

Ministerial Search Committee – 2024-25

Nominees

Nominees: John Archibald, Nancy Mohn Barnard, Leo Collas, Jim Houchins, Michael Kersey, Jenny Loehlin, Melanie Mahoney-Walters, Joe Milam-Kast, Jim Schmidt, Toni Wegner

Composition

The second Ministerial Search Committee will be composed of seven members from the ten shown on this ballot. Five of the members will be selected by the congregation and two will be selected by the board to ensure a balance of perspectives on the committee.

Election Date and Time

The Search Committee Election will take place by secret ballot at the Congregational Meeting on **Sunday, May 19, 2024, at 1:00 pm.**

Eligibility to Vote

To vote in the election, an individual must be a member* of the church. **Members must be present at the Congregational Meeting, either in-person or virtually, to vote in this election.**

**Definition of a member – The church by-laws state that “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.” To verify if you are on the membership rolls, please contact Shannon Posern, Executive Director at shannon.posern@austinuu.org.*

Search Process Schedule - Overview

The committee will begin its work in June. The elements of the search process are well-defined in guidance from the UUA. The process is lengthy and thorough and includes a period of discernment of the congregation's needs, preparation of materials for potential candidates and review of potential candidates.

After the Search Committee has done its discernment and identified a ministerial candidate, the congregation will vote on that candidate in the spring of 2025. Our bylaws require that a candidate get an affirmative vote of 90 percent of the members. Additional information on the search process will be provided as the process unfolds.

For More Information

For additional information on the search process or election, please contact a member of the Board Transitions Committee – Donna Carpenter carpenterdonna@yahoo.com, Kelly Raley rkellyraley@gmail.com or Russell Holley-Hurt russell.holleyhurt@gmail.com.

Special Announcement from the Board
Ballot for the Second Ministerial Committee
Updated 4/23/24

The Board is pleased to announce the ballot for the second Ministerial Search Committee. Over 25 people were nominated by congregants and the board identified ten individuals for the ballot from among those with the most nominations.

The candidates are:

- John Archibald
- Nancy Mohn Barnard
- Leo Collas
- Michael Kersey
- Jim Houchins (subsequently withdrawn by the candidate)
- Jenny Loehlin
- Melanie Mahoney-Walters
- Joe Milam-Kast
- Jim Schmidt
- Toni Wegner

The second Ministerial Search Committee will be composed of seven members from those shown on this ballot. Five of the members will be selected by the congregation and two will be selected by the board. We believe this is a strong slate of candidates and that any of those selected will bring integrity and commitment to the process of selecting a ministerial candidate to present to the congregation. We thank the nominees for their willingness to serve.

The Search Committee Election will take place by secret ballot at the Congregational Meeting on **Sunday, May 19, 2024, at 1:00 pm**. To vote in the election, an individual must have been a member* of the church. **Members must be present, either in-person or virtually, to vote in this election.** Additional information on the procedures for the vote will be disseminated prior to the Congregational Meeting. The results will be announced following the vote.

The committee will begin its work in June. After the Search Committee has done its discernment and identified a ministerial candidate, the congregation will vote on that candidate in the spring of 2025. Our bylaws require that a candidate get an affirmative vote of 90 percent of the members. Additional information on the search process will be provided as the process unfolds.

For additional information on the search process or election, please contact a member of the Board Transitions Committee – Donna Carpenter carpenterdonna@yahoo.com, Kelly Raley rkellyraley@gmail.com or Russell Holley-Hurt russell.holleyhurt@gmail.com.

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Candidates for the Second Ministerial Search Committee



John Archibald (he/him) grew up in New England serving many a detention while attending Catholic elementary and high school. As a teen he was a staunch atheist who thought he knew it all but times have changed. Since before he was born his late father had a sign company, A&S Signs, and John spent much of his formative years at "the shop" where he developed his handyman skills.

He has always had a passion for film and stories especially those taking place a long time ago in a galaxy far, far away.

