

Congregational Fitness for Ministry

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Given the increasing shortage of UU ministers, congregations might wish for a simple way to evaluate their own fitness for ministry.

Below are five categories with a 1-4 rating. A score of 10 or below probably means developmental ministry. A score of 15 or more is very ready. I would not choose a church that didn't have at least two "4's" or had more than two "2's" or less.

Mission

4. The church has a strong sense of mission, to change lives in and out of church.
3. The church is a beacon for liberal values, and many people are engaged in outward ministry.
2. The church is a refuge for liberal people, and some work in the community for good.
1. The church is a club-house and resists any effort to change the world, let alone the gathered people.

Participation

4. Many people joyfully participate in worship, leadership, and social activities. The minister has strong partners in ministry.
3. There is a core of active leaders in many areas.
2. Though there are some good leaders, the minister is expected to drive most of the ministry.
1. Members see themselves as consumers of the ministry, not co-creators or owners of the church.

Respect for Authority

4. The church values the minister's expertise and authority in theology, leadership, worship, and care. The minister is the clear chief of staff.
3. Most members respect the minister most of the time, but an undercurrent of suspicion may be present.
2. Members often question the minister's authority and judgement. Some act out, and leaders let it go unchallenged.
1. The minister is seen as a service provider whose job is to make people happy. They are regularly critiqued and attacked. They are not consulted about important decisions.

Pay

4. The congregation is joyfully fair-compensation.
3. Though some members grumble about it, the congregation is fair-compensation and committed to remaining so.
2. Many leaders want to be fair-compensation, but the congregation isn't there yet.
1. The congregation is not fair-compensation and doesn't really see why they should be.

Balance

4. The congregation insists that the minister maintains a healthy work-life balance, and joyfully welcomes the minister's family, if any, at the level they wish to be engaged.
3. The congregation respects the minister's boundaries and need for time off.
2. Though most members respect the minister's time off, some do not, and the congregation sees this as the minister's problem to solve.
1. The congregation regularly invades the minister's time off, privacy, and family life.

Your total score _____

A minister and a congregation might look at other key factors –

- **Anti-racism and anti-oppression:** A “4” would have commitments to intercultural competency and a systemic understanding of oppression. “1” wouldn’t want their minister to talk about it too much and an implicit commitment to minimization.
- **UU Identity:** A “4” might mean the congregation embraces their UU identity and relationships. A “1” means little understanding to no understanding of, or connection to, Unitarian Universalism.
- **Financial Health:** A “4” would have clear policies, transparency and inclusion of the minister in financial affairs (including full access to pledging data).
- **Theological maturity:** A “4” would embrace mystery and metaphor with grace. A “1” would be excessively literalistic and reactive to any religious language.