

**Ministerial Record**  
**Rev. Donna Dolham**

**Preliminary Fellowship:** 2018

**Final Fellowship:** N/A

**Ordination:** 2018

**Seminary:** Andover Newton Theological School, Master of Divinity, May 2017

**Congregational Ministries Served:**

2018-2020	Interim Minister	Denton UU Fellowship	Denton, TX
2018-2018	Sabbatical Minister	First Church and Parish in Dedham	Dedham, MA
2016-2018	Ministerial Intern	First Church and Parish in Dedham	Dedham, MA

**Other Ministries and Work Experience:**

1993-2018	Clinical Social Work	Private Practice	Union, Maine
1991-2001	Community Health Social Worker	Androscoggin Home Care and Hospice	Lewiston, Maine
1989-1991	Clinical Social Worker	Kennebec Valley Mental Health Center	Waterville, Maine

**Other Education:**

Masters of Divinity, Andover Newton Theological School, 2017 Justice and Ethics Certificate  
Focus on interfaith studies  
Johnathan Edwards Honor Society

Master of Social Work, Boston University, 1989  
Major: Casework

B.A., University of Southern Maine, 1987  
Major: Social Work

Associate of Science, University of Maine, 1984  
Major: Human Services (Gerontology)

Met with MFC September, 2017 and was granted initial fellowship pending completion of my internship in May, 2018.

Ordination, June 16, 2018 by First Universalist Church, Unitarian Universalist in Auburn, Maine

**Other noteworthy work experience outside of UU ministry:**

Andover Newton Theological School, Student Leadership Committee Date: 2015 – 2017

Andover Newton Theological School, Commencement Committee Date: 2017

Knox County Marriage Equality, Maine: Steering Committee Member; 2011

Organized, educated and spoke on behalf of marriage equality

Outright Lewiston/Auburn, Maine, Advisor; 1990s

Drop-in center and support group for GLBT youth ages 12 to 21years old

Maine Speak Out Project: Speaker

1998 – 1999/2000

Speaker for this organization whose mission was to create a society that is inclusive and respectful of people of differing sexual and gender orientations by providing opportunities for non-divisive dialogue

The National Organization for Women, Maine Chapter: Secretary; 1994

Equal Protection Lewiston, Maine: Steering Committee Member; 1992

Worked to pass an ordinance prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation in the areas of employment, housing, public accommodation, and the extension of credit at the November 1993 public referendum which was unfortunately defeated.

The AIDs Project, Portland, Maine, hotline responder Date: 1987/1988

**Denominational and Community Activities:**

Unitarian Universalist Association

Volunteer Facilitator; Beyond Categorical Thinking; 2001 to Present

Educate and engage with search committees and congregations, coordinate and facilitate worship, facilitate or co-facilitate the 3-hour Beyond Categorical Training Workshop, provide feedback to the Transitions Office following the BCT weekend. This program is designed to help congregations deconstruct barriers at is relates to calling ministers who identify as LGBTQ, ministers with disabilities and ministers of color, Latina/Latino Latinx. My work has been done throughout the Northeast.

Denton Record Chronicle, Religious Section Contributor 2018 - 2020  
Denton, TX

New England Region of the Unitarian Universalist Association

Volunteer Peer Facilitator; 2015 to 2018

Facilitate congregational process, facilitate board or leadership retreats.

Northern New England District of the Unitarian Universalist Association

Member of the Nominating committee; 2016 - 2018

Volunteer Healthy Congregations Consultant; 2012 – 2014

Facilitate leadership/Congregational group process around issues of basic healthy leadership and healthy congregation concepts including systems thinking, adaptive leadership, church size dynamics, power and authority dynamics, healthy boundaries and conflict transformation. Have facilitated exit interview, start up weekend, board retreats.

First Universalist Church, Unitarian Universalist, Auburn, Maine

This is currently my home and was my sponsoring congregation for ministry; I am not serving in any leadership capacity at this time.

Date: 1990s

~ Social Action Chair

~ Worship Associate

~ Board Member at Large

~ Vice President of the Board

~ President of the Board

~ Member of the Canvassing group

~ Personnel Committee Chair

~ Member of the Diversity Task Force established to guide the congregation in its multi-cultural, anti-racist and anti-oppressive work using the Journey Toward Wholeness and Welcoming Congregation programs of the UUA.

Midcoast Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, Damariscotta, Maine

Date: 2008 – approx. 2013

~ Membership & Hospitality Chair

~ Religious Education Committee member and teacher (children and adults)

~ Worship Associate

~ Vice President of the Board of Trustees

~ President of the Board of Trustees

## Background

### **Give a story that embodies your ministry:**

Arriving in Denton, Texas was a time of discovery in ministry. Learning the Denton Unitarian Universalist Fellowship congregation had been growing faster than their structure could support was an adventure and opportunity for shared ministry development both in governance and programming. Prior to my arrival, most programs were created and facilitated with the minister at the center. Having outgrown this type of congregational structure, an opportunity to flourish and grow was present.

