



## FIRST UU MINISTERIAL SEARCH COMMITTEE FAQ'S ABOUT SEARCH PROCESS

### **What is the purpose of the Ministerial Search Committee?**

The fundamental purpose of the Search Committee is to discern the qualities First UU needs in its next settled minister, present a candidate for consideration who is a good match for the congregation's needs in its settled ministry and ask for a vote of members of the congregation to call the candidate as its next settled minister.

### **How were the Search Committee members selected?**

The Search Committee members were elected by a congregational vote after nominations were solicited by the Board. Members of the committee are Susan Thomson, Chair, Carolyn Gremminger, Tomas Medina, Peggy Morton, Celeste Padilla, Tom Shindell and Bis Thornton. The committee can be reached at [searchcommittee@austinuu.org](mailto:searchcommittee@austinuu.org)

## **THE WORK OF SEARCHING: THE SEARCH PHASE**

### **What is the purpose of the Congregational Survey?**

The Congregational Survey collects basic demographic data and information related to respondents' involvement in the life of the church, i.e., a balcony view of the congregation that is helpful for ministerial candidates. In addition, responses related to expectations of our next settled minister and visions for our congregation are essential to the Search Committee in its discernment of the ministry needs at First UU.

### **What does the Search Committee mean by "discernment"?**

Discernment is the process the Search Committee uses to analyze the results of the Congregational Survey and the Search Party and Focus Group conversations in order to identify the qualities the congregation needs in its next settled ministry.

### **Will a summary of the Congregational Survey results be shared with the congregation? When will it be shared?**

Yes. A summary will be shared prior to the Search Parties and Focus Groups.

### **What is the purpose of the Search Parties? Will I receive an invitation?**

The Search Parties are meetings at which structured conversations are facilitated by Search Committee members in order to aid the Search Committee in its discernment of the ministry needs at First UU. They are open to all congregants. Multiple dates are offered for in person meetings at the church or via Zoom to give everyone an opportunity to attend a party.

**What is the purpose of the Focus Groups? Will I receive an invitation?**

Focus group meetings are targeted at specific groups within the church who represent various demographic communities and ministries within the congregation. They help the Search Committee in its discernment of the ministry needs at First UU. Meeting invitations are sent to these groups.

**Will a summary of the results of the Search Parties and Focus Groups be shared?**

Yes.

**What does the term “Inside Candidate” mean?**

An Inside Candidate is a staff member of a congregation with a vacant position in its settled ministry. The Inside Candidate is considered first in the search process. Our Board charged the Search Committee with giving Rev. Chris our first consideration as our Inside Candidate.

**What does the Search Committee do with the results of the Survey and Search Parties and Focus Groups?**

The results of the Congregational Survey, Search Parties and Focus Group meetings are the primary source of congregational input used by the Search Committee in its discernment of the ministry needs at First UU. To be fair, the Search Committee must rely on the collective input from the congregation rather than that of individuals.

**What is Breaking Barriers: Building Beliefs?**

Breaking Barriers: Building Beliefs is a workshop designed by the UUA to help congregations examine current biases in the congregation and give those present an opportunity to discuss what they would do when these biases occur in their congregation’s ministry. It is facilitated during the search process by a UUA trainer via Zoom. Everyone is encouraged to participate.

**What is the Congregational Record?**

The Congregational Record (CR) provides a complete description of a congregation in search for a settled minister. The Search Committee is required to compile this record whose primary audience is ministerial candidates in search. Information in the CR is made available to the congregation.

**HOW THE SEARCH COMMITTEE DECIDES WHO TO MOVE FORWARD FOR A CONGREGATIONAL VOTE: THE DISCERNMENT PHASE****How does the Search Committee determine whether the ministerial candidate should be moved forward for a congregational vote to call a Settled Minister?**

The Search Committee conducts its discernment of the Congregational Survey, Search Party and Focus Group meeting results and feedback from the Breaking Barriers: Building Beliefs workshop, identifies the qualities needed in the ministry at First UU, and reviews the Ministerial Record provided by Rev. Chris. The committee meets with Rev. Chris to discuss its discernment as well as the Congregational Record and his Ministerial Record. If the Search Committee and Rev. Chris mutually agree that he is a good match for the congregation’s needs in its ministry, the Search Committee asks the Board to announce a congregational meeting to vote to call Rev. Chris as our Settled Minister.

If the Search Committee and Rev. Chris agree not to move his candidacy forward, the Search Committee will continue to search for an external candidate with a potential congregational vote in 2024.

The Search Committee will inform the congregation of its decision on Oct. 8.

**THE VOTE! CALLING A SETTLED MINISTER**

**Who is a settled minister?**

A settled minister is called by a vote of the voting members of the congregation. First UU currently has only one settled minister position, now vacant. Other ministers are hired.

**Who has the final authority to call a settled minister?**

Only the voting members of First UU have the authority to call a settled minister.

**What are the requirements for voting membership at First UU?**

According to our Bylaws, full voting membership in this church is open to any person 14 years or older who accepts the general purpose and programs of this church. There shall be no creedal requirements for membership. Signature in the membership book and a contribution of record are the basic requirements. The date of membership is the date of signature in the membership book; membership becomes official when acknowledged by the Board of Trustees.

Individuals who have been members of the church for 30 days or more and who have (as an individual or part of a family unit) made a recorded financial contribution during the last 12 months and at least 30 days prior to the meeting, have the right to vote at all official church meetings.

**How will the voting members hear about the congregational meeting to call a settled minister?**

The Board of Trustees transmits a congregational meeting announcement at least 20 days in advance of the meeting. The meeting for our current search may occur as soon as October 29.

**What are the requirements for approval of a settled minister?**

Election to the position of settled minister shall be by an affirmative vote of 90% of the voting members of the church present and voting at a regular or special meeting. If the vote is affirmative, Rev. Chris becomes our settled minister. The search concludes upon Rev. Chris and Vic Cornell, our Board President, signing a contract.

**What happens if the voting threshold is not met?**

As with all candidates, if Rev. Chris does not meet the 90% threshold, it is considered a failed search. The church goes through another year of interim ministry with a new search for an external candidate and a new search committee is selected. The church will not have a settled minister until 2025. As is the case with all inside candidates, Rev. Chris resigns.