



# Strategic Review of Professional Ministries

An exploration of the past, present, challenges and opportunities for our Unitarian Universalist ministries, with sixty recommendations to consider

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## **Introduction**

The Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) faces two critical challenges in the next decade. First, half of the ministers now serving Unitarian Universalist (UU) congregations will reach retirement age raising serious questions about staffing congregations in and for the future. Second, the United States is in the midst of a major demographic change. The new U.S. is far more diverse racially, ethnically, and culturally than ever before. Yet our movement and our ministries are overwhelmingly Euro-American. For Unitarian Universalism to thrive in a multi-cultural world, changes are necessary to prepare for such ministries.

The Rev. Peter Morales, UUA President, set the Strategic Review of Professional Ministries (SRPM) in motion shortly after took office, with the goal of “a new ministry for a new America.” He named a task force of primarily UUA staff members to conduct the review, focusing on the people involved in the ministries of our congregations – parish ministers, religious educators, and music professionals.

## **The Charge**

The Task Force was charged with creating a report to serve as a guide primarily for directing UUA staff effort and fiscal resources. Several groups within the Association in addition to the congregations and staff have some role for ensuring effective ministries, including the Board of Trustees, the Ministerial Fellowship Committee, and professional organizations such as the Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association (UUMA), Liberal Religious Educators Association (LREDA), and the Unitarian Universalist Musicians Network (UUMN). The Task Force’s focus was on changes the UUA staff could make, but its charge included suggestions that could potentially be useful to other groups.

## Task Force Members

Current members include:

**The Rev. Harlan Limpert**, SRPM Task Force chair, UUA Vice President,  
Ministries & Congregational Support

**The Rev. Jory Agate**, UUA Ministerial Development Director

**Dea Brayden**, Special Assistant to the UUA President

**Janice Marie Johnson**, UUA Multicultural Growth Director

**The Rev. Sarah Lammert**, UUA Director for Ministries & Faith Development

**The Rev. Jane Rzepka**, retired Senior Minister, Church of the Larger Fellowship

Over a period of about a year, previous task force members or those having significant roles in the creation of the contents of this report include:

**Taquiena Boston**, UUA Director for Multicultural Growth & Witness

**Erik Kesting**, former UUA Youth & Young Adult Ministries Director

**The Rev. Keith Kron**, UUA Director for Transitions

**The Rev. Beth Miller**, former UUA Director, Ministry & Professional Leadership

**The Rev. David Pettee**, UUA Director for Credentialing

**Tom Stites**, retired editor and publisher of *UU World*

## Task Force Process

Rather than organizing expensive conferences or consultations, the SRPM Task Force chose to analyze and build on the many reports, consultations, research projects, conferences and studies that have been conducted over the decades both within and outside the UUA. They included major internal documents like the 1992 Commission on Appraisal Report entitled “Our Professional Ministry,” the 1932 Commission on Appraisal Report entitled “Unitarians Face a New Age,” and smaller resources such as the notes and recollections from “The Pizza Meeting,” a one-day gathering of representatives of various professional and

identify groups of the Association in 2007. Additionally the Task Force reviewed and reflected upon external studies such as the Faith Formation 2020 – Envisioning the Future Report created by LifelongFaith Associates, a national organization committed to helping congregations develop lifelong faith formation for all ages and generations. Other significant documents consulted are listed on the final page of this report.

## **Recommendations & Next Steps**

President Morales asked the Task Force to include recommendations for consideration by the administration and to seek broad input from various religious professionals and related organizations. Currently, the recommendations in this draft are only those of the Task Force members. There was no attempt to reach consensus within the Task Force. The intent of the Strategic Review of Professional Ministries is to provide the administration with many viable options to consider. The final report will be presented in March 2011. The next steps will include evaluation by the administration of the recommendations for those most worthy of our efforts and our funding to be included in a Strategic Plan.

# Vision of Ministry

## A New Ministry for the future

Unitarian Universalism can be, and indeed is, the religion for our time, not because it is better and more insightful than other esteemed religions but because we provide a saving message of unity and love in a world that is fractured and hurting. Our message that all are precious and unique and at the same time interconnected is one that is potentially transforming, not just for individuals but also for our larger communities and nations. As the Harvard comparative religion professor Diana Eck has put it, “Unitarian Universalism is not the lowest common denominator; it is the highest common calling. The world is in need of your theology.”

The world is indeed in need, but the challenges for Unitarian Universalism in heeding Dr. Eck’s call are daunting. The Strategic Review of Professional Ministries addresses one of the crucial challenges: ensuring a robust flow of UU religious professionals who are equipped to provide vital ministry in congregations that thrive in a future that is increasingly diverse racially, ethnically and culturally – and who help our faith grow to serve all who yearn for liberal religious community.

This report explores a wide range of ideas about how best to approach recruiting, education, credentialing, placement & transitions, and continuing education & professional development. And it sets the Task Force’s observations in the challenging context of the Association’s long and troubled history of grappling with issues of race, heritage, oppression and multiculturalism.

Unitarian Universalism faces many challenges that go well beyond the scope of this report. Most fundamentally, for a faith dominated by educated Euro-

Americans, responding to Dr. Eck’s vision will demand cultural change. Studies by the Alban Institute and others have illuminated how powerfully congregational cultures resist change; there is no reason to believe that our Association’s staff and governance culture is less resistant. Cultural change is a wrenching undertaking and cannot be accomplished only by recruiting the right religious professionals and ensuring that they are equipped to lead more diverse Unitarian Universalist congregations. If we are to have a vital future, it will require the strategic commitment and creative engagement of our leaders, both lay and professional, at all levels of our Association.

This report paints a picture of what kind of professional parish ministry – defined broadly here as clergy, religious educators and music professionals who serve congregations – will be required to meet the challenges of a changing religious and cultural landscape. As UUA President Morales often says of burgeoning multiculturalism, “This historic change represents an enormous opportunity and challenge for us. Frankly, this new multicultural America exposes the greatest weaknesses of our movement.” To stay vital in the future, our religious professionals will need to be visionary, engaged, spiritually mature, and competent leaders.

## **The Challenges**

The United States is experiencing a decline in affiliation with traditional faith communities. While mainline Protestant churches are experiencing negative growth trends, the UUA has for more than two decades maintained near-zero growth overall; in recent years it has experienced a slight decline in religious education registrations. The “Faith Formation 2020” report by LifelongFaith Associates notes that if current trends continue, by 2020 only 14.7% of Americans will attend weekend worship services. In fact, the fastest growing sector of the U.S. religious “market” is not the evangelical church but those

identifying themselves with “no religious affiliation” at all. What will this mean for our congregations going forward?

The U.S. is trending towards greater racial and ethnic diversity but UU congregations are not keeping pace:

**Racial and ethnic diversity of Unitarian Universalists, compared to the U.S. population, 1998–2008 (sources: U.S. Census and UU World\*)**

	U.S., 1998	UUs, 1997	U.S., 2008	UUs, 2008
White	72.3%	91.5%	65.6%	89.0%
Black	12.1%	1.3%	12.2%	1.0%
Hispanic	11.2%	1.0%	15.4%	3.0%
Asian	3.6%	0.7%	4.6%	3.0%
Nat. Amer.	0.7%	2.3%	0.8%	—
Multiracial	—	3.2%	1.7%	4.0%

\*This chart compares U.S. Census estimates of America’s racial and ethnic diversity for 1998 and 2008 with demographic data from two surveys of UUs, the 1997 UUA Fulfilling the Promise survey and the 2008 Pew Forum’s Religious Landscape Survey. Because the UUA and Pew Forum surveys tracked six racial/ethnic groups—whites, blacks or African Americans, Hispanics or Latinos/Latinas, Asians and Pacific Islanders, Native Americans, and multiracial people—this chart shows that data alongside Census figures for non-Hispanic whites, non-Hispanic blacks, Hispanics who identify with any one race, Asians and Native Hawaiians/ Pacific Islanders, Native Americans, and multiracial people.

The U.S. has nearly 305 million people today. The population is projected to reach 400 million by 2039 and 439 million in 2050, becoming more multicultural as it grows.

There are hopeful signs within Unitarian Universalism to suggest that our ministry is becoming more diverse. Currently there are about 60 seminarians of color preparing for the ministry in community and parish settings, compared to 30 to 35 in the year 2000 (our records are not as clear from a decade ago). Forty-five ministers of color are actively serving our faith. A project is under way to identify religious educators of color in order to provide networking, support and



advocacy. There is a heavy emphasis at all levels of the Association on lifelong learning with regard to multicultural competency and anti-oppression work. Yet our movement and our professional leaders remain overwhelmingly Euro-American.

While our religious education professionals and musicians represent the broad spectrum of adult generations in our society, our ordained ministry is aging. Over the past twenty years, the average age of ministers entering new positions has gradually increased from 44 in 1991 to 49 in 2010. Nearly half of our settled parish ministers will reach retirement age within the next eight years, and our pool of accredited interims trends even older, with nearly all of the most experienced ministers in this area planning to retire in the next five years. While ministry continues to be an attractive second career, we will need to be intentional about recruiting younger adults to our ministry who are tuned in to cultural and generational change and who have the potential for long tenure in this vocation. In particular, we need to be able to attract replacements who are adept at growing congregations and successfully leading large churches as well as the small-to-medium-sized congregations that dominate our association.

Unitarian Universalism faces a number of challenges unique to our own ways of doing things, many of which will be addressed at greater length under their own topic headings in this report. Some of the broader concerns involve the future of progressive seminaries, including our two UU seminaries: Meadville Lombard Theological School and Starr Kind School of the Ministry. Since most of our future clergy will attend non-UU theological schools, as they do now, and since many will be nonresident students, how will we hold them “in-care” along the way and how will they gain the depth of understanding that enables them to be bearers of our faith tradition? In addition, increasing student indebtedness is of serious concern.

