

Jake Kipp: [*Welcome – Susan Cooper announcement about proxies for annual meeting*]

Jill Jarvis: Good morning. Welcome everybody. What we are doing here this morning is akin to being a sacrament in our free church tradition, if there is such a thing as a sacrament, and there really isn't, so. But it's our proudest tradition and I want to tell you a little about that because this is part of the interdependent web of all existence of which we're all a part into the past, our debt to the past and that drives our responsibility to the future. So the people, our institutional forbearers, the pilgrims that founded the free church tradition were trying to get away from hierarchy and people that would tell them what to do and what was true, what they should believe. This first started in the 16th century when there were unauthorized printings of the Bible and it was said that, I quote, because these are not my words, "Every man, neigh, every boy, and wench that could read English thought they spoke with God Almighty and understood what He said, of course they didn't all understand the same thing. The description of an outdoor gathering in 1588, among these free church thinkers who would establish the free church, each of them has his own Bible and turned to the page, and looked up the text, discussing the passages among themselves and they would start arguing about the meaning of the passages. Men, women, boys, girls, rustic, laborers and idiots and more often than not it ended in violence." This is the beginning of American Unitarian Universalism. So our inheritance is fierce insistence on owning and defending our individual views and the fact that given this, agreement among us not always immediately forthcoming, that's our heritage. Our institutional ancestors, when they founded the pilgrim and puritan churches on these shores believed that people who have become individuals capable of courageous partnership should freely bind themselves into a group of promised partners in further adventures of learning and service. And that would be without any compulsion or coercion, but only as they were persuaded together to study and argument and prayer as the spirit moved them. And so if they had any doctrines or truths to decide on whether they were good or bad – they'd do it all together. Nobody could impose that on them. They were looking for personal growth in themselves and they believed that could only come as they patiently practiced seeking together, searching out truth together. Becoming what they knew was right as it was made known unto them through the spirit of persuasion together. So they bound themselves together as individuals who understood their free faithfulness to one another to be the means for nurturing this integrity. The integrity of each and every person and the community also.

So the center of the free church, the free church tradition, the heart of the whole thing is this promise, the promise we make to one another freely to begin again all the time, to renegotiate, to look at that promise that's at the center of the life of the congregation in the renewed conscience, spiritual growth. And that spirit is the complex of ideas and understanding, memory, hope, will that learned social skills, that engagement with the world that we all come to and keep coming back to as we go through life. And it points also to our interior life, that we fully cooperate with as we feel it. So the spirit of persuasion,

the heart of that is love, and it's love for two things. It's love for our fellow human beings and all creatures, and it's love for the truth and how we find the truth together.

So in this spirit of persuasion that we are going to be practicing here today as part of our ancient tradition, each member, I will tell you in their words, each member is called to give utterance, to ask, say, explain, defend what is the truth as he or she sees, because to be unforthcoming is to be disloyal, for how can we learn together without candor. And each member is also called upon to yield the floor with humble courtesy, to listen, to be open, to try again and again to imagine what the other people see. To be unwilling to forget to hear is to betray, for how can we receive what others may impart without their counsel. So our covenant is an abiding commitment to give and to take counsel. I'm going to close and light the chalice in honor of these words from Reverend Alice Claire Wesley who has studied and written much about the history of the free church. "If the center holds, if the spirit lives, there are no limits to what we may constructively do together, for the sake of inspiration and mercy, justice, art, personal growth or just plain fun. There are no limits to the difficulties the free church may overcome or to the richness of its interior life or to the effective work we may do to fashion and recreate our world." [*Chalice Lighting*]

Jake Kipp: I'm here as a lay leader. Part of that tradition about which Jill spoke is the responsibilities that go with the congregation. One of the activities which we've engaged in in the course of the last year was the Mission and Vision Task Force. I've been at every event they've had, I've read their deliberations, I've followed them and I will be very candid to you to say I have in fact been in what Ron [Haifitz??] would call a balcony. I have not at all tried to be part of what was going on in Mission and Vision because I thought that it was between them and the congregation. And we've had a set of activities which I will objectively say were extraordinarily good. I was very impressed with the World Cafés, I was very impressed with the Town Meeting, I was particularly impressed with the first event where we tried to do a narrative, and how many of us came in to contribute to that narrative so that we can say, we know where we have been as a fellowship and how we got to where we are. The Mission and Vision Task Force said last year that they wanted a culminating event which would be with a consultant. And to be honest with you, we put a lot of money aside for that and I kept looking at budget and well, it would be nice if we had it other places, but we stayed true to our word. And in the course of their deliberations, they came up with an approach to the consultant which warmed my heart, partly because it was cheaper. [*Laughter*] As you know the last year I have been primarily concerned about the stewardship campaign and keeping us within our budget, and we've done that. But I was also very impressed with the person that they were recruiting, because it was someone who has done a great deal of consulting both inside the UU and as part of her professional career. And when the Mission and Vision Task force said this is where we want to be for the end of this year – and I was one of those who, ok, that means we're done, and the answer was no, we're not. That in fact it's going to continue and go on, as it should.

But if these meetings, now and the next one are run appropriately and we have the kind of counsel which Jill talked about, I think we can say we will take a very important step forward in that process. And having said those words, I will turn the podium over to the person who has in fact headed the Mission and Vision Task Force and I will claim to have been guilty, because when that task force was organizing and I thought about who should be leading it, one name came to my mind, someone I'd worked with as a chair, someone I worked with the governance task force, someone I had a great deal of confidence in and that is our Mission and Vision chair, Rebecca Gant.

Rebecca Gant: Well, good morning. Jake outlined a lot of the activities that we have had here for us to work together to articulate what it is that we hope to see happen in the world as a congregation. So I'm not going to talk about that today. Today I'm just going to talk a little bit about why, why are we doing this. If you asked most of us what do you love most about this place, you'd probably hear community, friends, relationships, the people, the people, the people, the people, we hear that a lot. And that's true. Most of us have formed relationships here that are dear to us and the people as we look around, always when I stand up here and look at all of you my heart is always full of the people that I love. If I asked a different question about what brought you here, the answer probably would not be the people because I suspect that most of us came here not knowing many people. But what brought us here was an idea that this group of people that we were looking to join somehow had an idea of what they wanted to change about the world or they had an idea about things they saw that they were unhappy about and wanted to make better. And that is an idea of mission. And when we were a much smaller congregation I think it was easy to have that group of people agree on what is it we want to change about the world and how we want to go about doing that. But we've grown. And now it's more difficult to tease that out. I think we all have, we each have our own idea of what this place is about and what this place should do, but what we are working to do as a task force is to find a corporate idea of what it means for us to work for justice in the world, to work to better the world. And that's tricky, because we all have our own ideas. So I would say that that idea of community is really important, but I would argue that the idea of mission is even more important. When you have a community and you have relationships among humans, those relationships break, people move, we lose people to death. But if we have a strong mission going forward, that will keep us here, and that will keep us going and moving and attracting people who also feel that same vision and mission. And just a word about the words vision and mission, I often use interchangeably, but they're not interchangeable. Our task force has been working to find two things that we all can agree on, one is the vision of the world that we would like to see, because we exist, we would like to see this world happen because of our actions in the world, so that's the vision. The mission is more specific and it's how we get there. So the mission is more action oriented. We will do these things in order to help the world achieve our vision. So we're working on both of those things. The statements that we will eventually present to the congregation after hearing from

you and passing them by you and talking about them some more will be important. It will be important to have those documents together. But even more important is this process that we're going through now. So the process helps us who are here now, the documents that we produce and the product will help those who come in the future. They look at our web site and say, wow, that's something I want to be a part of. That's our hope, that's our dream, thanks for helping us get there. Thanks.

Consultant: Good morning, I'm Patricia Daria and if you saw the invitation to this morning's meeting, you saw a little bit about me, I don't want to take time to talk about myself because we have really important work to do this morning. But I do want to say a little bit about what I've been learning. I can tell you that my first contact to be with you today happened in February, and since February I've been reading all about you, I've been talking to people on the phone and listening. I've talked with Nancy Hege from the regional office, so I've been immersing myself in you, and I have been so awed and impressed with who you are. It's really quite an honor for me to be here with you today, so thank you for the invitation. And I'm so glad that Jake feels good about, because it's not like [???], really reasonable.

So I want to start with a little reading. This reading, which I read, and I copied a whole bunch of it because it's so wonderful, but at the very end, and this was written and finished in 1995, so it's ten years ago now – wait, 20 years ago, I'm sorry. It's like yesterday! The last words are: What has kept the flame in the chalice alight, even if it sputtered there for a while, ask any of us, the answer is found in the title of this account, "We Unitarians." We, it is our people with all their diversity and opinions, all their love of argument and one another, all their caring and concern, who have made Unitarianism a force in this community and in its members lives throughout the history of Lawrence. And that history, those of you who haven't read it, it begins in 1857. So even though there was a break for a period of time, your legacy is quite lengthy and quite wonderful. So that's part of what we're about today, is to really honor all of who you are.

So the second thing that I want to say by introduction is that as I spoke with Rebecca and other members of the Mission and Vision Task Force, what I heard was a resonance with you as a community that their initial intention and I know everyone was so excited, we have a Mission and Vision Task Force and, by golly, we're going to write a mission and vision by the end of this church year. And everybody was like gung ho and running ahead. And because they were so exquisitely tuned into you, they recognized that to push forward with that really was not going to be in the best interest of your community. So like the planets, they sort of went into retrograde. They said, wait a minute, we gotta loop back. For those of you who are knitters or weavers, you know, if you drop a stitch it isn't right, even if you go ahead and finish the weaving or the knitting. So they, with great wisdom and love, stepped back and said, you know what, we really need to discern what it is that we can say about our mission and our vision, and that led

to the decision to invite me to come and for us to do this day together.

Then the third thing I'm going to say, because I'm going to go out there, I'm like a people person, I want to be with you, so I don't like this, so I'm going to come out there with you. But the third thing I want to say first is that one of the things, and we talked a lot about this last night when I met with the board and with the Mission and Vision Task Force members, is that there has been so much growth here and that when we grow we gain wonderfully, and we also lose. There are always losses, it's very paradoxical as in virtually everything important in life, right. We gain something and we lose. We're moving into a fabulous new home and we're leaving our favorite neighborhood in the world, you know. So we always have both things happening. And because you've grown so much, some of the things as Rebecca was mentioning earlier, that decisions were made here for many years by consensus, because you were small enough that everybody could sit and be together until that response, that answer, that decision emerged from the whole. And one of the beauties of Unitarian Universalism is that we are based on a democratic process. And what that does is it protects the integrity of a process even when we're too large to take the time or to have the opportunity to really sit in consensus. It's certainly a wonderful tool and it's a good thing to do in small groups and whenever we can. And even in a democracy we want to invite and honor as many voices and we want to get it all together and really know that as we move forward we're doing it with the fullest possible sense of what is right for the community, but it can't be exactly what everyone wants and it can't be truly that way of a smaller community of consensus. That when we reach the size that you are, there are some times when something will be lost for some members. And the important thing about that is what do we do when that happens? How do we honor those who might be grieving, how do we honor that there is loss here for some of us and that's what we're about today, is to look at how do we take those steps forward and what do we say to one another, how do we sit with one another individually and in small groups and in any way that will help us really be together as a community as we write this mission and vision and as we step forward into our future. So that's the intention and that is my understanding of what we're doing today.

One more thing I just want to say is just as I started to read and listen, as I prepared to be with you today, one of the things that I was so impressed with and I told the people I met with last night is the grace and dignity with which you have traveled through some challenges over all the years of your being and in particular in this past year, that you have been open and kept your hearts open and kept your minds open to listen, and that is unusual. That doesn't always happen, especially when there is so much passion. And there is so much that some may be feeling that they might have lost or might be in the process of losing. The other thing that I said last night that I want to say to you is that when we become part of a faith community, whether it's about god or whether it's about nature or whether we are agnostic or atheist or humanist or whomever, we bring the deepest part of ourselves

into that community. It is deeper even than our most intimate human relationships. It is about life and death, it is about being, who am I, how did I get here, what is this all about, this earth, this life, this world. And any time that we've opened ourselves to a community of people with whom we share that whole deepest essence, that core of who we are, we are much more vulnerable to anything that feels not so good or feels like we haven't been heard or we haven't been honored in the way that we really need that essence of who we are to be honored. And so this opportunity is another way to honor that wholeness of each and every one of you and so, let's have a conversation.

There are some questions that are part of the agenda and before we even do that, I want to honor that in your town hall meetings and your other meetings that you've been doing this year, you've honored a covenant. Jill referred to the covenant earlier, a long term kind of covenant, but I'm looking at the transcript from the town hall meeting from January 11 and I'm just going to read quickly this little bit on here just so we're all clear about what our intentions are in being together. That we are first assuming good intentions of one another, ourselves and one another, 2) that all viewpoints are equally valid, 3) that we speak respectfully, 4) that each of us speaks from our own experience and not invoking others' words, good if we can to use "I" statements rather than "you" statements, that's kind of understood, and then finally to share the floor and to recognize that there are others may have something to say and we all have our wholeness here with us today. So I'll read the questions that you've been invited to reflect about and then I'm just going to hold it open, invite you all to begin speaking.

So the questions that we've pulled together, first of all, what strengths and legacies does our history endow us with. And the second question, what does having a called minister mean to me and to us as a community. Third, how do you picture our congregation in five years, or in twenty years. Four, what are your dreams for this community. And five, what difference in the world would you like our congregation to make. These are not literal like we have to answer every question, these are just kind of thoughts for reflection and the important thing is that you speak from your heart about whatever it is that's in your heart.

