

Ms. Donna Helen Dolham

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Last Updated: April 16, 2018

Experience & Preparation

Preliminary Fellowship: N/A

Final Fellowship: N/A

Ordination: N/A

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

Congregational Ministries Served:

2018- 2018	Sabbatical Minister ⓘ	<u>First Church and Parish in Dedham</u>	Dedham, MA
2016- 2018	Ministerial Intern ⓘ	<u>First Church and Parish in Dedham</u>	Dedham, MA
2016- 2018	Ministerial Intern ⓘ	<u>First Church and Parish in Dedham</u>	Dedham, MA

Other Ministries and Work Experience:

1993-	Clinical Social Work	Private Practice	Union, Maine
1991-	Community Health Social Worker	Androscoggin Home Care and Hospice	Lewiston, Maine
1989-	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.

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

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.

New England Region of the Unitarian Universalist Association

Volunteer Peer Facilitator; 2015 to Present

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 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:

When asked to serve in Unitarian Universalist leadership, I say yes; when interested in serving, I ask. I have fallen in love with opportunities and experiences available in our UU faith. I've particularly enjoyed working with congregations in transition through the Beyond Categorical Thinking work which I began in 2001. It has been a delight to work with over 50 congregations over many years both near and far. I have worked with UU congregations in Michigan, Virginia, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Maine. Over the miles I've

enjoyed the adventures of visiting not only the different geography but have enjoyed the very different way each congregation lives their UU faith. Worship styles differ, leadership structures vary and systems function in their own unique styles.

While working with one congregation I had the opportunity to witness how they were just beginning to understand how dynamic they were. It seemed over the years they had fallen into a slump. They began to overlook their gifts as they fell into a familiar routine framed around their current expectations. As we met and worked together over the BCT weekend, it became clear that they (as many congregations are) were filled with exciting opportunities. They had very engaged congregants in life of the church, their music was really out of this world which infused their services with a depth that carried beyond any spoken word. It was easy to identify that they had a lot to offer a new minister and any new members that walked through their doors. They had not yet really spread the word about themselves or figured out how to open their doors to new members. This is a lesson that I take into my ministry. Watch for those sparks of health, watch for sparks of commitment and creativity and help people celebrate the many strengths that as a congregation they bring together.

Most recently, my yes to leadership arrived when my internship minister was called away unexpectedly. I have stepped into the role of sabbatical minister to help the congregation navigate this unexpected change. Some of what I've been able to offer during this time is a new eye to some leadership functioning. In particular, I've recommended some strategies to increase communication and trust in the process of executive session for the board. I bring to this role an understanding that there are many ways to live into our covenantal relationship together garnered from my contact with many different congregations. In my sabbatical ministerial role, I've been able to support existing healthy communication as well as guide opportunities for more clarity and directness. It has been a delight to support the life of this congregation during this time of unexpected change.

Why are you seeking ministry now?

With seminary behind me and my final year of internship nearing an end, I am excited to engage in professional ministry in this next chapter of my life. Social work was a wonderful platform to move into ministry and on September 2014, I stepped onto the Andover Newton Theological School's campus in Newton Center, MA as an incoming freshman. It was with delight that within a few hours, I recognized that ANTS was a wonderful fit with my ministry intentions. Three years

later, in May of 2017, I graduated from ANTS with my Masters in Divinity with a Certificate in Justice & Ethics. This last September, I met with the Ministerial Fellowship Committee and was granted a 1 (free to search for a ministerial position with no contingencies).

At this time, I am completing my ministerial training with First Church and Parish in Dedham, MA where I have been serving as their part time ministerial intern since September 2016 and began full time sabbatical coverage the beginning of March. Serving this congregation continues to ignite my excitement about the creative possibilities in ministry. This winter I was invited to facilitate the day long retreat for 13 of the congregations leaders. It was a joy helping the leaders connect to their own spiritual gifts and the congregations mission. We explored the question, "why bother with church?" As the facilitator for the day, I met in advance with the co-chairs and the minister to discern what their goals were for the day. From here I designed a day engaging teaching, reflecting, meditation and creativity where the leadership team dove more deeply into the possibilities that lay ahead. People left the retreat energized and excited about the opportunity to continue to serve the congregation and I found myself grateful for the opportunity to minister to them in this way. My internship will come to a close June 10th and my ordination is scheduled for June 16th by my home congregation, First Universalist Church, Unitarian, Universalist of Auburn, Maine.

I have continued my clinical social work practice through seminary and this too will also come to a close this summer as I enter into this new adventure in professional ministry.

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; where we build alliances with our neighbors near and far. I hope for a ministry that engages in 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 this year, 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 to build 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:

My first recollection of my call to ministry was in the first grade at Mount Merici Academy. Nearing the end of my first grade year after attending mass every Wednesday and enjoying religion class daily, I decided I wanted to be a Catholic priest. Monday through Friday I was Catholic and on Sundays I was Episcopal. It all seemed possible at 7 years old; I had missed some of the finer details that would snag up this plan a little later on, like I was Episcopal and a girl!

As I entered my teen years, St. Mark's Episcopal Church in Waterville became a greater focus for me. Early in my teens I became the first girl acolyte, still not imagining that my early dream of being a priest was an option. During these years my focus became surviving middle and high school without the grounding of my Catholic school community. Eventually, I found another island of support working at Burger King. A relief from trying to fit in, we all wore the same outfit and in some ways we were a pretty diverse group with a central focus, getting the job done.

Years passed and I found myself leaving high school half a year early to go to college. Almost by default I ended up in the Human Services program in Gerontology in Bangor, Maine because they had rolling admission and the program began the January before my high school graduation. I was fueled with determination to succeed at college after running into some educational roadblocks on the way in high school. Enjoying school, I continued onward

eventually completing my Masters in Social Work. The seeds of becoming a priest lay dormant and the seeds of ministering through my professional social work career and lay ministry at First Universalist Church, Auburn, Maine blossomed.

My social work practice along with participation in social justice activities nourished my call to ministry for many years. As time went on however, I felt nudged back to my call to professional ministry and I called the UUA to inquire. This was 15 years ago. The person on the phone asked what I had been up to, I explained my profession and they asked; "If you're already working with people, why do you want to be a minister?" ... I'm sure I said something but in reality I went blank, I didn't have an answer. The next part of sorting out my call began.

When asked to serve in church leadership, I said yes, when interested in serving, I asked. I fell in love with the opportunities and experiences and particularly enjoyed the Beyond Categorical Thinking work. 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 community. And this moves the time clock up to the year 2012. I want to be a Unitarian Universalist minister!

I didn't call the UUA this time, I just started the process. People in my life thought I'd cracked up; 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. They did however have a few recommendations, three that I initially mentioned as personal goals: do CPE, go to Seminary, continue in daily prayer and invest in an exercise program, continue with support system and begin spiritual direction. Ok, now I was really going to have to start exercising and figure out what spiritual direction was and that is what I did.

Hours and days went by during times of challenge that I reflected back with gratitude for the push to begin both the exercise program and spiritual direction. 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 2017, seminary is complete, internship is half way done and I'm stepping 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 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. At one point we had been given a generous promise by a large donor for money toward an elevator. Energy and excitement grew as we began to imagine a ministry with increased physical accessibility. At one point in our negotiations with the donor new hurdles were stipulated that at the time seemed insurmountable. The gift of the dream for an elevator however had grown into its life force. Firmly committed now to this dream the board accessed avenues for financing, a grant from the Shelter Rock foundation was applied for and granted, a successful capital campaign was completed and eventually the donor re-engaged with some funding as well. There are possibilities within communities that goes beyond any one person. This is a lesson that I carry with me into my ministerial intern work as well as my other engagements with congregations through the Association and New England Region.

Working with various congregations and leadership teams, I've found empowering leadership leads to dynamic change and transformation. My role in that is to offer

spiritual care, leadership support and training as well as supporting structures of effective functioning. It is here that I see we can build learning relationships among our UU congregations and our community at large.