Funding decreases for the Regional Subcommittees of the Ministerial Fellowship Committee (RSCCs) have meant that the vision has weakened for these committees to serve as a key vehicle for early feedback on ministerial formation and guidance on what skills and competencies might need attention. Efforts to create effective “in-care” committees to support seminarians have yet to yield a robust model. While some have questioned the overall cost of credentialing, it is clear that it is more than a gate-keeping function. It creates more cohesive standards by which competency is judged in the various religious professions. It also strongly informs the formation process before, during and after credentials are tested and received.

Religious educators and musicians face special challenges, including lack of resources for professional development and a lack of congregational buy-in for their professional credentialing. At times, the roles of these key ministries are poorly appreciated at the congregational level, leading to frustration. Even though our most successful and growing congregations model the importance of congregational staff teams working in synch, UUs overall have done little to cross-train professional teams to promote interdisciplinary collegiality.

Finally, community ministers often find themselves poorly supported by the larger UU movement as they struggle to fit in with collegial support groups and continuing education opportunities that are largely designed with parish ministry in mind. Community ministers represent a proud legacy of practical justice-seeking within the UU tradition, and an extension of the UU ministry beyond the walls of our congregations in the form of chaplaincy, education, denominational services, pastoral counseling, etc., The UUMA, UU Society for Community Ministry and others are working to create systems that support the unique needs of our community ministers. Community ministry offers a gateway for exactly the kind of cultural adaptation this report is calling for. It is a rich field that deserves to be studied in depth -- something this report fails to accomplish. The SRPM

Task Force recommends that another task force be assembled to focus on the future of community ministry.

## **The Opportunities**

Thankfully, every breakdown is truly an opportunity for a breakthrough. The pressures of societal, cultural and organizational challenges may allow us as a religious institution to become more flexible, creative and nimble in the way we operate in the world. For our religious leaders, this will mean embracing ongoing learning rather than achieving the designation of being learned. It will mean strengthening our personal, physical, emotional, spiritual and fiscal practices to support our own resiliency and health in the face of new challenges. It will mean embracing more entrepreneurial and creative approaches to what have been traditional pathways to excellence. It will mean embracing uncertainty, as we look for adaptive rather than technical solutions to the problems we face. And, finally, it will mean staying attuned to the changing world around us, and embracing a multicultural, multigenerational approach to congregational life.

Despite the uncertainties of our time, there are distinct opportunities for Unitarian Universalism. Again referring to the Faith Formation 2020 report by Lifelong Faith Associates (2009), there is a new stage of life in American culture that has been identified as “emerging adulthood.” Ranging in age from 18 to 30, these young people are facing a more prolonged and disjointed transition to the autonomy of adulthood than was typical in the past. This stage is characterized by greater freedom, experimentation and transition in which they are open to what is new, exciting, hopeful and transforming. Religiously, this means that young adults “church shop and church hop.” They are open to relevant and innovative approaches to religion and are seeking community belonging. Unitarian Universalism could capture the spirit of these seekers with updated worship services, multicultural music and art, and spiritually grounded service opportunities. UU congregations are beginning to grasp the possibilities of what

is now called “multigenerational ministry,” which can take many forms and can hold multicultural appeal. In addition, we may have a particular niche in serving the needs of multiracial and multifaith families.

This year, the UUA staff and Board are planning to launch an Appreciative Inquiry project to lift up the best of our congregational practices, and to encourage greater collaboration among clusters of congregations. This reflects a new partnership model that builds on strength and encourages peer mentoring.

The vision of ministry this report proposes includes these key qualities: innovative and practical leadership, strong multicultural and multigenerational competency, emotional and spiritual health, and the ability to lift up a vision for what is possible. Our religious professionals must work collaboratively with each other and with our lay leaders to share the “good news” of Unitarian Universalism: All life is precious, all life is interconnected, and all are called to a ministry of love and justice. To find and encourage a diverse group of religious professionals who can fill such large expectations, and who can grow congregations as well as plant new ones, we will need to be intentional about recruitment, the giving of scholarships and subsidies for training, and developing broad ownership of the nurturing and gate-keeping functions. Religious educators and musicians both need and deserve greater support in seeking professional development opportunities. The UUA will need to partner with the seminaries in recruitment efforts and in maximizing the best and most relevant approaches to ministerial training. The settlement system, which is currently undergoing some immediate and helpful updates, should eventually be expanded to include religious educators, musicians and other religious professionals.

These are some of the components the Task Force sees as crucial to becoming the religion for our time. More detailed ideas are explored in each section of this report that follow.

# Ministry in a Multicultural World

## Introduction

Out of a past of promise and disappointment, of brilliance and heartbreak, a new future for Unitarian Universalism is emerging, not in spite of changing demographics and the reality of multiculturalism, but because of it. Currently, a record number of seminarians of color are preparing for the Unitarian Universalist ministry. Multicultural learning opportunities at the district and congregational levels open possibilities for the deep success of these seminarians and ministers in congregations that are supportive in new ways.

However, ministers of color cannot carry the responsibility for transformation by themselves. If Unitarian Universalism is to be effective in a multicultural world – not just in the future but in the reality of today, then multiculturalism must be core to every aspect of religious leadership and congregational life.

Multiculturalism means to welcome people of all races, ethnicities, and cultures and provide them with religious settings where they see their cultural identities reflected and affirmed in every aspect of congregational life – worship, fellowship, leadership, governance, religious education, social justice, etc. Multiculturalism means that encounters with people of different cultural identities intersect with Unitarian Universalism to create a fully inclusive community where, in the words of a vision statement adopted by the UUA's Leadership Council, "all people are welcomed as blessings and the human family lives whole and reconciled."

Multiculturalism means that one culture does not dominate all other cultural identities, that people are able to be part of a faith community without denying or hiding their cultural identities, that the role of cultural identity is part of pastoral and prophetic ministry, and that leaders have the competency to understand how

their multiple identities influence their values, attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, and interactions with others.

Given these meanings for multiculturalism, several questions emerge in our examination of the kind of ministry the multicultural world requires, particularly in developing strategies for preparing religious professionals to cross borders of race, class, culture, and generational differences.

1. How do we equip congregational leadership to lead multicultural growth in a multicultural age?
2. What are the knowledge, skills, and new behaviors that leaders need to learn?
3. What is the role of the UUA and UU partners in building congregational capacity to grow vital, healthy multicultural congregations that are fully inclusive of all people who yearn for a liberal religious home?

While many Unitarian Universalist congregations express the desire to be more racially and culturally diverse, few UU congregations have made the commitment to intentionally diversify their ministries and religious leadership in order to achieve the desired diversity of membership. The transformation to multiculturalism requires multiculturalism to be at the core of recruitment, education and training, placement, transitions, continuing education, and professional development. UU congregations and the UUA must approach anti-oppression and multiculturalism not as “specialized ministries” but as effective ministry in a multicultural world. Finally, Unitarian Universalists must see effective ministry in a multicultural world not as our future, but as a present reality to which our congregations and religious leadership must adapt with a sense of urgency and intentionality.

## Past

Intentional efforts to diversify Unitarian Universalist ministry (and membership) are not starting from zero. Some of the UUA's earlier efforts towards advancing multiculturalism have caused some Unitarian Universalists to approach anti-racism and multicultural ministry with trepidation. The Black Empowerment Movement of the late 1960s/early 1970s sought to engage Unitarian Universalism in a kind of restorative justice toward the African American community. Conflicts over strategies between the Black Affairs Council (BAC) and the Black and White Alliance (an integrated group called BAWA) and the Association's failure to fulfill its financial commitment to supporting Black empowerment resulted in an estimated 1,500 African American UUs and white allies leaving the Association. UU congregations also experienced conflicts related to this tumultuous period in Unitarian Universalism's racial history. The result was a significant backing away from racial justice.

The 1980s saw Association leadership taking small steps towards re-engagement with racial justice. An Institutional Racial Audit Report commissioned by the Board of Trustees was adopted. The Board appointed a Racism Monitoring and Assessment Team. The General Assembly in 1985 overcame opposition to establish a Black Concerns Working Group to implement recommendations of the Task Force on Racism. The Committee on Urban Concerns in Ministry focused on issues of oppression and racism in urban areas. The focus on "urban ministry" was instrumental in the founding of the African American UU Ministers (AAUUM).

However, it wasn't until the 1990s that the Association made more intensive efforts to transform Unitarian Universalism through programs that addressed anti-racism, anti-oppression, and multiculturalism. Several identity-based groups evolved during this period, including the Latino/a Unitarian Universalist Networking Alliance (LUUNA) and, through the negotiations between LUUNA

and AAUUM, the people of color organization Diverse and Revolutionary Unitarian Universalist Multicultural Ministries (DRUUMM).

Just as differing theories and methodologies about Black empowerment caused conflicts among African American UUs and their white allies in the 1960s, differences about how to best engage anti-racist, anti-oppressive, multicultural transformation caused conflicts among racial and ethnic “minorities” in Unitarian Universalist ministry. Tensions have been most evident in differences about how to best engage anti-racism/multicultural work in the larger UU faith community.

UU congregations also debated and held strongly differing opinions about methodologies to achieve multicultural inclusion and racial justice. The most intense conflicts centered on the Association’s Journey Toward Wholeness anti-racism programs, which focused more on addressing institutional racism in Unitarian Universalism and UU congregations, and less on institutional racism as a justice issue external to our faith community.

## **Present**

In response to congregational resistance, the Journey Toward Wholeness Transformation Committee initiated four day-long, regional listening sessions with UU congregations and congregational leaders – professional and lay people – to foster re-engagement. The message from congregations was that they wanted programs more like the Welcoming Congregation curriculum that focused on welcoming LGBT people, and they wanted more customized programs that “meet them where they are.” The response to that message are the JUUST Change Anti-Oppression Consultancy and Building the World We Dream About (BtWWDA), a Tapestry of Faith curriculum that focuses on race and ethnicity. Both JUUST Change and BtWWDA were created as cross-staff efforts and involved Unitarian Universalist religious professionals and lay leaders working at the congregational, district, and national levels.



