

Your Search Committee:

December 2020 Report to the Congregation: Anxious Anticipation

For all that has happened this month – which we will get to in a moment – what’s most on our minds now is the arrival of applications. We have a meeting with our UUA contact Tuesday, January 5. At that point ministers will have already begun indicating the churches to which they wish to apply. We will be receiving the bulk of applications that first week in January. Our plan is for each of us to read all of them, follow some established criteria for assessing a fit with South Church, and conduct initial interviews with up to ten of those who have the most promise for us. From that group, our intention is to select three to five to invite to a precandidating weekend, to include leading worship in a neutral pulpit. The deadline established by the UUA for invitations to precandidating weekends is January 23, giving us just about three weeks for this important assessing and winnowing process.

Special thanks to Jesse Lore, Stephen Blakney, and Jennifer Wilhelm for developing our interview process.

For all the excitement and anticipation we are experiencing as a search committee, it is important to remind our fellow members that this process is held closely by the search committee. We are prohibited from sharing any of the details of this step along the way. What we can say at the outset is that we believe we are well positioned to welcome a strong pool of applicants. Partly that is because there are an unusually small number of congregations in search this cycle, 21 rather than a more typical 75, with just two others in New England. Beyond that, some of us have read the Applications of the other congregations and we see that we match up favorably with the other opportunities available.

Now back to December’s highlights. Certainly, the Beyond Categorical Thinking training held for the congregation at the beginning of the month stands out. This was a required training for the search committee and board of trustees, open as well to the entire congregation. A wealth of information, some deep introspection, and important learnings were the result. We were happy to see members of the congregation joining us for this training as we believe it will serve as a foundation for continued growth in our community’s commitment to justice for all human beings. One specific outcome was that we as a search committee decided that it would be helpful to have a conversation with Revs. Chris and Lauren, which we were able to do mid-month. Their thoughtful reflections on their time here have helped us think ever more deeply about our congregation and how we engage with ministers.

Our regular monthly meeting deliberations and more impromptu gatherings and online exchanges have continued to solidify our relationships with each other and our commitment to the integrity of this process. As we head into January, likely to be the heaviest workload month of the search process to date, we are grateful to the congregation for giving us this opportunity and for supporting our work every step of the way.