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**Beacon Congregation Announces Ordination of
Mary Early-Zald as Unitarian Universalist Minister**

Summit, NJ -- Mary Early-Zald will be ordained as a Unitarian Universalist Minister on Saturday, September 10, 2022, at 4 PM EDT, in a ceremony at Beacon Unitarian Universalist Congregation. The ordination will be celebrated by Beacon Unitarian Universalist Congregation and First Unitarian Universalist Church of Nashville, and is open to the public. Guests are welcome to attend in person at Beacon at 4 Waldron Avenue in Summit, New Jersey, or to watch the livestream on Facebook (facebook.com/summitbeacon.org) or on YouTube (youtube.com/c/BeaconUU). For the in-person celebration, masks are required and childcare will be provided. Clergy members, seminarians, and religious professionals are invited to robe and process. Guests are encouraged to R.S.V.P. at bit.ly/mary-ordination.

The ordination will be a celebration of Early-Zald's journey through ministry in collective liberation. Rev. Sara Dendy-Green, Unitarian Universalist Minister and Movement Chaplain, will deliver the sermon. Beacon voted in support of Early-Zald's ordination, and First UU of Nashville has provided support as well.

Early-Zald began her career as a clinical psychologist, attending the University of Nebraska and receiving her Doctorate in Clinical Psychology from the University of Minnesota. Following the loss of both her father and brother to AIDS and other personal challenges, she felt called to do more in the world and was especially inspired by the words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and by the resilience of love. She became a member of the Unitarian Universalist church in 2001, while living in Nashville, Tennessee, and decided to pursue her calling to ministry by attending Vanderbilt Divinity School, from which she earned a Masters of Divinity.

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In Nashville, Early-Zald was involved in social justice, activism, and community response. While a member of First Unitarian Universalist Church of Nashville, she became a Unitarian Universalist Chaplain. Upon moving to New Jersey in 2020, Early-Zald joined the Beacon congregation because, “I was attracted by the congregation’s affirming community, its diverse leadership, integrity and commitment to self-growth, and their social justice ministry.”

Currently serving as Beacon's Affiliated Community Minister, she volunteers with Summit Warm Hearts, providing spiritual care to individuals experiencing homelessness who are in need of respite from the weather and access to basic needs and services. As a Unitarian Universalist Chaplain, Early-Zald has provided spiritual care in urban, hospital, hospice, and congregational settings for five years. Her call is to urban chaplaincy, caring in solidarity with marginalized and oppressed folks, especially young people, because she dreams of a world where all can thrive.

Following her ordination, Early-Zald will continue to work with Summit Warm Hearts and to provide street, movement, and hospice chaplaincy. She also is looking forward to participating in activist and movement spaces as a minister in solidarity with those seeking justice. “My dream is to form a collaboration of religious-based and other community organizers, activists, and movement chaplains in New Jersey to create cohesion and support and amplify each other’s social justice efforts.”

A native of Santa Monica, California, Early-Zald has lived in every region of the US except the Pacific Northwest. She lives with her husband in Somerset, New Jersey, and their daughter lives in Asheville, North Carolina.

Beacon Unitarian Universalist Congregation is a regional congregation located in Summit, NJ. Beacon’s mission is to be a radically inclusive community that feeds the human spirit and heals the world. In-person and virtual services are offered every Sunday. Beacon also offers spiritual care and adult community groups, vibrant programs for children and youth, and a deep commitment to social justice. For more information, please visit the website at summitbeacon.org or follow Beacon on Facebook at facebook.com/summitbeacon.org.

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