In ministry, more requirements related to anti-racism and multiculturalism have been added to the fellowship requirements for ministerial candidates. The Diversity of Ministry Initiative (a UUA effort to support sustainable ministries for ministers of color, Latina/o/Hispanic, and multiracial ministers from the seminary through settlement) was established in 2008 as a response to the recognition that, at that time, there were more than 50 candidates of color preparing for the UU ministry. Given the Association's less-than-stellar track record in sustainable settlements for these ministers, there needed to be intentionality around identifying healthy congregations where sustainability was more likely.

No reflection on multiculturalism in the UUA can ignore the subject of resources. The Diversity of Ministry Initiative is a recipient of UU generosity. However, like past efforts at Extension Ministry and identity-based ministry, it suffers from inadequate financial resources and programmatic support. The inability to sustain support over the long-term continues to undermine efforts to transform Unitarian Universalism racially, culturally, and generationally.

## **Challenges**

The racial/ethnic history and current demographics of Unitarian Universalism present barriers and opportunities:

**Dominant demographic.** Unlike mainline Christian denominations, Unitarian Universalism does not have congregations that reflect the cultures of people of African, Asian, Latina/o/Hispanic, or Native American ancestry, at least not in the U.S. and Canada. This means that at the same time that we are attempting to attract more diversity to our ministry and membership, we are also acculturating (not assimilating) new racial/ethnic communities to Unitarian Universalism and vice versa. In addition, because the dominant racial/cultural demographic of Unitarian Universalist congregations is White/European-ancestored/Anglo-

American, Unitarian Universalism has become identified with the norms and values of the dominant culture.

**Need for multicultural ethos.** Some intentionally diverse congregations have faced seemingly insurmountable odds to survival because there was no multicultural ethos to support their efforts to be intentionally multiracial and multicultural. They were/are expected to grow and evolve following the pattern of the White/Eurocentric/Anglo dominant culture. Recent initiatives such as Diversity of Ministry, the Multicultural Learning Community that brings together ministers doing intentionally multiracial/multicultural ministries, and the transformations occurring in UU seminaries that are preparing religious professionals to engage “otherness,” counter oppression and empower marginalized communities offer glimmers of hope. But more intensive and intentional leadership and support is urgently required.

**Recruitment.** Diversity of membership requires diversity of ministry, including ministerial leadership. It is understood that one of the key components of growing racially and culturally is to have religious leadership that reflects the demographic diversity a congregation seeks to attract. The low number of people of color in Unitarian Universalist congregations limits the pool of persons of color already grounded in our faith and UU culture to be recruited for UU ministry. This often means identifying potential candidates unfamiliar with Unitarian Universalism but who are called to liberal religious ministry. Additionally, not all UU ministers of color are called to create intentionally multiracial/multicultural congregations. White ministers called to multiracial/multicultural ministry – as interims, consulting, and settled ministers -- have a major role to play in helping congregations transform their cultures to become more welcoming and inclusive of racial/cultural diversity. The responsibility of multicultural inclusion is not solely the responsibility of ministers of color.

**Education and Training.** What is needed are cross-cultural competencies and more intensive learning experiences that enable religious professionals to engage in creative and just interchange at the intersections of race, class and culture, as well as gender, ability, and generation. It is necessary for a critical mass of religious professionals to prepare for the transformation of Unitarian Universalism through its creative encounter with diverse cultural contexts, including multi-religious identities and practices. This needs to be expressed in UU worship, ritual and spiritual practice. We need to be able to ease into areas of discomfort and to discern and manage identity-based, cross-cultural conflict. *The Mosaic Report*, for example, speaks volumes about the needs of UU youth and young adults of color. To achieve authentic lifespan faith development, we must also learn how to apply identity-development regarding race, culture, etc., to pastoral counseling and prophetic or public ministry. Creating the conditions for multicultural community will allow us to create authentic multiculturalism for all the generations, including those here and those to follow, within and most especially beyond our walls.

**Placement and Transitions.** Congregations in search represent opportunities for ministerial transition and the potential call of ministers of color. However, the congregations that represent the greatest opportunity for call may also be located in areas that are isolated geographically or relationally from communities of color. This means that UU ministers of color are meeting the demands of ministry in isolation from communities that could provide the social and spiritual sustenance for them (and perhaps their partners and/or families). Another challenge is that few interim ministers have the training and experience to help congregations make the transition to a leader whose race/ethnicity and culture are different from the congregational community's dominant demographic. In addition, religious professionals of color find that their white colleagues often don't understand the challenges that race presents to their UU ministry.

**Continuing Education and Professional Development.** Effective ministry in a multicultural world requires a commitment to continuous learning. Because culture is not static, religious professionals are required to engage in continuing education and professional development to be effective in crossing race, class, and culture boundaries. A Multicultural Learning Community that currently involves UU ministers doing intentional multiracial/multicultural ministries represents one attempt to provide opportunities for religious professionals to learn from each other. Initiatives such as Leap of Faith and Dreaming Big also provide experiential learning, mentoring, and coaching opportunities for religious professionals.

**Technical vs. cultural change.** Congregational and UUA staff efforts to address multiculturalism often view it as a technical rather than an adaptive challenge. Many want to achieve racial/cultural diversity without addressing racism and other oppressions. The history of race and class in the United States often makes it impossible for diverse people to interact without addressing power dynamics and institutional oppression present in the culture and behaviors of individual Unitarian Universalists, UU congregations, and the UUA.

**UUA's lack of consistency and constancy in supporting anti-racism/multiculturalism.** The UUA's attempts to engage congregations, to overcome resistance of congregations and religious leadership, and to avoid conflict means that initiatives are continually being instituted and abandoned. In addition, the absence of assessment and evaluation measures makes it difficult for the Association to see what works, what is replicable, and what is to be learned. Furthermore, commitments to anti-racism have at times been undermined when there have been budget challenges. To UUs committed to anti-racism/multiculturalism, this is experienced as lack of commitment on the part of the Association and capitulation to the dominant culture.

## Opportunities

We acknowledge the glaring difference between building intentionally multicultural communities and filling multicultural ministry vacancies in congregations that are not multicultural, intentionally or otherwise. Opportunities to become a multicultural faith community are best reflected in the fact that our religious educational programs mirror an ever-growing diverse population (among our children and youth). Lifespan faith development programs often come alive, reflecting a spirit of grace-filled curiosity alongside our best attempts at embracing multiculturalism. In Sunday School and Chapel Worship – from infancy to youth – bridges of community are built across difference. This is where the multiracial/multicultural/multireligious families, representing the world we dream about, *show up*. In addition, as more and more ministers of color join our professional ranks, there is a shift in the professional ethos in which ministry is shaped, especially after seminary.

## Recommendations

**Education.** Provide education and training in cross-cultural competency and multicultural ministry at every level of formation and professional development. Provide tools for interim ministers and religious educators to do this work.

**Learning Communities.** Offer learning communities (such as Multicultural Learning Community) and acceleration experiences (such as Dreaming Big) for UU congregations and leaders on the path of intentional multiracial/multicultural ministry.

**Internships.** Support internships and teaching congregations focused on intentional multiracial/multicultural ministry.

**Recruitment.** Recruit ministers and religious professionals of color who are committed to liberal religious community that crosses borders of race, culture, and class.

**Continuing Education.** Support continuing education on leading multiracial/multicultural congregations at regional conferences and other suitable UU gatherings.

**Learn from others.** Learn from ministers, religious educators and music professionals who are attuned to making space for, honoring, and strengthening the diversity within the lifespan faith development community. To replicate it, use these learnings to inform curricula and resources that are being developed.

**Collegial support.** Support cohort groups of religious professionals and seminarians of color, and white anti-racist colleagues to provide collegial support and mentorship.

**Operational support.** Provide continuing operational support for multiracial/multicultural ministries that does not require special fundraising.

**Long-term commitment.** Recognize the long-term nature of this cultural transformation, that it is difficult and requires long-term commitment of financial and programmatic resources.

These recommendations reflect a commitment to effecting cultural change, rather than one to fix a technical problem. Transformation of UU culture requires visionary, adaptive, creative leadership. May we be among those who create it.

# Recruiting & Inviting

## Introduction

The need for a steady supply of excellent parish ministers, religious educators and musicians to fill ministry positions that become available in our congregations is obvious. But how is that supply created? And is “excellent” by historical standards appropriate for ministry in a multicultural world? Or for building congregations so Unitarian Universalism can grow?

A major challenge facing the Association is the need for a process for recruiting – or perhaps a better term would be inviting – potential religious leaders to serve in our ministries, and for ensuring that those leaders are prepared for the demands of a multicultural ministry.

The aim of this section is to describe the challenges we face and suggest actions to better ensure that we effectively invite those with potential to serve our ministries to do so.

## Past

While most other religious traditions can point to some formal system of ministerial recruitment, formal UUA efforts are hard to find – as are systematic attempts to gather and examine how our informal recruiting system works. This reality was acknowledged in the 1936 Commission on Appraisal Report “Unitarians Face a New Age”; the 1992 report, “Our Professional Ministry: Structure, Support and Renewal,” and countless other studies over the years.

The same can be said for the recruitment of other religious professionals – religious educators and musicians. While the educational requirements for such

positions are different, as are the channels by which they typically become trained and are hired in congregations, the same basic truth exists: There is no formal or intentional effort to recruit these professionals to the ministries of our congregations.

There has been, and remains today, a powerful informal system for recruitment of ministers. It has centered on certain ministers and specific congregations who feel both a gift and a calling for this work. Visiting with ministers at General Assembly and other gatherings provides a chance to hear of those who take great pride in pointing to individuals who, over the years, they have identified, encouraged into ministry, and supported as they pursued theological education and settlement. Similarly, there are congregations that have understood themselves to have important roles in identifying those with potential for religious leadership and providing financial support, internships, and other opportunities for ministerial development. But the informal system produces a small minority of UU clergy, and no one has ever measured just how small.

