



Transitional Ministry Handbook

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Introduction to the Handbook

The Transitional Ministry Handbook is an all-encompassing guide to ministerial transitions. Some materials are meant for congregations; others are meant for ministers. Some materials are for regional staff and for those who simply want to learn more about transitional ministry.

If you are a congregant or congregational staff person reading these materials, you are likely facing a ministerial transition of some kind. Whether it is imminent or sometime in the future, whether it is the departure of a long-term minister or a search for your first minister, whether it is a gentle departure or a conflicted one, you will find information and suggestions here to assist you during this transitional time.

For ministers, this handbook will help you understand the process of transitional ministry and the guidance offered and practices followed by the UUA Transitions Office and regional staff. Ministers who feel called to interim ministry will also be able to learn about applying for an interim position and about the Accredited Interim Ministry (AIM) program.

Using the Handbook

There are two versions of the Transitional Ministry Handbook. One is a PDF file of all materials. The other is a [collection of links](#) for quick access for specific questions. Congregations and ministers in transition may want to see the entire manual or refer to a quick links version for faster access, as needed. While forms are in both the PDF and the easy-to-find link versions of the Transitional Ministry Handbook, the forms in the PDF file are there for reference only; the versions in the easy-to-find link version should actually be used.

If some materials seem repetitive, remember this is intentional so the user may find all their information in a few clicks, rather than scouring the entire handbook.

We hope the information provided here is educational, guiding, thought-provoking, and anxiety-reducing for each reader. May this handbook help you to cope with the natural anxiety a transition produces and to understand the big and small picture of ministerial transitions.

UUA Staff Support

The UUA has a mighty network of care for congregations and ministers in transition! The Transitions Office and Congregational Life staff group provide most direct support to ministers, boards, and search teams, but we also have an in-house developer for our search system and staff and volunteers to help with compensation and benefits concerns. Please reach out any time we can help:

UUA Transitions Team:

- **Rev. Patrice Curtis**, [Transformational Interim Ministries Director](#): works with interim ministers to support them in their role as change agents, provides support for inclusion work throughout the search process
- **Rev. Keith Kron**, [Transitions Director](#): holds the ministerial transitions portfolio for the Ministries and Faith Development staff group, main contact for ministers in search, manages "Break Barriers, Build Beliefs" and Targeted Ministry programs
- **Christine Purcell**, [Transitions Program Manager](#): holds the ministerial transitions portfolio for the Congregational Life staff group, main contact for search committees and boards in search, manages search committee retreat leaders, member of the Congregational Life Leadership Team
- **Amy Szen**, [Transitions Administrator](#): sends communications from the Transitions Office, helps troubleshoot issues with congregational records in the MinistrySearch system, maintains records, helps search teams use the MinistrySearch system

Transitions Office: transitions@uua.org (this email address reaches the whole transitions team).

Other UUA staff members providing direct transition support to congregations and ministers:

- **Jan Gartner**, [Compensation and Staffing Practices Manager](#): member of the Office of Church Staff Finance staff group who provides support for ministerial transitions, manages compensation consultants, provides guidance on equitable compensation and benefits
- **Sean Griffin**, [Compensation and Benefits Specialist](#), member of the Office of Church Staff Finance staff group who provides guidance on equitable compensation and benefits

For compensation questions: comp@uua.org (this email address reaches the compensation team)

Transitions in Ministry: Departures

All ministries will end.

We do not often know when and how ministries will end. Sometimes they end because of retirement, death, illness, or disability. Often the minister and/or congregation know it is time for something else. Sometimes the ending is a surprise, and, at times, an unpleasant surprise.

At the start of most ministries, rarely do the minister, staff, or congregation think about the ending that will inevitably come. Whatever qualities a ministry may have, nothing will shape its impact more than how the ministry ends and the perceptions of that ending. Harsh words can undo a successful ministry. Bad boundaries around leaving have tarnished good ministries and the reputations of congregations and ministers alike. A good ending may go unnoticed, at the time, but it may enhance the ministry and its impact on all involved. Too deep of an imprint (whether negative or positive) may last and affect future ministries.

Leaving Well

How a ministry ends affects how it is regarded and remembered and can affect subsequent ministries. Most ministers and lay leaders are not taught the skill of ending a ministry well. Timing and tone matter. In general, there seems to be less anxiety in both congregation and minister(s), when the departure is announced four to six months before the actual end date. Longer-anticipated departures can be frustrating for the minister and congregation, as often any work happening within the congregation goes on “pause.” Shorter endings can lead to greater congregational anxiety which will affect the congregation for some time. This may still be the better path, given other options.

In figuring out when to leave, we recommend ministers talk with colleagues and UUA staff about timing, message, and process. Many ministers initiate this thought process and these conversations far too late. Congregational leaders should speak directly with the minister with questions first, then talk with regional staff and the Transitions Program Manager for additional support.

Endings should focus on celebrating accomplishments, expressions of gratitude, and saying good-bye in a way that will be remembered with satisfaction. Once the announcement of an ending has been made, it is rare, and even inadvisable, that significant new projects be attempted by the departing minister.

Negotiated endings can be traumatic. Outside support from regional staff, colleagues, and the UUA Transitions Team is strongly suggested here. The civil ending to a ministry is encouraged. Conflicted endings lead to greater mistrust of ministry within the congregation. Finger pointing, “You should” statements, and entrenched negative feelings and rigidity are impediments to both minister and congregation. Self-reflection and learning are helpful, and often both the minister and the congregation need guidance outside of their system to move toward healing. Our congregations struggle with marginalized identities, both within our congregations and with ministers who hold such identities. Ministers whose ministries have been impacted by identity-based conflict are encouraged to reach out to any member of the UUA Transitions team.

Congregations with conflicted endings may develop a negative reputation and may have to meet some requirements for future searches. Ministers go through a review process before moving forward to future congregational ministries. For both the congregation and minister, finding a good match in the next attempted settlement can be difficult. The requirement for some sort of non-disclosure agreement in a very conflicted ending often leads to more trauma and distrust. This practice is strongly discouraged.

In a good ending with appropriate boundaries:

- Congregants should understand that the departure of a minister must include, and therefore create, space for the next ministry.
- Ministers are asked to covenant with one another about appropriate boundaries following a departure.
- Every minister and congregant should be aware (or made aware) that departing ministers are expected to follow the [guidelines](#) set forth and agreed upon by the UU Ministers' Association and the subsequent covenant between new and departed ministers.
- Ministers' spouses are not under guidelines, but congregational leadership and ministers should know that ongoing relationships with former ministers' spouses have been a source of tension, in some cases. If the ministers' spouse remains in the congregation, incoming ministers and spouses would do well to covenant to speak directly to one another and not be critical of the other in conversation with congregants.

An important practice is conducting an exit interview with church leadership and the departing minister(s). A member of UUA regional staff usually conducts these interviews. These interviews allow for the appropriate pastoral transition for both congregation and minister, allowing both to move forward with understanding of the accomplishments and struggles of the shared ministry. The information and perceptions gathered are helpful to subsequent ministers who serve the congregation. They also provide needed insight into the future needs of the minister and congregation to regional staff and the UUA Transitions Team. These documents are not shared beyond that small circle.

Knowing When to End a Ministry

The best timing for the end of a ministry is rarely easy to identify. Most ministers consider this timing for a while before realizing that it is time for the ministry to end. Often, ministers reach out to trusted colleagues, family, and friends as thought partners.

These questions may be of help to a minister(s) facing this decision:

- Are there shared common passions that make the ministry worthwhile and vibrant?
- Is there an abiding deep concern for the well-being of the other?
- Is there mutual respect and trust?

- Is identity-based conflict detracting from my ability to minister? Is the congregation marginalizing me? Can I still be the minister to congregants with whom I disagree?
- Are my concerns heard and discussed by the governing board?
- Can I still take care of myself, do the expected (and reasonable) role of my ministry, and not expect the congregation to take care of me?

A negative response to one or more of these questions indicates a need for careful reflection by a minister. It is best for the minister—and the ministry—if the minister realizes that the ministry should end before the congregation does.

Ideally, a ministry ends when there can be mutual gratitude for the ministry, a feeling that the ministry served the congregation and minister well. This is not always the case.

Expected Behavior from Congregations when a Minister Departs

Congregations experiencing the departure of a minister should focus on ending the ministry well, honoring the contract, expressing gratitude for the ministry, and reflecting on the accomplishments of the ministry.

Congregational leaders will engage in an exit interview from the region as part of the process (automatically offered for settled ministries, and upon request for other types of ministries). The interview is an opportunity to reflect and move toward a new time in the congregation's life.

Congregations face the complicated task of allowing the current ministry to conclude while, at the same time, preparing for the next ministry. The minister still should be seen as the congregation's minister until the last day of the contract. Congregational leadership should partner with the current minister to find appropriate ways to be in relationship once the next minister is hired. Congregational leadership should work with the current minister to define appropriate expectations and relationships once the current minister departs.

When the ending is complicated, congregational leadership should exercise diligence in co-creating as good an ending as possible. Civility, good manners, and fairness are expected of all members, and congregational leaders may have to exercise their leadership to encourage these. Like the similar expectation of ministers, this is not the time for the congregation, or more likely a congregant, to engage in antagonism, "intense truth-telling," condescending instruction, or bullying of the departing minister.

Even celebrated and appreciated endings can have complications. There is a difference between appreciation for a ministry and creating a "ghost"—a departing minister whose influence creates a standard that cannot be replicated and/or creates expectations that the next ministry must be the same. Leaders will do well to reinforce the reality that the next ministry will be different and should be different than the current ministry, even if the current ministry is dearly beloved.

Expected Behavior from Departing Ministers

Leaving well is an act of ministry. A departure is a time of reflecting on the ministry's accomplishments and learnings, expressing gratitude for the opportunity, and assuring the congregation that they will move to a new future with a new ministry partner. The scope of ministry lessens to a focus on preaching, pastoral care, one-on-one conversations as requested by congregants, appropriate staff supervision, abiding by the covenant(s) in place, readying information for the next minister, and setting boundaries around their role with the congregation once the ministry has concluded.

This can be complicated if the ministry was conflicted for the minister and/or congregation, and perhaps even required a negotiated ending. Ministers and congregations should work with extra diligence in these moments to avoid doing harm by engaging with civility, honoring their contract, and following UUMA guidelines.

A complicated ending is not a time for vindication or admonishment. Some ministers have felt a need to instruct the congregation on better behavior and engage in what they consider to be "intense truth-telling." Historically, this has only antagonized the congregation and created bad feelings and a wider divide between minister and congregation. Intense reactions to the ending have led to angry explosions, bullying, and disparaging remarks—none of which are appropriate behaviors.

Ministers are expected to honor their contracts, engage in an exit interview, and, if the ending was conflicted, engage in a time of reflection overseen by the UUA's Transitions Director.

Expected Behavior from Congregational Staff when a Minister Departs

Often forgotten, a ministerial departure has a significant impact on staff. The work of the staff is two-fold here: first, they too must say goodbye to the outgoing minister. They must also serve the congregation, by being present, supporting leaders and the minister and continuing their professional responsibilities and behavior. Anticipating a new supervisor can cause anxiety in congregational staff. If the ending of the ministry is conflicted, the staff should avoid triangulation and taking sides in the conflict. If staff need support, they should find it outside of the congregation, through their professional organizations, therapists, and other sources of support.

Kinds of Ministerial Departures

Not all ministry endings are the same. Each of these examples of how a ministry may end has a distinct effect on a congregation: death, disability, illness, negotiated endings, misconduct, retirement, ministers moving to a new position within or outside of parish ministry, or even simply taking a year off.

All endings of ministry bring feelings of grief, loss, and relief of varying degrees to members of a congregation. Congregants do not all feel the same way at the end of a ministry, and congregations do well to honor disparate feelings, rather than forcing a label or groupthink onto the congregants.

Death

The death of a minister serving a congregation amplifies typical grief and loss at the end of the ministry. Some members may feel guilty if they wanted the ministry to end and then the minister dies. Congregations will most often need a strong pastoral ministry to follow, whether they say this or not. Both the congregation and the family of the minister are strongly urged to rely on the UUA as a source of support.

Disability/Illness

An illness or disability that results in the end of a ministry will also amplify feelings at the end of the ministry. Seeing ministers in decline may be hard on a congregation. Ministers with a new disability or illness should confer with their doctors, colleagues, and the UUA about their limits, their future, use of employment benefits, and options. All should note the difference between ministers exercising good self-care and being taken care of to the point of not being seen as minister. Of special note to congregations that chose not to offer long-term disability benefits: this can be a time of great guilt and frustration for the congregation.

Marginalized Identities

Unitarian Universalists work to overcome supremacy from our wider culture that marginalizes people who hold a variety of identities: woman, disabled, fat, neuro-divergent, Black, Indigenous, and people of color, non-binary or gender non-conforming, queer, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and more. A minister's identity or identities may be met with resistance, exclusion, erasure, microaggressions or other harmful behavior in a congregation that leads the minister to conclude they will be unable to continue serving that congregation. The effect of this analysis can be difficult to admit. In the report from the [Commission on Institutional Change](#), congregants are encouraged to accept the experiences of the minister as their lived experience and avoid challenging these perspectives. Ministers are encouraged to bring up such issues well before an announced departure and to neither dwell on their experiences nor "call out" specific congregants in the transition time. UUA staff offers support in such cases and exit interviews provide an opportunity to share reflections with leadership as the ministry ends.

Minister leaves for a new congregational ministry position

Ministers often leave for a new congregational position, though sometimes the timing can surprise the congregation they are leaving. A shorter-than-expected tenure can cause a congregation to question itself. A longer-than-expected tenure can cause frustration for a congregation and guilt for ministers, who, only when leaving, realize the ministry might have been better ended a year or two before. A settled ministry lasting less than four years can often have a significant detrimental impact on a congregation, both emotionally and financially.

Minister leaves for a new non-congregational ministry position

Sometimes, ministers discover their preferred ministry lies outside of a congregational setting. They may feel their work with a particular congregation has run its course and are unable to move to a new congregation. They may need more traditional work hours to meet family needs. There may be some combination of reasons for this change in the way they live out their calling.

The effects of these moves are often the most easily understood by a congregation, though grief, loss, and relief will still be apparent. Some congregants may also feel the loss of what might have been; of the opportunity and future they hoped this ministry would create.

Minister leaves ministry for other work

A minister may discover ministry is not their calling, or may, due to geography or other conditions, seek a different kind of work. This may be particularly hard on the minister who has spent a lot of time and money in preparation for ministry. This may leave the congregation wondering how they might have contributed to the ministers' decision. Again, the feelings of grief, loss, and relief may be related to what the ministry was and what it might have been.

Minister leaves ministry resulting from ministerial misconduct

The impact of ministerial misconduct is traumatic. Often, congregants take sides and there is division in the congregation in the wake of misconduct. The minister may not understand the nature of the misconduct, which can lead to more confusion for everyone. Blame can be a significant part of congregational life, both turned inward and outward. Trust has been violated and will be slow to rebuild. Feelings are likely to run deep, strong, and long. In the worst case, the congregation no longer understands what ministry is and is supposed to be. Future ministries will need to focus on building trust, maintaining boundaries, abiding by covenant, moving slowly, and ending well. Sometimes, if there are repeated instances of misconduct, it will take multiple ministries for trust in ministry to return.

Three notes:

1. Examples of misconduct include sexual, financial, emotional (e.g., bullying).
2. Misconduct is not limited to ministers. Staff members, even congregants, engage in misconduct.
3. Unnamed misconduct in a congregation's past has a profound impact on a congregation, perhaps even more profound than named misconduct.

Minister negotiated out of congregation

Negotiated endings are particularly hard on congregations, staff, and ministers. This type of ending is often a result of some unresolved conflict that has festered and amplified (sometimes from only a small but powerful group or member of a congregation). The ending can catch many members and even the minister by surprise. The desire to keep silent about the conflict inhibits healing for both congregation and minister. Negotiated endings can lead to congregational division, secrets, blaming, and misinformation. The effects can be long-lasting unless both minister and congregation can eventually respond to these three questions with empathy and the ability to take other perspectives into account:

- What happened?
- What happened to the congregation?
- What happened to the minister?

