

Discerning the Call

for Rev. Kristen as Associate Minister

Frequently Asked Questions



Q: Isn't Rev. Kristen already our Associate Minister?

A: Rev. Kristen is currently our contract Assistant Minister. UU congregations can have a called/settled minister, a contract minister, or have no minister and operate with lay preachers. A settled minister is one who has been called by a vote of the congregation. A contract minister is generally one who has been hired by the Governing Board for a limited time.

The vote to call a minister represents a depth of commitment and an affirmation of a shared vision by the congregational membership.

Q: Why are we doing this now?

A: First UU is emerging from a transitional period. Calling Rev. Kristen to become a Settled Associate Minister is a step towards commitment, stability, and covenant. It is also a demonstration that First UU is moving forward, towards a full and robust realization of our values and goals. The Board and the Call Discernment Team feel that the Congregation is ready for this step.

Q: How long does a settled minister's term last and how does it end?

A: A settled minister's term is not specified like that of a contract minister. The expectation is that the minister will serve out their ministry as long as it is mutually beneficial. If a settled minister would like to leave their position, they are expected to give the congregation and Board sufficient time to plan for the next stage of the congregation's ministry. If the congregation would like to dismiss a settled minister, there must be a congregational vote. Just as it takes a congregational vote to call a minister, it takes a vote of the congregation to dismiss a settled minister.

Q: Are UU congregations assigned ministers?

A: In Unitarian Universalism, congregations choose their ministers. The **Unitarian Universalist Association** does not assign a minister to us. This aligns with other aspects of being a UU in which each congregation is self-governed – a system called congregational polity. Our congregational polity gives important decisions to local congregations, such as choosing a minister, defining membership, electing leadership, or purchasing property.

Q: Why is this Call process a big deal? What does it mean?

A: To “Call” a minister by a vote of the congregation shows a deeper level of commitment than the Board contracting a minister. The Call reflects a commitment between a minister and the full congregation.

Rev. Kristen has been deeply invested in First UU since her first contract in 2023. Our shared ministry and commitment to one another has continued to grow. Calling a minister reflects an evolution of our mission and vision work over the last three years and represents a step in our commitment.

Q: How is this different from any other hiring decision?

A: As a faith community, the selection of a settled minister is simply not the same as an organization hiring a leader through a search process vetted by multiple committees and others. (Rev. Kristen was vetted in her initial hiring process.)

The vote to Call, however, is about giving our community the opportunity to choose whether or not to affirm a commitment to this relationship. We should approach this with the utmost degree of reverence, wisdom and love that lies at the heart of our faith, celebrating the worth and dignity of each person involved in the process, and affirming and practicing our democratic values.

Q: How will our questions and thoughts be heard?

A: Congregational Conversations are a cornerstone of this process! We want to hear your thoughts on what calling Rev. Kristen would mean for First UU. We will be holding a series of small discussion groups and we urge you to join the conversation and the process. The synthesized results of these Congregational Conversations, along with a recommendation, will be presented to the Board and Rev. Kristen who will make the final decision whether to move forward with a vote to Call. Please sign up for one of the Congregational Conversations, which are scheduled for November and December.

Q: What will we do in a Congregational Conversation? Do I need to come to one if my mind is already made up?

A: Congregational Conversations will be small group meetings where two facilitators guide the group through a discussion of the Call process and what settled ministry means for the congregation and its mission. Everyone will have the opportunity to ask questions and share their thoughts about this decision. We will be taking notes and making a report to the Board. We ask that everyone sign up for and attend a Congregational Conversation. **These conversations are the most important part of this process!** We need to hear from everyone about how they feel about this decision and we want you to hear from each other, as well.

Q: Should we do a full search with other candidates?

A: No. Our denomination prohibits considering “inside candidates” alongside new applicants for a ministerial position. Rev. