

***The Negotiating Team***  
***For the Board, Search Committee, and Negotiating Team***

A team to work out and negotiate the agreement on expectations and compensation with your new minister should be established shortly after the Search Committee and the Ministerial Settlement Representative have met for the first time.

Membership: The three member team should include: a Board Member, a Search Committee Member, and a Senior Statesperson from the congregation. At least one member should understand financial matters.

Schedule:

The team should begin meeting as soon as it is constituted. The draft agreement must be sent to the Transitions Director (along with other information from the Search Committee) before a list of prospective candidates can be provided. It should also be included in the packet that is sent to prospective ministers.

It is important to have the provisions below clearly decided upon before beginning serious dialogue with potential candidates. Ministers need to gain a clear understanding of your expectations and your offer. They are impressed with Search Committees that have things in place and know what they are talking about. Prospective candidates and the Search Committee should reach a clarity approaching agreement in principle during the pre-candidating weekend. The agreement should be fully worked out in writing and signed by both parties (such to a vote to call by the congregation and decision to accept by the candidate) before you release the name of your candidate to the congregation. Candidating week is no time for negotiation!

The *Settlement Handbook* contains all necessary information, including links to crucial pages maintained by the Office of Church Staff Finance.

Getting Started: the following items should be helpful:

1. "Application for Minister" (available at the Search Committee's web page in the Ministerial Settlement System at <http://www2.uua.org/ministerapp.asp>)
2. Your congregation's current agreement or contract
3. Model ministry agreements and related resources in *Joint Recommendations Concerning Letters of Agreement between Ministers and Congregations* (available at the Transitions Office website at <http://www.uua.org/transitions>)
4. Materials to be brought by the Compensation Consultant from the UUA Office of Church Staff Finances, available at <http://www.uua.org/leaders/leaderslibrary/compensation>. Contact the Administrator at 617) 948-6421
5. *Church and Clergy Tax Guide* by Richard Hammar. Call 1-800-222-1840 or go on line to purchase.

## What Should the Agreement Include?

### *Review Joint Recommendations*

Whatever form your agreement takes, there are three basic groups of elements that will be included: 1) Salary plus Housing Allowance, 2) benefits and professional expenses, and 3) expectations of each party.

### *Salary plus Housing Allowance and Benefits, and Expenses*

The Board will determine Salary & Housing (S&H). To provide benefits and expenses at the Transitions Office-recommended level, figure another 35-40 percent. To be included in the latter group:

1. Health insurance—the UUA recommendation is that the congregation cover 80% of the minister’s premium. It also recommends that the congregation cover 50% of the premium for dependent children and spouse and partner. What will be done in this congregation?
2. Life insurance—the UUA recommendation is that the church insist that the congregation “make available” life insurance at two times S&H) for the benefit of dependents and the relief of the congregation in the event of the minister’s death. Should the church pay for it?
3. Disability income insurance—the UUA recommendation is that the church “make available” disability income insurance at 60% of S&H with a 90-day waiting period, How else will the church avoid being put in a moral bind in the event of the minister’s disability? How else can a disability provision in the agreement be crafted. Should the church pay for it?
4. Pension contribution: at least 10% of S&H unless you want your minister to work forever.
5. Social security: Your minister pays Social Security at the self-employed level of 15.3 percent. The UUA recommends that the church pay monthly to the minister a 7.65 percent (taxable) “contribution in lieu of FICA,” thus putting the minister’s compensation pretty much on the same footing as everyone else.
6. Professional expenses allowance: the Transitions Office recommends 10 percent of S&H.

One of the decisions needed: if the candidate can establish no need for certain coverages that the church is willing to fund, should they be added to salary?

### *Expectations*

Both the congregation and your ministerial candidate are likely to have thoughts on the topics listed below. It is helpful if both know their thinking on each, particularly when the positions are strongly held. Nothing crystallizes thinking like drafting an agreement. Generally, the more flexible you are, the better. It is not healthy to expect your new minister to conform to your last minister's style or to suppress the gifts s/he can bring to you. Discussing expectations is a fine way for a minister and search committee to learn more about each other and move the relationship along. All of the following should be negotiable:

Sundays: how many and how specified (e.g., 30 out of 40)? What does “Sunday off” mean? Are professional or denominational meetings on duty or off?

Office hours: what expectations and how rigid?

Day off: what expectations are most reasonable?

Minister’s relationship to other staff: what makes the most sense? A clear delineation of who’s responsible for what saves a peck of trouble. The other view: let the parties work it out among themselves.

Minister’s relationship with children and youth: there is no right answer here, or in any of these areas, but what do the parties expect?

Evaluations: how often, and conducted by whom? (See the helpful publication, *Assessing Our Leadership*, <http://www.uua.org/documents/mpl/assessingleadership.pdf>)

Vacation, study leave, and continuing education: how much of each? Who pays when minister is called back from any of these?

Sabbatical leave: what are the conditions?

Sick leave: what is a reasonable understanding on this?

Starting date: reach a decision about this. If the church is on a “church year,” the UUA recommends August 15.

Moving expenses: what will be covered and what is the amount available?

Housing: if you have a parsonage, what are the provisions for privacy, utilities, repairs and maintenance? If you do not, will you subsidize the cost of additional trips for house hunting?

Termination provisions: what are the by-law provisions, including termination pay?

The above topics are not exhaustive. There is obviously enough suggested that it behooves the Negotiating Team, in consultation with the Board of Trustees and the Search Committee, to begin working through the various elements as soon as it can.

### A Final Word

It is not necessary—in fact it is likely counterproductive—to have everything worked out in final detail. There is, of course, a commitment regarding the salary provisions, but there should be room to negotiate on most issues as you and your candidate develop together the relationship you wish to forge for your longstanding relationship.

Not feeling required to have thought of everything may remove the pressure a bit when the Search Committee member of the Negotiating Team begins discussions with prospective candidates, but it is helpful then to state that "this is an area we are still working on--do you have any thoughts?"

Following the selection of your candidate, the minister and your Negotiating Team should finalize the agreement and present it to the Board for approval before announcing the candidate's name to the congregation.

Good luck!