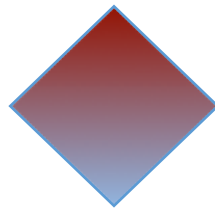
There are a variety of matters appropriate for covenantal promises between the current and former ministers. Those are beyond the scope of this handbook, which focuses on potential promises between the current minister and the former minister's partner, whether these turn out to be expressed in a covenant that includes the former minister or not.

Here are issues that the current minister and former minister's partner would do well to think through together with their shared conclusions on each issue to be expressed in a covenant:

- Of what significance is it, if any, if the partner was a member of the congregation prior to the former minister's ministry there?
- Of what significance to the partner's involvement is it, if any, if the former minister has been named emeritus/a?
- Will the partner stay away from all congregational activities, including Sunday services, during the period while the congregation is served by an interim or other transitional minister? If not staying away from all activities, which ones will the partner attend and which not?
- Will the partner refrain from conversation with congregants and church staff, whether in person, in email, or on social media about the current minister, the current ministry, and the governance and other operations of the congregation?
- Will the partner maintain friendships with individual congregants and/or staff members in person and/or on social media? Or will these friendships be suspended temporarily (and if so, for what period of time), or respectfully ended?
- Will the partner seek or accept positions of leadership in the congregation, or instead decline to seek or accept such positions? If some but not all, which ones? Board of Trustees? Committee on Ministry (however named)? Ministerial Search Committee? Others? How might the partner appropriately put gifts and talents to use for the benefit of the congregation?
- In what specific named social activities and groups might the partner take part? For instance, choir? Small group ministry groups? Book groups? Adult Religious Education classes? Yoga or Tai chi groups? Others specifically named?

Here are a couple of observations about covenants that have the best chance of serving well:

- They are short.
- They are exclusively about behavior, not about state of mind. A common and almost completely useless provision says, “We will assume good intentions.” And how would anyone know whether someone is honoring such a provision? Useless! In any case, the purpose of covenants is to invite people to make and keep promises regarding what they will and will not do. The purpose is not thought control.



B. An Adaptable Innovation: The Retired Minister’s Working Group

When one of the ministers at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Bloomington (Indiana) was preparing to retire and remain in the area, the Senior Minister created an innovative body that came to be known simply as a Working Group. It was such a valuable innovation, for the benefit of the retiring minister and his partner as well as the congregation and its ministry more generally, that others might well consider taking up this idea and adapting it for their own circumstances.

Here are the details about what unfolded at the UU Church of Bloomington:

A month or two before the minister’s retirement, the Senior Minister appointed the Working Group, consisting of one Board member and two additional members of the congregation who were retired clergy from other denominations. Their charge was simply to support the retiring minister through the transition in his relationship to the church. To whatever extent desired, they would be available to the minister’s partner and other family members as well.

The Working Group prepared for their task by reading:

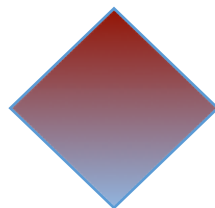
- *Running through the Thistles: Terminating a Ministerial Relationship with a Parish*, by Roy Oswald
- *The UUMA Guidelines*
- *The UUMA Joint Task Force Report on Retired Ministers*⁵
- *In the Interim: Strategies for Interim Ministers and Congregations*, edited by Barbara Child and Keith Kron

The Working Group got underway by inviting the retiring minister and his partner to dinner and letting his partner know they were available to her and her family when and if she expressed a need. They continued to meet with the minister throughout two years of interim ministry and well into the new called minister's tenure. They occasionally met without the retired minister and occasionally met with the Senior Minister to get her take on things, though all were aware that they did not report to the Senior Minister and that their sole purpose was to support the retired minister and his family as needed through the transition in their relationship to the congregation.

The retired minister's partner expressed gratitude for members of the Working Group reaching out to her to find out how she was doing and if she needed anything from them. It meant a lot to her to know that she could lean on them as needed.

It became clear over time that fulfilling that purpose turned out to be a gift to the congregation as well. With a low key approach and steady availability, the Working Group was able to make what might have been a highly stressful transition far less so.

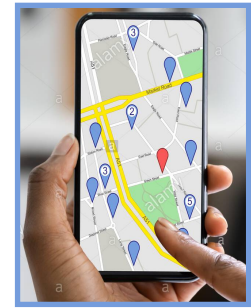
There is no magic potion here; however, some form of group similar to this fairly informal Working Group has the potential to accomplish for the human beings involved in similar circumstances at least some of the good things that we ordinarily look to covenants to accomplish. At the very least, it is certainly worth considering.



