
X. Questions, Questions

<p><i>Questions, First Group</i> <i>Search Committee Questions for References</i></p>

A search committee recently asked these questions of the references of its potential ministerial candidates.

1. How long have you known _____?
2. As far as you know does _____ have clear personal and professional boundaries? i.e. can they say no when too many demands are put upon her/his personal time?
3. Does _____ tend to have a strong support system?
4. Does _____ have strong family ties?
5. Is _____ warm and available to her/his congregants?
6. Is _____ a strong leader?
7. Does _____ implement the vision of the congregation with clarity?
8. Is _____ strong on pastoral care? Describe please.
9. Have you known of a personal life crisis that _____ has had and how did he/she handle it?
10. Have you experienced or do you have a perception of how _____ would handle a difference of opinion issue with a congregant?
11. Have you experienced or do you have a perception of how _____ would handle a difficult pastoral care issue?
12. What is the most significant contribution that _____ has made to the UU ministry?
13. What has been the greatest challenge presented to _____?
14. Is there anything in his/her personal and professional life that we should know?
15. Would you want _____ as your minister?

At this point ask the Reference to add whatever they wish to the reference.

Questions, Second Group
Search Committee Questions for Ministerial Pre-Candidates

A search committee recently asked these questions of its potential ministerial candidates.

1. *Pattern* (Member A)

Give us a chronological verbal resume in 10-15 minutes. (Observe how well the person articulates biography.)

Why moving on or why desire a change?

Why interested in our church?

2. *Vision* (Members B&C)

Based on the reading of our packet, what do you feel you can do for our congregation?
 (Need specific answer--this is most key)

What has been your major contribution to your present congregation? Did you envision that when you started there?

Said another way: In what areas of your congregation's programs do you believe you have been most effective? In which least effective?

Would your goals be to deepen members' experience, or grow in membership size?

Follow on question if appropriate: Describe your successes, both in leadership of congregational activity and in individual contacts, or helping individuals grow and develop.

How would you deal with the congregation's diverse visions?

What is the right length to stay in a pastorate? Is stagnation inevitable?

Minor: How do you envision your relationship with this congregation in one year, and in 5 years?

What participation do you envision in the community?

What should be the relationship of the UU church to other religious organizations? How do you get involved in that?

What experiences have you had with the media?

How much do you participate or want to participate in the denomination? With other local churches?

How do you reconcile unity and diversity in a UU context?

3. *Theology, religious orientation, minister's religious journey* (Members D&E)

(The objective is to understand their theology, how and when they arrived at it, and how it fits our church members.)

Why did you choose the ministry as your profession?

Summarize your theological beliefs and how you got there.

Why do you feel you fit the theological profile of this congregation?

Give an example of how you would use UU heritage and apply it to a crisis. How do you define crisis?

4. *Worship Services* (Members F&G)

Describe the climate or distinctive quality you seek to develop in planning Sunday services?

What new expressions have you brought to worship?

Describe your typical worship service and a plan of action for implementing it.

What responsibility-would others have in assisting with this development?

i.e. the DRE? Music Director? Worship Committee? Board of Trustees?

Have you worked with a music director? How do you integrate music into the service?

What involvement of individuals in the worship service, i.e. lay leaders, children?

How do you view participation by others?

How do you feel about a Worship Committee being responsible for a certain number of Sunday services?

What has been your relationship to such a committee?

5. *Religious Education* (Members A&B)

What programs have you initiated and sustained for both youth and adults?

Would you see yourself as a leader of classes, workshops, or seminars? If so, what areas of adult education/programming interest you?

Are you comfortable with periodic attendance by youth? Describe your experience.

Rights of passage, life transitions, your experiences.

How do you think children can be helped to feel like an important part of your church community?

6. *Pastoral Care* (Members C&D)

What training and skills do you have in counseling?

What kinds of counseling are you most effective at, and least effective?

How do you feel about counseling?

How do you deal with divorce when counseling?

Have you had any experience with an organized caring committee?

How do you approach the life passages of births, baptisms, weddings, illnesses, deaths?

What is your feeling about doing marriages and funerals for non-members?

How do you feel about performing a holy union ceremony for gays and lesbians?

7. *Social Responsibility* (Members E&F)

How have you been involved in local, state, national, and global issues? Describe your experiences with each area.

How involved should the minister be in social concerns?

How involved should the members be in social concerns?

What successes have you experienced in the area of social concerns?

What failures or disappointments have you experienced in social concerns?

Our church has been a sanctuary church since Jan. 1984. How do you feel about this decision?

What would you do if you had \$20,000 a year to spend on social issues?

8. *Administration* (Members G&A)

Whom do you see as the manager of the church?

How do you work with the Board, the staff, and the committees?

How do you envision the relationship between the minister and staff, and the Board?

What should be your involvement with the Board? With the Program Council?

What is the role of the minister in relation to lay leadership?

How much time do you spend meeting with committees?

Describe a typical work week.

What office hours have you kept?

How much time do you usually spend in preparation of a sermon?

Give examples of your ability to organize, activate, guide and follow through with the congregation.

To what extent do you participate in building maintenance? Daily office routine?

Our office administrator will be leaving us in June after nearly 25 years. Do you feel you should have the authority to hire the new person? To organize the daily functioning of the office?