Tamara Fairbanks Ishmael: I feel a really strong need for a short grounding myself, so if I could just ask everyone to put both your feet on the floor please, and take a very deep breath and let go of any of agenda that you might have come here with and listen with open hearts and that we breathe deeply and we listen deeply without judgement. Thank you.

Ted Wilson: Speaking to the need or question about a called minister, I was thinking recently about the macabre issue of how we dealt with memorials in the past, I've been a long time member. And I thought then about the astonishing wonderful memorial for Forrest Swall. I cannot imagine that that would have occurred without having a minister, having Jill. I'm not a spiritual person, as some of you know, the two people right here know. But that was one of the most moving experiences of my life, to be there to listen to Susan Cooper, to listen to

many others and to have that kind of being involved in a community's response honoring a person who's had such an important role in our lives. I just can't imagine that it would have occurred without the presence of someone to lead us.

Janet Fitzgerald: With all due respect, I disagree with that statement because I was profoundly affected by Paul Gillis' memorial and I'll never forget when Paul came up to us before we adopted Arwin from China and he was so excited for us and he hobbled across the floor in the other building with his oxygen tank to tell me that. And I thought, you know, if he was going to do this, make the effort to tell me that, well then by gosh, I need to find out more about this man, and I went to his memorial and it changed me. And that was a lay led memorial service. So I just want to say that, I also went to Forrest's memorial and I was profoundly affected by that as well. He obviously made a mark on many people and certainly me, I knew him as a professor before I knew him here, and I just want to say that there's both sides to that, so. Thank you.

Consultant: I think what I hear in that and what is true is that there is wisdom and there is grace and there is love in all approaches.

Michael O'Brien: I was thinking maybe for purposes of clarification I'd be interested in hearing what the definition is of a called minister and what it would mean, what would be the difference between having a called minister and not having one at this fellowship.

Consultant: I think, I'm hesitant to take a lot of time to talk about what it is to have a called minister, because you have the experience of having a called minister. You have called a minister here. That if you are lay led, it's a different set of circumstances, and there are many lay led congregations and communities, fellowships in our denomination. [*background question "one or the other?"*] Yes, If you are lay led, you don't have a minister, there are some lay led congregations and fellowships that have a consulting minister who comes for perhaps once a month or an affiliation with a theological seminary where they have students come, but it is not an ongoing relationship that is the embracing of a community by a minister and the living into the life of that community by that minister, which is probably the succinct distinction.

Michael O'Brien: Ok, I was not participating at the time, and just for information, I didn't go to the town hall meetings, was that voted on by the greater fellowship that we were all going to approve having a called minister leading our fellowship?

Consultant: Yes, yes it was.

Michael O'Brien: Ok.

Consultant: Does anyone, can anyone clarify that?

Ted Wilson: It was voted upon after considerable deliberation and discussion. It was voted on almost unanimously, I think there were very few abstentions, no "no" votes when it happened.

Consultant: And I can add to that, that I have worked with many congregations in search, I served on a search committee at my own congregation, and I've done search retreats with search committees who are in search of a called minister, and that is precisely what is looked for when a minister is called by a community, that there is virtually a unanimous vote to call that person. So I think you did it in the way that it needed to be done and the vote was on that certainly supported having called ministry here. And that is your situation. There is a called minister here and that is how you're living into this community.

Valerie Roper: The only other comment I'll add to that since I was chair during a part of this time is we did a year of education about a search process. Nancy Hege came down and talked to us a couple of times and then we went into the consulting minister for a year and then into the called role. 2008, 2009, I think we called Jill, 2009 or 2010, I'm getting old.

Graham Kreicker: I think it's important for us to notice at this particular time that when we decided to move toward called ministry, it was not because there was any feeling of the members of this fellowship at that time that they had a significant loss by not having a called minister or, more importantly, a spiritual service. The concept was to increase our diversity, to widen our circle and to provide for people that wanted a spiritual aspect a time where they could come and worship or do spiritual activities at a time other than the program. And I think that continues up to this point. And I commend the early founders and pioneers who made the decision to make available to new members and old members that wanted it, a spiritual service. Those people, even up to today, provide a tremendous amount of the resources to run this fellowship, including the spiritual service and I feel it is unfortunate that we would do anything to denigrate or diminish the importance of the program that these people find as their sacred space. It might not be mine, it might not be yours, but it's theirs and that time and their activities are as important to them as the activities of people that come at 11 o'clock. And to steal an excellent word from John Brewer – excuse me John – I think our success in the future depends on us having a binary system, honoring both the spiritual service and the program, and fiscal constraints require us to get along, because there's not enough people here from either side to run this place on their own. We've got to cooperate and find a way forward. Thank you.

Consultant: Could I just say one small thing? One of the things that I was so impressed with in your long, long history was repeatedly, like every couple of years in that long history, there is a very clear statement of how it's uncomfortable for us not to be in conflict. That this community has always had diversity and has always struggled to find that center, to find a way to be whole in the context of so many perspectives, and that in any community, it isn't a matter of something being less than or more than, it's where is the emphasis or how, who are we today and how do we live into who we are today versus how we have been five years ago, ten years ago, twenty years

ago or even how we'll be five years, ten years, twenty years from now. So you're here today, and as Rebecca said earlier, you're looking at the future, but you're also very importantly living into who you are today.

Michelle Iwig-Harmon: Just taking the question literally, what does having a called minister mean to me, when I thought about this, I think of it in terms of what I value and my analogy in terms of what I need in my life is that, for example, for my children, I could teach them at home, but I choose to send them to public schools because I value having others to lead them and each year to teach them new things and help them grow. And I pay taxes because I have to, but I would pay more because I value that so much. And what I value about having a called minister is I think that it's putting my resources towards something that I value, because I, in my personal life, do have the energy or skill or gift to spend time on the big questions in life and what inspires people. And I value paying someone to spend their time and their vocation on doing that for me. And to come on Sunday morning and know that someone has spent a considerable amount of time and energy on that and can give me an inspiring message in a service that enriches my life and enriches my family's life and hopefully others, and I do value every volunteer hour that goes into the fellowship – I've spent some of them myself – and I can be moved by someone who is not paid, but I value in my culture and in my society that we pay people to do things that we think are important. And this is something that I put a lot of importance on, and like an artist or a teacher or someone else, I am appreciative of being in a community that values that. And that's what having a called minister means to me.