Working with the Unitarian Universalist Association, the Northern New England District and the New England Region have offered me multiple practice engagements with numerous congregational systems throughout the northeast. I've learned that different 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, to name just a couple, and all need attention to right relationship to help hold the work ahead.

Most recently, I've had an opportunity to provide sabbatical coverage for my internship congregation. This time has invited opportunities to increase my collaboration with lay leaders and paid staff around worship development, church administration and congregational systems functioning.

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

Collaboration, accountability, clear expectations 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. I am looking for a full time ministry position and would see my role as supervisor of staff, available to be their "go to" person. Working with the personnel committee around issues of hiring and firing will require clear, direct communication. Having colleagues to work with encourages professionalism and effective systems functioning.

I have provided supervision in my previous career in social work in group and individual settings, providing feedback and support for other social worker's goals. I have also worked in interdisciplinary settings where clear boundaries regarding responsibilities helped get the overall job done with ease. My wish is to engage 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?

Shared ministry is a creative opportunity for congregation life. As professional clergy, I see my role as engaging space for spiritual development and faith in action, including leadership development. The covenantal nature of our Unitarian Universalist faith invites space for deepening individual and congregation wide relationships allowing for a more full understanding of strengths and challenges. Any ministry, congregational or clergy is deepened through understanding of individuals and the congregation as a whole. Our time together is created by our mutual learning, creative contributions and historical contexts.

Setting vision and mission in partnership with the congregation at the intersection of our Unitarian Universalist faith, the culture of the congregation and society offers a process rooted in the congregation and supported by clergy. 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 the discernment of the congregation's direction as lay leaders offer persistent engagement of the vision. Developing systems for effective functioning and leadership is a specific area that would ground its success in multiple perspectives in partnership with the congregation.

Although there is a supportive role for clergy in congregational committee work and board leadership, these particular areas fall in the scope of congregational life. Such things as long range planning, nominating leaders and voting on bylaws and other congregation wide efforts is 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 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.

It is my hope to engage in interreligious relationship building, deepening our understanding of others and grounding us more deeply in our own faith tradition. All of these opportunities 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 a number of 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 see 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 listening 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 and respectful processes is part of how I handle conflict situations. I have a direct, transparent approach to communication.

Tell a story that deepened your understanding of what ministry is:

The power of community has deepened my understanding about what ministry is in many ways. One example occurred following a Sunday service. The worship topic, "forgiveness," I had picked the summer before as a challenge to myself. I had spent some time preparing a ritual around forgiveness of self and others, not being sure how this would go over with the congregation. It was something very different than their usual service structure. It just so happened that the week before this service a congregant had approached me for pastoral care centering on issues of forgiveness. As I prepared my sermon and the service liturgy, I reflected on not only her needs but how to invite those present into exploring this at the intersection of their own lives.

The entire congregation participated in the ritual... Following the service, one member with tears in his eyes thanked me for the service explaining that he had been challenged with the issue of forgiveness. People greeting me in the receiving

line, seemed impacted and grateful for this opportunity. Ministry is sometimes creating space for people to grieve, let go or at least let part of their lives be, as they prepare to venture into another week of life.

Tell about a mistake you've made in ministry and what you've learned from it:

Humanity is a gift of perpetual learning. One mistake I've learned from in the context of ministry occurred in my internship teaching committee. This is the very loving and committed group of congregation members that have supported me in my ministerial formation. During my first of a two year internship, I began to notice that one member was having difficulty engaging in the process. Although they attended meetings regularly, their participation varied from engaged, to dis-engaged. I asked him about his experience, revisited our covenant, I engaged in a mid-year evaluation of our group process and checked on each members investment in continuing on the committee. This did not seem to change the dynamic. What I eventually realized was that the group had not had any training on how to be an internship committee and this had a significant impact on the different levels and styles of participation in our process. I ended the first year with a conversation with the committee identifying this as a need within the group and year two began with a training which I developed and offered with my supervising minister. The clarity about the "job" of the committee was like watching a light bulb go on. My mistake was not recognizing that a very early building block was missing in our group process. People need to understand clearly what the task is that they are participating in and need to be given the resources to engage in the task. We also ordered "Fulfilling the Call, A Model for UU Ministry in the 21st Century" for each member of the internship committee to support their understanding of ministerial formation. These two interventions turned not only this one member's participation around but deepened our process together. I will remember: start at the beginning, offer resources around expectations and guidance for those taking on any task.

