

To: UUSM Board of Trustees
From: Transition Team
Re: Next Step in Ministerial Search
Date: April 24, 2024

The Transition Team recommends at the April 30, 2024 meeting the Board of Trustees determine the type of minister we will seek and the timing of our search, as follows:

- Type of minister:
 - UUSM will search for a contract minister to replace Rev. Terri and Rev. Tovis by mid-2025;
 - the contract ministry will have a developmental emphasis to assist us in continued transition and transformation;
 - the contract minister will have an initial term of 5 years, subject to extensions, and subject to cancellation by either party with notice; and
 - the contract will include an option to call the contract minister for a settled ministerial position.
- Timing of search:
 - The Board will appoint a search committee at its May meeting; and
 - the search committee will be asked to submit a congregational profile and application for a contract minister to the UUA by December 1, 2024.

DISCUSSION

A. Background: types of ministry

UUA distinguishes four types of ministry: settled, interim, developmental, and contract. These ministries are described in the attachment, quoting UUA publications.

Settled ministers are called by a congregation and serve indefinitely, although typical tenures may be only 5 to 7 years. A settled minister will expect that a congregation will have undertaken transitional work process to understand its history and culture, address its problems, identify its mission, and set its goals. This the congregation does by first working with either an interim or a developmental minister for a period that runs from 1-3 years (interim) or 4-7 years (developmental). Although we have not had a formal interim minister, by working with Rev. Terri and Rev. Tovis we have done some of the work typically done with interim ministers, who prepare the way for congregations to chose to pursue a settled minister or a developmental minister.

A contract minister is often hired by smaller congregations, congregations seeking part-time ministry, or congregations seeking more flexibility than is available through UUA's hiring calendar and restrictions, e.g., its rule that a congregation may not call an interim or developmental minister for a settled position. If UUSM seeks a contract minister, there is nothing that prevents UUSM from seeking one with a developmental emphasis and from

including an option to call that minister for a settled position. This is in fact the model used by many non-UUA denominations and that Rev. Keith Kron at UUA predicts may become the standard model for UUA in the future.

B. Why not search for a settled minister now?

The Transition Team does not feel that UUSM is ready to search for a settled minister this year for several reasons.

First, although we have made progress in our transition work, particularly in looking at our heritage and culture, there is still significant work to do. To attract and to find a fit with a settled ministerial candidate's interests and abilities we need to identify our mission, values, and a shared sense of our future as a church. We have not explored some issues, reached a congregational consensus about direction and emphasis, or resolved structural and cultural problems in a number of areas – religious exploration programs and emphasis; community engagement; diversity and anti-racism work; survival, growth, and stewardship with an aging congregation; leadership development and shared ministry; attracting and serving a diverse congregation; authority of and trust in professional ministry; our campus plans and real estate portfolio; or our engagement with social justice work. The Transition Team thinks we have made progress identifying these issues, but we are far from agreeing on a shared set of aspirations.

We also have significant structural work to do on administrative systems and governance.

We should not rush to articulate our mission and vision and to spell out what capabilities and interests we most want in a settled minister just to meet a UUA hiring deadline or the need to replace Rev. Terri and Rev. Tovis next year. We should instead take the time to listen to ourselves and to continue to build community organically. The congregation can likely identify four or five key issues it seeks to address over the next several years as it continues its core worship and pastoral care activities. Those key issues can be presented to potential ministerial candidates interested in and capable of helping us continue to grow our church and our community.

However, as a practical matter, we are not ready to tell a candidate who we are, what we think our church is for, and what we want in a settled minister by the December 1, 2024 UUA deadline for submission of an application and congregational profile for settled search.

Second, a settled search demands substantial volunteer time from seven members of the congregation over the next year and a budget of \$10,000 to \$25,000 to meet and interview candidates.¹ Significant time is required in the fall to attend UUA workshops and develop a search profile, and much more time is required in the spring to evaluate, reference check, and interview candidates. We may not have these resources.

