

## **From contracted to called ministry - What is a call? What is a settled minister?**

Four years ago, we hired Rev. Russ Menk as our Developmental Minister.

Developmental Ministry is a relatively recent program launched by the Unitarian Universalist Association (or UUA) to match congregations with ministers who have the skills to help them solve specific institutional problems. We were at a very low point for our Fellowship, and we contracted with Russ to help us rebuild a firm organizational and financial foundation and to strengthen relational trust among members.

After three years with Russ in this role, it was evident that we had made enormous strides towards these goals. Indicators included more new members, increased attendance at Sunday services, strong lay leadership, and growing volunteer commitment and organizational effectiveness - including the rebuilding of our committees and teams - and our annual deficit has been significantly reduced in each of these years. A survey of members in 2015 indicated overwhelming support for calling Russ as our settled minister.

So what is a settled minister? What is a call? Here are some insights from the UUA guide on the call process:

*Each local UU congregation has the power to select its own minister. Ministry is considered a vocation, arising from a sense of calling to a profession of faith and service, and a life of meaning. A called minister is one who has been formally voted upon by the congregation to stay in relationship for an indefinite period of time. The congregation chooses (or calls) the minister to stay, creates a covenant, and commits to work together in a mutually defined and agreed upon ministry designed specifically for that congregation.*

*The transition from a contracted to a called minister is significant. There is no longer an annual renewal of a service contract, or a defined multi-year term of service...A called minister leaves only when the minister or the congregation formally acts to end the ministry. A called minister becomes less like a “consultant” and evolves into **a vested leadership partner, mutually engaged with the congregation for the fulfillment of its long-term mission.***

As our advisor from the UUA's regional office described this step, "this is a big deal!"

The Mutual Discernment Committee is being reconvened by the Board to oversee the call process, and will keep the congregation informed with regular updates regarding the steps to be taken and the timeline. This process will culminate in a special congregational meeting that will be scheduled for the sole purpose of voting to offer a call to settlement to Russ.

Please note that this vote is separate and distinct from the vote that will take place on September 11, when the congregation will be asked to approve drawing from our reserves to bring Russ' salary to full-time. Our Treasurer Ian Hunter will talk more about this topic next Sunday. Each of these special informational reports will be posted in the Current Happenings of the following week.

Ann McCrow

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