Getting to know the congregation was like a scavenger hunt, around every corner surprise unfolded; each conversation was an invitation to discover interests, skills and needs. There were ideas just under the surface waiting for harvest. A variety of ideas surfaced including facilitated book discussion groups, identity groups, craft groups, the birth of the social justice and action team, youth talent show fund raiser, annual trans awareness panels for trans awareness week and professional photo shoots for trans and gender queer families for trans day of visibility. (\*see links below for more information)

This inter-generational congregation filled with parents of preschoolers also had folks who were interested in starting a drop-in program for parents and children embodying Unitarian Universalist principles. What began as a play date program a year ago, grew into a program open to the larger community, with child-care and programming for parents. They developed a steering committee, worked with both the board and congregation at large to inform, collaborate and educate.

As these and other congregational ideas emerged it was clear that avenues for increased lay involvement required structures and clear paths for engagement and communication clarification. In addition to working with lay folks in the development of their ideas and ways forward, I worked with the administrative assistant in the development of an easy to access program form with clear steps and access to ministerial support, program development, and advertising. Parallel to this work, a shared ministry process occurred with board, where with some ministerial encouragement, the board and I met with a congregational development specialist around “right sizing” the governance model to the congregation.

This process of curiosity, support, encouragement and structure development is part of the story that embodies my ministry.

\*[https://dentonrc.com/life/local-church-talks-evolving-language-cultural-norms-around-transgender-week/article\\_27e4fdc5-4f2b-58e3-b34e-4651deeac071.html](https://dentonrc.com/life/local-church-talks-evolving-language-cultural-norms-around-transgender-week/article_27e4fdc5-4f2b-58e3-b34e-4651deeac071.html)

\*[https://dentonrc.com/news/panelists-talk-double-edged-sword-of-transgender-visibility/article\\_caaa08e1-0b61-522a-88cb-6da0d07b6589.html](https://dentonrc.com/news/panelists-talk-double-edged-sword-of-transgender-visibility/article_caaa08e1-0b61-522a-88cb-6da0d07b6589.html)

\*<https://www.facebook.com/dentonuufellowship/>

### **Why are you seeking ministry now?**

As my time and interim ministry contract heads into its final season with Denton Unitarian Universalist Fellowship in Denton, TX, some of my attention turns toward the beginning of the next ministerial opportunity. This season of search is one of discovery, inquiry and mutual discernment filled with moments of reflection for both ministers and congregations.

During my time of reflection, I’m connected to the joy discovered in creating and participating in shared ministry opportunities. Witnessing a spark growing into the light of new programming is part of the joy that fuels my continuing call to ministry. I am seeking ministry now because I am committed to this gift of a second career filled with dynamic, creative and shared opportunities grounded in beloved community and our Unitarian Universalist faith.

### **What ministry do you hope is ahead for you?**

The ministry I hope for will be filled with opportunities to engage our Unitarian Universalist faith within our beloved congregational communities building alliances with our neighbors near and far. I hope for a ministry that engages the process of deconstructing barriers within ourselves and our communities, living into a commitment to anti-racist and multi-cultural practices and environments. I envision working shoulder to shoulder with other seekers, curious how we can transform and be transformed engaging justice across interfaith and secular settings.

In Jerusalem, I spent time listening to the power of community as two members of the Parent Circle Program came to speak to my traveling group. They each shared their losses to violence, a Palestinian wife whose husband was killed and accused as a terrorist while coming home to take his family to the beach and an Israeli father, whose daughter was killed by a Palestinian suicide bomber. They come together working for reconciliation. Their parting words to us were: "Go home in peace, be ambassadors for us to your communities." They left me with a call to work building relationships, breaking down assumptions and fear based barriers.

Collaboration offers opportunities for peace and change, bridge building and creativity and in this light, I look for a congregation interested in a shared ministry model. When we bring our different gifts and interests together, the beauty of community comes alive. I hope for a congregation that is interested in engaging a practice of health within its congregational system, encompassing clear, transparent communication, healthy boundaries and an ability to risk sharing thoughts and opinions with respect.

I seek a community where my love of life, justice and hope for humanity can be of service.

**Describe your call to ministry. What life events have led you to this moment?**

The light shines through the window onto the floor, illuminating evidence of my younger self. Toys in disarray, Barbie's Dream Boat next to the blond-wooden prayer stand. Pictures of Jesus, Mary and pendants of various saints on the shelf reflect a Catholic elementary school experience. The light shines through the window onto one girl's imagination and dreams. From time to time between imagining great trips across the sea, Wonder Bread communion between friends, dreams of becoming a Catholic priest begin to unfold.

Nearing the end of first grade, after attending Catholic Mass every Wednesday and enjoying religion class daily, I decide I want to be a Catholic priest. Monday through Friday at Mount Merici Academy, I was immersed in Catholicism. On Sundays at St. Mark's, I was Episcopalian. All seemed possible at 7 years old.

The barriers weren't yet evident as I imagined my way forward. As time passed, it became clear that I had missed some of the finer details that would snag this plan to become a Catholic priest. I was Episcopalian, not Catholic. And I was a girl! Societal barriers began weaving their way in to extinguish the sharp light of my call. Over time, dreams of Catholic priesthood began to fade away.