Trust must often be repaired and rebuilt after a negotiated resignation. Learning must occur for both minister and congregation to avoid repeating patterns. Ministers must remember they must minister to the entire congregation. Congregants must remember that the minister has their own perspective and still must minister to everyone in the congregation. Not all negotiated endings are a result of misconduct. Congregations with a history of misconduct, especially unacknowledged or unknown misconduct, seem more likely to have negotiated endings than those with no history of misconduct. Often, the negotiated ending amplifies feelings of grief, loss, and relief. The feelings of the loss of opportunity are often more present than the feelings of loss for the ministry ending.

UU Ministers Association Good Officers with the specialized contract/call negotiation support portfolio and UUA Congregational Life staff are trained and equipped to support ministers and congregations in negotiating ministry endings which are as equitable, kind, and clear as possible. Congregational leaders should reach out to their regional staff contact or the [Transitions Program Manager](#) and ministers should reach out to a specialist Good Officer for support as soon as they realize a negotiated ending is likely.

Ministers who retire

Retirement is often the most celebrated ending and is often harder for the minister than the congregation. Frequently, the congregation is expecting the retirement and is simply waiting for the minister to announce. If the ministry has lasted a long time, it may be harder for both minister and congregation to really move toward a new future. Ministers may have a tough time seeing themselves not serving a congregation or being in the same relationship with congregants that they have had. This may also be true for congregants. The feelings of loss and grief are about the loss of the familiar and a move toward the unknown, even though this was inevitable. It is important that both minister and congregation understand that the minister, once retired, is no longer the minister of the congregation, and that a new set of relationships must be negotiated.

To participate in the Service of the Living Tradition, ministers must complete and submit the [Intent to Retire form](#).

For more information about retirement, visit the [retirement page](#) on the UUA website.

Please see this article, [Six Rules for Letting Go when You Retire](#), for further reading.

Exit Interview Process for Settled Ministry

The ending of a settled ministry is an opportunity for reflection and learning.

Congregational leadership, ministers, and regional staff all have the opportunity (and should take advantage of the opportunity) to reflect and assess the ministry at its end. This is not an evaluation solely of the minister, but also is a reflection on the ministry of the congregation during this minister's tenure.

The exit interview process is intentionally both pastoral and educational. Congregations and the minister both have chances to share information, insights, and feelings about the ministry they shared together from their unique perspectives. Not everyone in the congregation will have the same reflections and opinions. This is not only normal, but it is an opportunity.

The process is overseen by UUA regional staff. A regional staff member sets up and conducts the interviews. They are encouraged to share any insights they have as well. The interviews are shared only with the outgoing minister, congregational leadership, regional staff, the UUA Transitions Team, and, if requested, the incoming interim and settled minister.

An interview will be conducted with the outgoing minister. Another interview will be conducted with the congregational board. Regional staff will take notes on interview responses, share the notes with interviewees to make sure they reflect what was said and intended, and share and store the approved interview notes appropriately. Both leadership and minister are encouraged to share what worked well and what each wish they had gone better or produced a different outcome. In some cases, the regional staff may also interview congregational staff.

Exit Interviews

- Exit interviews will be conducted at the end of all settled ministries and all called second ministry positions.
- Exit interviews may be requested at the end of an interim, developmental, and other contract ministries by the Transitions Director (most likely in the case of negotiated endings), regional staff, or the congregation or minister.
- The exit interviews will be completed within the 3 months before the planned ending date (ideally 6-8 weeks) of the ministry. If this is not possible, the regional staff will inform the Transitions Office of the reasons for the delay.
- The exit interviews are to be shared between the congregational leadership and departing minister, the regional UUA staff, and the UUA Transitions Team. They can also be shared with the following interim and settled minister upon request. *This is a change from previous policy where sharing was optional. It is no longer optional.*
- Exceptions to the above rules must be agreed to between the regional staff and the Transitions Director.

Sample Ministerial Exit Interview

To be conducted with the departing minister of the congregation by a member of the Congregational Life staff group (regional staff) or designee.

Introduction

This interview is a tool for reflection and increasing self-awareness of the minister and for providing another lens about the congregation being served at the end of this ministry.

Regional staff will provide written copies of the report to the minister, the governing board of the congregation, and the Ministerial Transitions Office of the UUA. A copy should be kept for regional files.

Regional staff will also share the report with the interim minister(s), and the newly settled minister(s).

The exit interview provides an occasion for a representative of the UUA to check in with the minister to establish whether the minister has:

- Been in contact with the Transitions Office
- Connected or will connect with supportive colleagues
- Reviewed UUMA guidelines if they are staying in the area

Date of interview:	
Congregation:	
City & State/Province:	
Name of departing minister(s):	
Date of minister's departure:	
Name of interviewer:	

Exit Interview Questions:

- What went well during this shared ministry?
- What were the biggest challenges during this shared ministry?
- What did you learn during this shared ministry?
- Why did the ministry end?
- How was conflict handled during this shared ministry? *Some examples: boundaries, healthy relations policies/processes, identity-based bias/conflict, bullying (and tolerance for bullying), covenant, unspoken expectations, or issues with trust, power, or authority*
- How was the ministry shared between the minister, staff, and lay people?
- Were there any cultural shifts in the congregation during this ministry? *Some examples: inclusion, generosity, trust, justice focus.*

- What are your hopes for the future of this congregation's ministry?

Sample Congregational Transition Interview

To be conducted with the lay leadership of the congregation by a member of the Congregational Life staff group (regional staff) or designee.

Introduction

This interview is a tool for reflection and increasing self-awareness of the congregation at the end of this ministry.

Regional Staff will provide written copies of the report to the board chair (or designee), the departing minister, and the Ministerial Transitions Office of the UUA.

Regional Staff will also share the report with the interim minister(s), and the newly settled minister(s).

The Transition Interview provides an occasion for a representative of the region to check in with the leadership of the congregation. It is a good time to establish whether:

- the congregation has checked whether it is in compliance with its by-laws regarding such matters as termination, call, and committee on ministry, and whether its by-laws serve them well (experience of field staff and the Transitions Director, for example, suggests that a call of a minister should require at least a 90% vote and for dismissal 30% should be sufficient),
- the congregation has thoughtfully considered the appropriate pace and process for its search process,
- the congregation understands the roles of the Transitions Program Manager (the person in the Congregational Life staff group with the nationwide transitions portfolio) and the Compensation Consultant and has planned to meet with them at the appropriate point in its process, and/or
- The congregation needs any other assistance.

Date of interview:	
Congregation:	
City & State/Province:	
Name of departing minister(s):	
Date of minister's departure:	
Name of interviewer:	
Board chair or alternate contact person:	
Email:	
Phone:	
Number of persons participating:	
Name of each participant and their role in leadership (list):	

Transition Interview Questions:

- What went well during this shared ministry?

- What were the biggest challenges during this shared ministry?
- What did you learn during this shared ministry?
- Why did the ministry end?
- How was conflict handled during this shared ministry? *Some examples: boundaries, healthy relations policies/processes, identity-based bias/conflict, bullying (and tolerance for bullying), covenant, unspoken expectations, or issues with trust, power, or authority*
- How was the ministry shared between the minister, staff, and lay people?
- How did identity bias (gender, sexuality, ableism) contribute to challenges the minister experienced?
- Were there any cultural shifts in the congregation during this ministry? *Some examples: inclusion, generosity, trust, justice focus.*
- What are your hopes for the future of this congregation's ministry?

Sample Regional Staff Reflection on Transition

Ministerial Transitions Regional Staff Report

Regional staff are asked to share information from their perspective that will help the congregation. These reports may be submitted with the exit and transitions interviews to transitions@uua.org.

Based on the delicate nature that may be required in some situations, regional staff can request confidentiality on all but the last two questions if needed.

Questions

1. What went well during this ministry?
2. What did not go well?
3. What kind of minister would be a good fit for this congregation?
4. How did identity bias (race, gender, sexuality, ableism) impact the minister and ministry?
5. How has the congregation changed due to this ministry?
6. Is the congregation stuck in a rut or in the past?
7. How well is the congregation connected to the larger movement? To the wider community?

For public consumption:

1. What would you tell the congregation they need to focus attention on during the interim ministry?
2. What are your hopes for this congregation?

Exit Interviews for Other Ministerial Positions

When a ministry ends, congregations and ministers benefit from reflection on the course of the ministry with the congregation.

- Settled ministers go through an exit interview process usually overseen by congregational life staff.
- Interim ministers have final evaluations of the ministry. The minister does their own evaluation of the ministry, and the congregational leadership does its own.
- In developmental ministry, the leadership and minister complete a joint evaluation of the developmental ministry.
- Contract ministries have historically not had evaluations, but they may be evaluated.

Not only do the congregation and minister benefit from the evaluation and self-reflection, but ultimately other congregations and ministers benefit. Evaluations shared with the UUA allow our faith to share learnings from a particular ministry to assist our congregations, our ministers, and our faith.

Negotiated or Conflicted Ministry Endings

Ministers: Review, Hold, and Settlement Restrictions

1. A negotiated ending from any type of ministry puts a minister on a temporary hold for settlement until the minister has completed the Review Team Assessment which includes a reflective essay from the minister, completed congregational and ministerial exit interviews, and additional information from regional staff. We also may ask this of a minister when the ending was not defined as negotiated but known to be conflicted, particularly one where the minister may bring the baggage of the last ministry into their next ministry.
2. The minister has up to three years from the end date of the ministry to complete the essay before they are referred to the Ministerial Fellowship Committee for a fellowship review.
3. Upon completion of the active ministry, receipt of the reflective essay and exit interviews plus information from regional staff, the Review Team will determine the minister's future readiness for parish ministry. The Review Team consists of the Director of Ministry and Professional Development, the Transitions Director, the Professional Developmental Director, the Director of Congregational Life, and two other Congregational Life staff members.
4. The Review Team may decide to keep the minister on hold pending further ministerial development, place settlement restrictions (overseen by the Transitions Office) or release the minister to any kind of parish ministry search. Self-reflection, self-awareness, emotional intelligence, responsibility for one's actions, and potential to avoid a similar situation in the future are all factors which will be evaluated.
5. "On Hold" means the minister is prohibited from having their ministerial record shared with a congregation for any parish ministry search. Ministers may appeal hold decisions of the Review Team to the Ministerial Fellowship Committee.
6. "Settlement Restriction" means the minister may be considered for certain parish ministry settings with the oversight of the Transitions Director. These restrictions can include, but are not limited to setting, duration, percentage of full-time, required mentorship, continuing education, and therapy. Settlement restrictions may be lifted by the Review Team.

Congregational Accountability in Negotiated Endings

After a negotiated or conflicted ministry ending, congregations are held in special care by UUA staff. Regional and transitions office staff will work with leaders to determine the best way forward with a ministry search. The congregation would not be well-served by pretending nothing happened and looking for a new minister without reflecting on what went wrong and shoring up their congregational system and relationships. See this section for more information on how UUA staff works with congregational leaders after a negotiated or complex ministry ending: [What Type of Ministry Should Be Next for My Congregation?](#)

What is Transitional Ministry?

All ministries are transitional. All ministries have a beginning and end, though people tend to not think about that, especially during settled ministries.

Transitional ministry covers the time when a congregation is in an intentional transition from one ministry to the next. Most people only think of interim ministry as transitional ministry, and it is that. A congregation moves from one settled ministry to its next settled ministry with the help of an interim minister, who assists the congregation on this journey.

Some congregations need longer than a typical interim ministry to work on deep-seated issues and patterns that have kept the congregation circling in place or heading in a negative direction. There are very specific issues to be worked on in an intentional way. The congregation knows it needs help. Significant trauma may be a part of the congregation's history which has been ignored or downplayed, or, in some cases, not even known. Another congregation may want to engage in significant cultural or structural change work before its next settled ministry. These congregations may be ready for developmental ministry, another kind of transitional ministry.

Sometimes a congregation is unsure about ministry and/or how much of it they need or can sustain financially. The congregation decides to contract with a minister for a year, with the option to renew as the contract ends. In contract ministry, the congregation sometimes has very specific duties for the minister. Sometimes the congregation uses this ministry as a test period—to see whether the shared ministry is good, and to provide for the basics of ministry while the congregation assesses its needs.

Any search for a ministry position which is not full-time is considered a contract ministry search by the Transitions Office. Full-time contract ministry searches are also possible. While congregations may call the ministry by another name, the rules for contract ministry searches apply. Contract ministry searches are more flexible and easier on congregations, and may, unlike developmental and interim ministry, lead to a call and a settled position.

An Introduction to Each Type of Ministry

Interim—a transitional ministry designed to help a congregation move from one settled ministry to the next settled ministry or from a settled ministry to a developmental ministry. Most interim ministries last 24 months, though occasionally the ministry may be longer or shorter. An interim minister assists the congregation in moving beyond its last ministry and equipping itself for a new, different ministry. This preparation involves helping the congregation look at practices that may or may not be serving them well, assisting through the emotional process of transition, setting sights forward, and connecting the congregation to needed resources. The interim minister is hired by the board of trustees. Interim ministers may not be called by the congregation. Most congregations planning to continue in full-time ministry after a settlement use this option for their transition.

Contract—often used by a congregation that is seeking less than full-time ministry, that has fewer than 125 members, or that is uncertain that other types of ministries are a fit or financially sustainable long-term. The minister(s) is contracted for a specific period, usually a year, sometimes with a list of specific tasks like preaching and pastoral care, especially for part-time

ministries. Contracts may be renewed and modified. Contract ministers are hired by the board. They may be called by the congregation, should a call be mutually desirable, after a couple of years (see process for doing so in the [Contract to Call section](#) of this handbook).

Developmental—is an option for congregations with a history of repeated short ministries or chronic conflict. They exhibit a need to make structural or cultural changes, and/or a general inability to thrive, AND the self-awareness, desire, and capacity to make meaningful changes.

Developmental Ministry is a cooperative program between Congregational Life (CL) Staff and the Transitions Director. These UUA staff colleagues work with a congregation to identify the deeper issues underlying the recurring symptoms of burnout, inadequate financing, low volunteer satisfaction, ministerial turnover, or conflict. Congregations may ask for developmental ministry as they recognize a troubling situation or unique opportunity for meaningful change, or developmental ministry may be recommended by an interim minister or by CL staff. The congregation works with CL staff during a transition to prepare for developmental ministry and the congregation must be recommended by CL staff and the Transitions Office before they enter the program. During a developmental ministry, the congregation and minister work collaboratively with CL staff and the UUA to increase the odds of realizing the deep change sought by the congregation.

Developmental ministries have been most successful with a 4-7-year term. The developmental minister is not eligible for the called ministry of the congregation, as a good ending is part of the curriculum of the developmental ministry. In the last year of a developmental ministry, the congregation typically engages their next search for a settled minister. After this significant work in the congregation, there is no desire or need to have an interim ministry before the next settlement.

Settled—this minister is called by the congregation after a comprehensive search process. Ministers in search for settled ministry are rarely interested in following a settled ministry directly without some sort of transitional ministry. Settled ministry is mentioned here as a transitional option only for congregations where an assistant/associate minister may succeed the current senior minister. In general, the senior minister has worked with the congregational leadership and the second minister on a succession plan. Even then, outside help can be invaluable. Settled ministry is of an unlimited duration, but both minister and congregation would do well to remember that this ministry will end.

What Type of Ministry Should Be Next for My Congregation?

Your congregation's leadership and ministry will be held in care by a team of UUA staff members as you move into your next ministry search. Before your ministry search begins, Congregational Life and/or Transitions Team staff will meet with your leadership to discuss your ministry needs, context, and history. UUA staff will customize a recommendation for your congregation's transitional ministry search to try to ensure that your ministry needs are met and to increase the probability that your search will not end in a poor, brief, or conflicted ministry match.

