

Annual Report 2013/2014

Ministerial Search Committee

June 12, 2014

Members of the Ministerial Search Committee

Gary Lerude, Chairperson	Steve Hedges
Kathy Grossman, Vice-Chairperson	Carol Houde
Cecile Bonvouloir	Donna LaRue
Laurie Goodman	

Cottage Meetings

The small group “Cottage Meetings” organized by the Search Committee ran from May 5th through early July, 2013, with an impressive 107 members and friends plus approximately 80 children and youth participating. Members of the committee began the summer by compiling and interpreting the responses to the questions that were posed in the small group sessions. This information was instrumental in guiding us in identifying common themes and the priorities of our members as the starting point in determining the way in which we would represent our congregation to ministerial candidates.

Congregational Survey

In September the committee launched an online survey customized to deepen our understanding and quantify the range of anecdotal responses collected throughout the cottage meetings. A great deal of time and effort went into formulating the questions to this extensive survey in order to provide an accurate representation of who we are as a congregation – theologically, demographically, desired characteristics of our next minister, as well as many other aspects of our congregational life. 174 members of the church participated in this survey, which formed the backbone of our Congregational Record and Ministerial Search Packet.

Beyond Categorical Thinking Workshop

The UUA recommends the Beyond Categorical Thinking program for all churches entering the ministerial search process. It is designed to promote inclusive thinking and help prevent unplanned discrimination when calling a new minister. Nearly 70 members and friends of our congregation took part in the three hour workshop. The experienced facilitators lead us through a process that helped us voice our hopes, expectations and concerns about our next minister, learn about the how the ministerial search process works, and explore how categorizing people (i.e. ministers) interferes with choosing the best candidate.

Some concerns were raised during the workshop, but overall, there were far more benefits than concerns expressed regarding the choosing of a minister with an “identity” different from the majority of members of the congregation. We thank members and friends who attended for their willingness to engage in the discussion by expressing their concerns because it gave a chance for participants and the facilitators to address the issues that were raised.

Some of the *benefits* of hiring a minister different from what we have experienced in the past offered by our participants included: “we’d learn to be a more a welcoming congregation;” “would help us to learn and grow into living our principles;” “we would reflect our multi-cultural world; and “make Nashua UU more welcoming and attractive to the larger community.”

Congregational Record

The Congregational Record is developed through written responses to standard questions prepared by the UUA Ministerial Transitions Office. Through this document, we introduce ministerial candidates to our church, history, congregation, programs, culture, governance structure, budget, Lifespan Religious Education program, city and our hopes and dreams for our next called minister. All the work we did leading up to preparing this 30 page document—the cottage meetings, surveys, BCT Workshop and more was analyzed, evaluated and condensed into what we believe presents an accurate assessment of our strengths and challenges, who we are, where we have come from, and where we hope to go as a congregation.

Ministerial Search Packet

The Ministerial Search Packet is a website developed by the Search Committee to provide visual representation and context to the narrative in the Congregational Record. Filled with photographs of our congregational life, we introduced the people and the spark of life that are at the heart of our faith community.

Draft Ministerial Agreement

The Ministerial Agreement is a document that defines the terms of employment and compensation for the new settled minister. As a declaration of shared understandings and expectations, it sets forth the responsibilities and obligations between the Minister and the Congregation. The Negotiating Team, comprised of Steve Hedges of the Search Committee, Kate O'Shea of the Board of Trustees, and Jon Lasselle, a trusted church elder, developed a draft of this agreement that was shared and discussed with all of our Pre-Candidates. Due to understandable family obligations, Jon Lasselle's role was assumed by John Burkitt in March.

Incomplete Search

Our congregation received an impressive 22 responses from ministers-in-search expressing interest in our church. The committee narrowed down the candidates to four to bring to Nashua for neutral pulpit weekends by reading and discussing their Ministerial Records (similar to our Congregational Record), conducting Skype interviews, and speaking with references. Each candidate was carefully evaluated by comparing their strengths, experiences and interests with those expressed by members of our congregation throughout the discernment process we went through together.

At the completion of the first round, we had two strong candidates, however, in the end, these ministers chose other churches for their settled ministry. While we chose to participate in the second round taking another look at ministers who did not seem to meet our criteria in the first round, as well as a few new ministers who sent us their records in the second round, we did not find a match, and therefore, elected to do another year of interim ministry.

We are very pleased to announce that six of the seven members of the committee have agreed to continue on with the Search Committee into the coming year. We will miss Cecile Bonvouloir, who is stepping down in order to focus on the needs of her family.

Respectfully Submitted by:

The Members of the Search Committee