As years passed, St. Mark's Episcopal Church became a greater focus for me. Early in my teens, I became the first girl to be an acolyte of my congregation. No role models for women clergy were available to me at the time. People like Unitarian Universalist Olympia Brown, the first woman ordained in 1863 with full denominational authority in the U.S., and Allison Cheek, the first Episcopal priest in 1974 to administer the sacrament of communion, were not role models I was aware of. The women's Catholic priest movement had not yet reached Waterville, Maine.

Years later, I would begin reading about and witnessing women in religious and spiritual leadership, liberating my previous understanding of faith and ultimately my understanding of God. Marcella Althaus-Reid, bell hooks, Sharon Welch, Kate Lassiter and others offered bodies of knowledge, opening my understanding of theology and faith at the intersection of society and politics.

The seeds of becoming a priest lay dormant and the seeds of ministering through my professional social work career grew. At the same time my lay ministry at First Universalist Church, Auburn, Maine, the Unitarian Universalist region and Association blossomed. When asked to serve in church leadership, I said yes, when interested in serving, I asked. I fell in love with opportunities and experiences, particularly volunteer work as a facilitator of congregational dynamics with the Northern New England, and then the New England Region of the UUA and the Beyond Categorical Thinking facilitator work, a program of the Transitions Office of the UUA.

Clarity occurred over this time as I began differentiating between the parts of social work that were ministerial and how ministry holds all of life's processes, rooted in theological history, evolution and beloved community. And this moves the time clock up to the year 2012. I want to be a Unitarian Universalist minister!

People in my life questioned the soundness of my plan to leave a successful social work practice, flexible hours, lots of gardening and contemplation time. The Unitarian Universalist aspirant process began. I completed the career assessment before applying to seminary, just in case they could convince me that this was not a good plan; they didn't.

Time goes by and I reflect with gratitude for early recommendations from the career assessment program to maintain a strong self-care plan. These with my ongoing personal spiritual practice, ongoing supportive relationships have sustained me during my mother's stroke and recovery and eventually her broken hip and continuing recovery. Without these self-care activities and enduring friendships and relationships, completing seminary would not have been possible.

... And now it is 2019 and I'm living into ministry in ways I could not have imagined at 7 years old.

#### Ministerial Roles & Functions

##### **Share your ministerial presence and leadership style:**

Ministry is an interconnected system with lay leadership, lay ministry, paid staff and professional ministry working together. My leadership style has been described as one that shows personal concern for others, is nurturing and caring. I appreciate opportunities in leadership for collaboration as well as supporting other's strengths and interests.

Making room for creativity, inspiration and engaged faith is embedded in my style of leadership. As individuals and groups develop new areas of growth, faith engagement deepens both our individual and congregational lives. Shared ministry is fertile ground of this type of creativity and generative tension.

During my own years of lay leadership, I found increased congregational energy when there was room for many voices at the table, whether around the justice action table or board table. While serving as a lay leader on the board of the First Universalist Church, Unitarian Universalist in Auburn, Maine several experiences engaged my awareness of the power of community.

Working with various congregations and leadership teams over the years, I've found empowering leadership leads to dynamic change and transformation. My role in that is to offer spiritual care and guidance, leadership support and training as well as assistance with the development of structures for effective functioning.

Working with the Unitarian Universalist Association, the Northern New England District and the New England Region have offered multiple practice engagements with numerous congregational systems throughout the Association. Different congregational systems have different ministerial needs. Every group comes together with its own personality, strengths and growing edges. Some groups need permission to lead, others need education to gather congregational input, help with healthy communication and consistency with policies and procedures. Attention to right relationship holds the work together.

**How do you function with church staff? What are your thoughts on staff relations and supervision?**

Collaboration, accountability, clear expectation and supervision are key in team functioning. I see ongoing evaluation tied to clear expectations and opportunities for professional growth, creating room for staff agency over the tasks once the jobs are defined. Having colleagues to work with encourages professionalism and effective systems functioning.

As a full-time minister I see my role as supervisor of staff, available to be their “go to” person. Some congregational by-laws grant both authority for hire and fire as well as responsibility for supervision to the minister. Other congregations grant responsibility for supervision but allocate the responsibility of staff hiring and firing to the board. In either case, collaboration with the board or personnel committee helps support and problem solve staffing issues. The minister’s job is to work within the by-laws of the congregation.

Currently, I supervise 8 part time staff. We gather together as a large group with individual supervision occurring between. My experience in interdisciplinary settings where clear boundaries regarding responsibilities occurs, is a model that transfers well into congregational life. My wish is to work with a combination of paid and lay volunteers toward engaging the mission of the congregation.

**Regarding shared ministry what do you see as your work as minister? What do you see doing in partnership with the congregation? What do you see as the work of the congregation?**

As minister, my role is one of creating avenues for shared spiritual deepening through the creation of worship and supporting adult and youth programming. The role of minister encompasses availability for pastoral care as well as assisting the congregation in the development of lay pastoral care programs. As needs arise, to accompany congregants and possibly greater community members in celebration and mourning, the minister will be responsible for conducting weddings, memorial or funeral services or will be granted first refusal when retired or affiliate clergy are part of the congregation.

