

First Unitarian Church of Wilmington
Developmental Ministry Q&A

Q: What is Developmental Ministry?

A: Developmental Ministry is a type of transitional ministry that occurs between two long-term called/settled ministries. It's ideal for a congregation that has three to four specific goals it wants to work on before calling its next long-term minister. The goals are set by the congregational leadership. Based on those specific goals, the congregation is matched with a minister who can help them achieve their goals. The minister is hired by the congregation's board of directors and has a contract with them.

Q: What is the difference between Interim Ministry and Developmental Ministry?

A: As you can see in the chart below, the two types of transitional ministries are similar in a number of ways. Important differences are listed first.

Comparison of Developmental Ministry and Interim Ministry		
Features	Type of Transitional Ministry	
	Developmental	Traditional Interim
Time Frame	3 Years	2 Years
Renewable Contract?	Yes	No
Can this minister be called by the congregation?	Eligible to be called after two years of working on goals	Cannot be called
Purpose	Address 3-4 specific goals defined by leadership	Prepare for a new called ministry
Activities that occur during each ministry	Congregational Ministry and the work to address 3-4 specific goals for the developmental period, as defined by lay leadership. The standard interim tasks can be added after significant progress toward goal achievement.	Congregational Ministry and the 5 Standard Interim Tasks; other work is typically placed on hold. Standard Interim Tasks are: - honoring the past - restatement of identify, needs and challenges - clarifying roles; making shifts - renewal of vision, energy, stewardship, embracing the future
Selection of Candidates	Board makes the selection and/or creates a task force to assist with the selection process	
Hiring and Termination	- Hired by the Board (Called Ministers are hired by the Congregation) - Contract can be terminated by either party with 60 days notice	
Compensation & Benefits	UUA Fair Compensation Policy	
Residency	Would be resident in our area for the contract term	
Support for Minister	Recommends a committee be formed to support the Minister during the transitional ministry period	

Q: How does the pool of candidates differ for these two types of ministries?

A: Developmental Ministry draws on a larger pool of candidates than Interim Ministry. In addition to the pool of approximately 60 Interim Ministers, there is a pool of ministerial candidates that are in very different circumstances than the specialized pool of Interim Ministers. The Transitions Office is in conversation with all ministers who are in transition or considering a transition. This larger pool includes talented settled ministers, Assistant and Associate Ministers, and others who may find this 3-year commitment attractive for a variety of reasons. In addition, the Transitions Office may invite ministers to consider a Developmental Ministry as a career-building opportunity.

Q: What are the qualifications for these two types of ministers?

A: Both types of ministries draw on a pool of candidates with The Accredited Interim Minister (AIM) designation or Accredited Interim Minister in Training (AIMIT) designation and settled minister experience. Accredited Interim Ministers (AIMs) are ministers who specialize in interim ministry. Accreditation is awarded by the UUA Transitions Office on the basis of proven competence in interim ministry, advanced training, and continuing education. The designation is conferred on ministers who complete the Interim Ministry program, attesting to their competence both in parish ministry and as resident consultants, able to assist congregations in reviewing and revitalizing their operations.

In addition to experience carrying out the normal responsibilities of congregational ministry, such as worship and pastoral care; both types of transitional ministers possess specific skills in assisting congregations during a transitional period.

To be considered for admission to the status of Accredited Interim Minister in Training (AIMIT), a minister must be in Final Fellowship with the UUA; however, the Transitions Director may admit ministers in preliminary fellowship on the basis of relevant experience, skills, and training. They must demonstrate competence in worship, preaching, counseling, working with volunteers, and church administration; have completed the Fundamentals of Transitional Ministry and/or Orientation to Interim Ministry; have served effectively as an interim minister; and exhibit appropriate personal qualities such as 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.

Q: Why is the board considering a developmental ministry?

A: There are three primary reasons why the board is considering a developmental ministry:

- 1) A developmental ministry fits our need to create a successful transition from a 2-minister church to a solo minister church. One of the goals of the ministry will be to revise the structures, policies and processes necessary to keep our church vibrant and growing. We desire to transition to a shared ministry model that empowers lay leaders and fully leverages the talents of our existing staff; as well as tapping the resources of the JPD and our Cluster.
- 2) A developmental ministry encourages forward momentum on specific goals; while a traditional interim ministry would put most of this work on hold. First U volunteer teams have been developing a lot of momentum lately around the goals of our strategic plan. A developmental ministry will continue to move this work forward.
- 3) We are in the first year of a staffing plan that is based on a 5-year projection of declining revenue. After the next 2 years, we will have a better idea of what our future may look like and be better prepared to call a long-term minister.

Q: What goals would First U designate for a developmental ministry?

A: The number one goal for a developmental ministry would be to make a successful transition from a 2-minister church to a solo minister church. Based on the congregational input recently gathered by the Single Minister Transition Team; we want to revise our governance structures, policies and processes to create a shared ministry model that empowers lay leaders in new ways. In addition to this goal, we want the developmental ministry to help us continue to made headway on the first two goals of our strategic plan which are to 1) grow our congregation and 2) create a culture of voluntarism.

Q: What is the selection process for a developmental minister?

A: According to our by-laws, the board is responsible for hiring a transitional minister, whether interim or developmental. The board will appoint a small task force very soon to assist with the candidate evaluation/selection process. The UUA Transitions Office will provide us with qualified applicants to interview and evaluate. Initial interviews will occur via the phone or skype. We plan to bring our chosen candidate to Wilmington for in-person meetings with lay leadership and staff before finalizing the contract. If we do not find a developmental ministry candidate that matches our needs; we have the option to shift to the traditional interim ministry path.