For many years, after difficult ministry endings, ministers have been required to engage a UUA hold or review process, which sometimes includes professional development or personal work, before engaging their next ministry searches. The UUA policy of reviewing the congregation's needs, context, and history, offering support, and recommending an appropriate type of search

before initiating a ministerial search adds parallel congregational accountability to the search process. By pausing to reflect with congregational leaders at the end of ministries, especially those which ended in conflict, before rushing into ministry searches, the UUA Congregational Life staff team hopes to support congregational leaders in making decisions that will yield sustainable, vital future ministry matches.

Just as UUA staff considers the history, skills, and traits of ministers when making recommendations for their searches, congregational history, traits, and preferences inform recommendations for congregational searches (not an exhaustive list):

- How the current/last ministry went/ended
- Evidence that past interim work has continued into settled ministries
- Level of self-awareness and accuracy of self-representation in past searches
- Evidence of healing from trauma in congregational dynamics
- Conflict transformation skills
- Turnover rate of religious professionals
- Ability to take responsibility for and learn from the congregation's part in past conflicts
- Good ministries and endings with religious professionals with marginalized identities
- Openness about ministry endings (participating in exit interviews, no non-disclosure agreements)
- Respect and trust for professional ministry partners
- Understanding of congregation's shared ministry obligations, and appropriate expectations of ministerial partners
- AR/AO/MC commitment, including participation in "Beyond Categorical Thinking" or "Breaking Barriers, Building Beliefs" during settled search
- Relationship with the UUA and Annual Program Fund
- Stability of leadership structure
- Sustainability of professional ministry (less than full-time is automatically a contract ministry search)
- Whether UUA curation of the list of applicants (ministers with full fellowship or a particular type of experience, for example), would be beneficial and welcome for congregations with significant conflict or misconduct
- Cultural or structural change work which the congregation wants or needs to engage
- The congregational understanding of Unitarian Universalist theology
- The understanding of the discipline and practice of covenant

When UUA staff considers a congregation's needs and context, they may not recommend a certain type of ministry search immediately simply because it is the one the congregation has always engaged in the past. Other types of ministry search should not carry a stigma because they might indicate some work that is ongoing or needs to be done by a congregation. A recommended extra year of interim ministry or a pivot to developmental ministry can make a significant difference for congregations working on structural or cultural change work between settled ministries.

Types of transitional ministry search:

- **Contract:** the simplest and most flexible type of ministry search. While this is a transitional ministry, and begins with a board hire, it may lead to a congregational call if a good match is made.
- **Interim:** a transitional ministry (board hire), usually 2 years long, between settled ministries (congregational calls) or before a developmental ministry. Congregations may not call interim ministers.
- **Developmental:** a transitional ministry (board hire) recommended by Congregational Life staff or an interim minister, usually 4-7 years long, during which the congregation works on its cultural change goals with an experienced ministry partner. Congregations may not call developmental ministers.

After engaging an interim or developmental ministry, your congregation may be ready for a settled ministry search:

- **Settled:** the search is conducted during the last year of an interim or developmental ministry and culminates in a congregational call of the candidate identified by the settled search committee. This is an open-ended ministry, unlike transitional ministries, which have renewable one-year agreements.

In addition to recommending types of ministry search, UUA Congregational Life staff members:

- offer and suggest support which could take many forms and be ongoing: coaching, training, leadership experiences, the Hope for Us conflict engagement process, UU Leadership Institute courses, developmental ministry, etc.
- review all congregations' ministry search profiles before publication and, in some cases, offer guidance on congregational needs and history to include in the search profiles to maximize the chance that applicant ministers will understand and be equipped for the challenges the congregation has faced or is facing. When congregational leaders gloss over past misconduct or current conflict, for example, ministers do not know what they need to know before applying.
- provide support, upon request, to congregational leaders and ministers in adapting the standard agreement/contract as part of the negotiation process. UU Ministers Association Good Officers with the contract/call specialty can support ministers in this work, as well.

Interim Ministry Overview

Interim Ministry Considerations

When it works:

- Interim ministries follow most full-time, settled ministries.
- Interim ministers serve most congregations well, even, sometimes, when the congregation thinks the interim has not. Frustration within the congregation can be directed at the next minister in many ways. When these frustrations are directed at the newly settled minister, shorter settled ministries ensue. It is better to use an interim time to deal with these frustrations in a period of purposeful disequilibrium than to unintentionally create a transitional minister out of the newly settled minister.
- Additionally, congregations may have areas of neglect and/or unproductive patterns that need attention. The interim helps the congregation refocus to improve the odds of a successful settled ministry.
- Following a particularly traumatic, intense, or surprising ending, an interim can work with the congregation to bring stability, reflection, and openness to a new future.

When it doesn't work:

- An extremely divided and conflicted congregation may not trust any minister to do more than preaching and limited pastoral care. These congregations may be better served with a contract minister.
- Congregations seeking less than full time ministry are served with a contract ministry, though this may involve interim work.

Reminders:

- If a congregation had a particularly anxious time with a previous interim minister, they are better served by clearly stating what did not work with that interim ministry in their search materials, than thinking interim ministry is the problem. Like snowflakes and settled ministers, no two interims are alike.
- Interim ministers cannot become the next settled minister.

Ministerial Pool Available:

- Generally large, though compensation, geography, and a congregation's willingness to do interim work will affect interest.

Notes About the Interim Search Process

- The search for an interim minister takes place in April and May of each year for an August 01 start.
- **Congregations seeking a minister at less than full time use the contract ministry search process.** A contract ministry with an interim focus is possible, though the settled ministry search is open only to full-time searches. The transitional ministry training which interim ministers receive from the UUA and Interim Ministry Network is open to contract ministers.

- **Note for small congregations:** In recent years, congregations with fewer than 125 members have had fewer (and sometimes no) applicants in full-time interim, developmental, and settled ministry searches. A contract search works well for small congregations because it moves more slowly, costs less, and requires less volunteer time and energy than, for example, the interim-to-settled ministry search. Please reach out to the [Transitions Program Manager](#) to discuss your congregation's plans for the search and to learn more about the current ministry search landscape.
- We know that congregations sometimes learn that they will be in search while pledge drives are on-going and a full financial picture for the year ahead is still unclear. We can initiate an interim profile for your congregation, at your request, while leadership figures out if full-time ministry is affordable and sustainable. We can transfer your interim search profile responses to a contract search profile (part-time or full-time), if needed, before publication if it becomes clear to leadership that this is the better way forward for your congregation.
- The interim search moves quickly, so the interim search committee should be prepared to prioritize this search over the several weeks it normally takes to conduct it.
- We strongly recommend you read *In the Interim: Strategies for Interim Ministers and Congregations, 2nd Edition* available from the [UUA Bookstore](#), but if you are close to the April application deadline, feel free to submit your application first.
- The name of every minister who expresses an interest in your congregation will be released to you, up to six names.
- You may request to have a single interim minister recommended to you.
- You may choose to limit the number of names you receive (2-6 names)
- If your congregation had a difficult interim experience in the past, please arrange to speak with your regional staff or UUA transitions team. This should not deter you from searching for an interim minister, but it can shape how you search for your next, different interim minister.
- When reviewing a congregational profile, ministers look for fair compensation and authenticity. They are most interested in a congregation which honestly expresses its challenges, successes, and needs. They want an opportunity to do real work with a congregation looking to get ready for its next settled ministry.

Duration of Interim Ministry

- Congregations engaging at least a 24-month interim ministry period had a much greater success rate (90%) at calling a minister following their interim period than congregations doing only a single year of interim ministry (56%), so the UUA no longer recommends one-year interim ministries for most congregations.
- Search committees have more time and seem to be more discerning and open when elected after the interim minister has arrived than during the end of the settled ministry. Search committees need a full year to do their work well. Search committees selected after an interim minister has arrived tend to be able to look forward and are more likely to see future needs than committees elected before the settled minister departs. Search committees selected while a settled minister is still serving the congregation tend to gaze backwards and are more reactive (either positively or negatively, often overly so) and less open to a new and different minister and ministry.
- It is highly recommended that congregations doing two years of interim ministry do so with the provision that the contract is one year with the option to renew for another year. Doing so allows for the possibility of a graceful exit if the interim and congregation do not match well. Additionally, some congregations are simply better served by two different interims.

- An interim ministry may be extended to a third year at the mutual request of the congregation and the interim minister.

The Interim Ministry Search Process

1. Let the UUA Transitions Office know that you are anticipating a ministerial transition within six months of the end date of the ministry by completing the [Notice of Ministerial Transition](#)
2. **Board and search team members may contact Christine Purcell, Transitions Program Manager, at any time during the transitional period for support:** cpurcell@uua.org. She holds open office hours each week on Zoom for those in transitional ministry searches on Tuesdays from 3:00-5:00 PM Eastern time: <https://uua.zoom.us/j/95425414067>
3. Review the Transitional Ministry Handbook and phase 1 of the [Settlement Handbook](#) as guides to planning to end this ministry as well as possible and beginning to look ahead to the next ministry partnership.
4. The board should discuss your ministry needs with your congregation's primary contact on the UUA's regional staff team and arrange to complete an exit interview process with them (if you are not sure whom to contact, Christine Purcell can connect you: cpurcell@uua.org). Your primary contact, with assistance from the UUA transitions team, will offer customized recommendations for your ministry search based on timing, finances, congregational needs, etc.
5. Your governing board should examine your congregation's bylaws to see how ministry search is presented to ensure a smooth interim search process. If the board perceives a misalignment between the requirements of the bylaws and UUA process (if the congregation must vote on a transitional ministry, for example), please reach out to the Transitions Program Manager as soon as possible.
6. If interim ministry is recommended and desired, assemble a search team. This team is usually a task force of the board with 3-5 members who are trusted by the full board and can engage in a fast-moving process that plays out in early May.
7. To initiate a search profile, email transitions@uua.org to provide the name and email address of at least one search team member in or after mid-February. The UUA transitions team will open a search profile for your search team in our MinistrySearch system once that information is received. Here is a link to the [MinistrySearch System](#). Only search team members added to the profile will have access to the profile. The initial contact to whom UUA staff grant system access may add other interim search committee members.
8. If your team wants access to your information from a previous search, you may request your congregation's old record sheet(s) by sending an email to transitions@uua.org.
9. **The search team should pay attention to the interim search calendar, as exact dates change a bit from year to year (published on uua.org/transitions) and to all newsletter updates from transitions@uua.org.**
10. While the profile questions could be downloaded for work outside of the search system, copying and pasting responses takes time, and frustrating formatting errors are likely. If you decide to work off-line on the questions, you should clear formatting before pasting text into the system. It may be easier to work on the profile in the search system, saving changes as you go, as the search system is stable.

11. The search team will see the name and email address of the congregation's primary contact on the Congregational Life staff team (UUA regional field staff) in the profile. This is the person search teams ask to review the profile before publication and potential applicants can contact to learn more about your ministry opportunity. **Please direct questions about the search process to the [Transitions Program Manager](#) or [Transitions Office](#), not to regional staff.**
12. The search team should have the [draft ministerial agreement](#) approved by the board and compile a documents packet (full list below) to be shared with applicants.
13. Complete the profile as best you can. Ideally, input is obtained from at least the entire board of trustees. Some answers may require an educated guess or estimate. Some information will be pre-populated from certification data submitted to the UUA from the congregation. The profile serves your congregation best when you are truthful about your congregation's needs during the interim time. Provide a quick assessment of your strengths and challenges and a snapshot of your congregation and its values. Authenticity and honesty trump putting your best foot forward. Surprises lead to resentment, bad matches, and hard feelings all the way around. You may adjust and modify your application until the deadline.
14. **For the best exposure to potential applicants, search profiles should be ready for publication before the last week of April.**
15. Once the profile is complete, your team should click "complete record" and then "publish." Doing so will push your changes to a version of the document which can be previewed by regional staff. *Let your primary or regional staff contact know that your profile is ready for review.* Your primary contact (or the Transitions Program Manager) will review your profile for clarity, consistency, and a balanced view of your congregation's unique strengths and challenges. They may offer feedback or request changes before clearing it for publication.
16. Ministers will review all search profiles in the last week of April and decide where to apply.
17. When names of applicants are released to your search team the following week, each member of the search team will receive an automated notification email from the MinistrySearch system when your team has applicants to review. The names and ministerial records of your applicants will appear in the profile when you next log in. It is possible that not every congregation will have applicants, so if you do not see any names when you log in, check in with the Transitions Office to confirm this. Every effort will be made to release the names of all prospective interims available to the search team by 5 p.m. Eastern on the day names are released.
18. A minister's name may be sent to up to 6 congregations for consideration before the first offer date, with preference being given to accredited interim ministers and those with experience and training in interim ministry. The Transitions Director will release the names of all eligible applicants to each search team unless there are more than 6 applicants for your position. If your search team receives the names of 6 applicants, you can be sure that those are the 6 most experienced ministers who applied.
19. Trust is key in this process. The board must trust the team it assembles to make hiring decisions (including ranking applicants and making a verbal offer once matched). Ministers need to be able trust that their identities will be held in confidence by the search team throughout this process. Only search team members listed in the MinistrySearch system should know who your applicants are. The search team can solicit hopes/questions for the interim ministry/minister from staff members and people on the board who are not on the search committee and create a shared document for all involved to see. The search team could share *anonymized* information about and responses from applicants in this way.

20. Search teams should fully and fairly consider all applicants, using an inclusive process that honors the unique needs, perspectives, identities, and skills of all search team members and applicants, in alignment with our Unitarian Universalist values.
21. The search team should acknowledge each application and send a link (view-only access) to the documents packet so your applicants can learn more about your opportunity while your team learns about them. Documents packet details are below.
22. Everyone on your search team should read each ministerial record in preparation for a discussion about whom your team wants to interview. You may want to interview all your applicants if you have time to do so in the two-week consideration window. Every member of the search team should participate in each interview.
23. To let an applicant minister know, at any point, that your team does not wish to move forward in considering them, you should dismiss them using the MinistrySearch system. The system can send them an automated message, or you can write your own message within the system, as you prefer.
24. **References and confidentiality:** as the search team moves forward with discernment, team members should keep the identities of applicants confidential both in their own congregation and in the process of learning about applicant ministers. They should only reach out to references provided by the applicant minister. They should NOT, for example, reach out to someone in leadership at the congregation where a minister is serving if that person's name was not provided as a reference, as that leader may not know the minister is in search. Search teams should not attend live worship led by an applicant on-line or in-person, though they are free to watch recordings which are provided by the applicant or available to the public. Attending live worship can breach confidentiality and may lead to the withdrawal of an applicant who did not consent to this. *Please check in with UUA transitions staff with any questions about confidentiality.*
25. The search team should ask applicants if there are dealbreakers in the draft contract or any additional expectations applicants would like to share. Doing so maximizes the chance of a smooth negotiation.
26. Check the references your applicants provide to you. You may do this before or after interviews, as you wish. There are advantages to both approaches.
27. You may ask your applicants for additional references if you need more specific information. You may also ask top applicants which UUA regional staff member is most familiar with their ministry. *UUA staff do not provide references for ministers* but would be glad to provide their perspectives on applicants. If you are not sure whom to call on regional staff to learn more about your top applicants, the [Transitions Program Manager](#) can connect you to the right person on her staff team. [See this section for information on research calls with UUA staff.](#)
28. Congregational Life staff and the minister(s) currently serving your congregation are likely to be contacted by applicants to learn more about your ministry needs and history. This is appropriate and helpful. A minister currently serving a congregation should not provide applicant-specific information or guidance to the search team.
29. Once you have read ministerial records, checked references, and interviewed applicants, your team should meet to assess and rank your applicants with the priorities for your interim ministry in mind.
30. On or by the date specified on the search calendar, please provide your ranked yes/maybe/no list to the UUA Transitions Team using this [form](#) (for search teams). Ministers will do the same using this [form](#).
31. The Transitions Director will figure out the highest-ranking match for everyone and let everyone know what is likely to happen on offer day *before* offer day. For example, if Rev. A and congregation X identify each other as mutual first choices, it is a match! If Rev. B identifies congregation Y as their first choice, and congregations Y and Z both

identify Rev. B as their first choice, Rev. B has a match with congregation Y. The Transitions Director would then check for an alignment between congregation Z and their second choice. Occasionally, the ranking is more complex to sort through, or the transitions team will need to have a conversation with a minister or search team about a tie or a potential match identified as a maybe.

