

What: Town Hall

Subject: Our Ministerial Future

When: June 25, 2023; 11:30-1:00

Where: Vestry

Background:

We have entered a period of transition with Jodi's resignation, a time when we are intentionally moving from one settled ministry to the next. Our initial goal was to hire an interim minister to help us navigate this period. Unfortunately, we were one of 17 congregations out of 38 (almost 45%) who did not receive an interim minister match.

Disappointed? Initially, yes. But it is now time for us to move forward and to explore other possibilities in a creative and positive manner. This Town Hall is a crucial part of this process. Below you will find summarized various options that the Board hopes will lead to a fruitful and stimulating discussion about the future, both short- and long term, of the First Universalist Church.

Why a Town Hall? The idea of the Town Hall comes from Reverend Paul Langston-Daley. Reverend Langston-Daley suggested that:

“Town Halls around a particular theme...that is of importance to the congregation could be a practical tool for facilitating better communication generally and getting a sense of where the congregation is...[T]hese meetings are not for making decisions, but to share and integrate information. If you can incorporate small group work into those meetings, even better. Publicize the heck out of the meetings. Close the loop on any Town Hall discussion; don't let questions hang out there unanswered.”

What to expect?

- Good, specific printed information prior to and at the meeting
- A circle of chairs
- A facilitator
- A microphone
- Zoom access (*TBD*)
- Opportunity to express your thoughts and ideas in the larger group and in smaller break-out groups
- Board members ready and willing to listen
- A transcript of comments to be shared as widely as possible

- By the end of the meeting, a sense of possible future steps (not solutions)
- FOOD (a potluck event)

Ministerial Options:

Contract Minister:

General features:

- Contracted for a specific period, usually for a year. Can be renewed. Can become a settled minister.
- Can receive training in interim/transitional ministry skills.
- Either full-time or part-time.
- Full-time contract minister no different from a regular minister in terms of job description. Similar compensation package.
- Part-time contract minister possible; 75% = three weeks on, one week off; 50% = working every other week.
- For part-time ministry we would negotiate specific tasks: preaching, pastoral care, perhaps other tasks depending on percentage of time.
- Eligible to participate in the UUA's annual training for transitional ministers and can work on interim ministry tasks
- Salary, Housing, Benefits, Professional Expenses, Relocation costs
- Board hires the contract minister (similar to interim minister search)
- Board assembles search team comprised of Board members and members of the congregation (different from interim minister search)
- Search team holds small group sessions with congregation members (different from interim minister search)
- No application deadline (different from interim minister search)

Possible Constraints:

- Spring to Summer best application window.
- Geography: for us, a contract minister probably would come from Central and Southern Maine; a limited pool of candidates.

Example:

- Reverend Christina Sillari who led our April 30th service is the part-time contract minister at Augusta Community UU Church

in 2022-23. She had served previously for 11 years as the settled minister at First Parish Portland.

Advice:

- **PATIENCE.** There are no deadlines. Once we submit the application, it could be a while (perhaps a long while) before we have a minister.

Targeted Ministry Program (TMP):

General features:

- New UUA program
- Short term ministry of less than a year
- Retired or semi-retired ministers approved by the UUA
- Could be full-time (no more than 2 months) or part-time (no more than 8 months)
- Provides a bridge to the next search window (December to April)
- Salary, Housing, Retirement benefits, Social Security taxes

Possible constraints:

- Need to apply and be accepted into the TMP; not automatic
- Limited pool of candidates

Further Considerations:

The recently adopted 2023-24 church budget does cover a full-time minister and an Office Administrator working 15 hours per week. Some thoughts:

- If we do have to wait some time before we hire a minister, a strong office administrator could ensure that church life ran smoothly: (*fill in the blanks of all that could be taken care of by an effective OA*). The OA would address many of the issues that Jodi addressed in the past. The savings from not having a minister could be directed to expanded hours for the Office Administrator.
- If we were to hire a part-time minister, the savings in the budgeted minister line could be used to expand hours for the Office Administrator; and/or to hire a sexton; and/or to put more money into the DRE position; and/or to reduce the projected budget deficit. (*Provide some*

*info on what the savings may be: 75% minister = \$*** in savings; 50% minister = \$*** in savings)*

- Should we be pro-active and create a strong administrative support system while we work and wait through the ministerial process?

- A bigger question: Should we be pro-active and discuss what church and congregational life mean to us? What are our priorities? What does it mean to have a minister? Are our traditional expectations of the role of a minister realistic?
 - For example: what if we have a virtual minister? On Sunday, we would gather in person in the Sanctuary, sing hymns, do coffee hour. The sermon and all the other boring bits that the minister does would be virtual. Ministerial presence at Board meeting and pastoral care could be virtual. But: Who would carry out the CEO functions?

Summing Up:

The above is simply intended as food for thought. So, whadd'ya think? (as Betty Lynne would ask) Please let us know at the Town Hall or in any other way that you feel comfortable.