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

As I enter into ministry, I look forward to increasing my capacity across the landscape of ministerial skill sets. It is my goal to continue with the Unitarian Universalist Ministerial Fellowship process with the Unitarian Universalist Association. In light of that goal, I look forward to working with a group of lay people and a professional mentor toward this and ongoing professional development. These relationships are a place where I can continue to discern differences between my previous social work career and professional ministry. In

these relationships, kind honesty, transparency and direct communication are strategies I've found helpful in other learning environments. This exciting opportunity for engaged learning through supported practice is something I'm looking forward to.

Balancing my call to parish and public ministry will be an integral part of my ongoing development. Developing increased skills in leadership and staff development and community alliance building are vital areas to how my current ministry can be enhanced and nurtured. A congregation that I serve can support my engagement with learning experiments by leaning into opportunities with me and reflecting on the effectiveness of our emerging strategies. In this way we will develop a community of shared learning.

Increased skill with media and technology and its integration into my ministry will be just one way to enhance worship, outreach and community connection and communication. A congregation can support my development in this area with generosity as I continue to practice various forms of technology in my ministry.

Intercultural competency (the ability to relate emotionally, cognitively and relationally across racial, cultural and other identities) is a life-long practice that I hope the congregation will join me in. Where we can examine our own internalized lessons that cause us to step back when stepping in will offer a richer texture to our lives and add to what we have to offer our communities as allies and friends. There are opportunities for us to learn from each other and to reach out into the world and engage and develop relationships where we expose ourselves to our growing edges, living into our Unitarian Universalist faith.

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 definitely 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.

In addition to years of experience in creating safe spaces for people to share their concerns and struggles, I've had opportunities to bring in new dynamics of ministry as I worked at Maine Medical Center in their clinical pastoral education program. During my time there I visited with patients who experienced a number of different health crisis. I covered general medical units, the emergency room and pediatrics meeting with people pre and post-surgery, and families who were companioning their loved one through the end of life. 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 inter and intra 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.

The opportunity for smaller congregations may found not only in creative multi-age programming but in the alliance building with other congregations.

- **Youth work:** In the 1990s, I was gifted with the opportunity to volunteer as an advisor for a program called "Outright," an organization serving GLBTQ 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 intergenerational events including mentorship 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 congregations. 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 including, MI, ME, VT, RI, VA, CT, MA, and NH. This program which is offered to congregations in ministerial transition offered me opportunities to work with an equal number of search committee 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 build on my skills as a facilitator as I came to understand that it is about how we invite others into participation.

This learning along with other opportunities for learning through 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 a group and 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 can find more pathways to meaningful participation and leadership development perhaps we will 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 what we can know someone's name, we can 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. We can develop systems of follow up, with both minister and lay members working together to care for members and friends. We can develop a radical hospitality approach to our congregational life together that is invitational and reflects the multicultural and multiracial world we live in. We can work on deconstructing our barriers to more just engagement with others. I believe this would be some of the basics to further both a deepening of our spiritual relationships and a growth of members. If we can find ways to engage new members and maintain and follow up with members and friends, perhaps, we will have a base on which to grow our congregational membership.
- **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 northeast 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 fed my spirit in my own spiritual journey. 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! We just never know for sure what feeds one's spirit and developing avenues for engagement is one of our calls as both professional and lay leaders in congregations.

- **Interfaith / community work:** There is a place for us as individuals and as a congregation to understand ourselves as a vital 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.

It is my hope to engage in interreligious relationship building, deepening our understanding of others and grounding us more deeply in our own faith tradition. All of these opportunities 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 can benefit from working together, learning together and taking community action together. I believe that a benefit to engaging in denominational activities is the development of such 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 can 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. There are times when someone's

pastoral needs may be evident in the shifting of their ability to meet their pledge in which case a minister having access to these instances would help in ministerial pastoral outreach.

