

Dear Friends,

Your FUUSB Board of Trustees has an important decision to make by February 15<sup>th</sup>. Please take the time to read this letter today.

Over the past two months both the transition team and Mark Ewert from Stewardship for Us have hosted a number of events inviting people to share their perspectives on our current strengths, challenges, and opportunities. We are very thankful to all of you who participated in these listening events and for being willing to share your thoughts, concerns, and hopes for our community. The summary of the feedback can be found in a combined report that is posted on our website at [www.uusociety.org](http://www.uusociety.org).

This thoughtful feedback has led to some deep reflection and discussions between your Board and your ministerial staff. We heard many beautiful stories, a sense of pride in our community and hopes for an exciting future together. These include:

- Gratitude for our current ministers, inspiring worship and programs
- Pride in our historic building and our place in the Burlington community
- Commitment to our vibrant social justice ministry

We also heard concerns about our challenges that need long-term support and action. These include:

- The very high workloads for a sole Senior Minister and our Director of Operations and Finance, Christina Fulton

-Our financial challenge of annual pledging that is insufficient to fund our desired level of staff support, resulting in a large deficit budget for this year

-Considerable staff turnover

These are complex and longstanding issues, and addressing them will take time. We share your longing for spiritual leadership and stability for our congregation. However, we are concerned that we are not in a positive position to attract the type of minister we seek, and are not yet able to provide the conditions for establishing a successful settled ministry.

We recently learned of an opportunity to go in a different direction, by hiring what is called a *developmental minister*. Developmental ministry is a relatively recent innovation, created to help UU congregations grappling with structural and cultural change. A developmental minister would be a fully ordained spiritual leader, hired for a period of three to five years to help us work on a small set of goals specified in advance by the congregation. At the end of the developmental ministry, we would begin our search for a settled senior minister. Hiring a developmental minister requires finding someone with the specialized training and experience needed to help us meet our goals. That takes some time, so the deadline for applying to hire a developmental minister to start this fall is coming very soon: February 15.

Developmental ministry asks for active participation and leadership from the community. Your board, ministers, transition team and administrative leadership recommend this direction, but we will not make this decision without hearing and thoroughly considering the congregation's opinions. We invite you to join us and share your thoughts at our third listening session to be held in the sanctuary at 12:15 on Sunday, February 10th. Childcare and light snacks will be provided.

On behalf of your Board of Trustees,

Tracy Titchner, Board President

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