

Transition FAQ

1. What is happening?

This year, UUCC will search for and hopefully settle a new minister. Because of our health, our plans for the future, and because we are helping pilot a new search and settlement process with the UUA, we will not have an interim minister, but hope to settle a new minister in the summer of 2017.

2. Why are we doing this?

For a number of reasons. When we were in search for Rev. Audette, we had a vision of ourselves as a mid-size congregation. We looked for and found in Rev. Audette an experienced minister whose area of expertise is in working with program+ size churches. We now have a solid policy-based governance system that should serve us to continue to grow to any size that is possible, given our demographic limitations, as long as we continue to see members and friends volunteer their time and give financially. Looking at our health and where we could head, and considering budget and other issues, Rev. Audette began conversations in her third year with us with UUA transition leadership, and then, last year, with regional and UUCC leadership, to discuss a plan that would build on our success, allow us to make as smooth a transition as possible to a new ministry, reflect budget realities, and allow us to embrace a new missional work: that of a teaching congregation.

3. What is a “teaching congregation,” and why should we be one?

The term is our own. What we mean by “teaching congregation” is that we would seek to serve our Unitarian Universalist faith by being a congregation which uses its health, gifts and skills to nurture the growth and skills of ministers just entering the ministry. **This is not an “internship” role.** We are seeking to be a place where talented, qualified, seminary-graduated and MFC*-approved ministers would come to serve their first congregation, hopefully for a period of around

5 years. The first few years of a minister's service to our faith is a time called "preliminary fellowship." During preliminary fellowship, a minister is carefully nurtured and reviewed by congregational leaders in the congregation they serve, and a UU minister mentor. After a successful period of review, the MFC grants "final fellowship," which is basically ministerial tenure, and the minister is no longer under a review process outside of any except that established for good shared ministry between minister and the congregation they serve.

It is often the case that new ministers find themselves in the most unhealthy churches in their first settlement - either because they do not know how to avoid them, or because those congregations are the only ones available. This often leads to early burn-out among ministers, and it can seriously affect a talented new minister's formation. UUCC has a long track record of being a healthy congregation which works well with its ministers. The UUA affirms this with us. Therefore, we want to become a congregation that is intentional about being a welcoming & teaching congregation, where a newly-minted minister can join us in shared ministry and have an excellent start to their ministerial careers. In return, not only do we get to share our gifts and serve Unitarian Universalism in this way, the UUA will offer special help and support in finding us good ministers interested in serving alongside us.

4. Does that mean our new minister will be young?

Not necessarily! Ministry is often a second or even third career. So our new minister may be young, middle aged, or qualified for AARP! As in any ministerial search we have had, we will be looking for a minister whose gifts and talents we believe will be well suited to our ministry in Cheyenne.

5. You say this is a new settlement process for the UUA. What are we getting ourselves into?

The UUA has had interest for a while in developing new models of search for certain specific kinds of congregations - in particular, those who are overlooked because of **geographical location**, size, or other factors unrelated to the health and vitality of the congregation itself. In those instances, the UUA is willing to work directly with those congregations to, when appropriate, forego interim and to assist by intentionally encouraging ministers to apply or consider those particular congregations. They will take a more direct hand in matching congregations and ministers, based on the information both provide in their settlement documents. The search process is streamlined for those congregations. As a pilot congregation, there will be some “learning together as we go,” and we understand that. The Rev. Keith Kron, UUA Transitions Director, is working directly with our congregation during this time.

6. What about Rev. Audette? Does this mean we’re kicking her out? Where will she go?

Rev. Audette has worked with the UUA, the Mountain Desert area leaders, and UUCS leaders over a period of years to help us create a transition plan that will help us accomplish a few key goals:

- A) Help us build a clearer sense of mission;
- B) Provide for as little disruption between ministries as possible;
- C) Take into account the gifts of the congregation, and also our financial realities;
- D) Allow us to proceed on our ministry path with openness, excitement, and a good footing for the years ahead.

So no, we are definitely **not “kicking Rev. Audette out.”** She has been a leader and an integral part of our planning and development, and has understood for a period of a few years that a transition would be needed about this time.

As for where she will go, that we do not know right now. Rev. Audette will also be in search this year and is considering all her options for this stage of her career, as she gets closer to 20 years of service in ministry.

7. What will Rev. Audette be doing this year? What will be her focus?

If we continue to show all signs of health and low anxiety during this transition, we will not have a formal interim period. However, the transition from one minister to another does always bring up emotions and energy, so Rev. Audette will be available to meet with individuals to listen to anything that the transition is bringing up for them. It's important that the congregation knows Rev. Audette loves us and cares about our future and our long-term success, and so continues to be ready to listen and care for the members of UUCC.

Other transitional work includes helping the congregation:

- Focus on areas of strength and success;
- Develop in areas that need attention - right now, this includes stewardship & fundraising, pastoral care, and worship;
- Making sure the church system is in great shape to welcome new ministerial leadership - staff, policies, public presence (website, etc), leadership roles (i.e., Board, CoSM, Leadership Development).

Please be aware that because she will also be in search and continues to have larger UUA responsibilities, Rev. Audette will be traveling frequently this year. If you would like some time with her, please be sure to plan in advance and arrange an appointment. Her calendar is usually booked two weeks in advance, excepting emergencies.