

# Meet Reverend Pamela Wat

Rev. Pamela Wat has been named by the Ministerial Search Committee as its candidate to be called as senior minister of First Unitarian Church. Members of the congregation will meet Rev. Wat during a candidating week that begins Saturday, April 27, and culminates in a vote on her call, Sunday, May 5. Rev. Wat will conduct First Unitarian's worship service and preach on two successive Sundays, April 28 and May 5. The full schedule for candidating week will be released on April 17.



Rev. Wat served the Denton, Texas, Unitarian Universalist Fellowship from 2010 until 2018, first as a contract minister and then as the fellowship's first called minister in its 64-year history. She led the Denton congregation, situated in a northern suburb of Dallas–Fort Worth, through a period of significant growth—and, following a devastating fire, through a time of rebuilding and recovery.

Rev. Wat received a Master of Divinity degree from the San Francisco Theological Seminary in 2005, where she served as coordinator for the Racial/Ethnic Advisory Committee. Following seminary, she served as a hospice chaplain in Delaware and Texas until 2009, when she became a ministerial intern at Community Unitarian Universalist Church in Plano, Texas. Rev. Wat was ordained by Pathways Unitarian Universalist Church in Hurst, TX, in 2010.

Unitarian Universalist ministry is a second career for Rev. Wat. After receiving a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree with a concentration in dance from Kutztown University in 1994, she moved to California to pursue a Master of Arts in Creative/Interdisciplinary Arts at San Francisco State University—a unique program aimed at using creative arts to promote social justice. From 1997 to 2002, she served as executive assistant for Shelter Network, Burlingame, CA, a \$3.8 million nonprofit homeless service agency. While at Shelter Network, she helped to organize a \$10.75 million capital campaign and helped to build and open two new program sites for the homeless.

Rev. Wat is a native of Wilmington and a graduate of St. Mark's High School. She and her twin brother, Allen, and older brother Ken lived with their parents Edward and Deborah in the Pembrey neighborhood. Her father is second-generation Chinese American, born in Hawaii, and is a retired chemist who worked for DuPont and later DuPont Merck. He is a long-time member of Immaculate Heart of Mary Church. Her mother a retired Reading Assist tutor and is active in various volunteer roles at Westminster Presbyterian Church.



*Rev. Wat and husband Erik Goodlett*

In 2018, Rev. Wat resigned her position in Denton to return to Wilmington in order to be closer to her parents, who live in North Wilmington in the house where she grew up. She and her husband Erik Goodlett live in the city's Triangle neighborhood.

Raised in her father's Roman Catholic religion and educated in Catholic schools, Rev. Wat's call to ministry came as a young adult during a Christmas Eve service at Westminster Presbyterian, her mother's church.

Shortly thereafter, she joined a Presbyterian church in California and set herself on a path to become a Presbyterian minister. "But once in seminary," she writes, "I realized that I wasn't so Presbyterian after all. I left the church, but finished my Master of Divinity degree anyway, trusting that my call to ministry would somehow unfold."

Following graduation from theological school In 2005, Rev. Wat returned to Delaware to enter a chaplain residency program. "I was told by my Quaker supervisor that I was Unitarian Universalist," she recalls. "The next Sunday, I attended a service at First Unitarian Church and I discovered that he was right!"

Shortly after this discovery, Rev. Wat moved to Texas to care for a niece and nephew. She embarked on a path to Unitarian Universalist ministry and received preliminary fellowship from the Unitarian Universalist Association in 2010. She was ordained later that year by her home congregation, Pathways Unitarian Universalist Church in Hurst, TX. She received final fellowship in 2013, while serving the Denton congregation.

Rev. Wat was hired as a half-time transitional minister in Denton when she says the small, family-sized congregation was “ready to grow.” By 2012, the church’s budget and membership had doubled and Rev. Wat was called as its first full-time minister.

Within six months, the fellowship transitioned from one to two Sunday worship services. Worship attendance increased significantly, with many members new to Unitarian Universalism and some new to church life itself. Religious education expanded rapidly, new adult and social justice initiatives emerged, and new classes and workshops addressed the needs of parents, young adults, and youth in the community.



*Rev. Wat leads singing at the Women's March in Denton, 2017*

At Denton, Rev. Wat was active in denominational affairs, interfaith leadership, and social justice work, particularly with the LGBTQ+ community in Denton. She officiated at the first same-sex wedding in Denton County during a public celebration of the 2015 Supreme Court decision. She has served on the executive committee of DRUUMM, Diverse and Revolutionary UU Multicultural Ministries; served as a Good Offices Person for the UU Ministers Association in the Southern Region; was a

member and coordinator of the Denton Faith Alliance; and has been invited to preach at numerous Unitarian Universalist churches in Texas. She led the prayer at the 2018 March for Our Lives and invocations on the County Courthouse steps for five years of Denton’s Transgender Day of Remembrance. Rev. Wat currently serves as an advocate with the UUA’s Office of Ethics and Safety to assist in complaints of professional misconduct.

Of her ministry at Denton, she writes: “I found this work very energizing and I deeply appreciated the opportunity for my first experience of congregational ministry to be one where there was so much flexibility and freedom to respond to the needs of the congregation and of the community. It allowed me to be experimental in worship and in our religious education offerings, and it helped us meet the needs of a growing community. It was a whole lot of fun (and work)!”