32. No offers or hints at offers may be made before offer day (date identified in the search calendar) at noon Eastern time. There is no formal letter of offer; just a call or email to say that the search team is offering the position to the minister. When the verbal offer is accepted, the minister and board may negotiate any final details of the contract.
33. Search teams may check with all their other applicants after noon Eastern time on offer day if they want to confirm their responses and wish the ministers well.

If no match is found:

- If your congregation finds itself without a match on the first offer day, please let the Transitions Office know whether you would like to consider any additional applicants. A continued search is part of the process, following the same procedures as before the first offer day. Good matches have occurred after the first offer day, but there have been years in which there were very few additional applicants and a less robust continued search.
- Please contact the Transitions Office if you still need a transitional minister after the second offer day. It may be necessary to convert still-open interim searches to contract searches because the interim search cycle ends, and the contract search cycle is year-round.

Additional Materials/Documents Packet for Interim Search

Your website is a source of information for potential applicants. Expect ministers to scour it. You should also provide a packet of information to your applicants via a **view-only access** link to an on-line folder. This should include:

- the draft ministerial agreement (approved by the board, with any changes from the template noted)
- a congregational budget (multiple years are even more appreciated)
- a copy of the by-laws
- covenants or policies around behavior or expectations of congregations (like a [safe congregation policy](#))
- a couple of orders of service
- several newsletters (links are fine)
- recent board minutes
- search team bios

If these are already housed on your website, direct the applicants to them and provide the access information needed. If they are not on your website, copies can be placed in a Dropbox or Google Drive (strongly preferred) or shared via email. You may include incentive pieces or links about your area, such as links to your location's Chamber of Commerce, Wikipedia page, housing information, and any tourism sites.

Ministers should have a website to share with each search team in addition to their completed ministerial record, though a collection of electronic files or links can suffice for the interim process. The minister's website (or packet) should include:

- a biography including a vision for Unitarian Universalism and your ministry
- sermons (ideally video)
- other rites of passage services
- newsletter columns
- references
- additional photos and audio/video files are a plus

Interim Search Covenants

Covenant for Congregations Seeking Interim Ministry

On behalf of your congregational board, please enter into covenant using the checkbox on your congregational record on MinistrySearch. Participation in interim search requires agreeing to and following the covenant.

1. We agree to follow the rules and timelines within the Transitional Ministry Handbook and Transitions Office Website.
2. We agree to honor a minister's need to follow the [UUMA guidelines for the conduct of ministry](#) (regardless of membership).
3. We agree to not to ask the interim to be a candidate for a congregation's settled position and understand that that the interim may not apply to a position with our congregation that starts within 3 years of their last day as interim minister.
4. We agree to inform and work with UUA transitions and regional staff throughout the transitional process.
5. We agree to complete interim progress appraisals as required.
6. We agree to fund the training cost of the interim minister, if they have not completed the transitional ministry training already. We acknowledge that differences in pay based upon gender, race, ethnicity, ableism, and other marginalized identities are well documented, and understand that ministers are encouraged to communicate with the Transitions Office regarding the salary offered.
7. We understand that an interim minister must have a mentor (all except Accredited Interim Ministers) or collegial support system (AIMS only) during the interim ministry.
8. We understand the need for fairness throughout the search and interim period. We agree to abide by the interim search rules as well as to support interim ministry in our congregation throughout the interim period.

Covenant for Ministers Seeking to Do Interim Ministry

Please enter into covenant using the checkbox on your ministerial record on MinistrySearch. Your interest will not be released otherwise.

1. I agree to follow the rules and timelines within the Transitional Ministry Handbook and Transitions Office Website.
2. I agree to abide by the [UUMA guidelines for the conduct of ministry](#) (regardless of membership).
3. I agree to not be a candidate for a congregation's settled position and will not apply to a position that starts within 3 years of my last day as interim minister.
4. I agree to inform and work with UUA transitions and regional staff to support the congregation through the transitional process.
5. I agree to complete interim progress appraisals as required.
6. I agree to complete the initial training for transitional ministers, if I have not already done so.
7. I agree to have a mentor (all except Accredited Interim Ministers) or collegial support system (AIMS only) during the interim ministry.
8. I agree to support my interim ministry colleagues throughout the search and interim period.

Offer and Background Checks

- Please remember that interim ministers should be compensated at the same level as you would compensate a called minister. You should plan to pay your interim minister at least at the midpoint of the salary range. Several of our experienced interims can command above midpoint compensation.
 - When you make an offer on the final day of the search cycle, the offer is contingent on a successful background check as well as coming to agreement on the specifics of the offer being made.
 - While you can use any company you wish to complete a background check we offer:
[Oxford Document Management Company](#)
[Church Mutual Insurance Company](#)
- [Follow this link](#) to find your congregation's Geo index and salary tables.
 - [Follow this link](#) to learn more about fair compensation.
 - If your current minister is paid below the mid-level recommended guidelines, you should at least maintain or raise the salary to find the best interim possible.
 - If your current minister is paid above the mid-level recommended guidelines, you should at least pay the mid-point, unless you are getting an interim with more experience than your current outgoing settled minister. In that case, you should match or raise the compensation.
 - You should be prepared to pay full benefits in the compensation package. Please use the [Compensation Worksheet](#).
 - The UUA recommended sample interim agreement can be found [here](#) and on the [Transitions website](#). Deviating from the recommended contract is discouraged.

If You Have Questions

- Questions about the interim search should be directed to the UUA Transitions Team.
- Emails are easier for the Transitions Office, but you may request a phone or video call. Send an email to transitions@uua.org with several suggestions of a time for a call and the nature of your questions or concerns.

After the Agreement is Signed

- Please send a copy of the signed interim agreement to the Transitions Office. An electronic copy sent by email is preferred.
- Please also be sure we know the start date of the ministry so we can update the online directory for your congregation.

Compensation, Benefits, and Relocation for Interim Ministers

Ministers should be compensated fairly.

Fairness includes:

- Compensation (salary and housing)
- Benefits (retirement, health, dental, long-term disability, life insurance, half of the minister's self-employment taxes)
- Professional Expenses (10% of salary and housing or a minimum of 5,000)
- Relocation costs (~\$10,000). Keep in mind that ministers are taxed on relocation expenses.

The agreement should also include adequate leave time for vacation, illness, and personal matters. Professional travel is work for the minister and should not be viewed as leave.

Compensation

Every congregation resides in a Geo index or wage rate area and is of a particular size. Both are factors in expected adequate compensation.

[Follow this link](#) to find your Geo index and salary tables.

Congregations are expected to pay at the recommended mid-point for their Geo index and size for interim ministry. If your congregation has been paying less than this and you cannot come up to mid-point, you should not expect many applicants for interim ministry.

If your leadership and your current (perhaps previous) minister kept their salary/housing lower than fair compensation guidelines suggest (as often happens in congregations where the minister is there for a while), know that you are dealing with a deferred congregational problem, and not the incoming minister's problem. This will also likely affect the settled search unless you begin to offer fair compensation.

Simply put, take responsibility for the fact that the minister has been underpaid and work to correct this issue, as soon and as best you can. As long as this is someone else's problem and not the congregation's, the congregation is less likely to attract the minister it needs.

Benefits

Every minister deserves benefits. All of them. Your minister has at least a master's degree and may have other people who depend on them financially.

If you have saved money on benefits, for one reason or another (like the minister's spouse provides health insurance), or if you can (because the interim tells you their health care is provided for), the congregation should make sure that money is reserved and available for future ministries. If your minister has something covered elsewhere, then the money saved should be included in the minister's overall package or set aside in a sabbatical coverage fund for a future settled minister.

Providing full benefits means more interest for a congregation in its ministerial search.

Professional Expenses

Professional expenses add up, often quickly. Ministers are professionals and should be treated as such. Cutting expenses is a risky business and affects the professional health of the minister and the vitality of the congregation.

[Follow this link](#) to learn more about professional expenses.

Relocation

This is often very hard on both minister and congregations. Relocation expenses are usually 10% of salary and housing to \$10,000 because moving is so expensive. Relocation expenses are now considered taxable income by the US government, so the congregation is encouraged to help offset the additional tax burden. Everyone is encouraged to find ways to help and save.

Any search team from a congregation located in the United States that considers hiring or calling a minister who is not a U.S. citizen should make sure their congregation has its own 501c3 status. Please contact the Transitions Office for more information.

For ministers who are U.S. citizens and are considering moving to and serving in a Canadian congregation, a document with considerations for religious professionals moving to Canada exists. Please ask the Transitions Office for more information.

Interim Minister Sabbatical Fund

The standard UUA/UUMA recommended agreement for interim ministries states: "In recognition and appreciation of the unique work of interim ministry, the Congregation will contribute \$1,000 to the UUA Interim Ministry Sabbatical Fund. Such payment will be made to the Office of Church Staff Finances." To make a congregational contribution to this fund, please follow [these instructions](#).

Getting Ready for the Interim Ministry

Interim Ministry Training

If a minister has not served as an interim before, they receive training from the UUA and the Interim Ministry Network in the summer prior to or just after beginning their interim service. The congregation pays for this training as described in the agreement.

Getting Ready for the Interim Ministry/Common Read

Congregational leaders that prepare themselves for the interim ministry period are more likely to have a successful interim period. We recommend a common read for leaders preparing for the interim ministry like [In the Interim](#) or [The Spirit That Moves](#) from our UUA bookstore.

The Transition Team

Typically, the Committee on Ministry is disbanded by the board or goes on hiatus during the interim ministry and a transitions team (with different members) is formed. Once an interim minister is hired, it is a good practice for them to converse with the board about the traits and connections they would value in members of their transition team. The interim minister appoints, or the board selects, in alignment with the interim minister's request, a team of people to orient the interim minister to the culture of the congregation and to assist them in planning, carrying out, and assessing some of the special tasks of interim ministry.

[In the Interim](#) includes a chapter on transitions teams: A Different Country, by Rev. Judith Walker Riggs.

For Ministers Considering or Practicing Interim Ministry

Interim ministry is not settled ministry. Interim ministry has evolved from a place where a congregation got an interim minister as a placeholder while they searched for their next settled minister. Interim ministry should not be perceived as something an interim minister does to a congregation.

Interim ministry is a collaboration between congregational leaders, staff, and the interim minister to help the congregation move forward toward a new future. Interim ministers must be prepared to work with congregations in various stages of grief, readiness, and receptivity to this ministry to be successful at it.

Ministers considering interim ministry are encouraged to read [In the Interim](#) and to reach out to colleagues currently engaged in interim ministry for even more information and discernment. The UUA's transitional ministry training (in partnership with the Interim Ministry Network) is not required to apply for interim ministry. It will be expected once a minister begins an interim ministry.

The Process for Ministers Wanting to Apply to Do Interim Ministry

1. [Alert the Transitions Office](#) of your interest in interim ministry
2. Complete your Ministerial Record in the [MinistrySearch system](#)
3. The Transitions Office encourages every minister to have a website. This is to be a presence for Unitarian Universalism in the wider world. What congregational search teams want more than anything else is to see and experience sermons/worship. Have a website ready (or at least an electronic packet, though somewhat less desirable) to share with potential congregations. This should include:
 - a biography including a vision for Unitarian Universalism and your ministry
 - sermons (ideally with video links)
 - other rites of passage services (good but optional)
 - newsletter columns (good but optional)
 - additional photos and audio/video files are a plus
4. Once your materials are complete, you may express interest in MinistrySearch for interim congregations. You should also email a list to the Transitions Office of your order preference (for the first round of interim search) as congregations and ministers are limited to the number of applications that can be received or sent.
5. Have references available immediately. We are encouraging in interim search that congregations contact references before video interviews.
6. You are free to reach out to colleagues who serve or have served the congregations you are interested in for more information.

7. We ask all searching ministers and interim search teams to provide the Transitions Office with rankings at least 48 hours before the offer date. The Transitions Office will confirm all lists and share what is likely to happen on offer date with each search team and minister. Please submit your rankings using this [form](#).

When the offer date and time comes, the minister may accept an offer to do interim ministry. Contract negotiations may begin as soon as the offer is accepted. Ministers may hear from other search teams who will call to wish them well in their search. We recommend ministers not initiate communications with search teams but let the search teams come to them.

Transitional Ministry Training (in partnership with the interim Ministry Network)

- ✓ Ministers are not required to take interim ministry training prior to applying to be an interim minister.
- ✓ Ministers are expected to complete the initial training once they have been hired to do interim ministry by a congregation.
- ✓ The Transitions Office offers one training in conjunction with the Interim Ministry Network each August for ministers new to interim ministry.
- ✓ Every interim minister should have a mentor when starting an interim ministry.

Becoming an Accredited Interim Minister

Requirements for Admission

To be considered for the status of Accredited Interim Minister in Training (AIMIT), a minister must:

- Be in Full Fellowship with the UUA (however, ministers in preliminary fellowship may be admitted on a case-by-case basis)
- demonstrate competence in worship, preaching, counseling, working with volunteers, and church administration
- Demonstrate a proven willingness to seek, illuminate, and create opportunities for the full integration of people with historically and currently marginalized identities into all aspects of congregational life, and to dismantle white supremacist culture
- have completed the Interim Ministry Network's Fundamentals of Transitional Ministry– The Work of the Leader or Transitional Ministry Orientation offered each August by the Transitions Office (or both)
- have served effectively as an interim minister for at least one full **current** year
- exhibit appropriate personal qualities:
 - self-differentiation: personal security, emotional stability, flexibility
 - resilience and resourcefulness
 - comfort with beginnings and endings
 - the ability to listen attentively and to ask searching questions
 - patience, empathy, understanding
 - hopefulness: a positive approach to life
 - physical vitality
 - entrepreneurial energy on behalf of congregations
 - a domestic situation conducive to frequent relocation
- make required professional commitments
- to retain an AIM as a mentor, and to engage in regular conversation about interim ministry with the mentor at least monthly
- complete and submit the application and all required documents by February 1.

Sample Application for Accredited Interim Ministry in Training (AIMIT)

Application Deadline February 1

This application and supporting materials should be submitted electronically (as email attachments) and must include the following:

- 1. This form, which can be submitted electronically [here](#).*
- 2. Name of congregation you are currently serving as an interim minister (and have completed one year)*
- 3. The name of a regional staff person with whom you have worked.*
- 4. A letter from your mentor evaluating your potential for interim ministry.*
- 5. Copies of at least one year of interim appraisals from you and the congregation. If you have served more than one year as interim, please include up to three years of appraisals. If you cannot provide these, the Transitions Office will attempt to locate copies. Our filing system is challenging so please allow several weeks' lead time when requesting copies of appraisals.*
- 6. A copy of your up-to-date Ministerial Record from the MinistrySearch system.*
- 7. A link to your website or an electronic version of your packet*
- 8. A copy of the certificate of completion of either Transitional Ministry Orientation (through the UUA) or Fundamentals of Interim Ministry (through the Interim Ministry Network.)*

Today's Date

Name

Email

Preferred Phone

Mentor's Name

Mentor Email

How long as mentor?

Does mentor have interim ministry experience?

Please list other mentors you have had and length of time as mentor

Regional Staff Name

Email

Please explain why you are interested in AIMIT status at this time.

Please explain why you feel called to interim ministry work and express any reservations you may have about the suitability of interim work for your ministry.

Is there any other information you would like to share?

Evaluation of your application will be conducted by the Transitional Ministry UUMA Chapter Exec. and the Transitions Team. If your application is accepted, you must attend the next April Transitional Ministry UUMA Chapter Meeting after which a final determination will be made whether you may be granted AIMIT status. Following the seminar, you will be notified of the decision by an email from the Transitions Director.

Submit your application to the Transitions Office at transitions@uua.org. Please submit all application materials as email attachments, using a single submission. If the files exceed the capacity of your email provider, please use www.wetransfer.com or a similar online service.

