

Minister Search Committee Report 2/5/07

Minister Search Committee:

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We started out on the committee talking about what we were looking for in a minister based on the marketing poll of the congregation that was done mid-year last year. We identified the fact that we are looking for more of a spiritual leader than someone who is very business-like, as we have the board to take care of the business end of things. This was important because our finances at this point are allowing us to hire a part-time minister, not full-time, so we needed to narrow our focus a bit when looking at their strengths and duties.

We then began work on a packet that we later submitted to the Association of Unity Churches, describing our church and what we're looking for in a minister. Once that was done, we began looking at our hiring process. We decided that as we received resumes, we would send either an acknowledgement letter or a rejection letter to each candidate. We took some time to work on drafting both of these following some guidelines sent from the Association. After that was done, we decided that eligible candidates would participate first in a phone interview, and if they were to proceed on in the process would then complete a written questionnaire. If we felt we still wanted to look at a candidate at this point, we would consider bringing them to town for an in-person interview.

To facilitate this process, we had to work on questions for both the phone and written interviews, as well as in-person interview questions. This was a process in itself as we wanted to make sure that the questions we posed meshed well with the strengths we were seeking in a minister. We had to identify what an interview visit would consist of...Sunday services, workshops, etc. We also began to look within ourselves and identify our strengths in order to facilitate the in-person interview process. We identified individuals within the team to take care of booking travel, including air, rental car and hotel, individuals to handle announcements in Sunday bulletins and over Newleadership, as well as a congregation-wide mailer to notify congregants of interviewee's visits, individuals to coordinate events, to create evaluation forms and to compile data received from said forms, to handle facilitating background and reference checking, etc.

We had four ministers apply for our part-time position. Again, each got an acknowledgement letter from the team. Two of these ministers pulled out of the process before the phone interview; one got another job and another for personal reasons. That left us with the resume of Reverend Diane Stark. We did a phone interview and were

impressed with what she brought to the table and felt that she should receive and complete a written questionnaire. She did so, and again, we felt she had many talents and gifts that would minister to the diverse population at our church. Then we had to look deep within ourselves to decide whether to schedule an in-person interview with Rev. Stark, as she was our only candidate at the time. We decided to go forward since she seemed to be such a good fit, however extended what would normally be an interview weekend to an interview week, as she was our only candidate and we wanted to spend a fair bit of time with her.

The week of January 21st through the 28th was spent with Rev. Stark. The schedule included a host of events, including Sunday services, a workshop, a children's event, adult social play, board and search team interviews, open office hours, meeting with the Youth Ed Director, a city tour, some chaplaincy with congregants in need and lunch and dinner events with various members and groups within the congregation. The evaluation forms from these events came back very positive and the board of directors subsequently voted unanimously to hire Reverend Diane Stark. We are currently in negotiations with her, working on the terms and conditions of the contract that will finalize the deal.

Just before Reverend Stark's week with us, we received another resume from an interested minister. Based on the resume alone we didn't feel this person would be a fit but decided to do a phone interview in the interest of looking at as many candidates as we could (besides, you never know!). The feeling remained after the phone interview and we notified this minister and let them know we had decided to go forward with a candidate we were interviewing when their resume was received.

Thank you very much to everyone who helped in this process. The Minister Search Committee did the preliminary work and identified candidates, but the board and congregation were very involved in our recent interview week. Great job everyone!