

## UCCT Blog Post: “Bittersweet”

*Bittersweet (adj.): both pleasant and painful or regretful.*

On January 5, 2025, I received a letter from Melissa Spindler-Smith. Bittersweet was the only word to describe it.

Most of you know that the letter was Melissa informing the church that she was resigning as our Community Engagement Minister. Now, truth be told, I had anticipated the receipt of this letter—as Melissa had shared with me that she was interviewing for a full-time position—but I was hoping that maybe the South Congregational Church in Glastonbury wouldn’t see what a gift Melissa could be for their congregation.

Sadly, for us, they did. Thus, bittersweet.

One part of me is very sad that Melissa will be leaving us in June. Even though Melissa will only have served two-years here at UCCT when she concludes her time with us, in many respects it feels much longer than that. Melissa, in my opinion, fit in with the congregation and staff right away and has blessed us with her energy, humor, out of the box thinking, and openness and honesty about her life and faith. I have enjoyed working with her immensely. I feel she and I complimented each other well and I feel as though I have learned a lot from her, even as she has learned a lot from me and all of you. I would love for her to have stayed for another 2 years . . . or more!

But the other part of me understands that we are not in a financial position to be able to offer Melissa a full-time salary with benefits as our friends down the road are. So I cannot fault her for making this move. It’s good for her professionally and good her family.

Again, bittersweet. Honestly, probably more bitter, than sweet, for me; yet even so, there is good news for us in all of this.

We can take pride, as a church, that we have helped Melissa grow into the confident and inspiring minister that she is now, and will even more so be, when she leaves us. We have given Melissa opportunities to grow in a loving, nurturing, and safe space. In fact, she has grown so much that she is now ready to complete the final steps with the Tolland Association of the Southern New England Conference of the United Church of Christ to become an ordained minister. And the good news is, that will happen right here at UCCT (date to be determined).

We can be satisfied with the fact that this was a hard decision for Melissa. I heard her say this past Sunday that “UCCT is a hard place to leave.” And that’s true: because of you! As you have loved me and my family, you have loved Melissa. UCCT is a church that loves to love its pastors if you’ll let them, I said to Melissa when she started here—and I know she now knows how true that is.

And we can be excited about the future. Of course it’s scary. All change is because we don’t know what’s around the corner. But remember that we were in this same space a little over two years ago. And look at the blessing we received when Melissa joined us. I have faith that God has something, or someone, else in store for us that will help us move and grow into the church that God continues to call us to be—we just need to listen for God’s leading and be courageous enough to follow wherever that may take us.

And I have faith that there will be nothing bittersweet about wherever that may be.

Blessed to be on the journey with you,  
Rev. Jeff