Sample Application for Accreditation as an Interim Minister (AIM)

This application and supporting materials should be submitted electronically (as email attachments) and must include the following:

1. *This form, which may be submitted electronically [here](#).*
2. *A letter from your regional staff person you have worked with evaluating your experience as an interim minister.*
3. *Copies of interim appraisals by you and the congregations served for the most recent three years of interim ministry. (If you cannot provide these, the Transitions Office will attempt to locate copies. Please allow several weeks lead time when requesting copies of appraisals.)*
4. *A copy of your up-to-date Ministerial Record (as PDF) from the MinistrySearch System.*
5. *A link to your website or an electronic copy of your interim search packet.*
6. *Copy of certificate of completion of the [Fundamentals of Transitional Ministry: The Work of the Congregation \(FTMC\)](#) including fieldwork (through the Interim Ministry Network.)*

Today's Date

Name

Email

Preferred Phone

Mentor's Name

Mentor's Email

How long as mentor?

Please list other mentors you have had and length of time as mentor

Regional Staff Name

Email

Dates of AIM Seminars attended (two required)

Interim Training – please provide dates completed below and send copies of certificates for the following:

- UUA's *Transitional Ministry Orientation* OR Interim Ministry Network's *Fundamentals of Transitional Ministry: The Work of the Leader*
- Interim Ministry Network's *Fundamentals of Transitional Ministry: The Work of the Congregation with fieldwork*

Explain why you are interested in AIM status and what you bring to Accredited Interim Ministry. In your statement, please address how your recent ministries have demonstrated success in assisting congregations in the following:

- claiming and honoring the past and engaging and honoring grief and conflict
- recognizing unique identity as well as strengths, needs, and challenges

- clarifying the appropriate leadership roles of minister(s), church staff, and lay leaders and navigating the shifts in leadership that may accompany times of transition
- making appropriate use of regional, UUA, and other resources
- proudly coming into possession of a renewed vision and strong stewardship, prepared for new growth and new professional leadership, ready to embrace the future with anticipation and zest
- providing normal responsibilities of ministry, including worship and pastoral care.

Is there any other information you would like to share?

The Transitions Office would prefer to receive all application materials at one time as email attachments. If the files exceed the capacity of your email provider, please use www.wetransfer.com or a similar online service. You may also store everything in a Dropbox and send us a link.

Evaluation of your application will be conducted by the Transitions Director, your mentor, and another AIM chosen by your mentor and will include a review of your UUA file by the Transitions Director.

Please allow six weeks after your completed application is received for a decision which you will receive by email from the Transitions Director.

Interim Progress Appraisals

Overview

Interim Progress Appraisals are a time for the board and leadership to reflect with the minister on the joint work of interim ministry. How well are the leadership and interim minister working on the tasks of interim ministry? What needed more work than expected? Where does work need to begin? Is the process moving along well?

The appraisals should be approached as a conversation between leaders and the interim. The Transitions Office likes to have copies of the appraisals to learn about the congregation's readiness for settled ministry and to see how self-reflective and open the interim minister and congregation are as they move forward. They are not meant as an evaluation of the interim minister.

The evaluation from the congregation should be done as a group, with one form submitted on behalf of the leadership after consultation with the minister. The interim minister should also consult with the board before submitting their own interim ministry appraisal.

Cycles

For a 24-month interim ministry

The appraisals are due:

1. six months after the start date
2. twelve months after the start date (good to begin a church year with reassessment)
3. toward the end of the interim ministry (in the last month or two)

For a 12-month interim ministry

The appraisals are due:

1. six months after the start date
2. toward the end of the interim ministry (in the last month or two)

For interim ministries beyond 24 months

The appraisals are due:

1. six months after the start date
2. twelve months after the start date (usually good to begin a church year with reassessment)
3. at the end of 24 months after the start date (good to begin a church year with reassessment)
4. toward the end of the interim ministry (in the last month or two)

Sample Appraisals for Interim Ministry

See link to the Word document [here](#) (last item on the page).

UUA Transitions Office Interim Ministry Appraisal (Example)

Interim appraisals should be completed separately by congregation and interim minister with results shared. Appraisals are due after 6 months, after 12 months, and at the end of the second year of interim ministry. In a three-year interim, a final appraisal should be conducted at the end of the ministry. Please email the completed form as an email attachment to transitions@uaa.org.

All fields are required. Input fields will expand as you type. If you have a problem using this form, please contact transitions@uaa.org.

1. Congregation Name (please enter full name)

2. Congregation City and State/Province

3. Name of Interim Minister

4. Date Interim Ministry Began

5. Name of Person Completing Appraisal

6. Email of Person Completing Appraisal

7. Role of Person Completing Appraisal

8. When was this appraisal conducted? after 6 months | after 12 months | at end of second year
at end of third year

9. Date of Appraisal

10. How did the leadership and congregation prepare itself for interim ministry?

11. Had previous interim ministries affected how interim ministry is viewed? If so, please describe.
12. What goals were initially specified in the interim ministry application? How have they been addressed and/or modified?
13. Please assess the congregation's work toward engaging and acknowledging its grief and conflicts.
14. Please assess the congregation's work toward recognizing its unique identity and its strengths.
15. Please assess the congregation's work toward recognizing its needs and challenges.
16. Please assess the congregation's work toward understanding the appropriate role of the minister(s), church staff, and lay leaders.
17. Please assess the congregation's work toward successfully navigating leadership shifts that often accompany times of transition.
18. Please assess the congregation's use of appropriate external resources, e.g., the UUA, Regional or District Resources, etc.
19. Please assess the congregation's ongoing work about being engaged in the wider world e.g., service to others, social justice, anti-oppression.
20. Is the interim minister capably ministering as preacher, pastor, and teacher? Have there been difficulties or have constraints been put upon the minister's ability to do so?
21. Has the interim minister been attentive to self-care and to a spiritual practice of choice?
22. Is the interim minister courageously raising the needful issues in the congregation?

23. Is the interim minister gaining the cooperation of the church leadership in addressing those issues?

24. What would you like to see addressed during the remaining interim period or in the future? Are there any adjustments that need to be made to the initial goals or anything else?

25. Any additional thoughts or observations?

26. Has this appraisal been shared with the minister if completed by the board or with the board if completed by the minister?

27. If appraisal has not been shared, please explain.

Developmental Ministry Overview

Developmental Ministry Considerations

When it works:

- When the congregation identifies significant cultural or structural change work it wants to do or wants to make a breakthrough in addressing chronic issues. Usually, the congregation has worked with the regional staff and/or current minister (usually an interim minister) to see the need for significant learning and change.

When it doesn't work:

- When the congregation is not serious about or committed to working on its goals.
- When the congregational buy-in for this type of ministry has not been established.
- When the congregation expects the minister to do all the work.

Notes:

- Congregational Life staff and the Transitions Office must approve this type of ministry search.
- The developmental minister is not there to fix the congregation. The developmental minister is there to assist the congregation in achieving its goals.
- The developmental minister may not be called. Developmental ministry precedes the search for a called minister, usually.
- Congregations seeking a minister at less than full time use the contract ministry search process. A contract ministry with a developmental ministry focus is possible. The transitional ministry training which interim and developmental ministers receive from the UUA and Interim Ministry Network is open to contract ministers.
- **There is no additional cost associated with developmental ministry for congregations which support our UUA's Annual Program Fund (APF) at the Honor level.** Because of the congregation's increased partnership with UUA staff and the need for additional support and continuing education for the developmental minister, congregations with developmental ministries which begin in or after August of 2025 which do not support the APF at the Honor level agree to pay the UUA \$1,000 during the first and second years of developmental ministry.

Ministerial Pool Available:

- Intentionally small. Often the Transitions Office actively recruits specific, experienced ministers to meet the congregation's stated goals. The overall pool of ministers interested in this, while growing, is smaller than interim or settled ministers.

Developmental ministry is a program for congregations which know that they have specific, longer-term transitional work to do before being ready for a settled minister. Usually, a developmental ministry lasts 4-7 years, with 5+ years being optimal.

Good candidates are:

- congregations which want to work on significant structural or cultural change work before calling another minister. There may be positive and creative reasons for seeking a long-term transitional ministry partner, such as moving into a new governance structure, improving the congregation's visitor to leader pipeline, or creating a culture of welcome, inclusion, or generosity, etc.
- congregations with a traumatic history of unresolved conflict, boundary violations, clergy (or other staff or leader) sexual misconduct, repeated and rapid ministerial turnover, abusive leadership.
- congregations with longtime, unresolved struggles, such as over a historic and beloved building.
- congregations where their community has changed, sometimes facing a decline, when the congregation may need to reinvent itself and its purpose.

In an optimal developmental ministry setting, congregational leaders are unified that goal-based work needs to occur, can readily identify areas of work needed, and realize that they must do this work with help from a minister (and, not have the minister do the work for them). They realize that the work may be challenging, as it may be related to trust, power, authority, identity, and right relationship. They realize that sustained work will be needed; this is not a quick fix. They have found a way to ensure buy-in from the larger congregation. New leaders are oriented to and supportive of the program when leadership turnover occurs.

For more information:

- Read Nancy Bowen's chapter "Options for Ministerial Transition Other Than Interim Ministry" in the 2nd Edition of *In the Interim*.
- [Read this article](#) about one developmental congregation
- [Question and answer article](#) from UU World
- Talk with your regional staff person

The Developmental Ministry Search Process

1. Leadership should do research on what developmental ministry is and if it is a good fit for their needs.
2. Board members should check the bylaws to see what they say about hiring transitional ministers. If they do not align with the process below, please contact the [Transitions Program Manager](#).
3. Leadership should engage with regional staff and their interim minister (if they have an interim minister) about whether developmental ministry might be beneficial. UUA Transitions staff is here to support leadership in discernment about developmental ministry, as well. *Congregational Life staff and the Transitions Office staff must approve this type of ministry search.*
4. Leadership should engage the congregation in reasons for considering developmental ministry and find ways to generate congregational buy-in. Listen well and communicate broadly.

5. Leadership should agree on appropriate and significant developmental ministry goals with the help of regional staff.
6. Once the decision to pursue developmental ministry is made and approved, leadership should assemble a search team of 3-5 people. This is a taskforce of the board and comprises mainly (or exclusively) board members. They should be trusted and empowered to make a hiring decision.
7. The Transitions Office opens developmental ministry search profiles in the MinistrySearch System on **01 December**. Reach out to the [Transitions Program Manager](#) on or after that day to have your profile initiated.
8. **Board and search team members may contact [Christine Purcell, Transitions Program Manager](#), at any time during the transitional period for support.** She holds open office hours each week on Zoom for those in transitional ministry searches on Tuesdays from 3:00-5:00 PM Eastern time: <https://uua.zoom.us/j/95425414067>
9. The search team will see the name and email address of the congregation's primary contact on the Congregational Life staff team (UUA regional field staff) in the profile. This is the person search teams ask to review the profile before publication and potential applicants can contact to learn more about your ministry opportunity. **Please direct questions about the search process to the [Transitions Program Manager](#) or [Transitions Office](#), not to regional staff.**
10. The search team should prepare a draft contract/agreement (using the [template](#) provided by the UUA), have the draft agreement approved by the board, and compile a documents packet (full list below) to be shared with applicants.
11. While the profile questions could be downloaded for work outside of the search system, copying and pasting responses takes time, and frustrating formatting errors are likely. If you decide to work off-line on the questions, you should clear formatting before pasting text into the system. It may be easier to work on the profile in the search system, saving changes as you go, as the search system is stable.
12. The search team should complete the profile and have it reviewed by regional staff in time to make any final changes before publication day: **31 January**.
13. Ministers have until **04 March** to apply.
14. The names and ministerial records of applicants are released to search teams on **11 March**.
15. Search teams should fully and fairly consider all applicants, using an inclusive process that honors the unique needs, perspectives, identities, and skills of all search team members and applicants, in alignment with our Unitarian Universalist values.
16. The search team should review all ministerial records and materials submitted by applicants, decide whom to interview, conduct virtual interviews, check references provided by applicants, and talk with regional staff about applicants as part of their discernment work (see information on research calls below). Each member of the search team should participate in all interviews.
17. **References and confidentiality:** as the search team moves forward with discernment, the search team should keep the identities of applicants confidential both in their own congregation and in the process of learning about applicant ministers. They should only reach out to references provided by the applicant minister. They should NOT, for example, reach out to someone in leadership at the congregation where a minister is serving if that person's name was not provided as a reference, as that leader may not know the minister is in search.
18. Search teams should not attend live worship led by an applicant on-line or in-person, though they are free to watch recordings which are provided by the applicant or available to the public. Attending live worship can breach confidentiality and may lead to the

withdrawal of an applicant who did not consent to this. *Please check in with UUA transitions staff with any questions about confidentiality.*

19. The search team should provide a ranked list of applicants to the Transitions Office by **25 March**. Ministers will do the same. Search teams should use this [form](#) to share rankings; ministers should use this [form](#).
20. The Transitions Director will figure out the highest-ranking match for everyone and let everyone know what is likely to happen on offer day *before* offer day. For example, if Rev. A and congregation X identify each other as mutual first choices, it is a match! If Rev. B identifies congregation Y as their first choice, and congregations Y and Z both identify Rev. B as their first choice, Rev. B has a match with congregation Y. The Transitions Director would then check for an alignment between congregation Z and their second choice. Occasionally, the ranking is more complex to sort through, or the transitions team will need to have a conversation with a minister or search team about a tie or a potential match identified as a maybe.
21. No offers or hints at offers may be made before offer day at noon Eastern time. There is no formal letter of offer; just a call or email to say that the search team is offering the position to the minister. When the offer is accepted, the minister and board may negotiate any final details of the contract.
22. Offer day: **28 March at noon Eastern**.
23. Search teams may check in with all their other applicants if they confirm their responses and wish ministers well.
24. If your team does not find a match by offer day, the profile may be kept open through the interim search in May, as there may be additional applicants, or converted to a contract ministry search.

Additional Materials/Packet for Developmental Ministry Search

Your website is a source of information for potential applicants. Expect ministers to scour it. You should also provide a packet of information to your applicants via a link with **view-only access** to an on-line folder. This should include:

- [the draft ministerial agreement](#) (board-approved)
- a congregational budget (multiple years are even more appreciated)
- a copy of the by-laws
- covenants or policies around behavior or expectations of congregations (like a [safe congregation policy](#))
- a couple of different orders of service
- several newsletters (links are fine)
- recent board minutes
- search team bios

If these are already housed on your website, direct the applicants to them and provide the access information needed. If they are not on your website, copies can be placed in a Dropbox or Google Drive (strongly preferred) or shared via email. You may include incentive pieces or links about your area, such as links to your location's Chamber of Commerce, Wikipedia page, housing information, and any tourism sites.

Ministers should have a website to share with your search team in addition to their completed ministerial record, though a collection of electronic files can suffice for the interim process. The minister's website (or packet) should include:

- a biography including a vision for Unitarian Universalism and their ministry
- sermons (ideally video)
- other rites of passage services
- newsletter columns
- references
- additional photos and audio/video files are a plus

Research Calls with UUA Staff

The search team should set up research calls with UUA regional staff (or CUC, if Canadian) to learn more about their top applicants. **These are not reference calls, as denominational staff do not provide references for ministers.** Regional staff are keen to share what they know about pre-candidate ministers to help your search team find a great match.

The search committee should ask each top applicant minister which staff person knows their ministry best before contacting a regional staff person. If the minister cannot connect the search committee with a regional staff person, the search committee may reach out to the [Transitions Program Manager](#) to ask if anyone on staff is familiar with the ministry of the applicant.

Research calls are part of the due diligence of the search team. They are one of the main ways the UUA shares information about ministers with search teams. There is value in confirming the perception your team has formed about your top applicants...or in hearing stories which challenge those perceptions. Ministers and ministries are multi-faceted and cannot be reduced to a single narrative. The view of someone on regional staff can be somewhat limited, and forms only one piece of the puzzle. You may receive a great deal of information from research calls, or you may simply hear, "I have no red flags about this minister for your ministry opportunity." You may leave the call with ideas about new references to request or questions to ask of your applicant, or you may simply feel more confident in your team's perceptions of an applicant. Soliciting more perspectives will help your search team select a good match for your congregation.