Mostly we have had a system that passively waits for individuals to discern for themselves whether they are interested in and suited for the ministry. When the answer is “yes,” the individual enters a formal gatekeeping process – for those seeking credentialing, at least – to determine whether they ought to be allowed into ministries of our congregations. Members of historically marginalized groups often get enhanced support from the Diversity of Ministry initiative, though it is still largely a matter of supporting those who have chosen Unitarian Universalism.

The process for recruiting religious educators and musicians for congregations is even less formal. Most often the search for a religious educator has begun within the congregation as they attempt to identify the most capable RE teacher or the most willing lay leader with a background in education. Musicians have most



commonly been found through networking within the music community in which the congregations exists.

## **Present**

Those who choose to pursue the credentialing process often find the overall process obscure, complicated, and mystifying. Most of our efforts at education about how to pursue our ministries are directed towards those already in the system – people in our congregations or those who attend General Assembly – not to an “outside” person who may be considering a choice of career and may be interested in parish ministry, a ministry of religious education, or a ministry of music.

Many of our current clergy became intrigued with the possibility of religious leadership in their youth as a part of groups such as LRY (Liberal Religious Youth) and YRUU (Young Religious Unitarian Universalists). Recent decentralization of UU youth group structures requires new thinking about how to nurture and encourage future leadership from youth.

The one more formal process is the UUA’s efforts to recruit students and ministers of color, essentially as a corrective to the imbalances of the current informal system. However, even the Diversity of Ministry Initiative has been overwhelming oriented to supporting people once they get in to the process. This reflects current thinking that the budget and resources are so limited that supporting current ministers is the best we can do.

## **Challenges**

**Aging Ministers.** While the bad economy may delay some retirements, the eventual impact of the higher–than-usual surge in retirements expected in the years ahead is clear. And this realization takes on even greater significance

when one considers that most of our largest and, arguably, most complex congregations are led by those clergy who are 58 and older. There are questions about whether as a denomination we prepared to replace them.

**Changing demographics.** Additionally, the demographics of our country are changing dramatically, as mentioned in the Vision section of this report, yet our ministers are still overwhelmingly white. And the challenge of changing demographics does not end with the shift towards a majority of minorities.

**Shortage of younger ministers.** We have not yet developed a critical mass of younger ministers to both replace retiring ministers and to create new ministries that will speak to the substantially changed sensibilities of a younger generation and stir the energies of emerging young adult leaders. The UU Musicians Network is actively working to increase the number of younger professionals in its ministry. There are younger leaders starting new projects shaped by new leadership sensibilities. Yet these projects can appear relatively isolated and out of context. There is danger that good efforts that might bring new sensibilities to the fore will die out for lack of the proper denominational support and guidance.

**Geography.** In some places, there are plenty of candidates for any ministry position, making the issue of recruitment seem not urgent at all. Yet in some parts of the country this increasingly is not so. The recently retired UUA Transitions Director recently wrote a memo of concern noting the “serious faltering in the ability of the UU ministry to serve UUA member congregations in our country’s midsection.” A rather large number of search committees who had done the process well and carefully and who were offering good positions had to go back to their congregations to say they had found no one to recommend as a candidate.

**Class.** The cost of preparation for the ministry, estimated at more than \$120,000, combined with the low compensation of ministry positions relative to

other learned professions, makes it challenging for those of modest means to consider a life of religious leadership – and this increases the difficulty of inviting them into the ministry. Similarly, the cost of achieving the master level of religious education credentialing is quite expensive. Having religious leaders limited to those able to afford the high cost of education makes the desire to address class issues within our Association that much more difficult.

**Quality.** Another element of how we experience the urgency of recruitment is perhaps rather sensitive: the quality of those entering our ministries. A few years ago Barbara Wheeler, then of the Auburn Center in New York, reported research that showed that the selectivity of theological schools was worryingly low: 90 percent of students for the ministry get into their first choice school. Most were confident enough of acceptance that they applied to only one place (The Christian Century, April 11, 2001, pp. 16-23). Many people, especially ministers, took strong exception when this isolated piece of information was quoted out of context—and Wheeler does provide a fuller context in her article. Yet there is a point here that all can agree on. All of us—ministers and congregants alike—want not just new ministers to replace those who are retiring, we want excellent ones to whom we can point with pride and follow with confidence. And we want ministers who are prepared to build congregations to grow our faith. The recent “excellence in ministry” discussion has shown the difficulty of agreeing on what excellence looks like among ordained clergy, much less on what excellence looks like among others involved in ministry. The challenge of identifying what excellence is in someone who has not yet begun the process of becoming a minister is even harder.

**Passivity.** Overall there is a passivity in the system around the challenge of identifying, recruiting, developing, and supporting the various ministries needed within Unitarian Universalism to ensure a vibrant and healthy future.

## **Recommendations**

**Encourage those currently recruiting.** The best place to start is where there is the greatest energy – with those ministers, lay leaders and congregations who already feel a responsibility to identify and recruit people who appear well suited for the various kinds of ministries needed for our future.

**Encourage others to become recruiters.** Making visible what is already working and encouraging other individuals and congregations to join in the effort will be the most efficient and effective way to create a culture change. Religious professionals and lay leaders must see it as their responsibility to find future ministers, religious educators, and musicians. Community ministers in particular are well placed to encourage diverse candidates for our ministries. The unique circumstances of religious educators and musicians makes this even more challenging than for ordained ministers.

**Recognize and honor those who recruit.** We need to find a means appropriate to our organizational culture to make the importance of recruiting better understood. Acknowledging those who have been successful at recruiting in public gatherings such as General Assembly, district or regional assemblies and other gatherings of UUs would be easy and likely to inspire others to do likewise.

**Create appropriate support materials.** Traditional marketing or educational campaigns on recruitment are likely to be expensive, but there are ways to lift up the opportunities of ministries to people of all ages. Offer discounted or free space for seminars in the display hall for GA and encourage “So you are Considering Ministry” workshops at district gatherings. The current materials on the UUA website ([uua.org](http://uua.org)) describing the path to religious leadership are seen by many as confusing. They reference the steps in the procedure but offer no narrative to personalize the process. At the UUA website page entitled “Ministerial Credentialing,” the focus is clearly not on inviting in but on sorting out

those who arrive at our doors. In contrast, the website of the Fund for Theological Education ([fteleaders.org](http://fteleaders.org)), which has roughly the same purpose, focuses not on process but on leadership.

**Target our efforts.** The primary weakness of our informal dispersed recruitment effort has been less in the number recruited than in targeting our recruiting: towards racial, cultural and class diversity, towards under-represented age cohorts, to ministers who can lead congregational growth, religious educators who can develop and lead dynamic programs, and musicians who can infuse worship with culturally relevant offerings and to the places where there is the most geographic need. Targeted efforts by our two identity-based theological schools – Starr King School for the Ministry and Meadville/Lombard Theological school – have been rather successful at increasing the diversity of their faculty and student populations. An analysis of the economic circumstances of those in our ministries and those wishing to serve is needed to better understand the challenges of targeted recruiting and how to address those challenges.

**Partner with other organizations.** The passionate and capable leaders in LREDA, UUMN, UUMA, DRUUMM, LUUNA, Equal Access, Interweave, TRUUST, and other identity groups – some of whom are already actively working in this area – could help ensure a bright future. If necessary, calling new groups into being could be an option. If our aim, for example, is to recruit more young leaders, we would do well to start by helping a group of them to form. Or perhaps it would work to partner with certain camps and conference centers that attract younger UUs and from whom future leaders might arise. Events that provide spirituality and service opportunities for UUs may be excellent recruiting grounds.

**Reframe the role of congregations.** A striking feature of conversations with congregational leaders was the degree to which they saw themselves as consumers of religious professionals produced by others instead of religious communities from which future leaders might arise. This is in contrast to some

denominations where potential religious leaders are identified at ages as young as twelve. The role of congregations in identifying, recruiting, supporting, nurturing, and educating those interested in careers of religious leadership is not yet sufficiently developed.

**Provide additional funding and support for internships.** It is important to financially support the role of congregations in providing internship opportunities as well as help congregations own and celebrate their role in making ministers. Celebrating the value of internships would build a new level of consciousness and motivation for others to follow.

**Support in-care systems.** In-care systems engage theological schools, lay leaders, religious leaders and congregations in helping people preparing for ministry to hone their skills, explore religious leadership, and solicit feedback. Funding through the Panel on Theological Education already support pilot programs in four districts. Learning from the pilots and expanding in-care systems could strengthen the role of congregations in supporting those preparing for ministries.

Countless people currently active in or retired from our various ministries describe their vocation as “a life well lived” and meaningful beyond the power of words to tell. To recruit – to invite – people into a life of religious leadership ought to be one of the most honored and desired jobs in the world. With new focus and intentionality, our efforts to recruit more – and more effective – religious leaders can be a significant element of ensuring powerful and profound ministries for years to come.

# Education & Training

## Introduction

Education and training in preparation for UU ordained clergy is the main focus of this section of the report as education for religious educators and musicians is typically less formal and frequently more varied than for ordained clergy. Lay Religious Educators enter the profession with a wide variety of educational backgrounds. Some have advanced degrees in related fields such as education or social work. Most start as volunteer Sunday school teachers or RE Committee members but have little or no formal study in education or theology before becoming a religious educator, and must rely on professional development opportunities to receive this training. Musicians in our congregations likewise enter UU congregations with a wide variety of education and training backgrounds, but receive training as UU religious professionals only in the form of continuing education.

UU clergy, on the other hand, almost uniformly spend years in preparation for the role before entering the profession. The standard path is a Masters of Divinity degree, which involves both academic and field education. This means achieving a bachelor's degree and then spending three or more years in fulltime training in order to meet the requirements of the Ministerial Credentialing process (see Credentialing report for more details).

## Past

The Unitarians and Universalists have always valued a “learned” clergy. Harvard Divinity School, St. Lawrence, Tufts, Meadville Theological School and the Ryder School of Divinity at Lombard College (the latter two later merged to become Meadville Lombard) were all established in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century as places of learning

for clergy. In 1904, the Pacific Unitarian School (later Starr King School for the Ministry) was established in California.

