

Developmental Ministry – A Possibility for Peoples Church

For those who weren't at the Feb. 22 worship service where this concept was presented, the information here is presented to let you know about this exciting new possibility for our church.

Developmental Ministry is a new program thru UUA that was launched in 2008. The program started at the Unitarian Universalist Church in Boulder, Colorado. The church needed help, membership fell to eighty congregants and the building needed repairs. To read more about the Boulder experience, follow this link:

<http://www.uuworld.org/life/articles/297107.shtml>

Since their experience with Developmental Ministry, Boulder has increased membership and raised the necessary funds to fix the church. They've taken on new tasks like being a teaching congregation for student ministers, social justice projects and church wide community events. Thru this ministry program the church has found new life both in faith and community.

So, you may very well ask what is this program we speak of? Below is a brief outline of how this program works.

What is it?

It's a ministry program that helps congregations set 3 to 4 developmental goals which are matched with a minister whose skills can help achieve them. This is different from interim ministry as a developmental minister has a longer time frame and is focused on the set goals.

Who sets the goals?

Goals are set by congregational leadership and UUA input is encouraged. In our case, the upcoming Talking Circles that begin in March would be a prime source of information in helping decide these goals.

How long does a Developmental Minister serve?

The minister is hired by the congregation's board of trustees and is contracted for a 3-5 year term. At the end of that time, the congregation can decide whether to extend the developmental minister's contract to become settled or begin a regular search for a settled minister.

How does this differ from an interim minister?

An interim minister's job is to transition a congregation from one settled minister to another, under a 24-month contract. A developmental minister's job is to help the congregation reach their set goals prior to calling a settled minister.

How are congregations & developmental ministers matched?

UUA looks at a congregation's goals and ministers who have interests or expertise in those areas. Some ministers are particularly good with heavy conflict, others are good at helping with decisions about facilities or increasing membership. It's customized, all based on the goals set by the congregation and skills the minister brings with them.

Why should we consider a developmental minister?

There are many parts of the church that could benefit from the specialized skills a developmental minister brings. Membership stabilization and growth are just one important example that could be addressed in this type of ministry. As we look to the long term, we need to consider whether we can find this kind of expertise in a standard search for a settled minister. Plus, the hiring of a developmental minister would be much less expensive at this point than conducting a search for a settled minister, while a developmental ministry now may help us find just the right settled minister in the future. And, as noted previously, if we like her or him and we're liked in return, the minister can become the settled minister. No further search needed.

At this point, the Board and Rev. Briere agree that a developmental ministry could be very beneficial and we recommend taking this route. We emphasize that at this point this is a concept for consideration so a decision to go ahead has yet to be made. Please share your thoughts and input on this subject. And keep a look out in your monthly Voice and/or Peoples Weekly for more information.

Kylene Loughrey
Vice President, Board of Trustees