Carol Eades Del Nevo: I find myself wanting to respond a little bit to what Graham said, and while I appreciate his perspective and what he said, I want to speak up and say that when you, Graham, say that you're speaking for the congregation and that the idea was to diversify and draw in people who maybe had other needs than folks had had traditionally in the fellowship, I was here at that time and I was on the board at that time, and I didn't feel like an outsider, I didn't feel like I was someone who was different than other people in the congregation. And so I guess I'm raising the concern that the congregation wasn't a monolithic, all in agreement, let's draw in people who are not like us, because I was already here and, so I think there's a little danger in stating unequivocally that this was the view of the congregation at the time. And I will say that, yes, I did come from another congregation before I was here and for me, going to a Unitarian Universalist congregation – and I'll just be straight – gave me the strength to do the difficult work that I did in reproductive health. I was an abortion provider and I was a medical director for Planned Parenthood in a hostile environment and I couldn't have done that work without being a Unitarian Universalist. And although I've had a career change now – I continue to do what I consider to be emotionally challenging work and I couldn't do that work without being a Unitarian Universalist. And I might get choked up because this is personal and it's deep and it's why I'm here and I couldn't do it without a debt of connection with the people that are here, but I also could not do it without a

Sunday morning service that touches me in a way that the worship service does. It gives me something to think about and it gives me the strength to do the work that I do and I feel a huge sense of loss over the past year that what I thought was a cohesive congregation that was working towards the same thing has divided into something that breaks my heart.

Consultant: Can I just say that one of the things that's been a strength for all of you and that I read and heard in many conversations is the strength of your relationships and the fact that you have stepped up many, many times over many, many years to comfort and be present with people who are feeling pain. And I think that is something that we tend to look at as sort of on the sidelines and it's not front and center. I think when you're going through a challenging time, one of the ways you maintain your dignity and your grace is by honoring that if someone is in pain I offer comfort, I offer support. And we don't withhold that or try to keep it over there. And I think in our culture broadly, away from UU, I think there is a tendency to say oh, you know, that's that person's problem. But I think one of the strengths of this community is if you live into it, is you embrace one another even as you struggle with something and even if you're in disagreement. There are two levels and fortunately as human beings we can hold two ideas at the same time. I disagree with you fervently and I love you dearly and I hold you in my heart. That's where the strength comes from to ride out and living into the challenges always.

Stuart Boley: I've been coming here for 30 some years and I really have a lot of empathy for Carol and her need for the spiritual, worship service part of the Unitarian experience here. We used to just have one hour and about 2001 we separated into two different experiences, the program as it had been and the spiritual celebration, which has grown and developed and become the worship service. I'm moved as Carol is by the program, that has been a very important part of my life and it was a refuge for me in my career as an IRS agent, believe it or not. I needed something and the program really helped me and continues to help me. I think what we need to do is support each other as we chose to do 15 years ago, we need to try to meet everybody's needs and I hope that some people's needs won't interfere with other people getting what they need.

Susan Cooper: I think when Lisa and I were shopping in late 2008 and trying to find a home that met our needs, we were continuously drawn back to the fellowship, and part of it was the people honestly and it looked like a joyous place with a good sense of what we wanted to do and how to support each other and we were interested in the things that were going on. And then we thought we knew what was going on, and I remember a little bit about the discussions or the called ministry. Like I said, we were still new that we didn't really have a hook yet on who was who and what was going on. And I have come to believe or understand in this process of the Mission and Vision that maybe we really didn't get it. We felt blind sighted by some of the things that are being put forward as what it means to have a minister. Now that could be our fault and our part of being newish at the time, but I believe

also when Jill actually expressed and shared with a group that I was a part of that we actually skipped some steps as far as a discernment process and whether, that the UUA usually would ask us to go through and she in my opinion helped me understand maybe why I feel like I am surprised, and along with being surprised about some things it is a disappointment and so I need to mention – and I’m sorry Carol to use your name again, but – your expression of a heartbreaking kind of thing goes along with that disappointment, we’re not on the same page and that we might really have some serious differences that we still need to get out there that may, should have come up five or six years ago and that there is surprise and shock and fear. And so at least I’m beginning to understand why I might have had this reaction, because we are seeing – and I speak for Lisa and myself, and I can speak for her – but we’re seeing things develop that we didn’t fall in love with and that we honestly don’t want.

Consultant: Can I just comment a little bit about the search process because I’m very familiar. What we as UUs – you know, we don’t do anything by any rules – there are guidelines for the search process and there is a web site that congregations in search are invited to go to seek ministers who are also in search and it’s kind of a dance of getting to know one another. Often in many congregations, in most congregations it takes at least a year. It’s a very intense, very kind of challenging and frightening process and the thing about it is that you don’t really know these people. It’s like they’re coming to you and saying, we have this thought, we have this thought, we do this, I’d do this for you. And then you create a packet about yourself that you put out there and then ministers in search get to look at that and to say, I like this about that community, I don’t like that, so is this a place that I might find a home, that I might be able to live into my ministry with this group of people. So it also is sanctioned and accepted within the UUA that if a congregation or a community has someone in mind that they want to call, that that is part of the search process and obviously it happened that way here, and that is not a short coming or a kind of something that was missed. My own sense as I’ve read and learned is that there was a very deep discernment here that went on actually for almost two years of getting to know Jill before the invitation was made to her that she might consider being a calling here. And the other thing that I want to say just really quickly is another way of churches or congregations or fellowships calling someone to ministry is something that they’ve called hire-to-call, where they hire a minister and they have that minister for a year or two and they decide then whether they’re going to call that person or not. That is closer to what you guys did and that is a very acceptable process for calling a minister in the UUA. So I think there’s a, because it wasn’t the “traditional” way where you went in search with all these anonymous people, you didn’t do it that way, but you did it in a way that’s very accepted.

Lynn Bodle: I’ve been around a very, very long time. The last time – I think it was probably 1995 – I was chair and we were debating about did we want a minister, we were certainly not ready at that time. For me one of the biggest things that has come out of this whole mission and vision thing is I had no

clue what it meant to have a called minister. I’m just now finding out, so this is a very valuable process.

Jake Kipp: I’ve been in the fellowship 16 years. I came in when the spiritual celebration was just beginning. I went to it because my wife wanted to go to it because I’m a Humanist, that’s my credentials. My wife is a Christian, she’s Orthodox and we have icons and all that good stuff. But she loves this place and she loves the people. In the debate and discussion about a minister, what I remember most is the other things that went with ministry. They were the things that we were not terribly prepared to deal with. We weren’t prepared to deal with people who were really very, very sick, end of life. I remember the watch we had with Richard Johnson. That would not have happened except for Jill and Jordinn getting us organized so that Marsha didn’t have to be there every minute in fear that her husband would die and she would not be there with him. Those are things about ministry, they don’t happen on Sunday morning, but they’re absolutely vital to the life of the community because that’s where we say we in fact do care. We get people to hospitals. We do when there’s trouble, we try to help out. And the minister is a mechanism for that. As far as the Sunday morning service, I go to both. I get a lot out of the program, I’m a Humanist, ok. But I also look at what’s going on with the worship service and see it as the one opportunity for our minister to have most contact with the congregation. And I understand that as a spiritual regimen – ok, we do that – but it is also a point of contact, so that she gets to meet and know people and you have the conversation about what needs might be. And I would not want to lose that side, because with the congregation we have, particularly an aging congregation, we will want someone who will be in fact there when things begin to get very hard at the end of life. And I think that’s a very important side of ministry. At least it is to me.