⁵ Available at uuma.org and uurmapa.org

Addendum A

Timeline



April 2019

Barbara Child and Joel Miller facilitate a workshop on “The Former Minister’s Partner” at the annual Spring Seminar of the Transitional Ministers Chapter of the UUMA. This workshop results in the chapter voting to propose an addition to the UUMA Guidelines encouraging the former minister of a congregation to include that minister’s partner in the process of covenanting with the current minister.

2019-early 2020

The UUMA and UURMaPA boards endorse adding the new sentence to the Guidelines. *[See Page 2 for exact wording of the sentence.]*

Barbara Child consults with partners via in-person interviews at UURMaPA’s fall 2019 and winter 2020 conferences, and also via responses to a questionnaire *[see Addendum C]* – in writing, by telephone, and on social media. She also interviews a member of the UU Church of Bloomington’s Working Group and the partner of the minister who retired.

June 2020

The UUMA membership adopts the addition to the Guidelines at its Annual Meeting.

2021

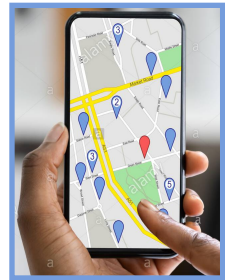
This Handbook is published; available on the UURMaPA website, www.uurmapa.org under Publications/Best Practices.



Unitarian Universalist
Retired Ministers and Partners Association

Addendum B

Materials Analyzed at the Transitional Ministers Chapter Workshop



Participants at the workshop during the 2019 UUMA Transitional Ministers Chapter seminar examined sections of the UUMA Guidelines and related materials as described below.

Group #1 analyzed the Section called “Expectations of Conduct” in the Code of Conduct that is part of the UUMA Guidelines for Conduct of Ministry. The Expectations include the following:

If I belong to or attend a congregation served by a colleague, I will honor the prerogatives of that colleague’s responsibility for leadership in that congregation, and in all ways seek to support that colleague’s ministry. I will initiate an open and direct conversation with my colleague(s) in order to create a mutually agreed covenant, expressed in a Letter of Understanding, about the role I am to play in the church. If I am a member of a congregation that I once served, this may include the possibility of absenting myself from any presence at all. I will articulate clearly my own hopes and expectations regarding my relationships in the congregation, and my intention to avoid wielding any undue influence among the members.

In another paragraph in this Section, the current settled minister promises to initiate conversation with retired ministers, foster cordial and candid relations, and bring any concerns directly to the colleagues.

The charge to Group #1:

- What do you find here, either stated or implied, regarding partners?
 - What, if anything, would you add or subtract?
 - Is the responsibility mainly that of the current minister or the former minister or equally of both?
-

Group #2 analyzed the Provisions on Family Life in the UUMA Guidelines, including:

1. Ministers should expect their spouse or partner and children to be regarded and treated as individuals separate from the work of ministry. At the same time family members may be well advised to refrain from positions of visible leadership or systemic influence.

2. Members of the minister's family should be allowed to participate in congregational activities free from expectation or coercion, according to talent or interest. This might mean, in some cases, not at all.

3. If the minister's spouse or partner participates in the congregation in such a way as to use professional or employable skills (e.g., as RE Administrator), the spouse or partner should have a separate contract and be compensated accordingly.

The charge to Group #2:

- What implications are there, if any, in these provisions in anticipation of the minister becoming the former minister and remaining in the congregation or returning to it with a partner? (We noted that the whole section is about the current minister; there is no attention paid to a former minister or the former minister's partner.)

.....

Group #3 analyzed provisions on Departing Ministers and Ministers Emeritus/a in the UUMA Guidelines on Responsibilities and Expectations among Colleagues. The relevant provisions are:

....

3. There should be no intentional or ministerial contact between a departing minister and members, staff or ... congregations ... they have served until there can be a covenant expressed in a Letter of Understanding between predecessor and subsequent ministers. In those uncommon cases where personal or familial relationships persist, care should be taken to assure that those relationships do not have a negative impact on the institution or on subsequent ministries.