For many years, our Unitarian and Universalist forbears also valued a “manly” ministry. Olympia Brown was grudgingly allowed to attend Canton (the Universalist Seminary at St. Lawrence) in 1860, after Meadville (a Unitarian Seminary in Pennsylvania) refused to admit her based on her gender. Meadville began admitting women students only eight years later, in 1868, but Tufts and Harvard held out for another half century.

According to Mark Morrison-Reed in his book *Black Pioneers in a White Denomination*, Meadville admitted its first African American student, Alfred Amos Williams (an African Methodist Episcopal minister) in 1870. It would not be until 1910, however, that an avowed Unitarian seminarian of color would enter the school in the person of Ethelred Brown, who would go on to struggle against entrenched bias within the American Unitarian Association (AUA) to create a viable ministry, first in Jamaica and later in Harlem. Finally in 1961, Lewis McGee, another Meadville graduate, became the first African American called to an established senior Unitarian ministry position. While women have largely succeeding in attaining equal footing in terms of studying for and serving the UU ministry (the one exception being the large churches, where men continue have an advantage) the struggle continues to support ethnically and racially diverse ministers and ministries.

The 1970s and 1980s saw a push for the recognition and acceptance of LGBT ministers both in the seminaries and in congregations. A history of LGBT ministry is currently in the works, but it is safe to say that the UU faith has been out in front for the struggle for equal rights in terms of gender and sexual identity. While we have done well in terms of LG, we have more to learn about BT. Transgender ministers in particular have struggled for long-term success in the



parish setting, and a new advocacy and support group (TRUUST) is now working to highlight these issues.

It is important to note that in the past, students were often able to attend seminary at little or no personal cost. Congregations often sponsored seminarians and the schools themselves largely underwrote tuitions. As recently as the 1970s, anyone who was accepted at Meadville Lombard received free tuition. Starr King School (SKSM) has never had the endowment resources of its better-financed cousins in the Midwest and East, but in 1978 it charged only \$2,200 a year for tuition, with \$200 subsidies available from the UUA. By 1990, SKSM charged about \$5,000 a year, and in 2010 the tuition was \$15,070. This trend mirrors the tuition trajectory of many theological schools. According to the Association of Theological Schools (ATS), the current average tuition at seminaries is now \$14,000/year. Harvard Divinity School is the most expensive among the more progressive schools at \$26,500/year, but has substantial scholarship resources to offset expenses.

## **Present**

The purpose of theological schools has been hotly debated in recent years, but one could argue that at minimum they exist to educate future religious leaders and to contribute to the intellectual work of the church. According to Dan Aleshire, Association of Theological Schools (ATS) president, seminaries must consider four key questions as they look to their relevance for the future. First is how to welcome and educate racially and ethnically diverse students and how to “increase the cultural horizons of white students for ministry in a radically changed world.” Second is how to assess their stewardship of educational responsibility and efforts to remain credible. Third is how to educate leaders for a religiously plural world. And fourth is how to build a viable relationship with ecclesiastical bodies.

At this time only two UU-identity schools remain in business – Starr King School for the Ministry and Meadville-Lombard Theological School, which has recently announced that it will be joining a new interfaith university with partners including Andover-Newton Theological School.

Starr King and Meadville-Lombard have done an excellent job responding to the need to adapt to the new possibilities of a multicultural world, recruiting more diverse student populations and increasing the sophistication of their antiracism, antioppression and multicultural efforts as well as multifaith work. The new interfaith university partnership with Andover-Newton, Meadville-Lombard and others is designed to deal with religious difference in an increasingly pluralistic and global society. The Harvard Divinity School curriculum emphasizes practical theology in a global context. Iliff School of Theology in Denver has just completed a new covenant that upholds the value of diversity and the pursuit of peace and justice in the local and global context.

## **Challenges**

**Preparing for effective 21<sup>st</sup> Century ministry.** Even with theological schools' advances in training in antiracism, antioppression and multiculturalism, students will need to apply this learning in a practical way through field education. In some cases seminarians will be challenged to translate the theory they have learned into community and UU parish settings that may or may not have the same understanding of, or institutional commitment to, this important issue.

Practical skills for transformative leadership, including skills to grow congregations and supervise staff teams effectively, are not always covered in seminary, and are critical areas to address through continuing education and peer learning.

**Isolation of Distance Learners.** The Ministerial Fellowship Committee and others are concerned that some candidates struggle with finding opportunities to network, be mentored, and experience the larger UU context within which they will be called to serve. Most seminarians today attend non-UU schools; many find attending area nearby schools part-time while continuing to work, or participating in distance learning programs at their own pace, are the best options for themselves and their families. Some candidates experience only their own home congregation during their formation process. This isolation of UU students must be intentionally addressed.

**Financial Vulnerability of Seminaries.** Starr King School and Meadville-Lombard continue to be financially vulnerable. Some support comes from the UUA's Panel on Theological Education. The Panel annually distributes a little over half a million dollars in investment income from an endowment created by a \$9 million gift to the UUA in 1983 from the Veatch Program of the UU Church at Shelter Rock in Manhasset, NY. Most of the money goes to support the operating budgets of Starr King School and Meadville-Lombard; Harvard Divinity School gets a smaller amount.

**Financial vulnerability of Candidates.** Students are incurring larger and larger debt loads to graduate. Among UU ministers who applied for debt reduction grants from the UUA, the average debt increased 53 percent from 2003 to 2010 (from \$33,291 to \$50,869). The UUA allocates \$100,000 a year from its Living Tradition Fund to help these struggling colleagues, with the average grant in 2010 being \$1,493. Compounding the problem, income to the Living Tradition Fund has declined in recent years. The main source for the Living Tradition Fund is the collection at the Service of the Living Tradition at General Assembly each year. In addition to declining contributions, the Association is considering holding GA every other year, leaving future contributions to the Living Tradition Fund even more uncertain.

## Recommendations

**Scholarships and debt reduction.** The UUA needs to review its procedures and become more strategic in the granting of its scholarships and debt-reduction grants. The grants have shown a decidedly egalitarian bent; they would be better invested in promising students who reflect the characteristics, commitments and diversity we wish to see in our ministry. More scholarships should be directed towards the UU identity schools and to UU scholars pursuing advanced studies. In addition, consideration should be given to shifting some scholarship dollars to debt reduction for ministers in preliminary fellowship. There is no guarantee that all seminary students will ever serve the UU ministry, but it is clear that financial struggles greatly stress our newest ministers.

**Debt relief policy.** The UUA should have a new goal: no seminary debt for ministers serving more than ten years. We do not wish to reward fiscal irresponsibility (and standards ought to be in place to assure this), but the economic reality is that income from ministry often does not allow for timely repayment of educational debts. Of the 67 ministers who applied for debt relief in 2010, 46 had served only 1-5 years, 17 for 6-10 years, and 4 for 11 years or longer. The average debt load of those with the longest tenure was still \$33,682. After more than 10 years of successful ministerial service it is unacceptable that UU clergy should continue to struggle with seminary debt loads. Congregations in difficult-to-settle geographic areas should be encouraged to add debt-relief to their compensation packages to attract more candidates.

**Support for seminarians from historically marginalized groups.** Race, ethnicity, class, gender identity, sexual orientation, age and physical abilities continue to be factors in the success of our seminarians both during their years in seminary and beyond. The UUA currently supports an annual gathering for seminarians and clergy of color that promotes mentorship, mutual support and networking; the Diversity of Ministry initiative (DOMT) and Beyond Categorical

Thinking (BCT) training are important vehicles for ensuring that once students graduate there will be opportunities for diverse ministers to succeed in the parish. Yet ministers of color and transgender ministers in particular continue to struggle to find fertile ground for their gifts to flourish in our Association. The UUA should undertake a thorough evaluation of our current programs in support of our ministers of color and determine where to allocate future resources that will have the most impact.

**Partnering with seminaries** The UUA should partner with seminaries in recruitment efforts and in creating a clear rubric of what constitutes excellence for 21<sup>st</sup> Century UU ministers in parish and other settings. This connects to the recommendation in the Credentialing report regarding fully funding and implementing a proposal by the Education Development Center Inc. to develop an assessment framework for UU ministers.

**Future ministry formation.** Excellence in ministerial education must be viewed as a shared pursuit. The UUA must work with progressive seminary leaders and organizations such as the UUMA, DRUUMM, LUUNA, TRUUST, the Interim Guild and others, as well as with internship supervisors and congregational leaders, to create strategies for the future formation of our ministries. Internship and field education supervisors should receive training.

**UUA/Seminary Funding:** The UUA should initiate conversations with UU seminaries to find ways for fundraising efforts to be symbiotic rather than competing for the same dollars (such as ordination and installation offerings). Capital Campaigns should be planned with mutual input. Congregational sponsorship of ministerial aspirants, which is a requirement for the credentialing process, should include an expectation of financial support from the congregations during seminary.

**Multicultural Immersion Learning.** Seminarians as well as others preparing for ir active in the ministries of our congregations should be encouraged to engage in multicultural learning and service experiences both in the U.S. and abroad. Many seminaries have such programs in place. Additionally, the UUA should partner with the International Council of UUs and the Partner Church Council to raise scholarship funds to support international learning/service experiences with UU communities in places that otherwise might be out of reach for many seminarians.

# Credentialing

## Introduction

Credentialing at its most basic level is the process by which those interested in pursuing religious leadership as ministers, religious educators, or musicians are officially and formally recognized and certified. It is also about helping people live into a deep sense of calling as servant-leaders and agents of spiritual and societal transformation.

UUA President, Peter Morales, believes that vibrant multicultural congregations are essential for a thriving Unitarian Universalism of the future. What do our congregations, which look to the UUA to establish and maintain standards of excellence for ministers, religious educators and musicians, need from the Association in order to accomplish this?

