
VII. Ministerial Profile

The ministerial profile is one of the most important pieces of information you can supply to the Transitions Director and prospective ministerial candidates. The following are real profiles drawn by real search committees. They show what is wanted in terms of length and subject matter. The success of your profile statement depends not on how much it resembles one from another congregation, but how clearly it distinguishes your congregation and its unique needs.

Example #1 - a small congregation

Our next minister will be a scholar, possibly, a healer, hopefully, and a leader, certainly. We want a visible leader with a sense of direction. But our congregation will not be led by a forced march. We need a leader by example, a leader by persuasion. Our next minister will be a *spiritual* leader, one whose vision for us matches our own, but who challenges us to open our hearts and minds to new possibilities, also. Our congregation wants a leader in the pulpit who will energize our church with inspiring and meaningful sermons. We need to empower more of our members into helping to develop and carry forward the church's programs and institutions.

At the same time, our new minister must lead by consensus. Passionate and diverse viewpoints need to be heard and blended. Our desire for growth must be reconciled with our fear of losing the intimacy we share now. We have a rich diversity of lay leaders who want to remain involved in the ministry of our church. Our next minister must be someone comfortable with him/herself and capable of working productively with strong individuals with diverse outlooks. And we want a minister who is accepting of all the various viewpoints and lifestyles that members of our congregation embrace.

Finally, we seek a minister experienced in working with complex congregational dynamics. Ours is a church dealing with issues still lingering from the last 25 years of ministry. As a group we are struggling with the natural conflict between getting things done and acting *compassionately*. We want to be better, but may require some guidance. We need a person who will help us to focus our vision for the church and to unite our various energies into a harmonious chorus.

Example #2 - a mid-sized congregation

Our minister will stimulate us intellectually, inspire us spiritually, and motivate us to be socially responsible. He or she will be compassionate to those of us in need. It is important that the candidate have "pizzazz." Sunday services must attract our members and motivate our guests and visitors to return.

When asked for the most desired personal characteristics in a new minister, the congregation cited leadership skills first, followed by personal warmth and understanding, then philosophical and intellectual emphasis. Spiritual depth and a sense of humor are also important characteristics.

In exercising leadership, the primary focus will be a shared ministry within our congregation. In addition, our new minister will maintain good connections with the

wider religious community and help define our Unitarian Universalist presence in our city. Of various possible "styles" of leadership (e.g., authoritative, collaborative, facilitative, submissive), the congregation most strongly pointed to "collaborative" and "facilitative" as desirable.

Survey respondents ranked desired areas of ministerial focus as "delivering meaningful sermons," "encourage spirit of fellowship" and "provide spiritual leadership" as by far the most important of competing options.

Not surprisingly, the congregation reported wide variance in what religious orientation "we" have and the orientation we seek in our settled minister: agnosticism, humanism, ethical religion in general and ethical Christianity were all very well supported in survey responses. Our minister must speak to a wide range of beliefs.

This is an exciting time for our congregation. Join us in our journey.

Example #3 - a large urban congregation

The individual profiles submitted by members of the committee show the diversity of approach and style which one would expect from its diverse membership, yet three common themes unmistakably emerge: the senior minister must be a *great preacher*, a *creative leader*, and a *warm and open human being*.

In the pulpit he or she must reflect a moving but searching and scholarly eloquence, a critical and courageous conscience (that yet perceives some shades of gray as well as black and white), and both depth and breadth of insight. Recognizing the tension of sustaining such a burden, the congregation contemplates that other ministers or (occasionally) lay persons may fill the pulpit one Sunday a month.

Out of the pulpit, the minister must be versatile and creative, strong yet catalytic for members and staff alike. As the senior member of the professional staff, the senior minister is responsible for coordinating the operations of the church under the policy direction of the Board of Trustees. Vital, but possibly sensing a lack of purpose in an era of rapid change, the congregation seeks renewed challenge and direction. It would welcome a generalist in interest and education who responds to the urban challenge and who does not fear to face the future.

In personality, the minister must genuinely relate to people. This demands a warm and open spirit — a person who likes people, who inspires enthusiasm and devotion, who listens and who hears the voices of differing ages and groups, whether these are soft or strident. Our minister must be a leader whose goal is not to sweep the congregation by force of personality, but whose passion is for making the democratic process work. He or she should feel fulfillment in leading members and groups to confront problems squarely, to engage in open dialog, and to reach responsible decisions. In a word, our minister must be a person whose style says "we," not "I."