Ellen Reid Gold: I’ve been here quite a while. First of all, I want to thank all of you for sharing your thoughts. I thought Carol’s story brought tears to my eyes because I’d never heard that piece of it. I also want to tag on a little bit to what Jake says because I’ve been very grateful for the sorts of human services which Jill has provided and were we to, if Jill were to retire, I would probably be among those voting to call a minister. On the other hand, I have to say that Susan adequately reflected my confusion about the position of a called minister. And thanks to some emails in which Emily quoted section 10, it has seemed to me that what section 10 says is the minister has responsibility for programs, for weddings for funerals, for services, etc., etc., etc. and he or she may or may not delegate those. To me, that’s pretty absolute, that that gives the minister a lot of authority. And I’ve been a little bothered by the way in which I interpret that as giving the minister a lot of authority and the frequently repeated mantra that this is a democratic society, because to me if the minister has that much authority, the chances for a democratic society are lessened.

Consultant: Can I just comment? The minister serves and she serves at the invitation of the congregation and the board and she is always answering to the board first and to the

community at large. So I've worked with many, many ministers and many communities over the years. It is not an absolute kind of thing. And what truly happens when a minister serves in a community is there is some power that begins to emerge from his or her goodness as a person within that community, from the love that grows, from the relationships that grow. Kind of as Jake was talking about, people get to know that person, that person is there at significant times and becomes someone who then by virtue of his or her presence, has some power. But it isn't about authority in the sense of legal authority in the way that sometimes we think about authority. So I think to keep in mind that this is a relational process, it's not a legal process in the same kind of way. It doesn't mean there aren't legal elements to a letter of agreement, but it isn't quite that. The other thing I wanted to just real quickly say something about what you were saying Jake, is all of those very intimate things that need to happen in a community, when we grow beyond a certain size, it isn't possible for the community to do those things for one another anymore in the way they did when they were 30 or 50 people. And so that's another element that I think the leaders in this community were very wise to begin looking at. You know, we've grown to a size now where it really isn't feasible for us to be all that we want to be for every one of us when we have needs. So it's another just a little piece that kind of comes off what Jake was saying. Thank you.

Susan Harper: We've been here since 2004. We first visited here during the circle, spiritual celebration upstairs, very early days of 2001. I value both the program and the worship service. Bob and I are here, I call it the Sunday morning marathon. We are here at 9 o'clock to get set up and we are often the last ones to leave in the afternoon. Now, as far as my personal religious feelings, I don't know what they are. I am an agnostic. I believe many things are possible and I am content not knowing and that's fine. But the worship service is a great source of comfort, of expansion of my thoughts. Now, as you all know, I am your volunteer music director and I help provide music for 52 blasted Sundays a year, free. I, at the very beginning, we had a spiritual celebration team and we were putting together programs. It was when we had a part-time person, maybe two times a month we had a minister. I know how much work goes into that. I have a feeling that if we value the worship service at all that we need to have a minister because nobody is going – I mean, Lara, yeah, Lara used to lead things a great deal. Sorry to bring your name up. I know how people burn out. I'm kind of burning out, especially if we're trying to get stuff together for summers. But anyway, I think that the worship service would just die if we didn't have a minister, because we are all too busy people to be able to do that. I don't think you know how much work goes into that, but it is a tremendous amount of work. I think it's like, what, 30 hours a week maybe away from here at least trying to get one service together. Now I see the young people that are coming, I see the children up there for children's story. That's the future people, that's our future. I honor the past, I honor the program, I love the program. But I also see what's good for UFL.

Michael O'Brien: I think there's a couple points I'd like to make. I haven't participated for about the last six or seven months and people called up and asked me to come participate at this, because they thought I should say why. Part of the problem for me has always been wondering how many other people might feel the same way as I do. I'm an atheist and a pretty hard core one. I would technically call myself an agnostic, because I can't prove that god doesn't exist. But I don't think he's there. The other part of what's important to me is that I am a lapsed Catholic, I was raised Catholic, I went to a Catholic prep school, I attended a private Jesuit university for two years. The forms and nature of organized religion are anathema to me. I don't want to participate in something that reminds me of church. It was the reason we can here in the first place is because this place didn't remind me of church. I have to assure everybody that the divisions that are now becoming apparent have always been here. Many people did not want a minister. I voted against it every chance I got because I saw this moment coming. Everything that has been done here that has made it more like a Christian church has distanced me and pushed me away. Passing the basket, having a procession, doing reading responses – which I am sorry, I personally find demeaning. As a 48 year old man with 145 IQ, I don't like reading things and having to repeat back. And I have always thought that I was very much in the minority and I haven't pushed this viewpoint. However, I have been contacted by some other people who apparently are in concordance with me, maybe not as far south as me, maybe they didn't go to a Catholic prep school or the Jesuit University. But I think that the divisions are becoming apparent now because the push is towards churchiness. And this paper we've got here with the little thing on it makes it perfectly clear that 47% of the people who responded have no interest in church religion whatsoever. They're either atheists or they're agnostics and they're not interested in churchy stuff. [challenges] Whoa, it says right here "don't believe in"...

Consultant: I think to be careful to extrapolate from that information as to what people want because they...

Michael O'Brien: In that case, I'm sorry I said that. When I looked at that it seemed to me like there was a fair number of people who also probably weren't very interested in church forms. This sort of called to me, these two categories. And while I don't have any problem with having a spiritual celebration, the problem is the push seems to be towards you need to participate in that if you really want to be a full member of the fellowship. What's going to happen to me, I mean, what do I do? Do I just come to the program? If my child is coming here and speaking at the spiritual celebration, am I supposed to sit out in the hall and not see her? I'm not sure what the answer to that is, but I'm just trying to present to everybody the problem of a member, and I do think there are other members who feel the same way that I do. I think some of this comes down to, do we want this to be a church or do we want it to be a fellowship? Another point I'd like to make is I often hear people talk about the original Unitarian church of Lawrence – there is no connection between this facility and that. When the [??] came around I did research, I did programs, I wrote articles that were printed in the magazine

for the Unitarian fellowship and I can assure you that for almost 20 years there wasn't a Unitarian church in Lawrence, and when this was started up again by members of the faculty and administration at the University of Kansas there was not a single person who participated in the original church who was in the new one. There's no documentation, there's no connection at all. And the new church was started as a fellowship in order to make people who are not Christians feel welcome.

Consultant: You're talking about a history and there isn't anyone from that time here. I can tell you that as I read the history that was written, and I have the names of the people written down, but I don't have it in my head yet, that it was written by people who in 1995 who saw the continuity, so I think to say there is no connection is quite.... it's a hypothesis.