Q: How will the board decide what qualifications and characteristics to look for?

The board will seek candidates with the skills and experience required to accomplish our goals and will be guided by the congregation's input provided to the Single Minister Transition Team when they conducted their recent assessment of our needs and priorities for a single minister. This input is summarized in a Handout entitled "Congregational Survey Results-Single Minister Job Description" and will soon be posted to our website. If you would like an electronic copy sent to you via email, please make your request via email to: Suzannefirstchurch@gmail.com or call Suzanne Perry with your request: 302-543-6566.

Q: What if we don't find suitable candidates?

A: If we do not find developmental ministry candidates that we believe can meet or exceed our needs and expectations, we will have the opportunity to engage a traditional Interim Ministry candidate.

Q: How and when would we make the decision whether to call the Developmental Minister?

A: First, to clarify this option -- Developmental Ministers (DMs) are not expecting a call or working towards a call. They are working towards the accomplishment of the goals that have been laid out for the ministry. The option of to call the DM is available to our congregation, should we choose to exercise it. It is not an expectation. Most DMs to date have not been called by their congregations.

Our plan is to create a Search Committee to call a settled minister in the third year of the developmental ministry with the goal of ending that year with a new settled minister beginning in August of 2018. If the Search Committee recommends the consulting minister for a congregational call, the UUA recommends following a full and formal candidating week as described in the *Settlement Handbook*. The DM would be considered an "inside" candidate and would be given consideration first, prior to considering other candidates. Any inside candidate must apply to the search committee early in the process and the search committee must make a yes-or-no decision before considering other candidates.

Q: Who becomes a developmental minister and why?

A: Ministers in many stages of ministry find Developmental Ministry attractive. For example, our geography, size and specific set of goals may be of interest to ministers in smaller congregations who want to gain more and varied experiences before seeking a settled ministry. A talented minister working at the assistant or associate level in a large church may find the opportunity attractive for leadership, visibility and impact it offers. Both ministers in their early careers and very experienced ministers have been attracted to developmental ministry assignments.

Q: Why not a one-year interim so we can quickly call and settle a new minister?

A: While this is an option, the UUA has advised us that it's not the best option for these reasons --

- 1) Outcomes are better with a two year interim period. Congregations are more satisfied with their choices and with the process leading them to the selection of their next settled minister.
- 2) The two-year interim has become the standard because it works. It best enables congregations to make successful transitions between long-term ministries. Of the 50+ congregations with Interim Ministers this year, it is anticipated that 5 or fewer will be one year interims, often involving a retirement and planned succession.
- 3) Your board does not feel this option fits our needs right now. Given our Staffing Plan, we believe we need a period of time to learn to be a single minister church before we call a settled minister.

Q: What are the costs associated with each type of ministry? Are we certain we can afford to make a three year financial commitment?

A: The annual costs for a 2 or 3 year transitional ministry are the same (salary plus housing allowance and benefits). Absorbing the transitional costs (interview and moving expenses) over three years is a bit easier for us prior to absorbing the costs associated with a Search and settling a new minister. Even in our most conservative revenue projections for future years, there is no threat to our capacity to retain a full-time minister.

Q: What is the track record for developmental ministers accomplishing the articulated goals?

A: Anecdotal data is strong and very favorable. Most developmental ministries appear to accomplish their objectives, which is why this option is gaining in popularity. While formal data is not available, success stories are available here <http://www.uuworld.org/life/articles/297112.shtml> and here <http://www.uuworld.org/life/articles/297107.shtml>

Q: What is shared ministry?

A: As defined by our single minister job description task force, a shared ministry model embraces **collaboration and partnership** between the Minister, church staff, lay leaders, members of the congregation, and other ministerial colleagues within the congregation and the JPD district.

A culture of shared ministry begins with leadership that embraces and encourages empowerment of our church staff and the membership of the congregation, who have a wealth of talent to share, from our paid staff and proven lay leaders, to up-and-coming lay leaders, to retired ministerial colleagues.

Sharing our strengths through a network of ministry teams (e.g., worship ministry, pastoral care ministry, social justice ministry, etc.) comprised of ministers, staff, and lay members can help us develop more fully as spiritual beings, especially when nurtured and supported with compassion and empathy – not just by our minister, but also by each other.

One of the goals of a developmental ministry at First U will be to transition to a shared ministry model with a single minister. The first stage of making the transition to a shared ministry model will include an assessment of the specific changes needed to our board policies, operating structure, and even to our by-laws.

Q: Will we always be a single minister church?

A: We are optimistic that growth is in our future and that one day we will have the resources to add the positions we have had to cut due to our current budget constraints. We have established growth as our number one goal in our strategic plan. The demographics in our 10-mile radius favor growth. If both ministerial and lay leadership approach this goal with unity and commitment, and the congregation gives growth it's enthusiastic support, how can we fail? From the UUA's publication "Growth for Unitarian Universalism," we share this perspective: *Growth is inevitable in healthy congregations. To be a healthy congregation is to develop responses that are sound and reasonable. To be healthy is to be vigorous, to have strength, and to use these qualities in taking action. When a congregation sees clearly its place and possibilities and understands its mission and purpose, it will make decisions that serve itself and its community well. Such a congregation will continue growing because of its health. Such a congregation is ready to serve people who need Unitarian Universalism.*

May it be so for us.

“Chat with the Board” about Developmental Ministry
Q&A in the Sanctuary after Sunday services on Feb 8 and 15