Shared ministry is a creative opportunity for congregational life. As professional clergy, I see my role in co-creating space for spiritual and leadership development and faith in action. The covenantal nature of our Unitarian Universalist faith invites us to deepen individual and congregation wide relationships allowing for growth in understanding our strengths and challenges. Any ministry, lay or professional, is deepened through understanding individuals and the congregation as a system. Our time together is created by our mutual learning, creative contributions and historical contexts.

Living into the vision and mission of the congregation in partnership is at the root our Unitarian Universalist faith. Being aware of how we invite the voices of those on the margins into the conversation is a task for all. Some congregations develop focus groups to reach out and engage members in discerning the congregation’s direction, while others participate by creating ongoing loops for

conversation and participation. Developing systems for effective functioning and leadership helps ground a congregation success.

Although there is a supportive role for clergy in congregational committee work and board leadership, these areas fall in the scope of congregational life. While professional ministry supports long-range planning, the nominating process and updating bylaws and other congregation wide efforts, they are under the specific prevue of the work of the congregation. Our congregational polity places the life of the congregation in the context of congregational decision making.

**What role would you see yourself playing in the larger community?**

There is a place for us as individuals and as a congregation to understand ourselves as a vial part of the larger world community. As I engage with the larger world, I seek to meet people at the intersection of our different identities where we bring about collaboration and just change strategies in our local communities and greater world. This question engages my draw toward building community alliances where room for different voices and lived experiences can be expressed and respected.

It is my hope to engage in inter-religious and secular organizational relationship building. As we deepen our understanding of each other we are grounded more deeply in our own faith tradition. All these moments provide rich opportunities that inform our spiritual lives together, our engaged faith in action and our day to day routines.

**How have you seen change happen in a congregation or community? What role would you see yourself playing in congregational change?**

There are many ways I have seen change happen in congregations and communities. In some of the more effective endeavors I've witnessed, change has come from a few voices that see a need and begin to educate others regarding the need or cause. As participation, momentum and energy grows the impact as change makers grow as well. Over time, allowing for various opportunities for participation and development in the approach, a more engaged level of participation occurs. I see my role as helping people to find not only their voice regarding what they witness and are drawn to but assisting in linking interest with opportunity. As a minister of a free pulpit, I see my role as one of naming structures of oppression and our role in them along with an invitation to others to join me in dismantling these structures.

**Describe how you handle being in a conflicted situation:**

My general approach to conflict is one of curiosity. I listen deeply, curious about what perspectives people are carrying and the complexity involved in the situation. Conflict is part of authentic relationships and when we make space for conversations around conflict, relationships are strengthened. Out of the tension of differing perspectives creative solutions are possible. Helping to identify common ground, creative differences and respectful processes is part of how I handle conflict situations. I have a direct, transparent approach to communication.

**What needs do you have to strengthen your ministry and how might a congregation assist you in this?**

Ministry is an ongoing growth opportunity. I look forward to increasing my capacity across the landscape of ministerial skill sets through time. It is my hope that a congregation will support me in engaging with growth opportunities when they arise, attending colleague gatherings, classes and workshops.



It is my goal to continue with the Unitarian Universalist Ministerial Fellowship process with the Unitarian Universalist Association. In light of this goal, I look forward to working with a group of lay people and a professional mentor toward the ongoing requirements toward Full Unitarian Universalist Ministerial Fellowship.

**Describe briefly your ministerial approach to the following:**

- **Worship and preaching:**

Worship is developed at the intersection of the congregational community, greater society and our Unitarian Universalist faith. There is a liturgical arc to a Sunday service that offers an experience and space that is larger than any one particular element. Some of the most dynamic worship experiences are created in and from conversations and the creative energy that is ignited by an invitation to imagine, participate and develop ideas. Worship Associates contribute to this along Music staff and the Director of Religious Exploration and congregation members at-large. Our lives are the “scripture” from which to draw. Colleagues are another well of engaged creativity.

My approach to preaching is as much about the process of preparation as it is about the delivery. I’ve found a personal rhythm that currently works for me. Picking out topics ahead of time with flexibility to address urgent and recent events allows for creative pondering. The time offers room for consultation with others as well as research, reading and integration. I have a personal spiritual writing practice that helps in sermon writing. Preaching itself is a conversation of sorts with an invitation for those present to find themselves in the unfolding. Over my formal training and internship I’ve come to appreciate the difference between telling and showing; with showing offering more profound points of entry for listeners.

- **Pastoral Care / spiritual guidance / counseling / home and hospital visitation:**

Pastoral care is a ministry of presence with engaged empathic listening, open heartedness and spiritual grounding. This particular area is one that I’ve been developing over the last 30 years in my clinical social work practice. There is a skill set and practice that I carry forward into my ministry while at the same time leaving other aspects of clinical social work behind. These years offered me opportunities to provide counseling to people from age 4 to 88 in individual and family settings. 10 of these years were spent providing home care social work which engaged me in the skill of visiting folks in their home environment.

Pastoral care and spiritual guidance is weaved through so many aspects of ministry that go beyond any scheduled consultation. It is embodied in hallway conversations, coffee hour check ins as well as worship and adult and child programming.