Michael O'Brien: Anybody who'd like to some other time, I have my research, I have my sources, I can show my autobiography and show where, why I believe this. The point here I'm trying to make is that I thought this was founded as a fellowship

Consultant: It was.

Michael O'Brien: and I believe it is now turning into a church and that is going to make people, I thought the original idea was to make it place where people who are Muslims or Jews or Hindus or Atheists could come here and feel comfortable. I don't think you can adopt Christian practice forms and keep people who are not Christian comfortable.

Consultant: I think first of all, any community of faith or of reverence, which is what this is is a community of healing and I would say, I also was raised Catholic and went to Catholic schools my whole life and left the church as a young adult and then found UU. Most UUs are not UUs by birth, they come later. And most of us arrive in our UU communities with lots of sadness and lots of hurt and lots of things that we need to heal. And I think the opportunity there is to say, I am here in this faith community and it isn't the same. And so to be open to learning that it's a really different way. It is a very diverse perspective and that is part of the beauty and part of the call to UU. It isn't about one must be Christian. There are some things that are historic, that began with the puritans, etc. but I think to look at the whole and kind of Jake's idea, to look from the balcony a little bit, to recognize, this is an honoring of all faiths and there isn't one that dominates and that's part of what makes us UU. Whatever it might be.

Tamara Fairbanks-Ishmael: I am going to say that I strongly disagree. I am not Christian. However I am very spiritual. And that's one of the things that when I came to UU I found very difficult. We came from a different church that ended up Unity, which the minister when we went was very balanced and wasn't all about the Christianity, and but then it changed. So we were looking for a spiritual home that was not dogmatic and was not Christian. Now we live in the Bible Belt. This is it. And I am not the only one who has a strong spirituality and is not Christian and looking for a spiritual home. One does not

have to be Christian to benefit from deep contemplation and ritual. We as human beings, if you look at human beings throughout history, have benefited and have developed rituals. I think that's one of the things that is missing from our culture. We need ritual. We do. That's part of our human history. Now when I came here, I came with my own spirituality, which was probably a little different than a lot of people's spirituality here, and I thought, boy, how am I going to fit in. and I did. And I was very delighted to find, when I started doing my meditations on Sunday mornings and I thought, oh boy, let's see how these UUs take this, and I was really nervous about it the first time. When I went to Unity, what always delighted me was the feeling that the energy always, there is a lot of heart energy there, a lot of creative energy. And when I came here it's a lot of head energy. A lot of intellectuals. That's awesome, smart people are awesome. But the other part of that is we also need to go down into our hearts. And sometimes, in my opinion, there's not enough of that. There's a lot of head stuff. And I'm ok with head stuff, but it's the heart stuff that helps me get through the rest of my week dealing with my head stuff. And it's the uplifting message that helps me get through the week. And I will tell you that I personally today I am speaking for three generations. I am speaking for my children, I am speaking for my husband and myself, and I'm speaking for my mother who attempted also to come and join the UU and found herself very unfulfilled, being also a very spiritual person who wanted a spiritual community that was not dogmatic. She really sensed a lot of the stress and strife and didn't feel a lot of connection. Now what I see is a lot, I see that there are people here who are speaking out who have been here for a long time. And so I reached out to some people who I knew had been here for a while and hadn't been coming for a while, like me. Who either had one foot or both feet out the door because their needs were not being met. And so with the permission of the consultant, I asked them to come, but they weren't able to come, so they wrote some brief thoughts. And I know you don't want to hear me much longer, so if I could get four volunteers to read those letters that would be really helpful.

Consultant: Can I ask that we have those letters available but not read them now. We have too many people who need to speak.

Tamara Fairbanks-Ishmael: That'd be fine.

Consultant: Stay with who's here.

Tamara Fairbanks Ishmael: I'll just say one more thing, and that is that I guess I'm kind of puzzled as to why the folks... when they changed the times, Derek and I came to the program, but we came to the program because our kids were in RE and what else were we going to do for that hour. And personally, there were some programs that I really enjoyed, but for the most part, that's not why I'm here. I'm here for the spiritual community and the spiritual celebration and I love having Jill, and I think Jill brings a lot to this community. As Susan said, I've done some services too. It takes a lot to run an effective service. An effective service moves people. It moves people, it moves their hearts, it helps them get through the

week. It gives them hope. And lay led services are hit or miss, and that's just the way it is in my opinion they are hit or miss, because I may or may not feel moved, and the person leading the service may or may not move the energy of the congregation.

Jordinn Nelson Long: I am here as one of your congregation's two seminarians as well as a member. I will first say that it's an interesting dovetailing, I'm actually preaching about some of these issues and some of the issues that Michael specifically just brought up and that wasn't in any way planned, this just was the date that worked for me, so it's interesting. If you're interested in hearing more, the idea that there is no connection at all between the congregations, it's very much part of our mythos and I have spent the last semester digging into the archives of the Western Unitarian Conference and what used to be the AUA, the American Unitarian Association, most of which now [??] so it's been fascinating, I'm looking forward to talking with you about that and I think it's really relevant to this conversation. We have to know where we came from to truly know who we are and to chart a clear course. The other thing that I wanted to take the opportunity to say is that also like Michael I feel like the pain of these divisions has been here for a long time and it is a matter of whether we're choosing or able to be aware of that. I have felt for a long time, and this is just me personally, that this conversation about program with a versus in the middle – program versus service – it's a false choice. That's not a wrestling match that even needs to necessarily be had and it never was about the Sunday morning schedule, that's just an easy way that the pain of these divisions comes up for us. We say that no one should have to feel loss and I can't remember who here advocated in a way that really touched my heart. I hope we can find a way forward that doesn't take anything away from anyone else. And I wish that I felt that that were possible in any universe, and I don't even just mean in church life. The reality is that people feel pain and people are experiencing losses any time that there is growth, any time that there is change and I think in some ways the situation is analogous to what's going on as we talk about white privilege in our larger community. We have deposed royalty, we have people who have – I have – enjoyed a great deal of privilege and not had to really think about it and it is painful for me to suddenly realize that I've been stepping on people's toes for a very long time. There's pain in this community, it goes a lot of different ways and I guess I just want to hold up that as a seminarian, I walked into seminary with so much love on the shoulders of this congregation, and I have walked surrounded by that from all of you and I so deeply appreciate it. I also walked in with shame and with pain because I didn't realize that as a Christian universalist that that piece of my faith truly was compatible with unitarian universalism and it's because of parts of what I experienced here, trying to grow in my faith and trying to find some air to breathe, digging into the real spiritual questions that I have ostensibly as somebody who is one of the group of people that you wanted to bring in the door looking at ministry, to get here and be asked again and again, why are you here and why do you need to talk about your Christianity. As a universalist, somebody who believes that nobody is damned to hell, there is no other faith community

for me. I'm not sure where you think that I would go and be welcomed, particularly with a call to ministry. You are my people, this is my place. So I just want us all to be aware that first of all, I hear your pain and I feel some of it too. I guess I'll just close by saying also, I hear some despair and I felt some of that too about, can we do this, it hurts and can we do this. You are doing it. We are doing it and you've been doing it and I admire the example so much as somebody in a congregation now that dealt with conflict in a very, very different way and they're trying to come back from that. The heart and the spirit of walking forward in this faith I think is the best of the spirit of Lawrence and I value it.