Before asking questions of the regional staff person, please plan to share a bit about your congregation's culture, needs, and context, especially if they are not familiar with your ministry.

Sample questions:

- How do you know our applicant? Have you worked with them directly? In what timeframe?
- These are the goals for the next ministry partnership our congregation has identified: [list goals, or ministerial qualities or skills]. How do you see this applicant aligning with these goals?
- Should we know about any other great qualities or growing edges?
- Do you have any concerns about their ministry, especially given what we have shared about our congregation? *Please note that if you learn something which surprises or disappoints you from regional staff, your team has not made a mistake in evaluating a applicant as a potential match for your congregation. You may hear about behaviors or*

patterns that could cause concern or make a minister a poor choice for your congregation which do not rise to the level of misconduct, but about which your search team should be aware. Some examples: authoritarian management or communication style, resistance to accountability, poor boundaries, conflict avoidance or lack of skill in conflict transformation. You may also hear about the work a minister tried to do in a congregation which was not receptive to their efforts.

- Can you think of a type of developed reference we should be sure to ask this applicant to provide? *This could be someone who could speak to the applicant's approach to a particular element of ministry (worship, pastoral care, promotion of inclusivity, administrative functions, etc.).*
- Are there others on UUA regional staff we should contact?

Offer and Background Checks

- Please remember that developmental ministers should be compensated at the same level as you would compensate a called minister. You should plan to pay your developmental minister at least at the midpoint of the salary range. Several of our experienced ministers can command above midpoint compensation.
- When you make an offer, the offer is contingent on a successful background check as well as coming to agreement on the specifics of the offer being made.
- While you can use any company you wish to complete a background check we offer:
[Oxford Document Management Company](#)
[Church Mutual Insurance Company](#)
- [Follow this link](#) to find your congregation's Geo index and salary tables.
- [Follow this link](#) to learn more about fair compensation.
- If your current minister is paid below the mid-level recommended guidelines, you should at least maintain or raise the salary to find the best minister possible.
- If your current minister is paid above the mid-level recommended guidelines, you should at least pay the mid-point, unless you are getting a developmental minister with more experience than your current, outgoing minister. In that case, you should match or raise the compensation.
- You should be prepared to pay full benefits in the compensation package. Please use the [Compensation Worksheet](#).
- The UUA recommended sample developmental ministry agreement can be found [here](#) and on the [Transitions website](#). Deviating from the recommended contract is discouraged.

If You Have Questions

- Questions about the developmental search should be directed to the UUA Transitions Team.
- Emails are easier for the Transitions Office, but you may request a phone or video call. Send an email to transitions@uua.org with several suggestions of a time for a call and the nature of your questions or concerns.

After the Agreement is Signed

- Please send a copy of the signed ministry agreement to the Transitions Office. An electronic copy sent by email is preferred.
- Please also be sure we know the start date of the ministry so we can update the online directory for your congregation.

Compensation, Benefits, and Relocation for Developmental Ministers

Ministers should be compensated fairly.

Fairness includes:

- Compensation (salary and housing)
- Benefits (retirement, health, dental, long-term disability, life insurance, half of the minister's self-employment taxes)
- Professional Expenses (10% of salary and housing or a minimum of 5,000)
- Relocation costs (~\$10,000). Keep in mind that ministers are taxed on relocation expenses.

The agreement should include adequate leave time for vacation, study leave, illness, and personal matters. Professional travel is work for the minister and should not be viewed as leave.

Compensation

Every congregation resides in a Geo index or wage rate area and is of a particular size. Both correlate to expected adequate compensation.

[Follow this link](#) to find your Geo index and salary tables.

Congregations are expected to pay at the recommended mid-point for their Geo index and size for developmental ministry. If your congregation has been paying less than this and you cannot come up to mid-point, you should not expect many applicants for the ministry. Providing low compensation may keep you from being accepted into the developmental ministry program.

If your leadership and your current (or perhaps previous) minister kept their salary/housing lower than fair compensation guidelines suggest (as often happens in congregations where the minister is there for a while), know that you are dealing with a deferred congregational problem, and not the incoming minister's problem. This is likely to affect the search unless you begin to offer fair compensation, as fewer ministers will apply.

Simply put, take responsibility for the fact that the minister has been underpaid and work to correct the issue, as soon and as well as you can.

Benefits

Every minister deserves benefits. All of them. Your minister has at least a master's degree and may have other people who depend on them financially.

If you have saved money on benefits, for one reason or another (like the minister's spouse providing health insurance), or if you can (because the interim tells you their health care is provided for), the congregation should make sure that money is conserved and available for future ministries. If your minister has something covered elsewhere, then the money saved should be included in the minister's overall package or set aside in a sabbatical coverage fund for a future settled minister.

Providing full benefits means more interest for a congregation in its ministerial search.

Professional Expenses

Professional expenses add up, often quickly. Ministers are professionals and should be treated as such. Cutting expenses is a risky business and affects the professional health of the minister and the vitality of the congregation.

[Follow this link](#) to learn more about professional expenses.

Separate from professional expenses, we strongly encourage every developmental minister to have additional money set aside for transitional ministry training.

Relocation

This is often very hard on both minister and congregations. Relocation expenses are usually 10% of salary and housing up to \$10,000 because moving is expensive. Relocation expenses are now considered taxable income by the US government, so the congregation is encouraged to help offset the additional tax burden. Everyone is encouraged to find ways to help and save.

Any search committee from a congregation located in the United States that considers hiring or calling a minister who is not a U.S. citizen should make sure their congregation has its own 501c3 status. Please contact the Transitions Office for more information.

For ministers who are U.S. citizens and are considering moving to and serving in a Canadian congregation, a document with considerations for religious professionals moving to Canada exists. Please ask the Transitions Office for more information.

For Ministers interested in Developmental Ministry

Developmental ministry is for experienced ministerial colleagues with skills and interest in assisting congregations move through their developmental goals.

The developmental minister understands that

- The work is the congregation's work to do and not the minister's work.
- Systematic issues are often at play.
- The congregation may be at a low point of self-esteem, and this will play out in many ways.
- They will need outside resources to adequately minister to the congregation
- They will work with regional staff
- They will commit for a 4-7-year period, but be open to re-evaluation each year, which they will do with congregational leadership
- They will attend the transitional ministry training if they have not previously completed it
- They are patient, self-differentiated, and know not to take things personally
- They are not eligible to be called

Developmental Ministry Evaluation

This is an evaluation of the combined efforts of the congregation and minister in its developmental ministry. The form is to be completed by the board together with the developmental minister. A final copy should be sent to board members, minister, and Transitions Office (email transitions@uua.org). Please use narrative form to evaluate. This form may be submitted electronically [here](#).

You may distribute this form for individuals to complete, yet one composite copy only should be submitted as final. A follow-up phone conversation with the Transitions Office may be requested by the congregation and/or minister (and vice versa).

Today's Date

Full name of congregation

Congregation city and state/province

Name of developmental minister

Email of developmental minister

Name of person completing form

Role of person completing form

Email of person completing form

List names and roles of participants

1. What is the length of this developmental ministry and which year is being evaluated?
2. What were your initial developmental ministry goals?
3. What did you expect to work on this year?
4. What actually happened?
5. What adjustments do you need to make for the upcoming year?
6. Please describe the balance between the congregation's and the minister's work on these goals?
7. Is the workload balanced in a healthy manner between the minister and the congregation? Is the work shared throughout the congregation? Has the minister practiced appropriate self-care?
8. Please add any additional comments.
9. If you have adjusted your goals, please list your new adjusted goals

10. If you would you like a follow-up phone call with the Transitions Director, please list your name, phone number, and three possible times for a call or send an email to transitions@uua.org.

Contract Ministry Overview

In a contract ministry, a congregation and minister make agreements for ministerial service with a time-limited, potentially renewable contract. It is the only type of ministry search available for part-time positions, though contract searches may be for full-time positions, too. **Any ministry position not full time is considered a contract ministry by the UUA Transitions Office for search purposes.**

Contract ministry searches are for second ministry positions (assistant ministers), part-time ministers, and for congregations seeking a solo minister (full- or part-time). A congregational call is still possible with a solo contract minister, even one who is serving part-time (see the [contract-to-call process](#) in this handbook).

Note for small congregations: In recent years, congregations with fewer than 125 members have had fewer (and sometimes no) applicants in interim, developmental, and settled ministry searches, so the UUA now exclusively recommends the contract ministry search process for small congregations. A contract search works well for small congregations because it moves more slowly, costs less, and requires less volunteer time and energy than, for example, the settled ministry search process. Contract ministers, even those serving part-time, are eligible to participate in the UUA's annual training for transitional ministers (previously restricted to interim ministers) and can work with your congregation on interim or developmental ministry tasks. They may be called by the congregation after a couple of years of good ministry partnership, if doing so is desirable to leadership, the minister, and the congregation (see the [contract to call section](#) in this handbook).

Contract ministries agreements are usually for one year (or less). These agreements may be renewed. There should be no expectations by the congregation or the minister that the ministry will last longer than its term when the contract is agreed upon by both.

The process for finding a contract minister is simpler than a settled ministry search. Finding a contract minister sometimes takes longer than congregational leaders might wish, depending on factors such as timing of the search in the annual search cycle, geography, and compensation/percentage of time. Most contract ministries have a smaller scope of search than a nationwide settled ministry search.

Contract Ministry Considerations

When it works:

- The congregation is seeking less than full time ministry or has fewer than 125 members.
- The congregation needs to rebuild trust in ministry and a one-year shorter term ministry is needed.

When it doesn't work:

- When the expectations do not match what is stated in the search profile or contract.

- When the minister works more than the allotted time contracted with the congregation (working full-time at half-time compensation).
- When the congregation is intentionally avoiding needed interim work.

Reminders:

- The more specific the contract the better. Clarity helps manage expectations.
- Contracts may be renewed. A contract minister may be called.

Ministerial Pool Available:

- Small, especially outside of major metropolitan areas, and/or if part-time. Most of the time, the available contract ministers are local. Offering relocation expense reimbursement may help widen the search.

Part-time Positions

Most workers in our congregations (including ministers) are employees, not independent contractors, even if they are part-time with limited responsibilities. See this [Employee or Independent Contractor](#) page and contact comp@uua.org with any questions. Talk with your applicants about equitable and mutually agreeable ways to structure a part time arrangement. Example: a minister working at 75% works three weeks on and one week off. A minister working at 50% works every other week. Ministers and congregations should not expect full time work for part time pay.

Search Process for Contract Ministries

Contract ministry searches are expected to be conducted through the MinistrySearch system, which will allow your search team to review the ministerial records of interested ministers. Using the MinistrySearch system will require your search team to complete a profile in our system with questions about your unique ministry context. The contract search process is more flexible, sometimes faster, easier on volunteers, and less expensive than the settled search process.

Timing of Contract Searches

While a contract search does not have the series of deadlines and requirements that the settled search has, the settled search cycle influences all other types of searches. Ministers, in general, search each year between December and May for positions which will begin on 01 August. Search teams will have a larger pool of potential applicants when they post a contract search profile early in this window. If a congregation needs to find a new minister in the fall, it may be better served by a short-term contract with a Targeted Ministry Program minister so the contract ministry search will align with the main search cycle (see [Targeted Ministry Program](#) information in this handbook). Reaching out to your Congregational Life staff member or the [Transitions Program Manager](#) can help you determine how best to proceed.

1. Check your bylaws to see what they say about hiring transitional ministers. If they do not align with the process below, please contact the [Transitions Program Manager](#).

2. Since the board hires a contract minister, the board assembles the search team for a contract minister. The search team often has several board members on it. The board should choose search team members who understand the congregation's ministry needs and context, are trusted in the congregation, work well with others, and do not have a personal or controlling agenda.
3. **Board and search team members may contact Christine Purcell, Transitions Program Manager, at any time during the transitional period for support: cpurcell@uua.org.** She holds open office hours each week on Zoom for those in transitional ministry searches on Tuesdays from 3:00-5:00 PM Eastern time: <https://uua.zoom.us/j/95425414067>
4. Even though formal surveys and focus groups are not required for a contract ministry search, leadership should spend some time listening to the needs and wishes of the congregation before a contract search, especially if trust is an issue in the congregation. Small group meetings, where some questions like the following are explored, will increase trust, buy-in, and momentum for the search process:
 - Why did you come to our congregation?
 - Why do you stay?
 - In the last ministry, I wish our congregation had had more _____
 - In the last ministry, I wish our congregation had had less _____
 - What do you hope never changes in our congregation?
 - What do you think could be improved with fresh perspective and energy?

If leaders want to discuss what they learn from such conversations, they should feel free to contact regional staff. Questions like these provide valuable guidance to the search team as it presents the congregation to potential applicants and discerns the best choice of the ministers who apply for the position.

5. The board should work on the minister's contract and let the search team know the minimum amount they expect to pay for the position. Our UUA website has comprehensive information on ministers' salary and benefits [[Compensation Standards and Resources](#)]. UUA compensation consultants are available to help the board navigate decisions about compensation and benefits, as well [[Compensation Consultants](#)].
 - [Contract ministry agreement template](#)
 - [UUA geo index listings and salary tables](#)
 - [Guide to UUA Salary Recommendations](#)
 - [Benefits, Compensation, and Aid Funds](#) (note: some benefits are required)
4. Once the search team is in place, the chair should share the names and email addresses of its members with the [Transitions Office](#). UUA transitions staff will open a profile for the search team in the MinistrySearch System, the on-line portal where searching ministers and congregations connect.
5. The search team will see the name and email address of the congregation's primary contact on the Congregational Life staff team (UUA regional field staff) in the profile. This is the person search teams ask to review the profile before publication and potential applicants can contact to learn more about your ministry opportunity. **Please direct questions about the search process to the [Transitions Program Manager](#) or [Transitions Office](#), not to regional staff.**
6. While the profile questions could be downloaded for work outside of the search system, copying and pasting responses takes time, and frustrating formatting errors are likely. If

you decide to work off-line on the questions, you should clear formatting before pasting text into the system. It may be easier to work on the profile in the search system, saving changes as you go, as the search system is stable.

7. Once the profile is complete, your team should click “complete record” and then “publish.” Doing so will push your changes to a version of the document which can be previewed by regional staff. *Please let your primary contact on regional staff know that your profile is ready for review.* Your primary contact (or the Transitions Program Manager) will review your profile for clarity, consistency, and a balanced view of your congregation’s unique strengths and challenges. They may offer feedback or request changes before the Transitions Program Manager publishes it.
8. Once the search profile is posted, ministers will apply to the search team directly through the MinistrySearch System. Search team members will receive emails from the system to let them know when they have applicants. They will be able to see applicants’ full ministerial records in the system. The search team should plan to gratefully acknowledge each application with a brief email and stay in touch with applicants throughout the discernment process (ministerial record and website review, interview, reference checking, etc.). The search team should provide all applicants with a link with **view-only access** to an on-line folder (Google Drive, Dropbox, etc.) with:
 - Draft agreement/contract (board-approved)
 - Bylaws
 - Covenants or policies around behavior or expectations of congregations (like a [safe congregation policy](#))
 - Recent board and annual meeting minutes
 - Recent budgets
 - Benefits information
 - Employer Participation Agreement for the UUA Retirement Plan
 - Search team bios
 - Anything else leadership wants to share with applicants
9. Search teams should fully and fairly consider all applicants, using an inclusive process that honors the unique needs, perspectives, identities, and skills of all search team members and applicants, in alignment with our Unitarian Universalist values.
10. Search teams should plan to interview top applicants via videoconference after reviewing the applicants’ materials. Each member of the search team should participate in each interview. They may check references before or after holding interviews.
11. **References and confidentiality:** as the search team moves forward with discernment, the search team should keep the identities of applicants confidential both in their own congregation and in the process of learning about applicant ministers. They should only reach out to references provided by the applicant minister. They should NOT, for example, reach out to someone in leadership at the congregation where a minister is serving if that person’s name was not provided as a reference, as that leader may not know the minister is in search.
12. Search teams should not attend live worship led by an applicant on-line or in-person, though they are free to watch recordings which are provided by the applicant or available to the public. Attending live worship can breach confidentiality and may lead to the withdrawal of an applicant who did not consent to this. *Please check in with UUA transitions staff with any questions about confidentiality.*
13. While *UUA staff does not provide references for ministers in search*, the search team may reach out to UUA regional staff for a unique perspective on the ministries of top

applicants. They may ask applicants who on regional staff is most familiar with their ministry or ask the Transitions Program Manager for a connection to regional staff with relevant knowledge. [See this section for information on research calls with UUA staff.](#)

14. As the search team makes decisions about applicants, they should be sure to use the “dismiss” button in the MinistrySearch System. Doing so opens an email (which may be customized) to thank and release applicants who are no longer in consideration. Do not be shy about using this button! It frees applicants to focus on ministries where their gifts align with congregational needs.
15. When the search team finds the minister who is best for the congregation’s needs, they may recommend a hire to the board or make a verbal offer to an applicant, in alignment with the agreements about roles and responsibilities between the board and the search team.
16. The board will negotiate and finalize the contract with the minister. If the board needs assistance working out the final compensation and benefits details, they may reach out to the Office of Church Staff Finances at comp@uua.org.
17. The board should make sure that the congregation initiates a criminal background check on the hired minister as a good practice in hiring for a religious organization.
18. Once the contract is signed, please share a copy of it with the Transitions Office: transitions@uua.org. This will let us know that we can close and archive your search profile.
19. Board leadership or a staff person familiar with the terms of the finalized contract should complete the [Notice of Call of Hire](#) to update UUA records on the new ministry.

