

Narrative for Half-Time Minister plus Consultant Scenario

The essential features distinguishing this model from the other two are the hiring of a half-time Minister and a part-time Consultant. The Minister's primary responsibilities would be inside the fellowship, leading many Sunday services, providing pastoral care, and spiritual grounding. The Consultant would be a ministerial professional responsible for leading the fellowship in discerning our values, mission and purpose and assuring our organizational structure is aligned with those ends. He or she will help us answer the question: what gifts do we as a fellowship and we as individuals long to bring to the world and how can we deliver them?

The half-time Minister's base salary is one-half of the full-time Interim Minister salary, which is at the mid-point of the UUA guidelines. The Consultant's salary is based on current fees of Unity Consulting, a program of Unity Church – Unitarian in St Paul. This is one long-standing firm that consults with congregations nationally. Other consulting options could be explored if this scenario were adopted. This model also includes the services of a half-time Religious Educator, a half-time Music Director, and full-time Administrator. The personnel cost for this model, including all staff, would be approximately \$265,845.

The minister would lead 20 to 22 services a year in addition to Christmas Eve. He or she would provide a spiritual grounding up for the fellowship and a consistency that can serve as a foundation for the fellowship, its functions, staff and volunteers. He or she would also be primarily responsible for pastoral care, with the help of a strong pastoral care committee.

The professional Consultant would consult with the Board and congregation on a part-time basis, probably four weekends in a calendar year. These times may involve weekend workshops with just the Board or the Board and congregation. The goal would be to address both the disequilibrium from frequently changing ministers in the last five years during a pandemic, in addition to concerns about mission and identity voiced in at least two documents introduced to this committee.

First, the Rev. Dr. Frank Willey gave this as the first recommendation in his report following the recent *What Now?* Conversations: "Create a new, relevant and useful mission statement." He and board member Brenda Post cautioned that this would likely be a year-long process and require substantial work on the part of the Board and congregation.

Second, as long ago as 2005, in a report to the Board, Rev. Cathy noted, "unresolved questions of who we are, why we exist, and where we want to go." She saw this as affecting membership, financial well-being and commitment.

Without addressing these issues of identity, mission and vision in a holistic, strategic way, UUFSD is likely to keep returning to a place of confusion, loss of membership and financial instability. We have an opportunity to move forward as a unit to identify our purpose. When facilitated well, this process is often transformational for congregations, liberating creative leadership, heightened commitment, satisfaction, and growth in membership. The concern about an Interim Minister being responsible for this process is that many are not trained as Interims ready to do this work. Rather, they are often Ministers looking for, but unable to find, settled Minister positions.

One concern about the present scenario is that a half-time Minister may not have the time to become fully involved with the fellowship, especially if his or her contract is for just one year. This could be mitigated by offering at least a two-year contract. A two-year contract would likely attract more good candidates.

Likewise, 50% time may not be enough to fully provide pastoral care. This can be mitigated by having a strong pastoral care committee with a chairperson who provides leadership by being a conduit between the Minister and congregation, delegating tasks to the other committee members. It would be important for the Minister to fully support this chairperson. Some congregations with half-time Ministers also hire a Pastoral Minister who works 20% time and has primary responsibility for this function. The cost of this would be about \$18,680 plus taxes and benefits appropriate to a 20% position. If the half-time Minister does find challenges in providing this care and the budget allows it, our congregation may want to consider this option.

Another concern would be the half-time Minister having limited time for supervision of staff and attending committee meetings. This can be mitigated by having clear lines of communication established to maintain awareness and collaboration. The Minister could perform yearly evaluations of professional staff and be available if problems arise. The Minister could be asked to attend only those meetings where his or her input is necessary. Meetings, as with Sacred Circle leaders, where the Minister's guidance is important could be held less frequently, e.g., every two months.

Another concern is the half-time Minister may not have the bandwidth to engage actively in the work with the Consultant. One way to mitigate this concern is to have the Minister hired and present before a Consultant is hired, with the Minister having a say in that process. The Minister, Board, and Consultant could negotiate the roles and amounts of ministerial, consultant and Board time needed to maximize the success of the work.

The benefits of this scenario are that the fellowship would have the consistency, spiritual grounding and pastoral support of an ordained Minister at a more affordable price than engaging a full-time Interim Minister. The fellowship would also have the professional guidance of an experienced Consultant to lead the important work of discerning our purpose. There are substantial cost savings with

this scenario. Although volunteers would be necessary for our good functioning, they would have the leadership of professionals.

Furthermore, the work of the fellowship with the consultant would hopefully lead to clarity about what the priorities of the fellowship are. Thus, in the second year, the Consultant could be replaced by a Director of Congregational Life who could work to initiate projects in line with the fellowship's purposes which would attract energetic participation by the members. Finally, we would be implementing a novel approach to solving our ongoing problems with calling and maintaining Ministers who are good fits with the congregation. This in turn is likely to foster a thriving membership and financial stability.