Any experience with a computer? e-mail? websites?

How do you view the use of the church building? Rental fees? Contracts?

9. *Growth and Outreach* (Member B)

Given the limitation of our facility, should this church grow?

If so, why? Or why not? What would you do?

Are you interested in growth?

What successes and failures have you experienced with growth?

10. *Personal Life Style, Family, Hobbies* (Members C&D)

How do you assure yourself time for reading and study, to reflect, write?

How do you care for your own mental and physical health?

How does your family fit into our area?

How does your spouse relate to your ministry?

How do you relate to the work of your spouse?

(If the minister has been married several times) How would you deal with that when you counsel for marriage and divorce?

11. *Personnel Matters* (Members E&F)

Discuss our compensation package and your salary expectations

What expectations do you have regarding yearly vacation?

professional meetings time?

sabbatical leave time?

and so on

Questions, Third Group
Congregational Questions for Ministerial Candidates

(These are the actual questions a Unitarian Universalist congregation put to a ministerial candidate, for two hours on a Monday night during candidating week. The minister received and accepted the call to the church.)

What proportion of your sermons would you spend talking about philosophical matters, religious matters, social concerns, issues of the day, your personal experiences and feelings and so forth?

Are there any particular parts of the service that you feel strongly attached to and that you would like to bring to our church?

Could you describe what you see as your favorite order of service, or flow of service?

Could you describe what you think the role of your spouse will be in this congregation?

How do you see yourself supervising the other staff?

How do you order your priorities?

What is your approach to counseling?

What are your reasons for wanting to leave the church you are now serving?

What would be your long term objective for this church?

Do you believe that our church should increase its membership and if so how would you go about it?

Our last minister was much older than you. You are a member of the Baby Boom generation. What experiences do you have that help you relate to the needs of older persons in the congregation?

Will you be sensitive to gender inclusive language?

What role do you see for music in the service?

How do you see individuals and yourself being involved in social action? Do you see this more as individual participation or stands the church might take on some issues?

How would you rank social action and community activities in your priorities?

What do you see the role of this church in creating equality for blacks in our society?

Do you think our church should be more active in feeding and sheltering the homeless?

What do you see as a realistic endowment goal for this church over the next five years?

What would be the size of the congregation that you would be comfortable with?

What size of vote would you look for before accepting a call to our church?

How do you deal with people who come to the church that have life styles (single, gay, etc.) that are very different then the commonly accepted life style in our society?

What role do you see yourself having with the children's church school? Has it been your practice to be involved in that in any way?

What experience have you had and how comfortable are you doing other kinds of worship services that might involve dance, or film, slides and so on?

Why do you insist that you be a member of the Religious Education Minister/Director Search Committee? Your being a member can lend itself to a manipulation of that committee. I think that is what our fear is. Shouldn't the committee have a right to meet without the minister?

We had a lot of discussion in the last year or two about the structure of our church and the reporting relationships within the church and where the power lies. Some people view-the minister as a member of the congregation, other people view the minister as the chief executive officer of the church. Where do you fall in there? How do you view the minister of this church?

A ministerial search consists of a very large emotional as well as financial commitment on the part of a congregation and the denomination tells us that the expected average.ministry falls short of ten years. In the situation of you and your spouse representing dual professional careers how would you approach lets say four years from now your spouse receiving an outstanding offer in a distant community that would require both of you deciding how you would approach which direction to take? What factors would you deem in that situation?

Right now we are offering you the position as the Minister. If at some point we decided we wanted a co-ministry in this church, what impact would such a decision have on you?

Would the Minister/Director of Religious Education report to you or to the Board?

How do you feel about the church voting on the issue of Sanctuary for people from Central

America?

Do you believe that the church should have an outreach toward single people, and if so, what direction should that take?

This church has a long tradition of strong lay leadership. What do you see as your role vis-a-vis this lay leadership in the church?

How do you define who "the congregation" is when you say "it depends on what the congregation wants"?

What do you perceive as one or several issues as regards the development of the intellect or development of the spirit of the congregation?

We have had two interim ministers. But there is more healing that needs to be done. What would you do to start that process?

The pulpit committee had a wonderful experience. They became intimate friends. What could you do to give that same experience to the members of the congregation?

Fifteen years ago you faced a marvelous opportunity when you decided to enter the ministry. Then what was your passion to enter the ministry? Is that still your passion?

What are you going to bring to us and how are we going to participate in your growth?

If you had the opportunity to be any person other than yourself, who would you be, and why?

What do you say to a person who thinks that UUism is more of a social club than a religion?

Why is the UU church a necessary institution in our culture?

Do you have any special rituals on Sunday, or Christmas Eve or Easter or some other time that you would hate to part with as you take on a new church?

Could you name a few people who are more liberal than you are and more conservative than you are?

Do you believe that in certain situations the bearing of arms is necessary to protect the interests of our country?

We have few Blacks in our membership, even though the population of the community is 20% black. How would you go about bringing more Blacks into our church membership?

In your work right now what do you consider your strongest points? Where are you most effective?

In your work right now where are you least effective?

In terms of your own professional growth what goals do you have for yourself to achieve in the next ten years?

Generally how do you feel about the relative importance of the ministry to adults and the ministry to children in our congregation?

What do you turn to for your own sense of strength and source of renewal when you feel down?