

Greetings PNCUCC members,

As you have hopefully read by now, Rev. Phil Hodson has removed his name from consideration for the settled conference minister position. We write now to add our voice as a Board of Directors to his good voice, asking for your support and prayer for him, for us as a Board and for our Conference.

Phil joined us as our Acting Conference Minister in February of 2024. He worked tirelessly from day one, and it wasn't long before the Board of Directors (BOD) decided to ask you, our PNC-UCC Conference to call him as our Designated Conference Minister (DCM). You extended that call at a special meeting in June 2024, asking Rev. Hodson and the BOD to enter a two-year period of work on the many issues before us. Alongside that work, you asked the BOD and DCM to discern whether we might feel a mutual call to continue in ministry together.

The Board and Phil gave that discernment our full attention, weighing the joys and struggles of our Conference, our various needs, Phil's needs and the path behind, before and under us.

Prayerful discernment can be a surprising process; to faithfully engage discernment with openness to God's Spirit, persons must enter it with hands and minds open to arriving at end points we may not have expected at the outset of the journey. That is never easy nor without big feelings, and as your BOD sought to be faithful from a variety of perspectives, we stumbled a bit. The stumbling was hard but as we turned to one another in it, we better realized ways we have failed you. We recognized ways we could have been better partners to Phil and our past Conference Ministers. We realized questions we should have been asking and guidance we should have been giving. It was messy but good work. It was a next step for the BOD in our ongoing journey of growth. It should have happened sooner, and we wish to say to you and Phil that we are sorry it did not.

After several meetings of the Board, an initial vote was taken of members present. The vote split, and while that did not complete the discerning process of the Board, Phil determined it best to withdraw his candidacy. He will now complete the final six months of his call among us focused on preparation for our transition while building on successes of the last year-and-a-half.

Those successes have been many. Under Phil's leadership, we have built up a tremendous Conference staff team, set N-Sid-Sen back on its path to full potential, successfully helped many churches through pastoral transitions and crises, walked alongside many of our Samoan churches and pastors as they embraced full communion with the PNCUCC, and successfully put before you a long overdue draft for a new Conference constitution and bylaws. Phil would be the first to say that he did not do these things alone, but his leadership and guidance was present in all these things and many more. Rev. Hodson has worked hard for our Conference, and we are grateful for the ways he has moved us forward.

There are many next steps before us as your board, and quite honestly, we do not have all of them figured out yet. We know those tasks include turning to Rev. Hodson, our Conference staff and one another with care. We know we need to work with the denomination to begin a search and call process. We know we need open discussions around who we are as a conference and who God is calling us to be. We know we need deep and meaningful efforts in the direction of community-building. The Board has begun meeting to work in these and other needed directions.

We ask you for your prayers during this time, and we offer you ours. We also ask for your help in considering how you, your churches and all of us together might rise to embrace the gifts God wishes for us to see and the future God knows is possible in the PNC-UCC.

Warm Regards,
Your PNC-UCC Board