Unitarian Universalist ministers, religious educators and musicians must be equipped with strong multicultural competence, skills at growing congregations, and the ability to lead congregations of every size, and the UUA must credential a pool of qualified professionals from which the congregations can draw.

## Past

The American Unitarian Association (AUA) and the Universalist Church of America (UCA), which consolidated into the UUA in 1961, each had clergy credentialing bodies that originated in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Since consolidation, several commissions, committees and UUA staff bodies have recommended ways to improve the quality of our professional leadership and the credentialing process.

In the late 1990s, the Regional Sub-Committee on Candidacy (RSCC) system was implemented to screen students early, then support and guide only those well equipped for ministry. Financial resources for the subcommittees have dwindled but two evaluations have found them largely effective.

Credentialing of religious education professionals has gone through several stages. Until 1990, LREDA (Liberal Religious Educators Association) was open only to ministers and accredited religious educators. This gave way to three-tier religious education credentialing, which continues. In 2003, the locus of RE credentialing moved from LREDA to the UUA. About 50 Religious Educators have received credentials through the program through the end of 2010.

Credentialing of church musicians began in 2009 and is administered by the UUA in coordination with the UU Musician's Network (UUMN).

## **Present**

To be granted preliminary fellowship by the UUA's Ministerial Fellowship Committee (MFC) is a long, intensive and increasingly expensive process. Clergy seeking transfer from or dual standing with another faith tradition are also expected to meet MFC requirements.

After completing a comprehensive career assessment that includes psychological testing, all aspirants must successfully interview with an RSCC; arrange for congregational sponsorship; complete a criminal background check; be accountable to seventeen areas of academic, professional and ministerial competence; complete an Master of Divinity (M. Div.) degree through a seminary recognized by the Association of Theological Schools (or be granted an M. Div. equivalency); complete a unit of Clinical Pastoral Education or College of Pastoral Supervision and Psychotherapy (or be granted an equivalency); complete a nine-month full-time or a two-year half-time internship (or have the



internship requirement waived); complete the required MFC Reading List, and successfully interview with the MFC. Most ministers take three to four years to complete this process; total expenditures are estimated at \$120,000 or more. In a typical year, about 80 aspirants interview with an RSCC and 60 candidates interview with the MFC.

The process to be recognized as Master, Credentialed, and Associate level religious educators is also quite intensive. Applicants must demonstrate competency in a wide range of areas; articulate statements of pedagogy, meaning of faith, and personal theology; undertake some graduate level education; complete a criminal background check; develop a portfolio; work on a final project; complete a reading list and have a successful interview with the Religious Educators Credentialing Committee or, for associate level candidates, the religious education credentialing director. Since 2003, 51 candidates have been interviewed. The program was extensively revised in 2009 to provide greater flexibility in training options and to reduce the expense of credentialing. Nonetheless, the cost of the program continues to be a concern for religious educators who have limited professional development funds. In addition, many congregations resist paying the salaries suggested for credentialed religious educators.

Since 2009, there have been seven graduates of the Music Leadership Credentialing Program and 14 more are in process. Training for this program is offered at a professional day just prior to the annual UUMN meeting. The UUMN is ahead of the curve in opening their continuing education program to religious educators and ministers who may wish to benefit from these programs. Currently the UUMN is exploring making these programs available in on-line and webinar formats as well.

## **Challenges**

**Negative past pattern.** Twenty-first century demographic changes require intentionality in preparing leaders who can guide vibrant congregations into the multicultural future. The MFC requires that candidates show understanding of anti-racism, anti-oppression and multiculturalism at both the personal and systemic levels; the RE and music credentialing programs require relevant training. Our history shows a stream of institutional attempts to address this issue that have ended in failure. How can the credentialing program adopt best practices to help change this pattern?

**Congregational expectations.** As congregations are being encouraged to grow, to adapt to new opportunities, to become multigenerational and multicultural, and to call ministers who have the skills to lead such congregations, it becomes critical to set baseline competence for novice-level credentialed professionals as opposed to post-credentialing excellence.

**Credentialing obstacles.** Many individuals experience the ministerial credentialing process as overwhelming, bureaucratic and complex. Clergy ordained in other traditions who seek transfer and/or dual standing often express frustration that their credentials and work experience appear to not count for much. Some respond to this perception, or reality, by turning away from fellowship.

**Internship hurdles.** The most expensive part of ministerial formation is the internship year or years. Due to congregational polity, the UUA cannot require congregations to offer a particular salary to interns. Some interns' stipends are so low that they meet poverty guidelines; the UUA's reluctance to face social class expectations enables this hardship. Finally, the recent economic downturn has meant that many congregations have cut their internship programs, leading to a shortage of sites available to candidates. Seminarians who are unable to relocate for an internship may face additional hurdles in fulfilling the internship requirement.

**UU identity.** The MFC consistently interviews candidates with an undeveloped sense of Unitarian Universalist identity. Many seem not to know “our story” or see themselves as institutional cultural carriers in any meaningful way. About two thirds of UU seminarians attend multid denominational seminaries; an increasing percentage are preparing for fellowship through distance learning rather than full-time residential preparation. There are sometimes issues around UU Identity for musicians and RE professionals as well.

**RE credentialing.** Many congregations do not understand the benefits of credentialing for religious educators, and credentialing has not significantly increased employment opportunities or led to consistently higher pay. Meanwhile, the cost of gaining credentials is quite high and scholarship and professional funds available are quite low. As a consequence, interest in religious education credentialing is not growing. Many dynamic religious educators end up pursuing seminary and ministry to gain more pay and authority as they live their call.

**Missing metrics.** No comprehensive database tracks ministers over time to help assess the validity of the RSCC/MFC process in producing “effective” UU ministers. Without reliable information, any changes in the process would be essentially based on guesswork and thus risky. The lack of data also makes it difficult to assess the effectiveness of credentialing ministers, RE directors and musicians.

## **Recommendations**

**Multicultural competencies.** The UUA should work with the Diversity of Ministry Team (DOMT), Multicultural Growth and Witness (MGW) Staff Group, DRUUMM, TRUUST and others to develop an intentional strategy for credentialing multiculturally competent ministers, religious educators, and musicians, while

acknowledging the many efforts and failures in this regard in the past. The UUA should recognize that success for candidates of color and Latino/a candidates in all religious professions relies on intentional support beyond the credentialing threshold. The UUA ought to send representatives from the credentialing bodies to the Multicultural Congregation Consultation sponsored by MGW in March, 2011.

**UU Identity .** Create a partnership between the UUA, the UUMA, and the two UU-identity seminaries to offer summer intensives and seminars specifically for UU students at multidenominational seminaries, students new to UUism, and transfer candidates who wish to learn more about UU identity, history and polity. Open these programs to religious educators and music leaders. Offer scholarship assistance to attendees.

**Scholarship review.** UUA staff should take a hard look at the process for how UUA scholarship funds are currently distributed to aspirants and candidates. Consideration might be given to bundling small scholarships to allow students to get much greater support overall while still allowing for distribution of scholarship funds as intended by the donor. An alternative might be to eliminate scholarships altogether and provide loans that would be “forgivable” over a period of successful ministry.

**Strengthen RE and music credentialing and continuing education.** Partner with LREDA and the UUMN to more effectively communicate the benefits of credentialing to congregations and to potential candidates. Create a clearinghouse of opportunities for continuing education for religious educators and musicians. Reduce expenses by creating more on-line webinars that help candidates fulfill requirements for credentialing. Establish a scholarship program to support continuing education.

**Develop an assessment framework.** At the request of UUA staff, the MFC and the UUMA, the Education Development Center in Newton, MA, has proposed developing an Assessment Framework for UU Ministers that would provide objective and consistent criteria for evaluating UU aspirants, candidates, and ministers at different professional stages. The UUA Board's Panel on Theological Education has provided the seed funds to explore this concept.

**Deepen engagement sooner.** Aspirants should be expected to become active in congregational life immediately upon entering the credentialing process and to seek congregational sponsorship before interviewing with an RSCC. The requirements for congregational sponsorship have not been updated since it was created nearly two decades ago; UUA staff could create new resources to better support congregations in taking on this critical responsibility. Further, seminarians should be offered free registration for General Assemblies, district and regional meetings and other events that bring together UUs from many congregations.

**Support in-care committees.** Consider providing financial support to develop and maintain district-based in-care committees to provide those preparing for ministry opportunities for relationships with congregations and district leaders during their formation and education period. Evaluating the success of the "Living into Covenant" in-care system in the Mountain Desert district would be a first step, followed by evaluations of the in-care systems in Metro New York, Prairie Star and Joseph Priestley districts.

**Improve website.** Enhance and improve the UUA website dealing with credentialing so that it is more inviting and user friendly. It is currently all business, detailing a daunting array of requirements. The website could and should serve to enhance a person's ability to successfully enter UU ministry instead of being perceived as an uninviting and challenging obstacle. Additional

technology upgrades should be pursued. All forms for credentialing, for example, should be available interactively online.

**Resolve RSCC issues.** Either increase RSCC funding from the current reduced level or change the process to achieve the same goals at lower costs. RSCCs were created to give aspirants an early, direct and honest encounter with the expectations of the ministerial fellowship process. In the decade before the founding of the RSCCs, 33 candidates received a category “5” – the lowest – at their MFC interview. In the decade following the founding of the RSCCs, only one candidate received a “5” from the MFC. Thus, it appears that the RSCCs are accomplishing their intended purpose. However, the fact that so many aspirants meet with the RSCC later in the process diminishes the value of the experience

# Placement & Transitions

## Introduction

Congregations being led by professional clergy value tremendously the support they receive from the Transitions Office (formerly known as the Ministerial Settlement Office) to assist them in finding and settling a new minister. It is one of the most visible ways the UUA provides assistance to congregations, and it is often provided at a time when anxiety is high and desire for assistance is higher. Because the UUA has had such a minor role in settlement of religious educators and musicians, little is included in this section about either. In this section, the recommendations do include some ways we may gain from taking a greater role in these areas of professional ministry.

