

Unitarian Universalist Church of Arlington-Virginia

Connections Newsletter - February 6, 2020

Update from the Ministerial Search Committee

*The “Marathon” search for a new Senior Minister has an end in sight!
But after today – we can’t talk about it!*

By Frank Corsoro, MSC member

What do the novel *War and Peace* (1,225 pages), the epic poem *The Illiad* (15,693 lines), the movies *The Godfather* and *The Godfather II* (424 minutes – or 7 hours), and my undergraduate textbook *University Physics* (1600 pages, three semesters to complete) have in common with our current senior minister search process? They seem to go on FOREVER!

What do these masterpieces of literature and art and academia (OK, not everyone considers *Physics* essential reading) have in common with our ministerial search? The realization that the toil and time committed can not only be worth the effort, but that something transformative and even magical can emanate from the endeavor.

Your senior minister search committee – comprised of chairperson Kelly Kohl, Allen Keiswetter, Sally Determan, Sarah Yue, Betsy Rosenblatt-Rosso, Bee Moradi, and yours truly, Frank Corsoro--have invested hundreds of hours in exhausting physical and mental labor to this process. In many ways, the covenant we made with you, the congregation, to do our due diligence and leave no stone unturned in our quest to find UUCA’s next called senior minister has left us on the precipice of completing our mission. That the seven members of the search team have bonded spiritually in a deeply sacred covenantal relationship – while paradoxically being driven to the limits of our endurance and sanity, was exactly what was expected of us. And, we freely committed to it.

Our MSC Chairperson Kelly Kohl previously reported most of this work at the Capital Campaign congregational meeting in December. But here today we provide to you, the people whose vested interest in this congregation has motivated our efforts to persevere, a summary of what we have done. An impressive list of accomplishments if I do say so myself.

But then also an outline of what remains to be done. For the confidentiality of the process and the ministers involved in search, we can **NEVER** talk about this again!

A quick recap:

In **February 2019**, UUCA hosted Beyond Categorical Thinking, a workshop recognizing and removing unconscious bias, promoting inclusive thinking, and preventing unfair discrimination during our congregation’s search for a new minister.

In **March and April 2019**, the UUCA Appreciative Inquiry process brought together more than 400

congregants over several in-person workshops to discuss how we want to grow spiritually within our community, how we aspire to be together as a church, and how we want to interact with our larger community outside of the church.

In **May and June 2019**, the Search Committee conducted a Congregational Survey— in which 635 of you participated— and determined that UUCA seeks a strong worship leader, a visionary, and a person of character. The survey also provided areas of improvement for our congregation, including revealing a greater sense of disconnection among younger congregants and congregants of color. The survey told us that UUCA is interested in change, but that that interest is mixed with hesitation.

In **September and October 2019**, the Search Committee invited congregants to a series of Cottage Meetings, which included small group conversations about the survey results and encouraged participants to discuss which ministerial traits matter most.

Most recently, in **November and December 2019**, the Search Committee submitted the UUCA Congregational Record and Documents Packet to the UUA to be shared with potential ministers. These documents contain the story of UUCA, and serve, essentially, as the content of UUCA's job posting. On December 2, 2019, the UUCA job posting went live!

Now let's talk about the Search in 2020: Between January and April 2020, the Search Committee is required to keep a high level of confidentiality surrounding our activities. This is because most of our ministerial applicants will not have told their current congregations of an intent to move on to a new church.

On January 2, the Search Committee began to receive names of ministers who have indicated an interest in UUCA. Once we reviewed the candidates, the Search Committee began holding interviews with prospective ministers. The first round of interviews was by video conference call, and the second round will happen throughout several "pre-candidating" weekends in February and March. During these weekends, the Search Committee will observe four finalists in person at "neutral pulpits" and will extensively check developed references. Here is where the ABSOLUTE confidentiality kicks in at its most urgent level.

If all goes well, in **late March**, the Search Committee will select a single finalist from the candidates observed. UUCA will then offer this candidate the position of Senior Minister. If the ministerial candidate accepts the position, we will invite them to "**Candidating Week**," which will take place in late April.

"Candidating Week" will be your opportunity to meet the ministerial candidate. Candidating Week runs for nine days from Saturday, April 25 through Sunday, May 3, and will include a variety of events, including sermons on both Sundays. On the final Sunday, we will conduct a congregational vote on whether to call this candidate as our next senior minister. If confirmed by the congregation, the new senior minister will arrange relocation and begin their ministry in **August of 2020**.

Over the last year and a half, the Search Committee had worked hard to listen to and understand our community's needs and to define UUCA's identities and aspirations. As we move forward, we will learn about candidates and discern their compatibility with this community, ultimately, to recommend an outstanding candidate to the congregation. But, please remember, should you see any members of the search committee at church during the next three months – **Our lips are sealed**.

The Go-Go's [*My Lips are Sealed* video here](#).