

***Guidelines for Choosing Members
of a Ministerial Search Committee***

from the Unitarian Universalist Association

The kind of person to seek:

1. One who has an overall perspective and commitment to the nature, purpose and activities of the Church. Contrary to what might be expected, we do not recommend that Search Committees be made up of representatives of special interests with the Church. This tends to create unnecessary conflict and to have people looking for "one issue" candidates. So instead of looking for "representatives," we recommend looking for "senators."
2. One who is committed to UU pluralism in every area: theology, life styles, social concern, etc.
3. One who is patiently able to work for consensus rather than insisting upon majority rule or minority tyranny.
4. One with time to be thoroughly and continually involved. Members of the Committee may well devote a minimum of 20 hours monthly for ten months or so, to say nothing of the added time involved when the pre-candidating interviews get underway. Searching for a minister must be a top priority for members of the Search Committee.
5. One without rigid requirements regarding ministerial state, sex, marital status, age, etc.
6. One who constantly remembers the wishes of the Congregation, who will not permit the Search Committee to become an autonomous, independent (and finally irresponsible) entity.
7. One with a history of UU involvement. This does not necessarily mean long-term involvement, but it does mean that people new to our religious community ought not to be asked to serve. It takes time for people really to accept and embrace our diversity.

8. One who very evidently has the confidence of the Congregation.
9. One who can respect the confidentiality of the process, but who, nonetheless, is eager to keep the Congregation informed regarding the progress that is being made.
10. One of irenic, cooperative disposition: not disputatious.

The kind of person to avoid:

(This is really the flip side of the suggestions on the other side; still, it may be important to be explicit regarding a few characteristics.)

1. One with limited and high-intensity interests; one who defines the Church in narrow, exclusive terms.
2. One with rigid, authoritarian ideas coupled with little respect for differences, e.g. the militant Humanist, the intolerant Christian, the rabid Peacenik, the gadfly.
3. One who readily accedes to any request, but who is unable, either by temperament or time-limitations, to follow through.
4. One who feels that "we know best," thus urging the Search Committee to ignore the expressed wishes of the Congregation.
5. One who has a genius for stroking the cat from tail to head just to see the sparks fly.
6. One who is actively disliked by many people in the Congregation. Gadflies have their places, but not on Search Committees.

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