As America's population – and UU clergy, religious educators and musicians – become more and more multicultural, the placement process will be crucial in determining how well our congregations rise to this 21<sup>st</sup> century challenge and opportunity. A good fit between congregations and their ministers and other religious professionals also plays a major role in the growth of our faith.

## Past

The settlement system for the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations is not what it used to be. Before the advantages of technology, congregational settlement was done by hand. The word “hand” has two meanings here.

First, there were no computers or voice mail then, so hands typed, maintained files, sent mail and dialed the phone. More important, the then Settlement Office had a hand, or role, in determining settlement, as the settlement director played

matchmaker. Ministers would express interest in a congregation to the settlement director, and the director would pass on candidates deemed “appropriate” to the congregation. There were stories, not surprisingly, of deals being made, of favorites being played. While this practice had benefits, it also raised questions of fairness, equity, and other issues.

In 1998, a new settlement director as well as advances in technology came together to launch an Internet-based program that facilitates ministerial settlement in a way that is much more transparent and democratic – a market-like system that eliminates the “middleman.” Under this system any minister in good standing can apply for any congregation by completing an online ministerial record sheet. A congregation in search can look at record sheets of ministers in search and consider as many as are interested in looking at them. To make the system as fair as possible, a covenant was created so that no congregation could make a pre-emptive offer to a potential candidate before a specific date.

Challenges have included the fact that some ministers, especially those with obvious disabilities or who were people of color, Latina/o/Hispanic, bisexual, gay, lesbian, or transgender, and even women, had harder times finding placements than straight, white, temporarily able-bodied men. A UU bylaw in 1989 committed our Association to non-discrimination based on identity. A program called Beyond Categorical Thinking was created to engage congregations to improve the odds that the system would be more open for all ministerial candidates.

## **Present**

Congregations in search for a full- or three-quarter-time minister receive full service from the Transitions Office. Congregations in search for a minister who will work less than three quarter time receive support from District Services, part of the Congregational Life staff group. The same division of responsibility is used



for interim ministries. Materials on the UUA website assist all congregations in search.

Congregations in search name a search committee, which receives personal and customized coaching from a UUA ministerial settlement representative. The search committee creates a profile of their congregation that, after approval from the Transitions Office, gets posted on a password-protected area of the UUA website to be viewed by interested ministers. Ministers in good standing may indicate interest, allowing the search committee to review the minister's Ministerial Record Sheet. Phone interviews may follow and the congregation narrows its selection down to three or four "pre-candidates."

Once the congregation has selected its three or four top choices, pre-candidating visits are arranged – the ministers meet with the search committee to explore the possibility of a good match. The committee selects a final candidate, who spends a week or ten days with the congregation, preaching on back-to-back Sundays and attending meetings and gatherings. Then the congregation votes on whether to call the candidate. A minimum of 90 percent support is usually considered necessary in order to accept a call.

The interim ministry process is much more streamlined, for both clergy and congregations. Congregations submit an application and are given a list of names. They can choose from that list or ask for more names. The pool of available interims might include accredited interim ministers, those in process toward accreditation, and those who want to be accredited. Congregations select an interim minister primarily through its elected leadership.

## **Challenges**

**Ministers of color.** How do we collectively best support our ministers of color and those of Latino/a/Hispanic heritage in the settlement process and thereafter?

Our congregations often state they are ready to accept multicultural leadership, yet racism still exists in our culture, which can contribute to difficult and sometimes failed ministries. How do we equip both our ministers of color and our congregations to create successful ministries?

**Beyond Categorical Thinking/oppression.** Discrimination still happens during the ministerial search—particularly toward people of color, transgender and bisexual people, and people with disabilities. To a slightly less extent, it happens to gay and lesbian people, then around age, gender, and other identities. How can the UUA improve its efforts to help congregations and their leaders to be open to good matches irrespective of identity?

**Multi-minister congregations.** The Transitions process at the UUA has tended to have a “one-size-fits-all” approach. Multi-clergy churches need to call ministers who not only fit in with the congregation but also fit in with ministers already on staff. More and more of the UUA’s total membership is in large multi-clergy churches, and many large church ministers are near retirement age, making this a pressing issue.

**Once-a-year settlement system.** The UUA currently has a once-a-year settlement system. It’s not unusual for a congregation and minister to both know it is time to part ways, yet hang on because of the settlement calendar. Neither congregations nor ministers are best served by such circumstances.

**Once-a-year interim calendar.** A time of ministerial transition is when congregations are most anxious and most want to rush to get the next settled minister. The current once-a-year process for placement of interim ministers lacks the flexibility that congregations and ministers sometimes need.

**Consulting ministry.** There is a category of ministry called “consulting ministry,” currently used as a catch-all term for parish ministry outside the categories of

settled or interim ministry. Inconsistent understanding of what this means and lack of accountability for “consulting” ministers creates confusion and less effective results.

**Ministerial settlement representatives.** The current system to help congregations through the search process is expensive and not always as effective as we would like. How do we make the process more effective and less expensive? Congregations respond well to face-to-face contact, but what can be done as effectively well through the Internet and what still needs to be face to face? How do we increase the skills of the people who work with congregations to be more useful?

**Presentation of the congregation.** Often those serving on congregational search committees try to represent their congregations accurately but too often see them through rose-colored glasses. How can the UUA help congregations present themselves as they actually are, not as they wish to be?

**Ministerial database.** The UUA’s ministerial database isn’t sophisticated enough to enable comprehensive analysis of congregational and ministerial histories. It prevents UUA staff from analyzing issues such as how identity affects ministerial settlement and tenure, which schools have greater success in producing successful ministries, and whether there are geographic areas where ministerial tenures are longer than others.

**Web presence.** The uua.org website lacks sophistication at a time when everyone would benefit from the using video, webcams, easy-to-follow links, and multiple access points.

**Limited role in religious educator and musician placement.** The Transitions Office currently has no role in the placement of religious educators and musicians; congregations often say more support in these areas is needed.

## Recommendations

**Diversity of ministry.** Significant progress has been made in attracting people from historically marginalized groups to enter UU ministry, with about sixty ministers of color at some stage of ministerial formation, up from about half this number just ten years ago. But expanding diversity of ministry efforts to support both congregations and ministers so as to increase the number of successful placements and long-term ministries is crucial to our future.

**Beyond Categorical Thinking.** Expand the current Beyond Categorical Thinking program or explore alternatives that may be even more effective.

**Twice-a-year settlement.** The Transitions Office should change to a twice-a-year (February and August) versus once-a-year settlement system, and eventually move toward a completely open settlement calendar. A bonus is that students who have cleared the MFC could find placements earlier. And interim ministry, if it is to be effective, should start as soon as it's needed and last as long as it needs to last.

**Interim ministry placement.** Give congregations the option of having a minister selected on their behalf as opposed to them choosing from a list of candidates they don't know. One possible process would be for a congregation to list in its application the attributes it needs most. UUA staff, both national and district, would create a similar list. Those ministers with a potential interest in the position would describe their abilities. Then a team (perhaps including the Transitions Director and the district staff) could select the interim on the congregation's behalf. As with the former extension program, the congregation would have the right to interview the selected interim and accept, or reject, the candidate. Explore the possibility of creating opportunities for interim religious educators and musicians.

**Large congregations.** The Transitions Office needs to find ways to work with large multistaff congregations on a case-by-case basis.

**Better consulting ministry definition.** Consulting ministry should help congregations work on selected goals in a time-framed way. The UUA would also benefit from clearer definitions of what constitutes “consulting ministry”.

**Coaching.** Our congregations are both similar and unique. Providing customized coaching instead of cookie-cutter training for congregations will allow them to better decide for themselves what to do with more information. The same could be true for ministers. This could account for more complete service to congregations of different sizes and locations and histories, ministers of different identities, and be responsive to a quickly changing world.

**Interpretive summary files for congregations.** Currently the UUA provides congregations with interpretive summary files about their pre-candidates in the interest of full disclosure. Requiring similar summary files from congregations that prospective minister could study would provide a useful balance. Like the interpretive file summary for ministers, this would come from the Transitions Office with input from the appropriate district staff and others knowledgeable about the congregation.

**Trauma/after pastor.** Expand continuing education opportunities for those who support congregations most directly – district staff members – in the area of trauma/after pastor consultation so as to enhance their effectiveness and maximize the benefit to congregations.

**Web presence.** Various information needs to be available in several forms, including an introduction to interim ministry on video, a podcast of the Settlement

Handbook, and a quick links guide to a calendar year that would make the information more accessible to all.

**Explore an expansion of transitions support.** Explore the potential costs and benefits for a wider role of the transition department in the placement of religious educators and musicians.

# Continuing Education & Professional Development

## Introduction

The formal education of clergy can take them only so far. Once they start serving a parish, their maturation as ministers can only come through experience and continuing education. Most religious educators and musicians start their careers in congregations without an education equivalent to the Masters of Divinity degree that is required of ministers, so their professional development may come entirely from education after they begin serving congregations.

Given the call to prepare all forms of our professional ministry to bring Unitarian Universalism into harmony with the advancing multicultural realities of the 21st century, continuing education for people in all forms of professional ministry will be crucial. What the Scovel Report said in 1972 remains just as true today:

Continuing education cannot be considered a luxury in our Association. The growth, stability, and morale of our professional leaders are at stake. The UUA must support these leaders in their search for increased competence. For this reason the Commission believes that continuing education is as important as seminary education and that, in fact, seminary education is the beginning of one's continuing education.

Looking to the multicultural future, new kinds of continuing education opportunities need to be provided to equip our religious professionals to succeed.

Best practices for the use of technology in ministry, not only as an ongoing learning area but also in terms of delivery of continuing education need to be developed and shared. The UUA has begun to offer webinars for religious educators in the area of theology, for new ministers in a variety of subject areas,

and for lay leaders as well. The Tapestry of Faith curriculum series is completely web-based and includes classes that could be used in collegial settings as well as in the parish. Internet courses are low-cost and accessible, but there will always be a need for face-to-face learning opportunities as well.

