



Message from the DTSM Search Committee

Friends,

We have some exciting news!

The Search Committee for our Designated Term Senior Minister (DTSM) has been hard at work. As a reminder, the Council approved the recommendation of a Pastoral Transition subcommittee last October to pursue selection of a Designated Term Senior Minister for 24 months. The role of a Designated Term Senior Minister is to accomplish specific tasks outlined by the congregation. [As stated by our moderator](#): "Our goal over the next couple of years will be to achieve a pace of transformation that allows discernment of the long-term Central to which we will invite our next Senior Minister. Some of this work has been accomplished over the past few years, and we do not anticipate any meaningful departures from our core mission of being an open and affirming congregation in pursuit of our Just Peace Covenant". With the approval of Council, the search committee - Allen Moye, Makesha Spence, and Martha Wetzel - was appointed.

DTSM is a full-time, pastoral position with the following primary areas of responsibility: leader and head of staff, pastoral care, worship, leadership development, and strategic planning. The DTSM will also support the development of policies and procedures and environmental sustainability initiatives. The Designated Term is twenty-four (24) months, with an option, exercisable only by mutual agreement, for an additional period of twelve (12) months. At the end of the Designated Term, the congregation will call a Settled Minister.

Over the last few months, we updated our church profile with assistance from Council. The profile was posted through the Southeast Conference of the UCC. We are grateful to Associate Conference Minister Rev Heather Fosburg who worked closely with us during the search process and continues to be a source of support and wisdom. We received enough applications to have a candidate pool that was diverse across multiple dimensions, including gender identity, ethnicity, experience, and denominational affiliation. We interviewed 4 candidates and prioritized their experience and capacity to:

- lead the staff team,
- provide spiritual leadership and pastoral care for the congregation, and
- support the church in its discernment of strategic priorities during this time of transition.

We all agreed that one candidate was a tremendous standout and we brought this candidate in for a second interview. Based on our interviews, we made a recommendation to Council which was unanimously approved.



Our DTSM Candidate:

We are pleased to present Rev Elizabeth Mitchell Clement as the approved candidate for DTSM.

Rev. Clement is a resident of Atlanta and a member of First Congregational Church. She is a 1996 graduate of Candler School of Theology, cum laude. While at Candler, she was taught by Jon Gunnemann, and her faculty advisor was our own Helen Pearson-Smith.

She was ordained on February 17, 1997, and now has 27 years service in various settings. Some of the reasons we think she is an excellent fit for Central include:

- Rev. Clement has specialized in ministry to churches in transition. She has been certified for Transitional Ministry by the Interim Ministry Network. She has served three different churches in transition during the last 8 years — three in Florida and one in California. One of the Florida churches called her back for a second term of ministry. The California church, in Belmont, Ca., was the church that our associate minister, Rev. Kristi Denham, served after she left us, in 1999.
- As part of serving churches in transition, Rev. Clement has developed a process that pulls techniques from a variety of sources to facilitate church congregations in discerning and activating their gifts in service to the church. We believe this will be a key part of Central's strategic plan development in the coming years.
- Also, we just found her delightful.

Her undergraduate degree is from Talladega College, in Alabama. Her study emphases there were English Literature and Voice. Rev Clement has a beautiful voice; she still sings, and occasionally punctuates her sermons with song. You can view some of her sermons at the links below:

- [Closing Worship - General Synod 28](#)
- <https://www.youtube.com/live/EM4lLbwIOBA?feature=shared>
- https://www.youtube.com/live/l23z2A8Ac74?si=3LoGnLj_wepuqndT

She speaks French, and was once certified as an interpreter and translator by Georgia State University.

Rev. Clement has also served in a number of roles with the SE Conference, and on the Boards of Directors of the Atlanta Speech School, Grady Hospital, and the Georgia Campaign for Early Pregnancy Prevention. She was a founding member of the Board of Trustees of the Atlanta International School.

Rev. Clement comes from a family of church leaders and has been married to Arthur J. Clement, a retired preservation architect and architectural historian, for a long time. They are parents to two adult sons, Arthur J.H. Clement and Mitchell D.P. Clement (aka Mo), who have pursued doctorates at the University of Chicago and the University of California at San Diego, respectively, and now live in those cities.

She enjoys long walks, spirited conversation, and imagining what it takes to turn followers of Jesus loose on the world for God's good—street by street, door by door, and heart by heart. She aspires to become an accomplished knitter and grandmother (which she is not allowed to mention).

Next Steps

So what happens now? Ultimately, the congregation will vote on whether or not to confirm Rev. Clement as our DTSM. We anticipate that she will preach to the congregation and the vote will take place on May 5. **Before that happens**, it is important that we have opportunities to get to know her. During the month of April, we will schedule several events:

- Members of the congregation will have the opportunity to meet Rev. Clement in small groups, such as coffee meet-ups or dinners hosted by other congregants
- We will invite Rev Clement to meet in-person or virtually with representatives from specific committees and groups in the church.

This schedule of events as well as sign up options will be communicated in an upcoming e-letter as well as posted on Central's website.

We recognize that Rev Clement will be Central's first senior minister of color and we will create spaces to talk about this and our readiness as a congregation.

A special committee has been convened to negotiate details of the call agreement with Rev Clement. The call agreement would be finalized and signed should the congregation vote in favor of calling her as our DTSM.

We wish to express our deep gratitude to:

- Rev Jess Cusick who has been a superb supply minister.
- Rev Thomas A. Mitchell, our Associate minister, and the staff team who continue to bless and inspire us through their work.

Together they have facilitated inspiring worship and learning experiences, and provided exceptional spiritual leadership and pastoral care here at Central.

Our Central CUCC community is at an exciting time of transition! Please engage fully in this process of getting to know our candidate and voting in May. We look forward to your input, questions, and participation!

Questions?

Reach out to Makesha at makesha.spence@gmail.com or 470-727-3935.

Blessings,