¹ UUA guidance estimates settled ministry search costs at from \$10,000 to 18% of compensation, which might be up to \$25,000 if we were able to pay \$150,000. (UUA, Board Checklist, available at https://www.uua.org/sites/live-new.uua.org/files/board_search_checklist.pdf.)

C. Why seek a minister with a developmental emphasis?

Generally, a developmental ministry is intended to help a congregation address deeper issues than those addressed by an interim ministry, including a need to make structural or cultural changes, to grow and thrive, or to address the causes of burnout, inadequate financing, low volunteer participation or satisfaction, ministerial turnover, or conflict. In some measure, UUSM is confronted by all of these issues.

Viewed positively, a developmental ministry is an opportunity to make changes and to grow individually and as a community. Developmental ministry calls on a congregation to determine what its church is for. Reverend Keith Kron at UUA suggested that as the role of church becomes less clear and less prominent in our culture, the religious world needs to understand all ministry to be developmental work. Indeed, part of what we have learned so far in our period of self-reliance without a minister, and in our transition work with Rev. Tovis and Rev. Terri, is our need for continuous growth and transformation through our church and the rewards that our engagement in this process brings us individually and as part of a larger community. A developmental ministry can facilitate this transformation.

Not every congregation is a candidate for developmental ministry. UUA looks not just at the issues a congregation may have, but to its self-awareness about the issues and its willingness to address them. UUA must approve a developmental ministry, and they have agreed UUSM is a good fit precisely because of the self-reliance and self-awareness we have shown over these past three years. We should see a developmental ministry as an opportunity for continued growth rather than as a postponement of a settled ministry plateau.

D. Why seek a “contract minister with a developmental emphasis” instead of a UUA defined “developmental minister?”

Searching for a contract minister with a developmental emphasis instead of a UUA defined “developmental minister” offers advantages in timing, candidate exposure, and flexibility. As long as we characterize the job as a form of contract ministry, we are free from the UUA hiring timetable and its rule that a congregation may not call a developmental minister for a settled position.

Timing and candidate pools: We should seek to put our interests and needs before as many potential ministerial candidates as possible. In particular, we should not wait for the January 31, 2025 opportunity to apply for a UUA defined developmental minister, but instead put our needs in front of the entire UUA candidate pool on December 1, 2024, which is when the annual UUA hiring process is opened – for applications for settled ministers but not for UUA defined developmental or interim ministers.² Congregations may seek contract ministers at any time.

We should get our resume in front of all potential candidates, including those seeking settled ministry positions as soon as possible, before they fix their attention exclusively on settled

² UUA opens the annual search process for settled ministry on December 1, for developmental ministry on January 31, for interim ministry in late April, and for contract ministry at any time.

ministry positions. Settled ministers and developmental ministers are not entirely fungible, and, indeed, UUA represents that developmental ministers are specialists. However, our research suggests that there is no bright line distinguishing their experience, training, and interests. Neither of the developmental ministers we interviewed had prior training, neither sought only developmental positions, and both are now in settled ministries after having done developmental ministries. We believe that at least some of the candidates seeking settled ministries on December 1 might be interested in a long-term contract ministry with a developmental emphasis at UUSM. We should not ignore this large candidate pool.

In sum, we can and should post our interest in a “contract minister with a developmental emphasis” on December 1, 2024.

Rule barring call of developmental minister: Finally, UUA’s rules require congregations and developmental ministers to agree that the congregation will not call a developmental minister as a settled minister. The purported rationale for that rule is to ensure that the minister is able to present hard truths and make hard decisions without fear of compromising eligibility for a long term position. While this feature of the UUA defined developmental ministry may be useful in some contexts, it has also been identified as a bug, as evidenced by UUA’s departure from this rule for some congregations and by the fact that other denominations do not impose this feature on developmental ministries. By hiring a contract minister with a developmental emphasis instead of a developmental minister, we retain the flexibility to call that minister for a settled position. If we are worried about a candidate’s willingness and ability to speak hard truths and make hard decisions, we can screen for that in the hiring process.

