

Summary of VUU MSC Cottage Meetings 2021

The MSC reviewed the survey results, and the questions and comments received independently from members (on website, in the VUU office, etc), to determine as a committee, additional information we needed from the congregation to help inform our search and to clarify information from the survey. Then, using all of these materials, we crafted a schedule of cottage meetings to reach a broad and diverse number of members to help provide additional feedback to our process and our congregational packet.

In all, the MSC held 21 Cottage Meetings, starting first with groups that were already familiar with one another and meeting regularly (either in-person or on Zoom). It was hoped that the familiarity of these groups would be a comfort to participants and encourage open communication and discussion. With the permission of group leaders, VUU members and friends who are not a part of that particular group were allowed to join cottage meetings that fit their schedule.

The MSC then held three more “open to all” Cottage meetings, to ensure everyone had opportunities to voice their thoughts and concerns. At each meeting, led by a member of the MSC, we shared the search timeline and reviewed the search process. Then we posed three key sets of questions for the groups:

- How would you describe this congregation to its prospective ministers? To prospective members? To a close, non-member friend? ***(to help inform our document packet)***
- What “rules” or customs did you need to learn, both spoken and unspoken, as you joined VUU? And what will the new minister need to know/learn about VUU culture, rules, and customs? ***(to help identify program areas or subjects that should be revealed to ministerial candidates that might be sensitive areas or traditions they should be careful not to change.)***
- After our new minister has been with us a year, what will be your measures of success for them/us? What achievements will make you say you’re glad we called this minister? ***(to clarify congregational expectations)***

From the 21 Cottage Meetings we met with over 140 total attendees, nearly half of our congregation. We learned just how active and engaged that VUU is, as a community. And we also heard just how diverse our many interests and priorities are. Many responses have been integrated into our search packet.

In brief, cottage meetings informed us that the VUU congregation has high expectations and demands for our incoming minister. We expect a minister who will meet our internal, pastoral needs, and challenge us with sermons that are both intellectually-challenging and inspirational. We also want a minister who is engaged with the community and aspires to be seen as a leader on social justice issues. We want a minister who is actively engaged with all aspects of VUU,

from our music program, to our Faith Formation educational programs, someone who can handle our front office needs, and work well with the paid staff, lay leaders, and volunteers. We want a minister who appreciates our strengths and helps us address our weaknesses. While these demands are great, we also stand ready to support that minister, and work together to achieve the lofty goals and ambitions of our congregants.