

June 25, 2023 Town Hall Summary

The June 25, 2023 was our first Town Hall and it was devoted to a discussion of our ministerial options. 35 congregants were present. For the sake of clarity, this summary divides the comments into four categories:

- the broad challenges and questions facing us in the ministerial search process
- the specific strengths that we wish to see in our next minister
- specific challenges
- positive take aways

Big Questions:

- How do we get a handle on the changing nature of church?
 - Significant data out there showing that the number of unchurched is growing, especially among younger people.
 - UUA refers to needing to create “a church in a new skin.” We need to figure that out.
- What is our long-range plan?
 - Are we aiming to call a settled minister within 4-5 years? Will we have contract ministers until then? Renew the interim search next year? The answers to those questions will determine how we proceed in the short term.
- Shared minister possibility: 2 weeks on/2 weeks off. (Danger that minister could jilt us and go full-time with the other church)
- Are those congregants who are currently on the sidelines of congregational life:
 - Waiting for a new minister to come in and resolve our issues?
 - Waiting for us to create a plan amongst ourselves?
- We need to find a minister NOW who has the right skills for NOW. Create time and space for us to work through our issues.
- “Urgent care” metaphor: we need to stabilize to survive. A different skill set than that of a settled minister.

Ministerial Strengths:

- Inward looking minister
 - Pastoral care
 - One-on-one visits
 - Especially to those on Zoom, to those who have left
 - Awareness of joys and concerns of individual congregants
 - Active physical presence in the church building
 - Healing skills, willing to make concerted effort to rebuild community

- Emotionally literate skills
- Help us to identify and address our issues
- Engaging, dynamic minister
 - Importance of compelling sermons
 - Uplifting messages
 - A “kick-ass” preacher
- Minister who “can carry a tune.”
 - The importance of music in bringing people to church
 - A great musical legacy here at First Universalist
- Minister committed to religious education/exploration.
- Minister with business and managerial skills
 - Minister as CEO of the church within the Policy Based Governance model.
- Outward facing minister
 - We need to grow
 - We need to speak to all those in the L-A area who have no idea of the role of Unitarian Universalism – of our unique message -- in addressing the many social justice issues currently facing our society.
 - Willingness to make a concerted effort to reach out to the wider community
- Experienced Minister
 - Not fresh out of seminary

Challenges:

- \$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$
 - Can we afford what we need? What we want?
 - Probably need a 75%, if not 100%, minister
- Are we up against a time crunch?
 - Do we have the luxury to take the time required to think bigly and broadly?
 - OR should we jump into the hiring process for a contract minister right away given the limited pool of candidates?
- Worship Associates are maxed out
 - Services through July are addressed; nothing after that.

Positive Take-Aways:

- Gratitude for all that the Worship Associates are doing
 - All of us should step up to play a role in services going forward
 - Willingness to welcome and celebrate “amateur hour”
 - Worship Associates could circulate a description of what would help them going forward.
- Office Administrator

- General agreement that an office administrator with a broad skill set and more hours is essential. Both for the smooth working of the church and for attracting a minister.
- Board will work on creating an expanded office administrator role. Board will update congregation on the process.
- Our Ministerial Future
 - It's bright. Perhaps not yet bright enough to wear shades, but these thoughtful comments and suggestions give the Board a lot to work with.
 - Will be (as it has been) a standing item on the Board meeting agenda
 - Members and friends are always welcome at Board meetings