Additional Materials/Packet for Contract Ministry Search

Your website is a source of information for potential applicants. Expect ministers to scour it. You should also provide a packet of information to your applicants via a link with **view-only access** to an on-line folder. This should include:

- [the draft ministerial agreement](#) (board-approved)
- a congregational budget (multiple years are even more appreciated)
- a copy of the by-laws
- covenants or policies around behavior or expectations of congregations (like a [safe congregation policy](#))
- a couple of different orders of service
- several newsletters (links are fine)
- recent board minutes
- search team bios

Important reminders about any ministerial search:

- Ministers usually apply to multiple congregations.
- Ministers want clarity about what percentage of time they are being asked to serve.
- The first consideration in a minister’s decision-making process is often compensation and benefits.
- The more authentic a search team is about who they are and what they need from a minister, the more likely they are to get a minister who can serve them well.
- Using the UUA’s MinistrySearch system is more likely to get interest than just trying to get the word out through other channels. Use of the system is limited to ministers who are cleared for search. Ministers who have lost fellowship, have not been credentialed

as Unitarian Universalist, or have misconducted are not eligible to have their names released to search teams.

If you have questions, ask for assistance from the [Transitions Program Manager](#) or the [Transitions Office](#).

What to Expect

Often a part-time position will best be filled by a minister who lives nearby, especially for a geographically isolated congregation. Your regional staff may be aware of local ministers who may be a good fit for your congregation.

Offer and Background Checks

- Please remember that contract ministers should be compensated at the same level as you would compensate a called minister. Several of our experienced ministers can command above midpoint compensation.
- When you make an offer, the offer is contingent on a successful background check as well as coming to agreement on the specifics of the offer being made.
- While you can use any company you wish to complete a background check, we offer:
 - [Oxford Document Management Company](#)
 - [Church Mutual Insurance Company](#)
- [Follow this link](#) to find your congregation's Geo index and salary tables.
- [Follow this link](#) to learn more about fair compensation.
- If your current minister is paid below the mid-level recommended guidelines, you should at least maintain or raise the salary to find the best minister possible.
- If your current minister is paid above the mid-level recommended guidelines, you should at least pay the mid-point, unless you are getting a minister with more experience than your current, outgoing minister. In that case, you should match or raise the compensation.
- You should be prepared to pay full benefits in the compensation package. Please use the [Compensation Worksheet](#).
- The UUA recommended sample contract ministry agreement can be found [here](#) and on the [Transitions website](#). It is written for a half-time arrangement but may be easily scaled to another percentage of time using parenthetical references throughout the document. Deviating from the recommended contract is discouraged.

Compensation, Benefits, and Relocation for Contract Ministers

Ministers should be compensated fairly.

Fairness includes:

- Compensation (salary and housing)
- Benefits (retirement, health, dental, long-term disability, life insurance, half of the minister's self-employment taxes)
- Professional Expenses (10% of salary and housing or a minimum of 5,000)
- Relocation costs: contract ministry searches which do not provide for relocation costs may have only local applicants. Congregations typically budget \$10,000-\$15,000 for relocation expenses in other types of searches. Keep in mind that ministers are taxed on relocation expenses.

It should also include adequate leave time for vacation, study leave, illness, and personal matters. Professional travel is work for the minister and should not be viewed as leave.

Compensation

Every congregation resides in a Geo index or wage rate area and is of a particular size. Both correlate to what is expected to be adequate compensation.

[Follow this link](#) to find your Geo index and salary tables.

Contract Ministers are employees, not independent contractors. This makes them benefits-eligible. They should receive W-2s, not 1099s. If they are not yet in fellowship or ordained, taxes and payroll are handled as they are for non-ministerial staff.

Congregations which can pay at the recommended mid-point for their Geo index and size for contract ministry receive more applicants. If your congregation has been paying less than this and cannot offer in-range compensation, you should not expect many applications for the ministry position.

If your leadership and your current (perhaps previous) minister kept their salary/housing lower than fair compensation guidelines suggest (as often happens in congregations where the minister is there for a while), know that you are dealing with a deferred congregational problem, and not the incoming minister's problem. This will also likely affect the search unless you begin to offer fair compensation.

Simply put, take responsibility for the fact that the minister has been underpaid and work to correct the issue, as soon and as best you can. If this is someone else's problem and not the congregation's, it is less likely to attract the minister it needs.

Benefits

Every minister deserves benefits. All of them. Your minister has at least a master's degree, and may have other people who depend on them financially.

If you have saved money on benefits, for one reason or another (like the minister's spouse provides health insurance), or if you can (because the interim tells you their health care is provided for), the congregation should make sure that money is conserved and available for future ministries. If your minister has something covered elsewhere, then the money saved

should be included in the minister's overall package or set aside in a sabbatical coverage fund for a future settled minister.

Providing full benefits means more interest for a congregation in its ministerial search.

Professional Expenses

Professional expenses add up, often quickly. Ministers are professionals and should be treated as such. Cutting expenses is a risky business and affects the professional health of the minister and the vitality of the congregation.

[Follow this link](#) to learn more about professional expenses.

Contract ministers are encouraged to take the transitional ministry training.

Relocation

This is often very hard on both minister and congregations. Relocation expenses are usually 10% of salary and housing because moving is so expensive. Relocation expenses are now considered taxable income by the US government, so the congregation is encouraged to help offset the additional tax burden. Everyone is encouraged to find ways to help and save. Congregations in search for a contract minister who do not provide relocation expenses may have only local applicants.

Any search committee from a congregation located in the United States that considers hiring or calling a minister who is not a U.S. citizen should make sure their congregation has its own 501c3 status. Please contact the Transitions Office for more information.

For ministers who are U.S. citizens and are considering moving to and serving in a Canadian congregation, a document with considerations for religious professionals moving to Canada exists. Please ask the Transitions Office for more information.

When the minister commutes from a longer distance:

Some part time contract ministries are filled by ministers who commute from some distance. In these cases, the minister and congregation should work together to create a reasonable schedule for when the minister is in the area. Lodging could be a concern and the minister will not be lodged with a congregant.

Sample Contract Ministry Evaluation

This form may be submitted electronically [here](#).

Congregation:

Minister:

Evaluation for Time Beginning: _____ and Ending:

Person, completing/submitted evaluation form:

Role in congregation:

1. What was effective/worked well during the contract ministry?
2. What did you want more of from the ministry?
3. What did you want less of or differently from the ministry?
4. What else should be known about the congregation and/or minister?

Targeted Ministry Program (TMP)

The Targeted Ministry Program is a service to congregations needing short term ministries of less than a year, usually for either a few months, or regular part-time ministry over 6 months.

History

The Targeted Ministry Program (TMP) was created through the partnership of UURMaPA (UU Retired Ministers and Partners Association), the Congregational Life staff team of the UUA, and the Transitions Office of the UUA.

How it works

The TMP links congregations in need of short-term, contract ministry with retired or semi-retired ministers who apply and are approved by the Transitions Office to continue serving congregations. It promotes the program development, growth, continuity, and health of congregations between, before, or during longer ministries.

Is this like interim ministry?

While TMP work can be like the work of interim ministry, it is short term and wider ranging than our current model of interim ministry. Part-time TMP placements are for fewer than 6 months, and full-time TMP placements should not exceed 2 months (unless there are significant reasons like a death of a minister, and then should not be longer than 3 months).

Possible Reasons for Requesting a TMP Placement

- Any ending to a ministry that is not timed with the annual search cycle: death, illness, family emergency, negotiated ending, etc.
- Congregations considering new ministry (first professional ministry, an assistant ministry, or specialized ministry like pastoral care, social justice or family ministry)
- Multisite congregations looking for specific extra help
- Entrepreneurial, innovative projects best overseen by a minister

Sabbatical coverage

Congregational Considerations for TMP Placements

- All congregations should work with regional staff to clarify goals for the TMP ministry with reasonable and achievable expectations
- Congregations should be expected to pay the TMP minister for their services in accordance with UUMA and UUA recommended guidelines
- Housing should be provided by the congregation at their expense, whether it be an extended stay hotel, a vacated seasonal home, etc.
- The ministry may not be extended beyond the set guidelines
- The leadership of the congregation should work with the congregation and minister to ensure clarity of the agreed upon goals prior to the beginning of the ministry

Costs

If accepted into the program, the congregation is expected to pay:

- Salary/housing—at least the midpoint for that congregation’s size and Geo index
- Retirement benefits (required by federal law)
- Social security tax (in lieu of FICA/self-employment offset tax) 7.65% of salary

Additional benefits can be negotiated.

How do I apply for a TMP ministry?

Congregational leaders should be in touch with regional field staff before applying. You may contact any member of the regional staff with whom your congregation has a good relationship, your primary contact, or the Transitions Program Manager, [Christine Purcell](#).

Congregational leaders or staff may apply [here](#).

Ministers may apply to the Transitions Office for consideration and possible placement [here](#).

Sample Targeted Ministry Program Evaluation

We recommend a joint venture between the board and TMP minister. This form may be submitted electronically [here](#).

Congregation: _____

Minister: _____

1. Over what time period and time conditions (e.g., one weekend a month for six months, or six weeks daily) did this ministry happen?
2. What were the reason(s) for utilizing the Targeted Ministry Program?
3. What were the goals of the TMP for the congregation?
4. What actually happened during the Targeted Ministry?
5. What were the successes during the Targeted Ministry?
6. What were the learnings during the Targeted Ministry?
7. What advice would you have for others considering the program?
8. What else needs to be shared?
9. How were the answers here prepared?

Person Submitting Evaluation: _____

The Contract to Call Process

The UUA recommends that contract ministry agreements have a one-year term, with an option to renew. Contract ministry arrangements offer the opportunity, at some point, for the congregation to call the minister. UUA staff are frequently asked, “When should we do this?” Sometimes we are asked, “How quickly can we do this?”

Many, if not most, ministries start well. The congregation is grateful for ministry and the process of building a trusting working relationship often feels like it is proceeding smoothly, even easily. This will not always be so. How a congregation and minister work together through conflict is important, and success in doing so may be a good indicator that the relationship will continue to be mutually beneficial.

UUA staff do not recommend a call in the first year of a contract ministry because trust and a working relationship take longer to deepen than a year. There is no detriment to being sure of the relationship. There is no prize for rushing to a call. Do this well. Offer the minister and the congregation respect for the time it takes to establish a true working relationship, even when there has been conflict and disagreement. Trusting each other, an act of faith, takes time and is essential for a successful call.

Regardless of whether a ministry is transitional or called/settled, the working relationship between a minister and a congregation differs from other employer-employee relationships. Ministry is considered a vocation, arising from a sense of calling to a profession of faith and service. A called minister is one who has been formally voted upon by the congregation to stay in a relationship for an indefinite duration of time, in contrast to being contracted for a specified period, or in an annually renewable position. Congregations served by contract ministers may call the minister to stay, create a covenant, and agree to work together in a mutually defined and agreed-upon ministry designed specifically for that congregation.

The transition from a contract to a called ministry is significant. There is no longer an annual renewal of a service contract, or a defined multi-year term of service. This is not to say that there is no regular, mutual review of the ministry or potential for change in the service agreement, but continued relationship is assumed. A called minister leaves only when the minister or the congregation formally acts to end the ministry. A called minister becomes less like a “consultant” and evolves into a vested partner, engaged with the congregation for the fulfillment of its long-term mission.

Typically, the call process begins following a congregation-wide evaluation of the ministry (not just the minister) after at least the second year of a contract ministry. The congregation must discern if there is an alignment that is more significant than what is sought with a consultant of any type, and if the transition to open-ended, settled ministry seems like a good fit. The minister must discern if committing to a long-term relationship with the congregation is the best course for all concerned, given the dynamics experienced in the contract period and the minister’s personal call to serve the Unitarian Universalist faith. Together, the congregation and minister must assess whether vision, leadership, and financial resources are sufficiently robust to sustain new and ongoing progress in a settled ministry.

After a careful assessment and discernment process is created and implemented, a congregation may decide to call their contract minister, or it may decide to start the process to search for a new minister to call. The guidelines which follow suggest how the assessment and discernment process may be undertaken, and how a contract minister who has served for at least two years can, by agreement with the congregation, receive and accept a call to become a settled minister of that congregation.

Considerations of the Congregation

The congregation should think carefully about its willingness to vest their contracted minister with ongoing, indefinite leadership. Deciding whether to keep a minister who already has relationships, critics, and supporters may be complex for a congregation. A definite and distinct decision process which meets the requirements of congregational by-laws and is agreed upon and explained in advance to the entire congregation, can and will minimize miscommunication and conflict.

It is important to involve the whole congregation in the entire call process. It is equally important to accurately assess the congregation's level of commitment in supporting the minister and the ministry of the congregation at-large. At a minimum, the congregation must be ready to:

- consider what is best for the congregation as a whole.
- support a minister with fair compensation.
- continue its commitment to the minister for at least three years.
- support their current minister through the call process.

The minister is often well-informed about the significance of the call process. However, the minister should not take the lead in moving the decision process along, nor overemphasize their desire for a call. The decision whether to settle a minister is congregational business and should be conducted by the congregation under its lay leadership. Professionals, including the minister, regional UUA staff, and the UUA Transitions Team can contribute information, but the lay leadership of the congregation should take the lead.

It is important to note that this process can be a stressful one for a minister. The process of evaluating the ministry and the minister can make a minister feel vulnerable. Therefore, the congregation should be prepared to support the minister along the way.

Considerations of the Minister

For the minister, the key question to consider before the call process starts is: "If offered a call, would I accept, and under what conditions?" They should not entertain a call without serious intention of accepting it should it be offered. It is perfectly ethical for a minister not to entertain a request or accept a call. Ministers may not enter the process or accept a call for a variety of reasons such as: they believe their ministry with the congregation is complete, they believe the call process would divide the congregation, the finances of the congregation are not stable, or other personal and/or family reasons.

When to Engage the Contract to Call Process

In general, a contract minister should not accept a call until the end of at least two years of service, and only after a full and intentional period of assessment and discernment. In some cases, a formal contract-to-call arrangement is in place, usually stipulating that the minister is free to accept a call from his/her congregation shortly before the end of his/her second (or later) year of appointment. The UUA recommends that congregational leaders consider the time remaining on the current contract and the annual ministry search cycle when determining how and when to move toward a call.

