

Change of Minister Process Q & A

Fall 2011

Jean Alexander has announced she will be retiring on January 8, 2012, after almost 7 years at the UPA and 40 years of ordained ministry. Over the next several months, the UPA will engage in the process of identifying our next minister.

1. *What is the process for identifying the next minister?*

As set forth in our by-laws, the UPA congregation alternates between United Congregational Church (UCC) and United Methodist Church (Methodist) ministers. Since Jean is a UCC minister, this fall we will prepare to engage in the Methodist appointment process.

2. *Why does the UPA alternate denominations?*

The United Parish of Auburndale was created in 1980, when the Auburndale Congregational Church and the Centenary United Methodist Church federated. After a period of congregational review, the parish decided that alternating pastoral leadership was important enough to incorporate into the by-laws.

3. *What is the United Methodist Church's appointment process?*

Unlike the UCC process, in which an individual congregation "calls" a minister, the Methodist church follows an appointment process. The regional church leadership works with local congregations to match the qualifications of Methodist ministers with the needs of individual churches. The process of making appointments has also been referred to as a "send" process.

4. *Who are the players in this process? What are their roles?*

The players are:

- the UPA congregation
- Martin McLee, Superintendent of the Metro Boston Hope District for the greater Boston area of the United Methodist Church
- Peter Weaver, Bishop, New England Conference of the United Methodist Church

Their roles are best understood with a story. *In this story, the UPA is a garden – a beloved garden that is introducing a new focal-point plant. We who live and work*

in the garden know it well. However, we have limited knowledge of regional varieties. After all, we enjoy tending the UPA garden, but it's not our vocation. However, there is an expert gardener in our area who visits gardens in different seasons. This gardener has watched and nurtured plants for many years and regularly meets with other experts from nearby regions. Collectively, these expert gardeners have made a careful study of which plants do well in various soils and conditions. To prepare for the new focal point, the UPA must take stock of our garden and determine the most important characteristics of the new addition. The expert gardeners' work is to receive this information and, with their extensive knowledge of the region's varieties, recommend a focal point that meets our unique needs. Everyone works with care, because we want our local garden, and the broader landscape, to flourish.

5. *How will the UPA complete its work in the process?*

The UPA will complete a key document called the "Mission and Ministry Profile." This document outlines our church's community, mission, aspirations, and most important pastoral needs. The creation of this document will be a church-wide effort, with input gathered via surveys, forums, and house meetings. The goal is to ensure that all voices are heard so we create an accurate representation of our congregation. The profile will be shared with the District Superintendent during the next step in the appointment process, in which he and the Staff Parish Relations Committee meet to formally discuss our pastoral leadership.

6. *How will the United Methodist Church leadership complete its work in the process?*

Just as our church prepares its Mission and Ministry Profile, all Methodist ministers prepare annual profiles describing their goals and qualifications. The church leadership – which includes the Bishop and his cabinet of District Superintendents and other leaders – reviews the Parish and Pastor profiles and works to determine the best match for the UPA and other Methodist congregations. Although the Bishop makes the final appointments, our primary liaison and advocate throughout the process will be the District Superintendent.

7. *What is the timeline for the appointment process?*

The Methodist appointment process is conducted annually, and we will be working within that time frame. Between now and January, the congregation will

complete the Mission and Ministry Profile, which will be presented to the District Superintendent shortly thereafter. We anticipate that a new minister candidate will be presented in March or April. Then, in accord with our by-laws, the UPA will hold a congregational meeting to vote on the candidate. A 2/3 vote of the UPA membership present is required for confirmation. Note: Traditionally, a congregational vote is not a step in the Methodist appointment process. However, the Staff Parish Relations Committee will work with the District Superintendent over the next few months to determine how best to incorporate this requirement. If the UPA membership approves the candidate, the new minister will start in July 2012.

8. *Is the Methodist process inclusive?*

Yes. Any ordained Methodist minister, regardless of age, race, gender, disability, or sexual orientation, will be eligible. Through the creation of the Mission and Ministry Profile, we have the opportunity to identify our church as an open and affirming/reconciling congregation and seek an individual whose views align with our mission.

9. *At the church level, who oversees the appointment process?*

The by-laws charge the Staff Parish Relations Committee with overseeing the process. To ensure broad representation, two new church-wide committees are being formed: the Profile Committee and the Interview Committee. The Profile Committee will support the congregation's collective effort to complete the Mission and Ministry Profile. The Interview Committee will interact with the candidate in the spring. To accomplish these critical functions, volunteers are urgently needed. Do you have any expertise or interest in surveys, group dynamics, or marketing? Do you know someone who would be ideal? If so, please talk to our moderator Bill Hoch or vice-moderator Dana Dornbusch, or with any member of the Staff Parish Relations Committee:

Elizabeth McVittie (chair)	
Bev Loudin	Carie Michael
Denise Chicoine	Ed Roush
Michael Tolley	Sonia Parker

These church members can also discuss any concerns related to identifying the new minister.

10. *What is my role in this process?*

Everyone's voice is critical as we define the goals for our parish and its future leadership. This fall, there will be opportunities to provide direct input into the Mission and Ministry Profile. Members will vote on the completed Profile in January and on the appointment of the new minister in the spring.

11. *What if we do not find an acceptable candidate for full-time minister?*

If the congregation does not approve the minister candidate, we will continue with an interim minister until a new search process is defined and results in identifying a successful candidate.

12. *What is the process to appoint an interim minister?*

The Staff Parish Relations Committee will identify and interview candidates for the six-month period from January 8, 2012 through June 30, 2012. This Committee will make an interim minister recommendation to Parish Council, which will vote to approve or disapprove.

13. *How will the change in pastoral leadership affect the Youth Minister?*

The UPA is pleased to have Karen Hernandez as our new Youth Minister. Karen has made the commitment to be at the UPA through June 2012, spanning both Jean's final months as well as the Interim Minister's anticipated tenure. The Board of Christian Education will work with the new minister to determine youth leadership going forward.

14. *What's next?*

Come to our first coffee hour forum on September 18. The Staff Parish Relations Committee will present the work it has done to understand, and prepare for, the appointment process. And you can also learn more about opportunities to be involved in the Profile and Interview Committees.

SAVE THE DATE

Our first discussion forum regarding the minister search process will be after coffee hour on **Sunday, September 18.**