- **Children's religious education:**

Congregational life itself is the explicit and implicit religious curriculum for all ages. A life span education integrated approach to ministry is intentional, engages all ages in worship, leadership opportunities and spiritual development both formally and informally. Collaboration is key when working congregationally on religious education.

The Minister, the Director of Religious Education and the Religious Education committee have opportunities to craft experiences where individuals in the congregational community and the larger

community engage and learn together in both age specific and intergenerational contexts. Religious Education best serves community life when designed while keeping learning styles and development levels in mind.

Children's religious education that offers meaningful curriculum, engages opportunities for adults to be supported and trained in their capacity to teach UU children's RE is a framework that strengthens opportunities for all involved. Depending on the size of the congregation and the needs of families, different frameworks for RE can be explored. The UUA has some dynamic curriculums available free on-line. Supporting creative Religious Education and religious educators is important in the development of healthy programming.

- **Youth work:**

In the 1990s, I was gifted with the opportunity to volunteer as an advisor for a program called "Outright," an organization serving GLBTQIA youth in the Lewiston/Auburn, Maine area. The organization was centered on youth needs, engaging youth in the development of programming which guided what services the adults offered. It was a dynamic opportunity to understand how transformative it is for youth to engage their own leadership skills and find their ability to voice their own wants and needs in the framework of a safe and caring environment.

Prior, during and beyond this position, I worked with children in the context of my clinical social work practice. In one setting, I worked with youth who had encountered abuse and neglect who were living in a residential living setting while working with others who lived in the context of their families or foster care. These encounters offered glimpses into the importance of providing support for youth and their families. Congregations have a unique position to support the healthy functioning of various family formations through age specific and inter-generational events including mentoring programs.

Inviting youth into leadership and worship as well as other congregational functions enriches the life of the congregation and spiritual development of youth. This is an ongoing process however, that needs to start with opportunities for children to find room for their voices in the life of the congregation at all ages.

- **Adult religious education:**

The responsibility for life span education reaches across the membership of the congregation. Nurturing the sparks of creativity and faith can ignite new programs and new leaders. The goals of religious education can be best realized when considered holistically, people in context and environment. As we live into our principles, grounded in our faith tradition we can enliven and deepen our learning together.

- **Incorporating music, the arts, and creativity into congregational life:**

Music and arts are central to the spiritual life of a congregation. They are interconnected and influence the depth and opportunity to experience faith with and beyond words. There is something moving that happens when we weave together worship experiences that engage different parts of ourselves, our logical and emotional minds, our whole beings with the senses we have access to.

Engaging collaboratively with both lay and professional musicians, artists and staff as well as worship committees provides opportunities to imagine what we can create together both during times of worship and at other times in the life of the congregation and community. I wonder what ways we as

UUs can connect with others outside of our congregations by engaging art and music. Engaging music and arts with religious education, fellowship, spiritual development opportunities beyond what we can currently imagine are opportunities to shift our business as usual. And using art to bridge relationships and build coalitions can strengthen and enliven our faith.

- **Community building / facilitation skills / coffee hour and social times:**

In 2001, I was invited to become a facilitator of the UUA's Beyond Categorical Thinking Program related to my active congregational lay leadership. Through this program I have facilitated or co-facilitated over 50 different weekends with over 50 different congregations in various states throughout our Association.

Facilitating Beyond Categorical Programs offers me opportunities to work with various search committees and leaders. The program involves coordinating the event with the search committee, meeting with the search committee, facilitating worship and a 3 hour workshop for the congregation. It has been a great joy to continue building my facilitation skills and relationships throughout this work.

This learning along with other facilitation roles throughout New England have highlighted how important it is to create a space of radical welcome. This radical welcome helps to engage individuals and groups in the life of the congregation and in coalition building. Facilitation skills help individuals and groups of people find their way into understanding and knowing each other. One skill that I've particularly come to appreciate is how to find other already skilled facilitators in groups while having the opportunity to teach others to become facilitators as well.

- **Committee / Task force work:**

The beauty of congregational life is the varying points of entry. For some, a point of engagement includes short term clearly defined concrete tasks which is a gift to the congregation and involves at its best an opportunity for people to work and get to know others. My approach is to understand that people have their own process of engagement balanced with radical hospitality, noticing people's strengths and gifts, inviting them into participation. When offered opportunities to help create with the room to change the way things were approached in the past, people see how their contributions matter and the congregation is strengthened. Some tasks are well suited to committee work and others are more short term in nature and a working task force may be a more efficient way to approach a need.

- **Leadership development:**

Leadership development begins with the very youngest in age as well as newer arrivals and longer-term members of the congregation. Leadership development is one of the tasks of ministry, both professional ministry and lay ministry. As we change the framework of what leadership development means by considering how we engage the life of the congregation through this lens we can infuse our overall approach to congregational life with opportunities to lead at various levels. It may be one way to shift the adage that 80% of the work is done by 20% of the people. As we find more pathways to meaningful participation and leadership development, we ignite more interest and investment in congregational life.