A congregation deciding not to initiate the call process should contact regional UUA staff, who, along with the UUA Transitions Team, can support and assist lay leaders and the minister as they explore other ministerial options. It may prove unrealistic to expect a contract minister to serve effectively as interim minister if a call, expected by either party, fails to materialize. In this case, it may be better to work with the UUA Transitions Team and regional UUA staff to identify a minister who may serve as a transitional minister while the congregation engages in a search process.

How to Call a Contract Minister

Call Process Task Force

When interest arises in a call after a recent, generally positive assessment of the ministry, the congregation's governing board appoints a special call process task force to coordinate the decision-making process. The call process task force is charged with leading the membership in considering the question of a call and recommending a course of action to the congregation. While it may be tempting to assign this function to an existing committee, a fresh, unbiased, diverse committee of five to seven members, representing a range of interests, age, gender, cultural identity, and tenure in membership will more easily gain the broad-based confidence of the congregation.

The call process task force meets first to review this handbook and otherwise educate itself regarding contract and called ministry. After study and reflection, they design the process they will lead and begin to develop a timeline. Once this is accomplished, the task force then moves to share their recommendations for the process with the minister, the board and then with the congregation at an all-congregation informational meeting. The task force should pay careful attention to what information needs to be shared and what does not. Providing regular updates to the congregation will keep everyone informed and engaged.

The Call Sermon

Early in the call process, a call process task force member or a hired speaker may deliver a sermon or homily on "The Call." The service may focus, in a general way, on what the call means to whoever presents it. The service might also touch on the meaning of congregational polity, as final decisions about ordination and calling of ministers reside with congregations.

Communication

It is always important to keep communication between the call process task force, the board, the minister, and the congregation as fluid and open as possible. Educating the congregation about the process and keeping the minister and board up to date on the process are vital to a successful transition from contract ministry to settled ministry. It is important to keep all stakeholders thoroughly informed in as many ways as possible: articles in the church newsletter, meetings (large and small), flyers, visual displays on bulletin boards, worship service announcements, etc. These same means of communication can be used to invite the congregation to scheduled meetings to encourage full involvement.

Small Group Meetings

Small group meetings are an essential element of the decision process to discuss the ministerial role and choice of the minister. Small groups of five to ten congregational members meet to discuss members' feelings about what is occurring in their congregation. The meetings are facilitated by a member of the congregation and documented by a recorder. These sessions are intended to be confidential so that members may speak freely about their concerns and about their expectations and dreams.

Selection and Role of Small Group Facilitators

When selecting small group facilitators, choose individuals with solid listening and group process facilitation skills. Also, facilitators should be regarded by the congregation as unbiased and objective with the ability to create a safe environment where each participant can speak and listen in an atmosphere of mutual respect. For instance, when discussion about the minister occurs, the facilitator must be able to keep the focus on the role of minister and this minister's ability to fill the role, and to hear all points of view. The call process task force should plan to meet with the facilitators before the session to make sure communication is clear and unified and to respond to facilitators' questions. Before the small group meetings begin, facilitators may want to take time to record their own answers to the questions they will be asking the other congregational members. This will allow them to pay better attention to participants in the small group meetings when the time comes.

Tips for Small Group Facilitators

- Arrive early and ensure your space is comfortable and welcoming.
- Make sure that you have the proper tools: newsprint, easel, markers, etc.
- Be familiar with the list of questions to be asked.
- Set the ground rules first.
- Tell participants that:
 - the session will last from ___ to ___
 - The session framework is a series of questions designed by the call process task force.
 - Everyone in the group will have an opportunity to respond. Advise participants if you will be using a specific process (i.e., if you will be going around the circle one at a time, etc.)

- Your role as facilitator is to maintain focus, to make sure everyone has an opportunity to speak and listen, to be objective, etc.
- the content of the session must remain confidential.
- Everyone is expected to listen actively and respectfully to one another.
- This process is about discerning what is good for the congregation.
- Make sure there is someone willing to act as a recorder.
- Encourage participants to use “I” statements.
- Encourage everyone to talk. Ask the more reserved participants if they have something to add.
- Avoid having the conversation become personal about the minister or other members of the congregation.
- Have the group agree on the recorder’s notes before sharing them with the Task Force.
- Thank participants for their willingness to spend their time and energy for their church community's benefit.

Selection and Role of Small Group Recorders

Each small group has a designated recorder to document what is said during the small group meeting and to submit a report of the group’s views to the call process task force following the meeting. It is important to designate someone who can represent accurately what is said. It can be helpful to identify the recorder and gather their responses to the questions which will be asked of the group in advance so they can focus on recording what others say during the meeting.

Call Process Task Force Role in Small Group Meetings

In advance, the call process task force chooses the questions to be asked at the meetings. The goal of the small group meetings is to assess the ministry of the congregation, not to evaluate the minister. It is important that common definitions are agreed upon among facilitators and groups for key concepts such as mission, vision, goals, etc. to ensure continuity of responses. Questions used in small group meetings might include:

- What is working well in our religious community?
- What is our shared ministry accomplishing? Or how are we living into our mission?
- What is not working well in our religious community?
- What progress has been made toward the goals we set out for our transitional ministry partnership? *Ask this if you are prepared to review those goals in the session.*
- Is the current minister a good match for the next stage of congregational development?

Small Group Meeting Summary Report and its Distribution

After receiving the small group reports, the call process task force should plan for at least two meetings to consider their larger charge and process and summarize the findings. While some members will express their views in terms of adequacy and inadequacy of the minister, the committee’s report should clearly focus on the question, “What is best for the congregation as a whole?” The task force then summarizes all reports into a larger report. In this report, trends and

points of consensus are identified. The report does not need to include statistical analysis but can use language indicating trends and general weights i.e., “most members, some members, few members,” etc. A nuanced view that frames multiple perspectives is better than an attempt to distill all perspectives into a single narrative. The report needs to be constructed in such a way that it is not possible to identify the responses of individuals or small groups.

If issues arise with deliberations of the call process task force that cannot be resolved, contact regional staff or the Transitions Program Manager for assistance; the UUA’s Transitions Director is an additional resource if needed.

Before presenting a summary report to the congregation, there should be a discussion with the minister and the board regarding what information needs to be shared with the congregation at large and by what method. When sharing the results of the report with the minister, it is important to consider how information will be presented to them prior to the discussion. A few members of the call process task force and the Committee on Ministry should be present when discussing the summary report with the minister to ensure that a broad and clear understanding of the information is achieved. The information and discussion at this meeting are to be kept confidential.

If the report's findings are negative, no more than two people should be present when reviewing the findings with the minister. The chairs of the call process task force and the Committee on Ministry may be the best choices for this task. In the case of negative findings, prior preparation for the discussion becomes even more critical. It is essential that information be presented factually to the minister, while speaking the truth in the spirit of love. At this point, the minister may decide to withdraw from the call process and save the congregation from divisive feelings or offering up a “no” or “split” vote at a later congregational meeting.

The board may then decide to present a summary report to the congregation. Unless the board and call process task force have agreed on another method, the presentation should be in one or more informational meetings with a readable page (print or on screen) available at the meeting. Distribution of a print or electronic summary report should be available following the information meeting(s).

Making the Decision to Call

A consensus decision is desirable for whether to recommend a vote for a call to the board and then to the congregation. It is courteous for one member of the call process task force to meet privately with the minister to report the recommendation before presenting it to the board. The board may wish to endorse the call process task force’s recommendation or simply pass it along to the congregation. A summary report should be prepared and made available to the congregation at least two weeks prior to the congregational meeting.

Congregational Vote

A special congregational meeting should be scheduled, separate from the annual meeting, for the sole purpose of voting to offer a call to settlement. Check your congregation’s bylaws and

policies in advance for any provisions related to calling a minister and ensure that your process meets any such provisions.

The special congregational meeting to consider extending a call to the minister will be facilitated by the board with the support of the call process task force. The meeting should be publicized widely, encouraging a large turnout. This is a momentous time in a congregation's life. Using paper ballots will ensure individual privacy.

Although a congregation's bylaws may set forth a minimum positive vote (usually a super-majority) required to call a minister, the minister will often set a higher threshold regarding what level of support (% of votes) they will consider necessary to accept a call to settled ministry. The UUA Transitions Office recommends affirmative votes of at least 90-95% (of voters participating, not membership) when calling a minister in an open search process. Because an incumbent minister has established relationships within the congregation, undoubtedly including some with critics or detractors, a minister currently serving in a contract capacity may be quite content with an affirmative vote as low as 85%.

For the call to take effect, the minister must accept it. If attendance at the meeting is high, the resulting vote is positive, and the minister's requirements have been met, acceptance is likely, but should not be taken for granted. When there is any opposition, often ministers want to speak with those who voted "no" to consider the meaning of the opposition before making the final commitment and accepting the call.

Installation Ceremony

It is customary to celebrate a successful call with an [installation ceremony](#). The installation ceremony will distinguish when the minister enters a new stage of ministry with the congregation. This is a separate celebration from that of the covenanting service (a ritual typically performed between the minister and congregation at the beginning of a contract ministry). The installation ceremony signifies that a significant commitment has been made.

Any mutually agreeable time after the vote can be appropriate for scheduling the installation ceremony. Because the minister and the congregation typically have another year remaining in the contract ministry, it is fine to wait until the contract period is nearly concluded. It is also acceptable to rescind the existing contract for the ministry and enter into a Letter of Agreement for settled ministry at any mutually agreeable point after a successful call process.

Committee on Ministry

When the minister was first contracted, a Committee on Ministry may have been formed to facilitate a supportive relationship between the minister and lay leaders, and with other members of the congregation. This committee supports the idea of "shared ministry" in the congregation based upon how the mission of the congregation is identified, as well as the role of the minister in that mission. Lay leaders and the minister all carry shared responsibility for accomplishing the goals. If this kind of Committee on Ministry exists, it should continue into, and remain an active part of, settled ministry.

The role of the Committee on Ministry is changing in many congregations. The minister, board and congregation should consider whether and how a Committee on Ministry can best support vibrant shared ministry in the congregation. More information on Committees on Ministry can be obtained from regional UUA staff.

Suggested Call Process Timeline

The following timeline is an example only. Your plan will be unique to your congregation. Allowing appropriate time and thorough consideration for each step of the timeline will result in a broad consensus supporting whatever decision the congregation makes.

Keep in mind as you plan when to begin the process that most ministers search between December and May for new positions. It would be best to hold the vote to call by March 15 to give both the minister and the congregation appropriate time to enter the transitional ministry search process for an August start date if the call process does not work out.

Sample Timeline

Month 1: The board appoints a call process task force. The task force meets with the current minister to determine whether the minister will consider a call, if extended. If “Yes,” then follow the remaining elements of the timeline. If “No,” then the ministry may continue in its current configuration, or a search process may begin. The task force should advise the board and consult with your regional transitions program manager about next moves.

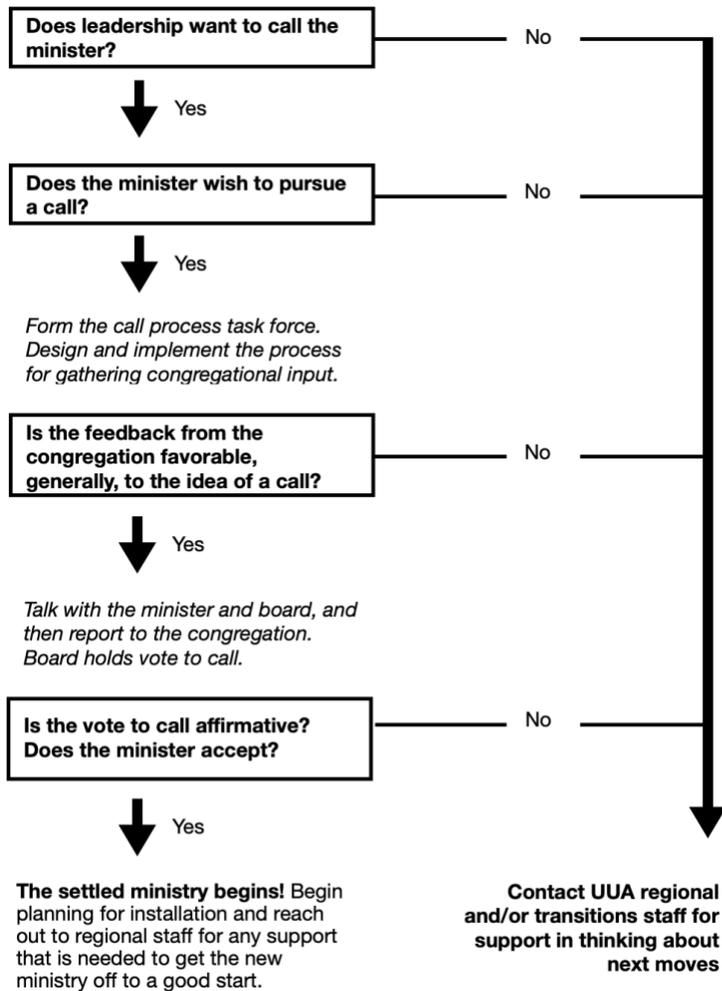
Month 2: The call process task force meets to plan its process, to develop a timeline, and to assign responsibilities to its members. The task force communicates its plan to the congregation.

Month 3: A call process task force member, UUA consultant or staff member, or an area minister delivers a sermon about called ministry during a Sunday service.

Month 4: Small group meetings take place. The call process task force presents a summary report to the board, minister, and congregation.

Month 5: A congregational vote is taken on the call. If affirmative, the minister accepts or declines. Contact regional UUA staff if the call result is not affirmative, or if the minister declines.

Contract to Call Decision Tree



When Ministers are Scarce

Student Ministry

Sometimes, a minister cannot be found to serve a congregation in need. While fellowshipped ministers are always considered first, in recent years, the UUA Transitions Director, the UUA Ministerial Credentialing Director, and the UUA regional staff have collaborated to help support a student in candidate status to serve such a congregation. The UUA's Ministerial Fellowship Committee's Rules and Policies, to which students and other candidates are accountable, seek to prevent a candidate eager to serve from getting ahead of their preparation process. Those applying for candidacy status are required "to defer accepting any ministerial position other than internships and student ministries unless approved by the Ministerial Credentialing Director. Violation of this policy shall render the candidate ineligible for an interview with the Ministerial Fellowship Committee or Ministerial Fellowship for four years from the commencement of the position." Upon learning that a candidate has interest in serving a contract ministry, the Ministerial Credentialing Director will first consult with the Transitions Director and the appropriate regional staff person for guidance.

Because UUA regional staff is familiar with the congregation, and thus able to describe the abilities needed for a candidate to serve effectively, and because the Ministerial Credentialing Director is best positioned to judge a candidate's possession of those abilities, the congregation's risk in hiring a candidate is kept to a reasonable minimum. The candidate will be expected to ask a minister in fellowship to serve as a mentor, and to be in frequent contact with the regional staff. A candidate serving under this arrangement should be able to expect compensation equal to at least 90 percent of the UUA-recommended minimum, considering the congregation's size and wage rate area. Contract ministries are understood to be time-limited arrangements, typically of one year in length. Occasionally, and only in consultation with regional staff and the Ministerial Credentialing Director, can a contract ministry continue after one year. Candidates who are not ordained are not eligible to receive a housing allowance.

Considering Non-UU Ministers

While congregational polity authorizes congregations to choose ministers without UU denominational fellowship, there are many crucial concerns congregational leaders should consider when choosing such a minister. Our Congregational Life staff team has assembled [this resource](#) to help leaders who are searching outside of the UUA MinistrySearch system and considering ministers who are not UU. The UUA Transitions Team will work with and support leadership in their process and discernment work when considering non-UU ministers, upon request.

For congregations which are affiliated with more than one denomination, and which would like to consider ministers from more than one denomination for an open position, contact the UUA Transitions Team for assistance. We have experience in supporting searches for federated

congregations and leveling the playing field for ministers from multiple denominations to be considered.

Hiring for Other Staff Positions

Religious professional staff (non-clergy) positions can be posted on the Jobs Board of the MinistrySearch system.

To list such a position, please complete [this form](#). Be sure to have a link to your job description and directions for applying before filling out the form.