

# **Ministerial Transition @ UUFR: Q&A**

## **1. Why is Rev. John leaving?**

John has served as the Fellowship's Lead Minister, Assistant Minister, and student (intern) minister for eight years.

As John announced during his January 15th sermon and CyberPulpit, he simply realized, several months ago, that although he'd done a lot of good work with the congregation, he'd given everything that he had to offer as the lead minister of this religious community and that it was time for him to step aside so we can find a new minister who can lead us, care for us, work together with us, and love us as we face the very real and very significant challenges that we will need to face to nurture and sustain this religious community during the coming years and ensure that it will remain the vibrant, healthy, engaged, inclusive, welcoming, diverse, justice-seeking, transformative liberal religious community it seeks to be.

## **2. Did the Board ask Rev. John to resign?**

Absolutely not. John's decision to leave was entirely his own and not the result of any pressure or dissatisfaction on the part of the Board with respect to his ministry. The Board expresses its sincere thanks to Rev. John for all that he has done for UUFR during his time with us and asks Fellowship members and friends to join them in expressing our appreciation for his care and leadership of our beloved community.

## **3. When is John's last day at UUFR?**

John will continue to serve as UUFR's Lead Minister through June 30, 2017 (but will be away for at least four weeks on unpaid furlough due to budget limitations between now and then).

## **4. When did the Board learn that John was leaving?**

John informed the Board of his decision to leave during the Board's October 25, 2016 meeting.

## **5. Why did the Board and John wait to inform the congregation?**

John asked that the Board not share this information with anyone, including our spouses, until he was ready to make the decision known to the congregation and the Board had time to consider what his leaving would mean with respect to the congregation's ministry and develop a plan for addressing the upcoming ministerial transition. The Board and John planned to share this information with the congregation on January 8th but had to delay the announcement due to cancellation of the Sunday service due to snow.

## **6. Will there be an opportunity for the congregation to say goodbye to John and thank him for his service?**

Absolutely. An appropriate celebration to honor John's ministry and say goodbye will be held sometime this spring.

## **7. Is John retiring from the ministry? Is he looking for another position? What will he do after he leaves?**

John is not retiring from ministry but is not actively seeking a position with another UU congregation and doesn't know, as of now, what shape or form his future ministry may take.

## **8. Will UUFR members and friends be able to remain in contact with Rev. John after he leaves?**

Not for a while. When a minister leaves a congregation, UUA and UUMA guidelines limit contact between the former minister and the members and friends of the congregation he or she served.

## **9. What about Rev. Sasha?**

Rev. Sasha intends to continue serving as the Fellowship's Assistant Minister. She is happy to help with the transition in any way she can in her continued role as Assistant Minister.

## **10. Will there be additional staffing changes or transitions?**

The Board is not anticipating any additional staffing changes or transitions at this time.

## **11. What are some of the Fellowship's options with respect to a new Lead Minister?**

One common option when a minister leaves is for the congregation's governing board to hire an "interim" minister for a period of one or two years, form a ministerial search committee and conduct a ministerial search during that time, and present a candidate who can be called (or not called) by the congregation's members to serve indefinitely as the congregation's "settled" minister. UUFR followed this approach most recently when Rev. Don Rollins served as the Fellowship's interim minister (2011-12) following the resignation of Rev. Tom Rhodes.

A second, more recent, option is for the congregation's board to hire, with the assistance of the UUA Ministerial Transitions Office, a "developmental" minister who can work with the congregation for a period of three to five years on a number of congregational challenges or goals identified by the congregation before the congregation searches for and calls a new "settled" minister.

## **12. So, what's the difference between an interim minister and a developmental minister?**

An interim minister's job is to shake up the congregation and yet give it some breathing room while it searches for a more longer-term minister. They often test out their programs and ways of doing things which can be stressful for a congregation, without long-range thinking involved. They know they won't be there for long and are not seeking to stay or correct any deep-standing issues within the congregation – given the relatively short amount of time they will be employed. Interim ministers are hired by the congregation's governing board for a period of one or two years.

Developmental ministers work with the congregation and the UUA transitions team to gently provoke change – hopefully adaptive change which will have lasting impact on the long-term well-being of a congregation by working with staff, lay leaders, and the congregation to intentionally address three to five well-defined congregational challenges or goals that the congregation needs to address in order to move forward.

A developmental minister will be matched to us by the UUA transitions team, though we will have the opportunity to interview him or her, research his or her references and select an alternate candidate if we do not feel the one chosen is a good fit. They would be a direct hire by the Board, but the Board would seek the congregation's affirmation of their decision. A developmental minister would serve the congregation for a period of three to five years under a series of annually renewable contracts (it is assumed that unless there are egregious problems this minister will stay for up to five years, but the Board has the opportunity to cancel the contract each year, and our congregation will also need to make it worth the minister's while to stay each year as he/she too has the choice to leave.)

So, developmental ministers are like interim ministers we get to keep for five years who are tasked with specific goals we set. The UUA regional team will be engaged with us and the developmental minister during their ministry to help the developmental ministry succeed.

## **13. Which option is the Board selecting and why?**

The Board plans to hire a developmental minister for a period of three to five years before the congregation calls a new "settled" minister.