- **Long range planning / mission / vision / covenant:**

Long Range Planning, mission and vision is important work of the congregation and will help guide leadership as they support the health and growth of the congregation through decisions and actions. Covenant offers a relational container as the congregation lives into its mission and vision utilizing its long-range plan as a guide. My approach is to support engagement of a model that encourages participation of the greater membership (including friends) early in the process.

A strong team to help develop avenues of engagement, information processing and collection is required. Skilled large and small group facilitation within the congregation and sometimes hired from outside the congregation can help engage effective participation. This type of approach takes time and it is well worth the time. When people have helped to create it, they are more greatly invested in it! These are living documents to continue to share and integrate into committee meetings, staff meetings, board meetings and worship.

Ultimately, the congregation owns this work and an opportunity to vote on these important supporting frameworks will be an important step in the process.

- **Membership and membership growth:**

There are different reasons people come to church and certainly we cannot know them all, however we can know someone's name, know how they like to spend their time and who they spend their time with. We can develop and maintain systems of caring support where people are greeted and invited to engage in the life of the congregation. Developing systems of follow up, with both minister and lay members working together helps care for members and friends. As we develop a radical approach to hospitality, our congregational life together can reflect multicultural and multiracial world we live in.

Deconstructing barriers to more just engagement with others, is the loving work of our faith. I believe these basics further to deepen our spiritual relationships and a grow our congregation's membership. When we find ways to engage new members and maintain and follow up with members and friends, we create a base on which to grow our congregations.

- **Anti-oppression work:**

My focus on organizational multicultural change began with my own expanding education of how the intersection of multiple identities impact our access in communities and how structures of systemic bias build barriers to full participation in life. My work in this area began to unfold with my participation at the First Universalist Church, UU of Auburn as we engaged the congregation in the Journey Toward Wholeness, exploring our issues with white privilege and the Welcoming Congregation, expanding our open hospitality and life of the congregation to LGBTQ people. I was part of the organizing committee at First Universalist for these programs in the early 1990s.

After several years working in this congregation I was recruited by the Reverend Keith Kron at the UUA in 2001 to become a facilitator for the Beyond Categorical Thinking Program. Since my initial training I have visited with over 50 congregations throughout the United States to assist in helping congregations look at how issues of identity might affect their ministerial search process. Engaging the deconstruction of systemic bias is ongoing work for all of us and leads to deepened engagement with others and our faith.

- **Social justice / social action:**

Social justice is an interesting intersection of congregational and community life. Finding out about the life of the congregation and its activities, successes and challenges is a beginning place for me as an incoming minister. Ministry involves discovery, support of engagement and encouraging growth and lived faith. There are many ways to offer education and connection in the congregation including adult education, attention to justice in worship and offering calls to action.

Social justice and action is one of the areas that feeds my spirit. From my first visit to a UU congregation in 1991, I realized I was home after being warmly greeted upon entering and directed to the sanctuary by the musical accompanist as it turns out and handed a social action update by one of the social action committee members! Now more than ever, the world needs a saving faith where voices are shared in community to build equity, treat people with compassion and shift structural ongoing systems of oppression and violence.

- **Interfaith / community work:**

There is a place for us as individuals and as a congregation to understand ourselves as a vial part of the larger world community. As I engage with the larger world, I seek to meet people at the intersection of our different identities where we bring about collaboration and just change strategies in the world near and far. This question engages my draw toward building community alliances where room for different voices and lived experiences can be expressed and respected.

As we continue engaging in interreligious relationship building, deepening our understanding of others we ground ourselves more deeply in our own faith tradition. These provide rich opportunities that inform our spiritual lives together, our engaged faith in action and our day to day routines.

- **Denominational activities:**

UU Congregations are part of a greater Association of congregations that benefit from working together, learning together and taking community action together. One benefit to engaging in denominational activities is the development of alliances and relationships. There are a variety of benefits on which to draw that are designed for staff development, lay leadership development and spiritual enrichment. As the world engages this electronic age, so have our Regional programs and Associational programs. With webinars, zoom and skype connecting has become more accessible and resources more widely distributed.

When congregations become aware of what's available and support engagement with both access to information and funding to attend I believe we help build awareness of our greater movement and our potential for creating change in our own UU Association and the community and society at large.

- **Stewardship:**

We are stewards of the earth, our faith, and our congregations. Stewardship also involves financial wellness which is strengthened by direct conversation about financial functioning.

Financial and non-financial stewardship is linked to the mission, long range goals and envisioned future of the congregation. Being clear about how what we do is supporting the life and mission of the church is a time well spent. I see my role as minister to help articulate how mission and money are connected.

There are opportunities in communities to explore our relationships with money both individually and as a congregation. Everyone has a theology connected to their actions and beliefs about finances. Creating opportunities for explicit examination is part of the ministerial role.

- **Finances:**

Transparency with the congregation around money, expenses, total salary expenses, building upkeep and maintenance among other areas is linked to overall congregational health, empowerment and engagement. The fiscal affairs/financial committee's communication with the congregation is vitally important. Budget hearings (education) prior to congregational budget votes, lays the groundwork for informed democracy.