4. Experience has shown that over the long term a congregation and a previous minister may benefit from that minister's continuing participation as a member of the congregation after their professional leadership to that community has ended. Predecessor and subsequent colleagues should adopt covenants expressed in a Letter of Understanding defining the nature and limits of this participation.

5. Unless the departed minister chooses to suspend all contact and participation in the congregation during the period of an interim ministry, the Letter of Agreement with the Interim Minister must be understood to be limited only to the period of the interim ministry. It is the responsibility of both parties to make it known to the congregation that the agreement is limited and that the provisions of the agreement with subsequent colleagues may be significantly different.

6. *The provisions of this covenant should be arrived at through conversation and negotiation with an understanding that the well-being of the congregation and the new ministry is of primary importance. When disagreements persist, the judgment of the new minister shall prevail. It is the responsibility of the involved ministers to inform the congregation of this covenant.*

....

8. *A departing minister may be expected to discontinue all contact with the congregation, ... its members and staff if:*

- a. the former ministry involved established misconduct;*
- b. the departed minister violates the UUMA Code of Conduct; or*
- c. the departed minister intentionally violates the terms of the covenant with the new minister.*

9. *It is good practice for a minister to prepare family members to understand that a change in the minister's relationship with a congregation ... may affect them all, and may mean the end of ties that family members may have with that institution. It is politically wise and collegially generous for a successor minister to reach out pastorally to the family of the predecessor minister if they remain in the congregation or community.*

The charge to Group #3:

- What is stated or implied in these provisions regarding partners?
- Is there anything that needs to be spelled out more explicitly or changed?

.....

Group #4 analyzed the Ministry of Absence Section of the Report of the Joint Task Force on Retired Ministers convened by UUMA, the Interim Ministers' Guild (now known as Transitional Ministers Chapter of UUMA), UURMaPA, and the UUA. The Ministry of Absence Section reads:

For the retiring minister, leaving for the interim period is essential to facilitate the transition work of the congregation and the interim. If the retired minister returns following the interim period, she or he must be prepared to take a limited role. It's a spiritual discipline to do so. We acknowledge the sacrifice this can be for the retiring minister and the minister's partner. A Ministry of Absence gives the retiree and the retired minister's partner a chance to try on new roles outside the church and allows much needed space for the interim minister to do his or her work with the congregation. The congregation may well find the absence painful, but the interim minister has the skills and training to help with healing as it is needed. The next settled minister will then have the best possible situation for starting her or his new ministry.

The charge to the Group #4:

- The Task Force Report may never be revised. Please assess the helpfulness of this section as it stands.
-

Group #5 analyzed a sample Covenant between Minister Emeritus and Interim Minister offered as a model in the Joint Task Force Report. It includes a provision that says: *“Retired Minister and Spouse will stay away from congregational activities during the interim period....”* The title of the Covenant indicates that it is a Covenant between two people, not three, and there are signature lines for Retired Minister and Interim Minister, no one else.

The charge to Group #5:

- To what extent is this a helpful model?
 - Do you find anything problematical about it?
-

Group #6 analyzed the Section on Right Relations in the Joint Task Force Report.

This Section acknowledges that it would be inappropriate for the UUMA to attempt to make rules attempting to regulate the behavior of partners, and also that even if there were some attempt to create such rules, there is no mechanism by which they could be enforced. This Section goes on to refer to “horror stories” about spouses and widows who stay on in the parsonage, continue to hold such positions as church secretary or organist, and continue to be a controlling presence.

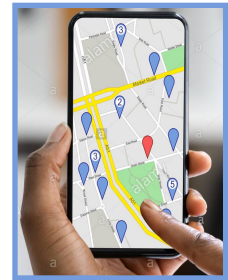
The Section refers to the widow who cares for her spouse’s “legacy” and counters any ill word. The Section also acknowledges the hard questions about whether a spouse should have to give up stature, standing, friendships, etc., and concludes by saying these matters should be the subject of a conversation with the new minister. The Section acknowledges the plight of the widow who has an existence cut off from the church and who is afraid to attend and may be ill, and the congregation that is afraid to reach out or give the help that may be needed.

The charge to Group #6:

- What do you find helpful here?
- Does your own experience tell you anything different about partners?
- Does this Section tell the whole story and tell it accurately?

Addendum C

Questionnaire for Partners, with Cover Letter



Here is the cover letter that accompanied the questionnaire:

Dear (non-clergy) Partner of a UU Minister,

I am writing to invite you to share with me whatever you will about your experience, your feelings, and your thinking as the partner of a UU minister who formerly served a congregation in the community where the two of you continue to reside.

