

Dear ones:

Your Ministerial Search Team is working to find the best fit for us as a church as we search for a settled minister.

Over the last 7 months we've done a survey, cottage meetings, and focus groups. We compiled that data and much more to create a congregational record, describing who we are as a congregation. We worked to be honest and realistic, noting that our congregation is amazing and still has much we'd like to do better. We created an informational packet of job descriptions, budgets, links for parks and recreation in the area, and much more. And we put it out on the UUA's forum for ministers to consider if they might be the best fit for us, and us for them.

Our congregation drew a lot of interest, and the process required us to narrow down to 1-3 precandidates. To do so we interviewed ministers who felt like they might be a good match, called references, and found our pre-candidates. During a pre-candidating weekend we met three times over a weekend with each minister, sharing a meal via Zoom and talking about a wide range of topics in conversations fueled by a lot of interview questions. We also got to watch each minister preach in a neutral pulpit - not their own, and not ours. Normally those would be nearby sites that we'd travel to, but due to online worship we didn't have to be limited by location.

We are now in the process of determining whether one of these precandidates is the best fit for us as a congregation, and they are deciding if we are the best fit for them. Congregations and ministers submit their yes to the UUA, who lets us know if there is a match -- if both congregation and minister feel that they are a good fit. If so, we'll let you know that we have a match soon after April 1, and we will start to plan a candidating week in which you'll have a chance to virtually meet the minister that we are recommending the congregation call. And that's what it is, truly. The congregation decides whether we call a minister through a congregational vote. We'll have more details for you as we get closer to that time.

There is a chance that we won't have a minister to recommend in early April. We might not have a minister we say yes to, or that minister might find a better match than us. That's scary, but we are not willing to settle for just any minister. We want to present to you a minister that we unanimously feel will be right for UUCE.

If we don't have a minister to offer as a candidate after this first round, there is a second round. That's reassuring, because it means we will be able to consider ministers that weren't in the system before. Going to the second round doesn't mean we failed. It just means that we are working to be sure that the minister we propose is the right one to recommend to you. We take that responsibility very seriously. There is a chance we still won't find a candidate, in which case the work of search will continue next year.

We know this may produce feelings of anxiety or fear - it is long and uncertain, and we are all eager to meet and know our next minister. We also know that this time-tested process is continuously refined

based on the experiences of many UUA congregations. We do not want just any minister, we want OUR minister, and that's what the process has been made for. To rush through or make a choice to avoid having this process take longer would be selling ourselves and the minister short. We're looking for a relationship that will bring us closer to living out our mission as a congregation, and our collective as well as individual experiences of spiritual growth. It is a process we trust in and despite our eagerness or impatience, trust that it will allow us to truly find a good match.

We are so honored that you've trusted us with this work. We are optimistic and hopeful, and appreciate your support and encouragement. What a blessing this congregation is -- to each other and the world.

In Faith,  
Your Ministerial Search Team