- **Other areas not covered above:**

Taking the leap of faith to enter seminary and begin a second career in professional ministry has been all I've anticipated and much more. As I've joyfully encountered new learning opportunities, I've found that I'm even more deeply drawn into the beauty of living our Unitarian Universalist faith. When we are willing to be transformed by engaging in life together we can change the world for the better. When we are willing to build relationships with other congregations and secular groups our opportunities for improving the world expand even more.

It is my hope to serve a congregation where we develop a shared ministry together that responds to the calling of the community and the world.

### **How do you build trust with a congregation and individuals?**

Unitarian Universalism is a covenantal faith, how we are with each other informs the very structure of our foundation. Being open to feedback, perspectives and ideas and a willingness to offer feedback, perspectives and ideas adds to the ability to build a mutual, faithful, and trusting community. A willingness to listen to each other while providing intentional environments where this can occur helps the process along. Understanding the congregational covenant and having clear safety policies assists us in offering consistent boundaries and some guidance when folks move out of right relationship with another.

Trust takes time and it's different for different people, so the formula has only the basic ingredients. It is in relationship that we get to know each other's stories, hopes and dreams. Being present, transparent and consistent as well as having direct, clear communication invites this cultivation. Years ago a congregant gave me the advice she had for a new minister. She wrote her formula down: Fair, Frank, Friendly, and Factual. These were her go to strategies in her long career in the hospitality business. She offered these to me as guides in ministry, a different kind of "hospitality" career.

### **Describe your theology and the role of the ministry in a congregation that has multiple theologies:**

There's a part of me that falls in love easily, and I've come to appreciate Krister Stendahl's term "holy envy," appreciating another's faith tradition while at the same time coming to a deeper appreciation of my own.(1) My own faith grounding is rooted deeply in our Unitarian Universalist tradition with an appreciation of the various sources of our particular tradition. Krister Stendahl is referring to inter-religious dialogue, where we listen to understand not convince; listening and learning with curiosity. I'm curious by nature and enjoy learning what sustains and inspires another's faithful action. This

opportunity exists in our faith where we are encouraged to follow our own search for truth and meaning.

To these encounters, I bring my own understanding of the sacred and holy. I find God in the creative energy between and among people and the environment. I remember how profound it was for me to see in the words of Henry Nelson Wieman a description that reflected my experience of God. For me, it is in relationship that I can see the creative mystery of life; those times when I have been transformed by my engagement with beloved community.

My day begins early, watching the sun rise. This connects me to my own sense of wonder about our vast universe, reminding me of my presence with the interconnection of all things. This is a time that I also connect to the holy within me. My theology has evolved over time leaving me with an understanding that our theology can change and our UU faith has room in it for that to occur. Only by encountering each other and different expressions of faith can we gain a greater sense of rootedness, either by shifting our own beliefs based on our experiences or by deepening our current theology through these same experiences.

Providing Beyond Categorical Thinking weekends and facilitating leadership retreats has offered me opportunities to visit congregations with very different expressions of faith, some strongly humanist and others liberal Christian. Even within these contexts however, a variety of theological perspectives exist. Ministry offers opportunities to reflect on ways to invite folks of different beliefs to engage. Utilizing varying sources and language in worship and ministerial leadership and engaging theologies that differ from my own, offer connection with others. Creating these invitations is another avenue for hospitality to those who hold different perspectives.

1 Landau, Yehezkel. Harvard Divinity School, Harvard Divinity Bulletin, Interview with Krister Stendahl. Winter, 2007. <https://bulletin.hds.harvard.edu/articles/winter2007/interview-krister-stendahl>(accessed June 21, 2017).

### **What questions do you hope our congregations are asking themselves and discussing?**

What is our role in dismantling white supremacy and how can we engage others in this work?

What is the role of Unitarian Universalism in our world today and how can we embody our faith as we engage in our community and in our world?

What ways can we deepen our faith as a community while engaging more voices that are currently not present?

How will we develop relationships with other communities both secular and religious in the work of social justice and climate change?

How will engage joy as we look to sustain our active participation in living our faith?

### **How do you give and receive feedback?**

Feedback is an opportunity for growth and relationship development. I generally approach it with a non-defensive position considering it an opportunity for transparency in relationships and follow through on covenant. Sometimes I explain that I need time to think something over before responding and if I know ahead of time that an interchange will be more challenging then I'll attempt to schedule the

conversation when I and those involved have an open window of time that is not rushed. I try to be ongoing in the feedback department with both strengths that I see and areas for potential improvement or glitches that we all run into. Being direct, transparent and non-defensive is the root of my practice regarding feedback. A genuine caring relationship helps to hold respectful feedback conversations.

### **How do you suggest your ministry with the congregation is evaluated?**

Fulfilling the Call, A Model for UU Ministry in the 21st Century, published in 2013 by the UUA, offers a detailed rubric guide to 9 ministerial competencies. Recently, a model recommended by Unitarian Universalist minister, the Rev. Kendyl Gibbons, is one my current Ministerial Fellowship team (since I'm in an interim ministry there is no Committee on Shared Ministry) and I have begun trying. The model invites one member of the shared committee on ministry/ministerial fellowship team, the minister, member of the board, and a person who would be an invested participant. For instance, the chair of the worship team when reviewing worship. In preparation, all participants are to elicit thoughts from their informal circles in the congregation.

