

## **Pre-Candidate Interviews**

Unity Church Ministerial Search Team, 2021-2022

### **Qualities of the experience**

- Environment of comfort and ease
- Not rushing
- Listen attentively
- Ask questions that make sense based on the Minister's MR and prior responses

### **Opening**

**9:00 - 9:10am**

1. Welcome
2. Light the chalice
3. Land acknowledgement
4. Opening reading
5. Preview process:
  - a. 5 sections of questions
  - b. First 4 sections are 25 minutes each
    - i. 2 people asking questions in each section
    - ii. 2 detailed note takers for each section and we will rotate
    - iii. Everyone else will be listening and taking notes
  - c. We will take a break at 10:45 before the Executive Team joins at 11:00
  - d. We will break around 12:15 for lunch
  - e. 1pm to 2pm is time for you to ask us questions
6. Hand over to first questioners

### **Spiritual Leadership**

**9:10 - 9:35**

1. As you develop worship services, what sources do you find yourself drawing from time and again? How do you find new ones?
  - a. Please share something about a sermon that seemed particularly effective as expressed by congregants. What made it work?
  - b. Share a story about a sermon that went awry. Why do you think it was not well-received? If you received complaints, how did you deal with them?

2. As a spiritual leader:

- a. What power or powers do you rely on and trust?
- b. What are the gifts you bring to this arena?
- c. In what ways do you cultivate your own spiritual maturity?

3. What does faith formation (for all ages) mean to you? What must it include, and how do you foster it?

- a. How can children and youth be more fully integrated in church life?
- b. What are some of the ways we can more fully embrace an intergenerational community?

### **Pastoral Care and Ministerial Presence**

**9:35 - 10:00**

1. How would you describe your ministerial presence? What do you think are the main qualities?
  - a. Is ministerial presence different in your interactions with staff, board, and congregants, and if so, how?
2. Can you give us an example of how you work with your congregation to create a sense of fellowship and belonging, especially for newcomers or for people who haven't felt welcomed or found a way "in?"
  - a. What are a few things you would hope to do in your first two years of ministry that would help build trust and connection with the congregation?
3. How do you work with your congregation to address urgent or traumatic events in the community, especially for individuals with oppressed identities? Can you give an example?
4. During the pandemic, churches have had to extend pastoral care in new ways. What kinds of things have you tried? What is worth keeping?
  - a. What ideas do you have about how to help Unity Church bridge from pandemic isolation and anxiety to the next phase of our church life together?
5. Tell us about a time when you felt especially challenged in your role of offering pastoral care. What was challenging, and how did you handle the challenge?

6. Pastoral and congregational care comes in many forms at Unity. What do you see as the senior minister's particular role in this domain?

## **Anti-Racism and Social Justice**

**10:00 - 10:25**

1. Tell us about the work you've done in your congregation around racism and white supremacy.
  - a. Tell us about a time you found it challenging as a white, cisgender woman to speak out against racism or oppression, how did you navigate the complexities of that situation?
  - b. What leaves you feeling ill equipped for the task, and what do you do to address that feeling?
  - c. Optional: What steps will you take to mitigate white supremacy culture within the operations, policies and/or practices of our church? Of the denomination?
  - d. Optional: Tell us about a time someone told you you were being racist and how you responded?
2. One of our Ends Statements is to "create brave space for racial healing and dismantling dominant culture." How would you see your role in working toward that end?
  - a. How would you work to build communities within the Unity community so that members of different identities feel embraced and have a space to be together within the church? Have you done this at your past congregations?
  - b. How have you fostered leadership by non-dominant culture congregants (BIPOC, LGBTQ, persons with disabilities, etc) without falling into tokenism?
  - c. Tell us about a time you have wrestled with the complexity of intersectionality while doing anti-oppression work in your ministry.
3. How would you help congregants develop and expand our cultural competency as we aspire to become more multicultural?
  - a. How have you fostered allyship in your past congregations between your dominant culture white members and your LGBTQ/BIPOC/etc members?
4. We consider community members beyond our walls who share a commitment to building the Beloved Community to be among our moral owners,
  - a. How have you engaged in this work?