I am undertaking to create an informal handbook to assist ministers currently serving a congregation, former ministers of that congregation who continue to reside in the community, and especially their partners as together they determine how to navigate the terrain that may look familiar but that has changed in significant ways. I think of this thing that I am setting out to create as a kind of annotated map, a GPS for navigating in unknown territory.

The UUMA Guidelines and Code of Conduct have quite a bit to say about appropriate arrangements to be made between the current and former ministers. Some people tend to refer to a variety of “rules” governing their behavior, but actually there is very little that could accurately be called a “rule.” Instead there is emphasis on the importance of the two ministers entering into a covenant, preferably a written one that can be shared with the congregation for their information and benefit. The covenant, we can surely hope, is a set of mutual promises, voluntarily agreed upon, and not imposed by one minister on the other.

But what about the former minister’s partner? Partners are not subject to the UUMA Guidelines and Code of Conduct. Nor should they be. Yet they too have had an important relationship with the congregation their partner is now no longer serving. Experience has made abundantly clear that these partners have needs, wishes, concerns, and a variety of issues that they may have initiated or that affect them no matter how initiated.

Since we are not in a world of rules here, but in a world of concerns and needs and hopes, it appears that the affected ministers and the former minister’s partner could use a navigational device – something like an annotated map with pointers, road signs, and helpful tips. After serving as an interim minister for over a decade, I know a lot of what I would like this navigational device to contain. But I don’t want it simply to reflect my experience and thinking. And this is where you come in! Before I start mapping anything, I would value hearing from you.

Questionnaire for Partners

Notes:

- 1) *As used in this questionnaire, “partner” is a generic term including spouse.*
 - 2) *These questions are for you assuming (a) you are not yourself a minister, (b) you are the partner of a minister, and (c) you and your partner are continuing to live, or have lived for a time, in the geographical community of a church where your partner formerly served.*
-

1. As you reflect on your connection now with the congregation where your partner formerly served, what remains as it was? What has changed? How has it changed? (Please include whether you used to be a member, and if so, whether you still are.)
2. What, if anything, about your connection with the congregation do you wish had not changed that has changed?
3. What, if anything, about that connection are you glad has changed?
4. What, if anything, about that connection do you wish you could change?
5. What do you need from the church? To what extent are you getting it?
6. How would you describe your relationship with the current minister of the church?
7. If you could ask that minister to make some promises to you, what would they be?
8. What would you gladly promise that minister if asked?
9. Have you entered into a written covenant with that minister – either together with your partner or separately? If yes, would you describe the experience of working out together what that covenant would say?
10. Would you recommend to other non-clergy partners that they be included in the process of working out one three-person covenant along with their clergy partner and the current minister? Or instead would you recommend there be a separate covenant between the former minister’s partner and the current minister? Please tell me as much as you would like about why you recommend what you do with respect to covenants.
11. If you could add more questions to this questionnaire, what would they be? How would you answer them?

Thank you very much for your help!

Addendum D

A Note about the Author



During 14 years in parish ministry, including a decade as an interim minister, **Barbara Child** became increasingly aware of issues relating to former ministers' partners as well as the needs and interests of the partners themselves, especially if the former minister and partner were still living in the community where the minister had previously served.

Before her retirement from full-time ministry in 2010, Barbara served on the Interim Ministers' Guild Steering Committee for three years, including one year as its chair. She also served several years as a UUMA Good Officer, available to assist ministers involved in intractable conflicts. And she served for a time on the national Good Officer Support Team, a group of consultants to Good Officers.

In preparation for co-facilitating a Transitional Ministers Seminar workshop on issues related to partners, Barbara began looking at the UUMA Guidelines and related materials with newly focused attention. By the time the workshop was over, it had become clear to everyone present that the much needed addition to the Guidelines encouraging former ministers to invite their partners into the covenanting process—valuable as it was—did not and could not come close to addressing the multiplicity of partners' needs and issues.

Barbara was commissioned by the UUMA and UURMaPA boards to investigate further. She was charged to make the fruit of her investigation available in an accessible form. Thus began the months of interviews and collecting responses to her questionnaire that ultimately led her to create this Handbook as a kind of helpful device for navigating in unfamiliar territory, including both recommendations and an adaptable innovation—the Retired Minister's Working Group.

