

Ministerial Search Committee

Update to the UUCB Board of Trustees - 11/2/2022



Shared Purpose

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF SHARED PURPOSE

We want to begin by acknowledging that we, the members of the search team, share with you, the members of the board, a deep love for this church and a concern for its future. We are grateful to you for your leadership and for the vision that you bring. We know that the interest in exploring alternate forms of ministry comes from a laudable desire, a desire that we share with you, to be creative and flexible in positioning ourselves for an uncertain future.

Recommendation

The MSC recommends continuing with the UUA settled ministry search process.

If unsuccessful, a contract ministry search should be explored subsequently.

Rationale

UUA has a developed hiring process, including key deadlines & milestones

- a vetting system for candidates, including baseline competencies
- a pool of references that search committees can access
- candidates who have ministered within a UU framework
- support and guidance if there are issues

This year the number of congregations in search has decreased to 34, and the ratio of ministers in search to congregations in search is about 2:1, which is a very good ratio

**We are a church with much to offer,
and we are already seeing interest from ministers**

Rationale

A UUA contract ministry is not recommended

- While we can pivot to a contract search from a settled search, we ***cannot pivot*** into a settled search from a contract search due to timelines
- General feedback from survey & focus groups does not indicate a desire for a contract ministry
- The pool of contract ministers in search is quite slim, and churches in search of contract ministers have low success rates

Rationale

A non-UU contract ministry is not recommended

- Congregants want someone who can handle the nuances of a UU worship, the diversity of views, beliefs, and backgrounds in our congregation
- High level of effort to train a new non-UU minister in “what it means to be UU” if not already well-versed in our faith and covenantal community
- UUA vetting process not available (prior to hire)
- No UUA support subsequently of contract ministry

Rationale

A parallel search for a non-UUA contract minister is not recommended

- Negative optics for applicants: would diminish interest from settled ministers
- Potential congregational mistrust in the process, particularly since the congregation doesn't get to vote on a contract minister
- Potential confusion for congregation if it appears the Board and MSC are each doing their own separate search
- No clear path to whose candidate will ultimately "win"

How We Got Here - Research Timeline

Meeting with Christine Purcell, UUA Transitions Program Manager (June)

- Clarification about UUA search process and settled/contract
- Requested contact info for congregations with contract ministers to gain understanding of their experience (why and how instead of settled)

Q&A with Rev. Michelle (June)

- Rev recommended settled search: "UUCB is ready for a settled minister."

Contract ministry investigations (July)

- UUWorld Article about non-traditional ministries read, shared, and discussed.
- MSC Retreat (late July): UUA does not recommend putting contract versus settled to a vote before the congregation

Survey preparation (Aug)

- Committee discussed putting more questions about the type of ministry on the survey and elected to not include it due to related UUA advice and the complexity of the question.

Communication with contract ministry congregations (Sep)

- Contract was purely a financial matter for ~50 member Plattsburgh, NY congregation. Could not initially afford a settled minister.
- This UU congregation is much smaller, which is true for most UU congregations whose senior minister is under contract

Feedback from Keith Kron, UUA Transitions Director (Oct. 3)

- No congregations of UUCB's size currently employ their senior minister under contract
- Congregations that explored contract ministry did so because they were looking for alternatives to an interim
- Congregations that try parallel search often end up with fewer candidates, ministers wary of mixed messages
- Currently only assistant ministry positions have a contract

Preliminary Survey Highlights

What keeps us coming back:

People!, programs, and worship

What we are looking for in a minister:

Outreach

- Interfaith
- Community
- Youth/YA
- Diversity

A personal minister who connects with every person

- approachability
- laughs, grieves, celebrates with us
- a person who loves this community

Traditional and alternative Worship forms and segments

- Adapting the new to the old

Breaking down congregational walls

Preliminary Focus Group Highlights

Theme 1 - Who We Are



Welcoming,
warm,
vibrant
community

Mostly
white-identified,
mostly > age 50,
college-educated
-but ready to be
more diverse

Diverse in
beliefs

Progressive
activists

Theme 2 - Stability

After years of
transition, there's a
desire for a
long-term
relationship with a
minister

Theme 3 - What we want from a minister

Energizing sermons that connect emotionally, sustain spiritually, and engage intellectually and bring us all together

Good interpersonal skills that foster belonging, connectedness and community

Encouragement of lay leadership, collaborative leadership of staff and volunteers

Honoring of UUCB customs/traditions

What's Next?

Settled Search Timeline

Post December

UUA hard deadlines in blue

(italics sections added by MSC)

JAN 2-16 Names of interested ministers released to search committees

JAN 2-15 Video Interviews (suggested time frame)

JAN 15-31 Initial reference checks & website reviews

JAN 23-24+ Pre-candidating offers made & accepted. Only 3 are permitted.

FEB 1- MAR 26 Develop references (including UUA staff) + Pre-candidating weekends: MSC coordinates neutral pulpit visits with the the three candidates

MAR 27 Decision List to Transitions Office: MSC informs UUA of their finalist

MAR 30 Offer made to Finalist. If no finalist, *discuss options with the Board*

April 30 - May 6 Candidating Week at UUCB. Preaches on April 30.

May 7 Congregational Vote: must be >90% *Otherwise consider contract route*

August Minister joins UUCB if both congregation & candidate say "yes"

What happens if a candidate is not found?

The MSC will recommend that the Board pivots to a contract ministry search if the following occurs:

1. The candidate pool does not meet the needs and desires of the congregation as determined by the MSC
2. A match fails through both rounds

The board hires contract ministers: UUA
Interim (or Developmental) Minister, UUA
Contract Minister, Non-UUA Minister

Questions