E. Next step – appoint a search committee

UUSM’s Bylaws require a seven-member search committee, elected by the congregation for a settled minister. (Bylaws, §§ 10.1, 9.2.) The settled minister must be called by the Congregation. By contrast, other ministers are hired by the Board itself, using whatever search device it chooses. (Bylaws, § 10.5.)

If the Board accepts the recommendation to seek a contract minister with a developmental emphasis and an option to call later, the Transition Team recommends that it appoint a 5 to 7 member search team at its May meeting. The team should get started as soon as possible to be able to submit a congregational profile and application by December 1.

The Transition Team has identified certain qualities the Board should seek in members of the search committee, including engagement with and presence in the congregation; wisdom and good judgment; willingness to consider the greater good and interests beyond the personal; trust; diversity in spiritual backgrounds, age, gender, and other identities; and awareness of the congregation’s developmental needs and goals.

The Transition Team proposes to bring forward a suggested slate for a search committee at the May Board meeting. Suggestions from the Board as to desired qualities or potential members in the interim would be helpful.

Attachment: UUA ministerial classifications

Settled: "this minister is called by the congregation after a comprehensive search process. Ministers in search for settled ministry are rarely interested in following a settled ministry directly without some sort of transitional ministry."³

Interim: "a transitional ministry designed to help a congregation move from one settled ministry to the next settled ministry or from a settled ministry to a developmental ministry. Most interim ministries last 24 months, though occasionally the ministry may be longer or shorter. An interim minister assists the congregation in moving beyond its last ministry and equipping itself for a new, different ministry. This preparation involves helping the congregation look at practices that may or may not be serving them well, assisting through the emotional process of transition, setting sights forward, and connecting the congregation to needed resources. The interim minister is hired by the board of trustees. Interim ministers may not be called by the congregation. Most congregations planning to continue in full-time ministry after a settlement use this option for their transition."⁴

Developmental: "is an option for congregations with a history of repeated short ministries or chronic conflict. They exhibit a need to make structural or cultural changes, and/or a general inability to thrive, AND the self-awareness, desire, and capacity to make meaningful changes.

Developmental Ministry is a cooperative program between Congregational Life (CL) Staff and the Transitions Director. These UUA staff colleagues work with a congregation to identify the deeper issues underlying the recurring symptoms of burnout, inadequate financing, low volunteer satisfaction, ministerial turnover, or conflict. Congregations may ask for developmental ministry as they recognize a troubling situation or unique opportunity for meaningful change, or developmental ministry may be recommended by an interim minister or by CL staff. The congregation works with CL staff during a transition to prepare for developmental ministry and the congregation must be recommended by CL staff and the Transitions Office before they enter the program. During a developmental ministry, the congregation and minister work collaboratively with CL staff and the UUA to increase the odds of realizing the deep change sought by the congregation.

Developmental ministries have been most successful with a 4-7-year term. The developmental minister is not eligible for the called ministry of the congregation, as a good ending is part of the curriculum of the developmental ministry. In the last year of a developmental ministry, the congregation typically engages their next search for a settled

³ UUA Transitional Ministry Handbook, p. 21, available https://www.uua.org/files/pdf/t/transitional_ministry_handbook.pdf; see also UUA, Settlement Handbook, p. 29, available at https://www.uua.org/files/pdf/s/settlement_handbook.pdf.

⁴ *Id.*

minister. After this significant work in the congregation, there is no desire or need to have an interim ministry before the next settlement.”⁵

Contract: “often used by a congregation that is seeking less than full-time ministry, that has fewer than 125 members, or that is uncertain that other types of ministries are a fit or financially sustainable long-term. The minister(s) is contracted for a specific period, usually a year, sometimes with a list of specific tasks like preaching and pastoral care, especially for part-time ministries. Contracts may be renewed and modified. Contract ministers are hired by the board. They may be called by the congregation, should a call be mutually desirable, after a couple of years.”⁶

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ *Id.*