

## **The Student**

Pastor Leah Atkinson attended Grinnell College and in 1998 received her BA degree in anthropology and elementary education. In 2001, her faith led her to a position as a Youth Director for the St. John's UCC in St. Charles, MO. Leah transferred her membership to St. John's and has remained a member for the past 8 years. It was her first three years as youth director and her extensive experience as participant and Camp Director at Camp Mo-Val that lead Leah to the decision to accept the call to ministry. In 2004, Leah enrolled in Eden Seminary and graduated in 2007 with a Master in Divinity. Between her graduation and now Leah has served as Acting Conference Coordinator for Youth and Young Adult Ministries for the UCC Missouri Mid-South Conference and as a member of the program staff for Camp Mo-Val.

## **The Pastor**

While the youth director at St. John's UCC Leah facilitated programs for youth in grades K-12 (150 active youth) delegating leadership roles to 40 adult volunteers. She designed and implemented a small group ministry, edited and wrote curriculum, taught confirmation and led a monthly youth worship. She organized and lead an annual intergenerational mission trip. Leah prefers this style of mission trip as she feels that every generation has something to share and learn from each other. Her inter-generational philosophy continued while at Eden Seminary. Leah's student pastoring experience is varied: Camp Mo-Val Capital Campaign Assistant and Presenter; sole chaplain at United Methodist Village

Retirement Center in Godfrey, IL; student chaplain in Clinical Pastoral Education program at Shawnee Mission Medical Center of Shawnee, KS; ministry intern at Webster Groves Christian Church, and Acting Director of Outdoor Ministries for Camp Mo-Val. Most recently, Leah has served as a vital resource for the Missouri Mid-South Conference Youth and Young Adult Ministries. She worked to maintain and build connections between churches in the sharing of ideas and gifts, to identify and nurture gifts of youth leaders, and to develop conference young adult programming.

## **The Person**

Leah Atkinson truly loves every aspect of being a pastor. She believes there is a foundational message in our Christian ministry. "Our love of God should be responsive. If we love God, we should express our love for God through the love we share with others." It is this love of others that brings forth Leah's excitement for the prospect of learning from, caring for and growing with St. Peter's UCC. Leah is the type of person who constantly seeks to recognize God's presence in every aspect of her day and life as she feels that it is through God's presence that we are shaped. Leah feels her call to ministry was due to her imperfections, doubts and daily reminders of humanness. All have lead her to embrace humility ("sometimes by choice and sometimes when it smacks me in the head"). Leah leads by example, complementing a deep faith with warm communication skills and a delightful sense of humor.

## **St. Peter's Youth Reaction**

"She makes you feel comfortable and that she is interested in what you had to say."  
"If we did some of the activities she mentioned, I'd come to church more often."  
"She is down to earth & can relate to us"  
"I like her strong faith."  
"She likes Sci-fiction. That is neat."