The Board feels that a three to five year developmental ministry would, first, provide greater stability and continuity over the next three to five years than a "traditional" one- or two-year interim ministry coinciding with a

“full-blown” ministerial search process followed by the call of a new “settled” minister, and, second, allow the congregation, lay leaders, staff, and ministers to more quickly and effectively address several challenges and goals (including those identified in the September 2016 report by our UUA stewardship consultant) that need to be addressed as soon as possible in order for the congregation to move forward rather than possibly losing momentum, energy, and focus during an extended period of ministerial transition.

#### **14. What are the goals or challenges that a developmental minister would help us work on?**

Drawing on the recommendations and goals contained in the 2016 UUA stewardship consultant’s report, the Board has identified the following developmental goals:

1. Grow UUFR members’ commitment to mission and understanding of membership as an active rather than passive state, which will lead to:
  - a. more balanced, joyful, and generous financial support of UUFR,
  - b. increased participation in ministry, programs, and lifespan religious education, and
  - c. greater engagement with the wider community to seek justice and reduce oppression.
2. Increase effectiveness of collaborative ministry and governance model, to be created through greater emphasis on, for example:
  - a. leadership and interpersonal relationship/communication training opportunities,
  - b. recognition of our own strengths and limitations, and those of others, and
  - c. connecting spiritual deepening and personal growth to deeper participation in the life of the Fellowship.
3. Promote greater understanding and practice of the covenantal relationship between members to:
  - a. create unity of congregational purpose,
  - b. enhance interpersonal connections,
  - c. increase visitor conversion and member retention, and
  - d. become a more effective force for justice in our denomination and the outside community.
4. Become a truly loving and diverse multi-racial, multi-cultural community that:
  - a. welcomes all,
  - b. invites and inspires those who share our vision and mission to join us,
  - c. finds common ground even in conflict, and
  - d. engages with others to promote our common values.

#### **15. What are the skills or characteristics we want in a new developmental minister?**

- Demonstrated ability to effectively implement shared (policy) governance and ministry in a large congregation.
- Demonstrated skills and experience with interpersonal and congregational communications and conflict management.
- Ability to deliver inspiring and thought-provoking sermons.
- Lay leadership development skills and experience.
- Thorough understanding of, and willingness to be involved with, stewardship in large UU congregations.

#### **16. Are there other UU congregations that have chosen the developmental ministry option?**

Yes. Two are right here in North Carolina. One is the UU Church of Greensboro, which hired two developmental ministers to work with them from 2011 to 2016. Another is the UU Fellowship of Greenville, which, after the departure of their settled minister and an eighteen month interim ministry, hired Rev. Rod Debs as their developmental minister in 2015.

#### **17. Where can we learn more about developmental ministry?**

The UU World magazine published an article about developmental ministry in the Fall of 2014: <http://www.uuworld.org/articles/stub-297112>.

### **18. What would be the timeline and process for hiring a new developmental minister?**

Over the past two months the Board has discussed the pros and cons of interim and developmental ministry with UUA staff and, after thoughtful and careful deliberation, submitted an application for developmental ministry to the UUA Ministerial Transitions Office.

After sharing the Fellowship's application with a pool of qualified UU ministers who have the skills and experience to help the Fellowship address the challenges and goals it faces, the Transitions Office will recommend one or more ministers for consideration by the Fellowship. The Board, with the assistance of an ad hoc search committee, will consider the UUA's recommendations and, if it feels that one of the interested ministers is a good fit, offer the position to him or her and negotiate a salary and contract. If everything works out, a new developmental minister could be hired by May, 2017 and begin work no later than September 1, 2017.

### **19. How much will it cost to hire a new developmental minister?**

Hiring a new developmental minister will cost approximately \$35,000 more per year than the amount we currently pay Rev. John for salary, housing, and benefits. Rev. John's adjusted (furlough) annual salary and housing allowance for 2016-17 is \$69,000. Because the recommended UU salary and housing allowance for the Fellowship's Lead Minister ranges between \$71,900 to \$77,850 (little or no experience) and \$94,250 to \$102,250 (at least five to eight years experience), the anticipated salary and housing allowance for a new interim or developmental minister will probably be at least \$25,000 more than the amount we currently provide and the amount that we will need to provide for health insurance, moving expenses, and other benefits will probably be at least \$10,000 more than currently budgeted. So this means that the Fellowship's 2017 Generosity Campaign will need to generate at least \$35,000 in additional pledges in order to hire a new developmental minister as well as maintaining current staff levels and benefits and funding for facility maintenance, operations, and ministry programs. That's a lot! But we can do it if everyone pitches in and does their fair share!

### **20. When will the congregation have the chance to discuss John's leaving and the ministerial transition process with the Board?**

The Board will be hosting several board forums during Wednesday night Wellspring programming as well as Sunday after service. The first forum will be Wednesday, January 18 at 7:00 pm, followed by a second forum on Sunday, January 22 after the Sunday worship service 12:15-1:30 pm and a third forum on Wednesday, January 25 at 7:00 pm. You may also send your comments or questions via email to [president@uufr.org](mailto:president@uufr.org) or call our Board President, Chris Breivogel at 919-801-7180.