Consultant: Can I just make a little comment. One is one of the things that I noticed and that I spoke with some of the people that I talked to was that the 2012 shared ministry proposal which changed the Sunday morning was something that when it was initiated, it was something that you had said as a community you would revisit. And then many other things got in the way, including a very important change in governance that I think Rebecca led. So I think what happened was that wasn't quite what it needed to be, and because other things got in the way, as a community you didn't get back to it to finish and to stay with it as it evolved into something that truly would work for you. And then when the Mission and Vision Task Force started doing its work, all of that discomfort just came to the surface in the healthiest possible way. There isn't anything wrong with having conflict or feeling hurt or feeling sad or afraid. It's a matter of then when it surfaces to do exactly what you've been doing this past year, which is speak about it, listen to one another, honor one another, comfort one another, be present with the situation and that's what you're doing in the healthiest possible way.

Marie Wilson: 1995 or so I've been here and I am extremely disheartened as to what I've been hearing here today. I resisted the spiritual celebration until I said, ok, fine. There are people who need the spirituality and that's just all there is to it. And as a matter of fact I was one of the first ones, I think it was the second year I joined the spiritual celebration committee. So I know the amount of work, and our joke in the committee was, we need a minister to do all this work because it's taking 30 hours a week. And I'm just so disheartened to hear that now there are people, even though I may not appreciate all aspects of the worship service that there are people who are disheartened themselves over the spiritual service and that maybe they feel threatened and on the program, I feel threatened. I think we're all feeling threatened here and we've got to get rid of that sense of being threatened and embrace each other maybe a little more.

Barbara Thompson: I just want to speak for a second about what ultimately, what led me here. And that was that I was attracted to being a member of a group that called itself a part of the Unitarian Universalist Association. I was interested in the work of the UUA and actually as a child I was interested in the work of Unitarians but never really was led there until quite late when I was in Houston with my husband who had cancer. And so we knew no one and it so happened that the Unitarian Universalist church of Houston was about two

blocks from our apartment. So I started going there. I am atheist/agnostic but I also felt a need to somehow think about, connect with what was happening in my life and world with the probable and ultimate loss of my husband and the fact that I'd always felt a strong connection to what we call the interconnected web of life, that there is something very special about being a part of this world and the connections we have to nature, to each other, to animals as you all know, I love animals. But to just find a way to express that and come to some kind of a sense of it, and I found that there. And it was very definitely led by some wonderful ministers. And I also became very aware of the work of UUA, which is that by being a part of that we are part of a very amazing organization in this country, it's connected to Canada, it has connections all over the world that stands for exactly what I want my life to stand for, to be a part of, be connected to, to contribute to, which I don't think can happen as an isolated group. And I also know that the ministers who go through the training to become a UU seminary are uniquely able to help us go in that direction and to be comfortable with people with a wide range of beliefs that are not necessarily like theirs or like mine, atheist or agnostic. So while I know that some of the rituals that are maybe like similar to a Christian church, I don't see them that way. I see them as recognizing an opportunity for us to be together and to be in reverence about the connections and the important work of the world. So I guess I just want to express that piece of it for me. And I don't think that connection and that being a part of things could happen nearly as well without a called minister.

Rachel Gehringer: I grew up in a very dysfunctional family and with a lot of conflict, so it's been very uncomfortable for me for the last few months. I really don't like people fighting and I feel like it's one side against the other and that's not what I love about this place. I love the fact that I am not someone who will probably go to a worship service, maybe I'll go to a couple, but that just isn't my thing and that's ok here. I have friends that don't feel the same way and we're still friends. When I came I was looking for a liberal community that I could be a part of, I could make a difference, and I didn't have to go to a traditional church. Not that this is. I'm just not interested in that. I think my confusion is it feels like over the last, in this whole process it's everyone saying well the worship service is important and the program is important, I don't understand why we can't coexist on Sunday with a called minister. And I don't know anything about the structure of a church. And I'm still learning what having a called minister means. Someone asked earlier and you said that we were experiencing it, but I don't think most of us even know. What does that look like? Is it different, is a called minister different, will it look different with Jill, does it look different with someone else? I don't know. This is really my only church experience I've had in my life. So for me I just feel like I need to know can both the program and the worship service co-exist on a Sunday and if not, not.

River: We moved here about two years ago and we were fortunate to get to pick where to move and one of my requirements of where to move was that there was an active UU with multi-generational services, and especially I'm a

single mom to my son. I've been a UU for about over 20 years, so I didn't come here not knowing what I was looking for, but I also came here knowing they vary widely, because I've been in different parts of the country. I thought where I was moving was a lot like where I grew up, on paper it looks very much the same, college town, same region of the country and I expected the UU to be a hub. I came here, I had anxiety and depression issues. I shared that very freely for me, which is challenging because I knew as a single mom I need to hit the ground running, I shared I have no family here, all that. My personal experience was one of a secluded social club. I felt it was very cliquish, which again, I am not one who breaks into things very easily, so a lot of that's on me too. But I did my darndest and I went to lot of things and everything, and I brought some other people here a couple times, actually several times. They felt the same thing. And everyone who I connected with eventually had one foot out the door if not more. So I was like well, this can't just be me. Obviously part of it's me, but it's not just me. And I also grew up in a very dysfunctional family and as soon as we got here I've been aware of conflict. I didn't know what the heck it was, I went around to people trying to figure out a place to join and a place to help. Yeah, the program was always very divisive and I just feel like, coming from Oakland there's no there there. There's a lot of great people and I feel like I really connected with some really wonderful people, but it feels like there's... Like I was excited at first when I heard about the Mission and Vision Task Force, I was like, they need that. And someone had mentioned the difference between community and Mission. That's what it is. It feels like to me, and again, I tried for a long time and then I realized that for a majority of people it's more like a social club community was how things worked. But I just also, another feedback, I think it's very understandable especially coming from a smaller church up and also when it comes down to it that people who keep stepping up, you need people that you're going to be able to count on, but then it's kind of like it becomes more and more insular and it becomes harder and harder for other people to work their way in. And yeah, I just think that was my main feedback. I have a lot more to say, of course, because I'm a UU.