The meeting is designed to offer education about aspects of ministerial functioning as well as the discussion of feedback related to various competencies and ministries of the congregation. The board member and minister take notes as the meeting unfolds. Afterwards, the board member writes a paragraph summary of major points from the conversation, which they report to the subsequent board meeting. Those paragraphs are accumulated by the secretary of the board, and at the end of the year constitute the published evaluation. These meetings are opportunities for ministers to hear more about what people care about, receive feedback and opens the door for folks to consider their role in various aspects of the ministry of the congregation.

These meetings are held monthly, covering a different competency each month and offers a year-round evaluation process. Some benefits of this model include, ongoing conversation about the ministry of the congregation including minister's and the congregation's role in that shared ministry, it helps to create a consistent format for what is being evaluated and because I am still in preliminary fellowship with the UUA, it offers a guide that aligns with the required evaluation by the board and committee on shared ministry/ministerial fellowship team.

Overall, a lens of appreciative inquiry is helpful during any kind of evaluation, allowing us all to highlight both strengths and areas of concern.

### **What do you hope for the future of Unitarian Universalism?**

My hope for the future of Unitarian Universalism is one of continuing opportunities for transformation and change as we continue to discover our own internal oppressive structures and ways of functioning. My living into our faith goes beyond hope with an energy that is fueled by my love of our historical stance on justice and a willingness to accept our engagement in forms of white supremacy which has damaged so many and limited our full participation in living out our principles in right relationship with each other and the world. Unitarian Universalism has room to harness the great possibilities of embodied faith within its history, its principles and sources.

Our Association is filled with congregations that are trying new ways of engaging with and in the world. There is an opportunity for us to learn from each other, developing stronger connections between congregations. We have an opportunity to consider relationship building one of our assets to build on.



### **What else would you like to say about your ministry and ministry skills?**

I bring to my role as minister years of engagement in congregational leadership. Having served two different congregations as Chair of the Board of Directors and as a volunteer for the Northern New England District and the New England Region, I've engaged with Unitarian Universalism in many ways. In these roles, I've facilitated start up retreats when a new ministry begins, have conducted exit interviews when a ministry has ended and have facilitated numerous leadership retreats.

As a Beyond Categorical Thinking facilitator for the UUA over the last 18 years, I have visited with over 50 congregations in our Association. Each experience has helped me understand the vast perspectives in congregations and cultures of congregations in our Association. There are so many ways of approaching Unitarian Universalism which has filled me with an appreciation for the unique nature of every different congregation. It is my honor to serve our faith.

As a foundation to ministry I bring a systems perspective developed through my 30 plus years of Social Work. My ministry in Denton, TX has reinforced the importance of shared ministry through the empowerment and engagement of congregation members. Learning in ministry and skill building is truly never ending.

Personal

### **What should a congregation know about your family situation?**

This February, my spouse Kate and I will celebrate the twenty one year mark of our first date. It was a long engagement awaiting marriage equality in Maine. On our wedding invitation 5 years ago, it read "We've been unionized, civilized and domesticated; now we're going to be married!" Our immediate family consists of the two of us and two elderly cats.

We are currently bi-locational, with a home in Topsham, Maine and an apartment in Denton, Texas. Kate lives in Topsham with one of our cats and I live in Denton, Texas with my mother. We are fortunate to have the flexibility to create connection through regular visits with each other. Kate has worked for Maine Medical for 25 years and currently works in their South Portland, Maine administrative office as the Manager of Maine Medical Partners, Business Intelligence Department.

We are sustained in life by the love and care of our circle of friends, near and far. Many long-term friendships and other more recent ministerial friendships are scattered across the United States. We have family as well and have been fortunate to live very near some of our family at various times in our lives. Both of our mothers are living, and we share our lives and support with them. I am one of 5 children and my father died in June 2013 at 81 years old, still engaged in his second career!

### **How do you take care of yourself so that the congregation does not have to?**

Healthy relationships outside of the context of the congregation I serve support my self-care. Part of my long-term self-care plan has been to maintain my friendships, appreciating them for shared fun and caring support. These relationships include very long-term connections as well as those more recently developed. I engage in professional relationships that support my health and creativity in my ministerial role. While in Texas, I've utilized zoom to connect with a group of seminary pals monthly, UU preliminary fellowship groups and individual meetings with friends.

In addition to these supports, I participate in Spiritual Direction and commit to my own spiritual practice. These in addition to my own health care activities provide a depth of support during times of challenge. I'm grateful for these enduring relationships and my capacity to create fun through dance, swimming, walking, singing, crafts, gardening, photography and attending musicals and leisurely conversations with my spouse.

#### Additional Information

Taking the leap of faith to enter seminary in 2014 and begin professional ministry has been all I've anticipated and so much more. While encountering new learning opportunities, I'm even more deeply drawn into the beauty of living our Unitarian Universalist faith.

It is my hope to serve a congregation where we develop a shared ministry called to hear the needs of the community and the world.