Finally, ministers will need to practice healthy self-care. Our congregations and community ministry settings undoubtedly feel the effects of our stressed-out culture. Dedication to spiritual or centering practices and tending to physical, emotional, and financial well-being are all keys to longevity and satisfaction in ministry settings. Any continuing education program ought to recognize and include this component.

## **Past**

Through the late 1960s and early 1970s, the UUA conducted a series of reviews of ministerial and religious education. The Scovel Commission, ending in 1972, had the most impact, culminating in the creation of a staff position to support ministers and religious educators in formation and throughout their careers. The 1981 Report of the Religious Education Futures Committee advocated strongly for more substantial professional development courses for religious educators, most of whom get their training after already working in the parish.

Staffing and allocation of resources at the UUA for continuing education have fluctuated over the years in response to budgets and changes in program priorities. In the meantime, the number of people preparing for ministry has steadily increased, and credentialing programs have been developed for religious educators and musicians. In 1994, the UUA added a ministerial development director position to, in the words of a previous staff group director, “support the professional development, spiritual depth and health of the ministers.” In 2003, the religious education credentialing director position was established; in 2009, it was expanded to include credentialing of musicians.



## **Present**

From 1961 until 1974, an average of 28 ministers were granted preliminary fellowship each year. Currently, the MFC sees about 60 candidates a year. About 500 people are at some stage of preparing for UU ministry; 278 ministers are in preliminary fellowship. Ministers in preliminary fellowship must submit three satisfactory annual renewal evaluations from their ministry settings before being granted final fellowship. Since the start of the RE credentialing program in 2003, about 50 religious educators have been credentialed; another 40 are in the process. Since the music credentialing program was added in 2009; nine musicians have been credentialed and 14 are in process.

The UUA provides an array of continuing education for ministers and religious educators: preliminary fellowship requirements and support, First Year Ministers' Seminar, webinars, hardcopy resources, consultations, training programs (Dreaming Big, Culminating Chapter, Transformational Leadership, etc.), and Review Team assistance. In addition, ministers access continuing education support from the UUMA through chapter programs, retreats, mentoring, and training programs such as the CENTER Institute for Excellence in Ministry and Who's Are We?

Religious educators find programs and resources from the UUA through the Renaissance, chrysalis and credentialing programs, resources and consultations. In addition LREDA and various camps and conferences provide training, networking, resources, and mentoring opportunities.

Musicians gather at the UUMN's annual convention for collegial connection, support, training, and participating in the credentialing program. Field staff provide a huge variety of continuing education offerings, often in team settings in which lay and professional leaders learn together. District meetings

and General Assembly include many workshops and lectures as well as opportunities to explore new worship styles and share resources.

The UUA puts high priority on ensuring that our congregations are anti-racist, anti-oppressive institutions and that our religious professionals are prepared to work in a multicultural world, so many institutional structures address these issues. The Diversity of Ministry Team aids congregations in the removal of obstacles to success of ministers of color in parish ministry. One model pursued by DOMT has been subsidizing and supporting the addition of associate ministers of color on the staff teams of large congregations. In addition, the UUA offers an annual retreat for religious professionals of color. The Jubilee Series workshops, the Journey Toward Wholeness, JUUST Change consultancy, and the new Tapestry curriculum called “Building the World We Dream About” all support the creation of multicultural congregations.

Additionally, the Ministerial Fellowship Committee has taken seriously its commitment to ensuring the competency of all new UU ministers in the area of anti-racism, anti-oppression and multiculturalism. This commitment was also built into the RE Credentialing and Music Leadership Credentialing programs. In recent years, the MFC has strengthened the competency expectations in this area, including making sure that ministers in preliminary fellowship maintain active engagement. The RE Credentialing program and Music Leadership Credentialing program work to equip our musicians and religious educators in this regard.

Seminaries (UU and non-UU), interfaith groups, and other professional organizations offer a myriad of other professional development resources. The UUA’s Ministerial Development Office maintains a website with links to other organizations’ continuing education offerings.

## **Challenges**

**Proper role for UUA.** What role should the UUA play in ensuring that religious professionals seriously engage in their own continuing education? We assume that all religious professionals benefit from continuing education, but is there a viable system – such as requiring continuing education units (CEUs) to maintain credentials – that could ensure that they actively engage in that continuing education? Imposing a CEU system similar to other professions such as social work or health care would be financially prohibitive; the staff time needed to certify CEU sites, approve religious professionals' participation, and take action against those that are out of compliance would require at least two more full-time staff positions. Still, we might explore alternative CEU program possibilities.

**Overcoming obstacles to diversity.** Why, given the extensive efforts to equip our religious professionals to meet the challenges and opportunities of our increasingly multicultural world, has Unitarian Universalism been so slow to reflect diversity? What additional partnering can occur between professional organizations like the UUMA, LREDA, DRUUMM, LUUNA and non-UU organizations to enhance continuing education? How, especially, can we target and highlight programs that help our religious professionals serve in a multicultural world?

**Growing the number of UUs.** Aggregate UUA membership is in a long period of slow or no growth. What continuing education would best help our religious professionals grow their congregations, and what skills in particular are needed to lead effectively in the large congregation setting?

**Resource allocation.** Since no comprehensive research has been completed to determine what continuing education programs work best, how can we know where – or whether – to direct resources? Because our religious professionals avail themselves of so many programs outside of the purview of the UUA or our professional organizations, it is challenging to name what else might be needed.

**Need for grants.** The Ministerial Development Office makes about 280 small continuing education grants each year that total about \$70,000; due to limited funds only a fraction of grant requests can be fulfilled. Most grants go to ministers, with only a small amount allocated for religious educators and none for musicians. RE and music professionals are in dire need of funding for continuing education, particularly since they generally have little to no professional expense budgets.

**Extending length of service.** About two-thirds of all parish ministers retire or leave for different careers after serving for 15 years. The tenure of religious educators tends to be much shorter than that of ministers. Given the investment in the preparation and training of our religious professionals, how can we encourage longer tenure and greater professional satisfaction?

## **Recommendations**

**Practical application of learnings.** Anti-racism, anti-oppression and multiculturalism are a major component of seminary education, but many religious professionals will also need to learn how to apply their understandings to their current ministry settings. The UUA should provide opportunities for individual coaching as well as continuing education. It should also reinstitute pre-General Assembly trainings on anti-racism, anti-oppression and multiculturalism.

**Technology training.** The UUA needs to offer training in the best use of technology not only in ministry but also in terms of delivery of continuing education. The UUA has begun to offer webinars for religious educators in the area of theology, for new ministers in a variety of subject areas, and for lay leaders as well.

**Funds for grants.** The UUA should seek to raise additional funds for continuing education grants for religious professionals, taking good care to ensure that the fundraising includes an appeal for all religious professionals, not just clergy. In addition, funds should be solicited for developing new programs, such as cross-professional leadership trainings, etc.

**Offer coaching and other support.** UUA staff should be available not only to inform but also to counsel ministers and religious educators about the kinds of educational experiences each may need at any given time. UUA staff should also encourage team-building among religious professionals serving together in different capacities. Staff should also encourage congregations to provide paid continuing education time.

**Programs by UUs for UUs.** **The Taskforce** believes that religious professionals both desire and benefit from programs that are offered by UUs for UUs. Therefore we recommend that, in addition to any “outside” development opportunities we may support, that internal programs be developed and supported.

**Overcoming isolation.** Because of the unique nature of ministry and congregational leadership, our religious professionals are extremely isolated in their work, generally without other professionals on site for support, feedback, or mutual relationship. Therefore we recommend developing more programs that provide religious professionals the opportunity to gather to experience in-depth skill-building, to find ongoing collegial support, and to take time for renewal and reflection.

**Build on successful format.** Dreaming Big, a two-year retreat style continuing education program for ministers who hope to serve large congregations, is an example of a face-to-face program that succeeded in equipping ministers to build on the kind of visionary leadership skills this report hopes to encourage.

Programs using this format should be expanded to include other religious professionals.

**Launch “Ten Year Plan.”** We support the creation and development of an initiative referred to as the “Ten Year Plan” to train ministers, religious educators and musicians in key areas of congregational ministries. The concept, using a “train the trainer” approach, was developed in partnership with representatives of the UUMA and the UUA with the hope of impacting 800 religious professionals in ten years.

**More early-year support.** We encourage more support of religious professionals in the early years of their ministries to set the stage for keeping them engaged in our ministries longer. The First Year Ministers’ Seminar is a wonderful beginning. Similar programs should be developed for religious educators. Ideally, third-year and fifth-year ministry programs would also be provided. Resources should be developed to assist congregations in understanding their role and relationship with “first call” ministers and new religious educators or musicians.

**More support for young ministers.** We believe the UUA needs to support and promote interest in younger ministers and religious professionals. Younger ministers have a unique ability to serve younger populations; they also can provide more years of service and develop longer experiences that can have a profound impact on our congregations and Unitarian Universalism as a whole. Investment in more leadership opportunities in the UUA for youth and young adults, and more support for first-career ministers, could reap valuable dividends.

**Help for specialized ministries.** We ought to explore other ways to support community ministers and other religious professionals in specialized ministries: chaplains, associate/assistant ministers, youth ministers, campus ministers, spiritual directors, hospice workers, etc.

**Support collegiality.** Finally, religious professionals need colleagues to assist them in reflecting on their ministry and where it is going. Colleagues who do not stay connected to their peers, and who do not have some supportive and honest feedback loop, are often the religious professionals who can find themselves in trouble. All religious professionals should be in some mentoring and/or small collegial reflective group. Resources should be devoted to assisting helping religious professionals make and maintain these connections in a positive and supportive environment.

**Help with self-care.** We need to provide continuing education that helps those in ministries practice healthy self-care. This is the Age of Anxiety where cultural and societal change is rapid, and economic uncertainty and information overload are the markers of our day. Introducing deep change to congregations as they engage more deeply with a multicultural world will inevitably increase tension and thus can only increase the need for self-care.

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