

2023-24 Developmental Ministry Search Info Sheet & FAQs

What is Developmental Ministry? Developmental ministry is a category of ministry like “settled” / “interim” / “contract”. It is designed to support congregations in finding their direction, achieving their goals, and moving toward greater organizational health. The UUA Transitions Office helps the congregation find candidates who are experienced and skilled in the areas the congregation wants to work on. They set and work together toward goals over an extended period of time.

Why isn’t Rev. Tara staying? Though Rev. Tara *could* stay for an extended contract because she came to us when we were in a time of transition, our shared ministry has been transitional in nature. Transitional ministers do their best work when their contract is time limited. Rev. Tara is sad to have an end date but feels the congregation will be ready to move into a new chapter. She will be going into search for a position closer to her home in northern MA.

Why aren’t we searching for a Contract or Settled Minister? There are two layers to this answer.

The first layer pertains to our church specifically. The Board feels Developmental Ministry is a great fit for our congregation. The departure of Rev. Donna and our work with Rev. Tara has helped to clarify various growing edges we have as a congregation (as outlined in the 2023 Annual Report). As we adjust to a world changed by COVID-19, we are also tasked with the work of reflecting how we as a congregation have changed and dream again about who we want to be.

The second layer pertains to the landscape of professional UU ministry and how it has changed since 2020. There is a shortage of Contract, Interim, and Settled ministers as ministers pursue other types of community-based work or leave the profession altogether (the same trend as many other “caring professions” since the pandemic). Contract ministers tend to be newer or looking for short term contracts where they can commute but not move. The settled search process is lengthy (about 2 years), very expensive, and doesn’t guarantee a perfect match nor a long-term settlement. The average Settled Ministry is currently estimated to be about the same as the length of a Developmental Ministry.

Does needing a Developmental Minister mean we’re a “bad” or “dysfunctional” congregation?

Not at all! This is a common misconception. In fact, UU congregations must qualify for Developmental Ministry. The UUA doesn’t send their highly skilled ministers into congregations they don’t believe are prepared to engage deeply in this work and meet the goals they set. By qualifying for Developmental Ministry, A2U2 has already shown through our work this past year that we’re on a solid path and show promise for growth. This is very exciting.

If we love our Developmental Minister, can they become our Settled Minister after the 5-7 year contract? Developmental Ministry is time-bound, and the minister may not be called. Part of the minister’s job will be to ensure a healthy ending and smooth transition. A Developmental ministry often precedes the search for a Settled Minister.

Why wasn’t I part of the decision-making process to choose what type of minister to hire? The congregation’s Board is made up of members appointed and voted in by the congregation. They are

entrusted to make decisions on behalf of the congregation with its best interest in mind. The choice of what kind of minister to hire is one of these decisions. Developmental Ministers, like Contract and Interims, are hired by the Board (this is different from Settled Ministers who are hired by the congregation).

Who will the Search Committee be? As suggested by the UUA Transitions Handbook, the Search Committee will consist of 3-5 people consisting primarily of Board members. This committee is appointed by your Board.

What will the candidate pool be like? The UUA Transitions Office actively recruits specific, experienced ministers to meet the congregation's stated goals. The candidate pool is intentionally small and highly skilled. Some ministers are particularly good in places of heavy conflict, others with mission and vision work, and others at helping with decisions about buildings. The matches are customized, based on the goals of the congregation and what skills the minister brings.

When we talk about getting support from UUA staff, who are we talking about? A2U2's New England Regional Staff point-person is Rev. Erica Baron, who will be leading our workshop on October 1. Our contact in the Transitions office who will support our search and transition is Transitions Program Manager, Christine Purcell. You can learn more about them both on the UUA website.

Who should I go to with my questions? Your questions are most welcome! Please reach out to a Board member or Rev. Tara to talk. The Board meets on the 3rd Wednesday of each month via Zoom at 6:45pm.

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