Over a decade ago he moved to Austin, TX from Bridgeport, CT via a 3 month detour through South America. Upon arriving in Austin and searching for "something" he googled churches, found First UU Austin and was struck by the knowledge and charisma of Rev. Meg and the welcoming warmth of the congregation.

He has worked in hospitality for years with a passion for "taking care of the guest" which translated well in helping to organize and execute the Opening Night Galas for First UU's Paradox Players Theater Group. Paradox is where he initiated many lasting friendships with church members.

The church that is First UU Austin is more than just an award winning theatre company or dedicated caring ministers or a rockin' children's choir. FUUCA is a whole that's so much more than the sum of its parts. It is a caring community made up of ministers, staff, the board, committees and a loving legion of individuals all doing their part to take care of one another and create something meaningful that is both ephemeral and lasting. John Archibald is extremely proud and very lucky to be a tiny part of that legion.



Nancy Mohn Barnard (she/her) has a passion for storytelling, literature, event planning and worship. After receiving an MA in Literature, Barnard taught college English, founded a community theater, where she wrote and produced plays, and coordinated conferences and trainings in the public sector. After unexpectedly losing her mother, Barnard found herself called to work with the dying. She spent the next few years working as the Concert Manager for Swan Songs, a local non-profit that provides musical last wishes for the terminally ill. In 2021, Barnard decided to attend seminary, in order to become a chaplain. She will graduate from seminary in May 2024, and will begin a chaplaincy residency at Seton Ascension in September. Barnard is a candidate for ordination with the UUA.



Leo Collas (he/him/his) became a member of First UU in 2003. He has worked as a financial advisor, corporate controller, and as a systems security analyst. Leo serves on the TXUUJM Advisory Council, has served on the boards of several Austin non-profits, and co-moderates the monthly LGBTQ & Allies Community Heart Circle here at First UU. Leo was raised in his family's restaurant business in Colorado, and later grew up in Honolulu. He moved to Austin in 1993.



Michael Kersey (he/him). I'm honored to be nominated for the search committee for a new co-lead minister. My wife, Karen Cleary, and I started attending services here in 1992. It's been our spiritual home ever since. We were married here and raised our child with the help and support of this community. Together, through the years, Karen and I have been active in various ministries and programs of the church including social action, the young adult group, the families with small children group, religious education, OWL, chalice circles, friendship, fellowship, and more.

As an individual, my participation with First UU has included leading Hands on Housing crews, serving on the Bridge Builder Team that helped develop and implement the recommendations stemming from the church's engagement with a church consultant, the Rev. Peter Steinke; serving on the Transitions Team for an interim minister, the Rev. Janet Newman, that worked with the congregation to draft the first version of our church's covenant of healthy relations. I co-led, along with Sharon Moore, the Settled Ministerial Search Committee that presented the Rev. Meg Barnhouse to the congregation as a candidate to be our Senior Minister. Following that I served on the church's Board of Trustees as both a board member and president in the initial years following the church's adoption of policy-based governance. After which, I served on and led the nominating committee. In addition, I've completed three years of the Wellspring small group curriculum exploring UU theology, sources, and inspiration. And I'm a graduate of the UUA Southern District weeklong lay-leader development program, the Dwight Brown Leadership Experience. In 2011, I started and currently continue to facilitate the Monday Mindfulness Meditation Group. As time and the weather allows, Karen and I enjoy cultivating our garden at the Sunshine Community Garden.

Academically, I have an undergraduate degree in history from the University of Tulsa and a graduate degree in organizational leadership and ethics from St. Edward's University. Professionally, I am a Vendor Manager in the Shared Technology Services program at the Texas Department of Information Resources.



Jennifer (Jenny) Loehlin (she/her) began attending First UU with her mother in the 1970s and participated in LRY (Liberal Religious Youth) in high school. After several years as a Presbyterian, she joined the church in the early 1990s. She was a member of Voyagers (the Very Old Young Adult Group), taught in the children's RE program, served as co-chair of the Fellowship Committee, and served on the Nominating Committee. Currently she is in her second year of Wellspring and is active in the Monday night meditation group, Earthkeepers, and Grief Support Circle. She is a retired web application developer and enjoys gardening.