- b. How do you sustain that energy in the face of resistance from within the congregation or from others in the community?
5. What does the practice of Radical Hospitality mean to you? How do you put it into action with regard to the congregation? Please share any stories that you can draw from your own experience when you practiced Radical Hospitality.

### **Personal Dimensions**

**10:25 - 10:45**

1. Share an example of when you faced having to make a decision that did not align with your values but was something others indicated they wanted/needed.
  - a. When have you had to “surrender?” What did you learn?
2. Tell us about a conflict situation at church that particularly challenged you. What was the situation, and how did you navigate it?
3. What kinds of actions can we take to advance our UU faith, making it more visible in the community and in the world?
  - a. What steps might you take to dispel the notion that UU is for white, educated, cisgender, straight, middle-to-upper class liberals only?
4. What kind of support do you need to function at your best in a large congregational context?
  - a. What strategies have you used to “find and keep your balance” between your work life and personal life?

**BREAK**

**10:45 - 11:00**

## **Organizational Agility and Strategic Vision (ET present)**

**11:00 - 12:00pm**

### MST Questions 11:00 - 11:30

1. Tell us how you engage a congregation in envisioning a preferred future and working toward it. Can you give an example of a successful experience?
  - a. (If needed: how was the Board involved in that experience?)
  - b. What about a time when you tried to lead change in this way, but your efforts were unsuccessful? What happened and what did you learn?
  - c. What are the formal and informal ways that you work to shape a congregation's strategic priorities and move action forward?
  
2. What is your experience, if any, working with a Policy Governance model like we use at Unity?
  - a. (If experienced): What do you see as your skills in working with this model? Can you give an example that illustrates those skills?
  - b. (If limited/no experience): Which of your skills would serve you well and help you adapt to this form of governance? Can you give an example of when those skills have come into play?
  - c. What aspects of Policy Governance do you think can contribute to a more effective and vibrant congregational life?
  
3. What is your approach to leadership development? In staff? In the congregation?
  - a. Tell us about an experience when you helped establish a well-functioning staff or volunteer team. How did you go about it, and what characteristics of the team contributed to its success?
  - b. Hannah: You would lead a team with very experienced ministers and other professionals. Tell us about a time you stepped into this situation as a leader, and how you navigated it.
  
4. What is your experience with church stewardship and finances?
  - a. How would you describe your aptitude with finances?
  
5. From what you've learned about Unity – our culture, our operations, our Ends – what feels “juicy” to you and gets your mind going on possibilities?

## ET Questions 11:30 - 12:00

1. What are your perceptions of the highly collaborative Executive Team structure at Unity and its relationship to the Board, the staff and the congregation? What gifts and what challenges do you see in this structure? How would you describe your practice of authority within shared leadership and shared ministry?
2. In sketching the outlines of your theology of ministry, what are some broad strokes that characterize and distinguish your ministry? How do they inform and animate your interest in the ministry of Unity Church?
3. Noting Unity's historical work and influence in the greater public life, what is your understanding of the minister as public theologian, and how have you engaged in prophetic witness and ministry with community partners?
4. The *Ends Statements* of the church live at the core of ministry as shared expressions of our covenantal ministry, and our progress towards the Ends serve as the pervasive and persistent measure of accountability. What are your perceptions of the Ends? What aspects of organizing ministry around Ends speak meaningfully to you? How do the Ends speak vocationally to you?
5. In this remarkable historical moment – where multiple competing urgencies are being worked out moment by moment with little assurances of futurity – what have been the generative questions for you in discerning the work of a liberal faith community?

### **Lunch**

**12:30-1:15**

### **Blessing**

### **Pre-candidate Questions**

**1:15-1:55**

### **Closing**

**Pre-candidate says a prayer**

**Closing Reading**

### **Extinguish the Chalice**

**1:55 - 2:00**