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.

- **Finances:** Transparency with the congregation around money, expenses, salaries, 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 my entry into professional ministry has been all I've anticipated and so 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. I believe that when we are willing to be transformed by engaging in life together we can change the world for the better and 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 hears the calling of the needs 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. In light of this, I find 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 someone steps 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 having direct, clear

communication invites this cultivation. Just today, I had an opportunity during a pastoral care visit with a long time UU member who is no longer able to come to services. I asked her what advice she had for a new minister and she responded by writing 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 I enter into a different career tied so clearly to the business of “hospitality.”

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 and I see this opportunity 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, I’m aware that a variety of theological perspectives exist. I enjoy reflecting on ways to offer varying sources and language in worship

and ministerial leadership; engaging theologies that differ from my own, offer windows into connection with others. Providing invitations through varying sources offers hospitality to those who hold different perspectives and may be yearning to see their own beliefs expressed.

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 will 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.

In one congregation I was part of, there were some folks who had some indirect approaches to sharing their concerns. I spoke with them directly and also kept a list of all the members of the congregation and each week, I watched for positive engagements with congregational life and sent cards of gratitude out noting the particular behavior or participation. During my leadership there, I made it through

the directory twice with positive notes. This had an impact on developing a relationship with people that tolerated conversations that were more critical in nature. A genuine caring relationship helps to hold respectful feedback conversations.

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

I believe evaluation is ongoing and that there is a ministry of the congregation as well as my ministry with the congregation. Appreciative inquiry is one approach that will encompass evaluation of the entire ministry of the congregation (congregation and professional clergy). I believe in feedback that offers the opportunity for conversation and growth. In order to evaluate anyone or anything, clarity must be present regarding expectations. At times, evaluations offer new insights into growing edges and strengths as well as opportunities to clarify or renegotiate expectations.

On a less formal level, I will be evaluated by a committee on ministry that is engaged with me in my continuing formation and fellowshiping process with the Unitarian Universalist Association. I like to invite people to offer direct feedback about their experiences with me, which is another type of evaluation. At times a relationship that is open and ongoing will allow for changes in approach, or courses of action sooner than once a year.

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?

Part of what I bring into my role as minister is years of engagement in congregational leadership. I have served two different congregations as Chair of the Board of Directors and have served the Northern New England District and the New England Region as a volunteer facilitator. 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 17 years, I have visited with over 50 congregations in the north east. Each experience has helped me to 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 and their ways of living out our common faith. It has been my honor to serve our faith.

As a foundation to this ministry I bring as well a systems perspective developed through my 30 plus years of Social Work.

Personal

What should a congregation know about your family situation?

This February, my spouse Kate, and I will celebrate the twenty year mark of our first date. It was a long engagement awaiting marriage equality in Maine. On our wedding invitation 4 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 Union, Maine and an apartment in Old Orchard Beach, Maine. Kate has worked for Maine Medical for 23 years and currently works in their South Portland, Maine administrative office.

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 my sister and her daughter who is now 11 years old. 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!

What should a congregation know about your health?

I'm mindful of engaging my own agency where possible toward healthful aging. I enjoy active exercise and balance this with meditation, prayer and play. One health challenge that I face genetically is some loss of hearing. I wear bi-lateral hearing aids and they are quite effective. In workshops or large groups that I facilitate I request amplification and in groups, request that people speak one at a time.

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 ones as well as more recently developed. I also engage in professional relationships that support my engagement in creatively serving in my ministerial capacity and in the past, my social work capacity.

In addition to these informal supports I participate in Spiritual Direction, and am quite committed to my own spiritual practice. These in addition to my own health care activities provide a well of support during times of challenge. I'm grateful for these enduring relationships.

How long do you hope your next ministry lasts? What's the minimum commitment you would make?

I am interested in serving a congregation during their time of ministerial transition, engaging in completing the contracted time for one or two years of interim work.

Settled ministry is also something that I can conceive as a ministry path. In this context, I would be interested in a long term relationship of a minimum of 8 to 10 years and hopefully longer as we continue to challenge and grow together.