Hello, 1st UU friends and family! My name is **Melanie Walter-Mahoney** (she/her). I have been attending 1st UU Austin since 1979. I met my husband here, both of us teaching in RE in the 80's, and we married in the very new sanctuary at the time. I have raised four daughters at 1st UU.

I am a happily retired Social Worker, having worked for a number of non-profits (Austin Families, Communities in Schools, Austin Child Guidance, and Child, Inc.) over the years, as well as brief stints with the State and County. I love music, reading, and being outdoors, especially walking in Nature, and get joy from delivering Meals on Wheels.

You may have seen me staffing the Bookstore in the Alternate Space Gallery currently and over the past years; it has been a wonderful way to meet and talk with folks. I am also teaching in the Children's Religious Education Department again and am on the Care Team, both of which nourish my soul.

I have been involved with the Austin Sanctuary Network since Alirio Gamez took sanctuary in our church back before the remodelling and the pandemic, am active with Texas Unitarian Universalist Justice Ministries (TXUUJM), and am on the Board of Trustees at UBarU (no Google, I do not mean Subaru!) Camp and Retreat Center near Kerrville in the beautiful Texas Hill Country.

I am honored to have been nominated for this very important job and will do my very best if elected.



Greetings and salutations!

My name is **Joe Milam-Kast** (aka “Zoeydad” – capital Z, one word 😊; he/him). I would be honored to continue serving this congregation by assisting in this new ministerial search process.

I have had the privilege of serving this community in a variety of ways since joining in 2016, including Religious Education (RE) – both youth and adult, Spring into Action, the Fellowship committee (and many a holiday party!), FReD dinners, ushering, the Children’s Choir, Connections Fair, Paradox Players, and Camp UU. My daughter Zoey is growing up here at First UU and represents her generation in our community by helping with RE, ushering, chalice lighting and in the kitchen on occasion.

I believe that all our voices need to be heard and considered for choosing our new Co-Lead minister. I advocated for this in the previous search and will continue to do so in this one. Individual voices contributing to consensus and decision play a key part in ensuring the best and brightest future for this church and our beloved community!

Thank you for your consideration and go in peace.



I am **Jim Schmidt** (he/him). Born in 1943, I grew up in Boerne, Texas, came to Austin in 1961 for college, married in 1965, served in the Peace Corps, became a registered nurse, retired 1999, and am now doing crafts & part-time work at Pioneer Farms. I first came to 1st UU of Austin in 1964 with my wife. I have been active member since 2017 after my wife died. My interests here are Austin Sanctuary Network, U Bar U, Men's Breakfast Group, Earthkeepers and Welcome Committee. If I am elected, I will do my best to represent the whole church. I want to help select the most appropriate person for the position of 1st UU's co-minister.



Toni Wegner (she/her) – I joined First UU after moving to Austin in 2016 from Winchester, MA (Boston suburb), where I discovered Unitarian Universalism in 2001. First UU was an easy transition and felt like the right fit from the start. I have participated in a variety of activities here including chalice circles, memorial service receptions, stewardship, Wellspring, Lee Legault's ministerial internship committee, adult OWL, and senior outreach ministry. I served as president of the board of trustees in 2021-22 and am currently co-chair of First UU Cares. I am deeply committed to our mission and value the people and community at First UU.

I currently work at UT Austin (my alma mater) in continuing and professional education but I am retiring THIS SUMMER! I am a volunteer with Hospice Austin, love to travel, and have been a passionate racquetball player for over 40 years. I have two adult daughters and a delightful granddaughter. I served on a ministerial search committee for my previous congregation, which was a great experience resulting in a successful search. I would consider it an honor and a privilege to be part of the team that helps First UU complete its ministerial team.