Lynne Renick: I started coming to the fellowship in 1976 or 1978, I'm sorry, somewhere in there. I knew J Ellen Fields, I knew Andy [???], Paul Gillis, Hellen Gillis. I've been around a long time. I came to the fellowship and found laughter and learning. Episcopalian church never laughs and I thought, oh, I got a home here. And the programs kept me coming. I became secretary. Heaven help me, I became chair one year and tried to herd the cats so that we could have a ramp put into the church because we couldn't afford an elevator. Trust me, it's been a long time. But I dropped off because I wasn't getting enough. And I kept looking at, well, I don't need to learn about that one or I know that program. And so as I got older, I needed something more. And when we finally started having a worship service I was, oh, oh, oh I can have the best of both worlds, life is good. And that is when you had Lynne who actually hesitated for a long time started to make pledges, because this gives me the best of both worlds. And if I will call your attention to the dedication of this building, it's not to

a church, but to a home. This has been my home since 1976, 1978. I want it to continue to be my home. If some people call it a church, blessings be upon you. But it's my home. And I want it to stay that way. As much as we disagree with each other, I still want this place to be my home.

Consultant: Can I just clarify one thing about the naming of a community? There is nowhere in UUA at all that says you should be a church or name yourselves a church. It is very traditional in our denomination that if a community began as a fellowship, that they are always a fellowship, they don't change their name. So anyone who has felt some pressure about that, I don't hear anything about the changing of your name at all nor do I think that would be something you'd even necessarily want to be thinking about. It's how do you live into who you are and be fully who you are.

Douglas Underwood: I may not be a good public speaker but I'd rather look at most of you and I would have rather have seen this as a circle. For me, I didn't even participate in the survey that's listed here. I think this definition atheist/humanist is so narrow I couldn't even agree with it. For example, I think I can agree about the physical reality, but most of it we can't see or touch. And this human development is my spirituality – that's so narrow that I can't even agree with it. And like the calling of the consulting minister or the minister, I know I was here in the building and they were having a meeting to have a vote and I didn't go because I didn't even want to vote on it, but I didn't want to have a called minister and a still don't, or a consulting minister. I'm sure it has its advantage. One of my big problems with the spiritual... I wanted to go and I went to a few early spiritual celebrations, but somehow they weren't for me. And I have a problem even with the program now, the split between the program and the spiritual worship service. The program used to include some song, some responsive reading, some poetry, some lighting the candle. But now, it's been eviscerated, it hasn't been banned. I mean, I probably have the wrong emotions most of the time, I'm a mental case, etc. but, somehow even the program doesn't work for me. And the idea, to steal a joke or refer to something from Garrison Keillor's thing probably, I'm not sure where it came from – the idea that the Unitarians aren't very good singers of songs because they're always looking ahead a few lines to see if they're going to agree with it or how they're going to change the words on the fly to come up with something that they can actually agree with, that they think somehow still captures the stuff. But anyway, for me, I've been really disappointed with most of the service. The few services I have come to in the last few years, it seems like there's no tolerance for atheists anymore. That's how it seems to me.

Rebecca Gant: I'm responding to the question about what does it mean to me to have a called minister and also just to my hopes for this place. When I came here I was looking for something different from the Methodist church where I grew up. I knew that I believed in something but I didn't know what it was and it wasn't the Methodist idea of god, and I still don't know, I'm still looking. But what I want from this place is a chance to go deep with my spirituality, to figure out what is it

that I believe, what does it mean that I live on this earth, what will my death mean, what effect have I had on the world. All those really deep hard questions. And I can't do that by myself. I need my community and I need somebody who's been trained to help me do that. So for me a called minister means that I have someone who can help me figure out my answers to those questions. A study group would help, of lay people, but we have somebody who's had three years of education in how to do this and has studied it and thought about it longer than three years and what it means to me is to have help in that search and that's why I'm here. I also want to echo what I've heard some others say. The worship service to me is a chance to rest from the week, to take a breath, to remind myself what's important to me, to have a corporate experience with all those around me and to be ready to go out into the world again. Thank you.

Bruce Johanning: Many people think of me as the grump. [Laughter] But however there's, today I've heard and it just goes to proof, never give a Unitarian a microphone because they will talk a subject to death and never answer the question, and that's what I'm thinking right today is that we have side-stepped the question, instead of moving, because we talked and we really haven't made any decisions and we really need to move forward on this. Or at least limit how much we're going to talk. But anyway, I think we need to move forward on the subject or at least be more focused on the subject matter, because we're not really, we're spinning our wheels.

Consultant: I think it goes back to that sense of retrograde, that you step back to loop in and really honor that before we take that next step forward, we need to be sure we've embraced all, so I don't see it as... In fact, having heard last night many comments about it, I don't think there's any intention for this to go on and on and on. In fact, there was a real frustration that we weren't able to finish that process this year and the intention absolutely is to stay with it until the point that it's ready, so.

Graham Kreicker: I think I said this before, at the General Assembly in 2011 delegates voted to use nothing but the words congregation in referring to all our organizations and fellowship and church don't appear in any documents anymore. So using the definition of Webster, we're a congregation.

Janet Fitzgerald: I don't know why I have to come over here again and stand, but I feel like I have my back to you guys, so. I want to thank Lynn Bodle for honestly saying that she didn't know what it meant – called minister – until recently, because that frees me to say, I didn't know what that meant either. Thank you Lynn, and if there's anybody else. Maybe this is late in coming, there are a lot of things going on in our lives right now that have prevented us from coming here in the last few months. Sorry I haven't participated like I could have, but I just wanted to say that I'm getting a better grip on what this means, having a called minister. I love Jill. She's a friend of mine on Facebook, we joke together, we private message each other, we've talked on the phone, but I against having a called minister – or a minister. I'd never heard the term called

minister until recently. And I didn't grow up in religion, so the way religion affects me is very different than the way it affects Michael and I've learned a great deal from him, a great deal. So that's what it means to me to have a called minister is I'm still trying to figure it out. I do think that we've grown to where we can't do it all on our own anymore and I do appreciate the things that Jill has done for this congregation. I like calling it a fellowship. But also as a parent I feel pulled all the time. We want to go to the program; we can't because it's during RE. Fine, we make a sacrifice, we teach RE, that's good too, we like doing that. But then they're like, well, we want your kids to come into the service, which somewhere along the line we now call it a worship service and that word repulses me. I don't like the word worship, just for the record. So we get tugged this way and tugged that way, and it kind of leaves us feeling a little resentful. So I'm trying to find where I fit in in all of this and – I'm sorry I don't know your name, in the green – Lynne. Lynne, what you said to me brought tears to my eyes and I do consider this a type of home, and I want everybody to get what they need from this place, so if we can work it out, great. There's a lot of people that used to come here that don't and I miss them and I wish they would come back and I don't know what it's going to take to bring them back, but it would be a dream come true.

Consultant: I think everybody shares your wish about that. That's what I've been hearing.

Susan Cooper: One more thing, and it's short. I want to say to everybody here who's spoken and not spoken something that I was looking for for somebody to say to me, I hear you. I feel this, I hear it, trying to understand everybody who's spoken and who has an opinion, who has strong feelings about it. And I really do appreciate honesty. Thank you.

Consultant: And I echo Susan's comments, thank you so much. It is truly an honor to be in your presence.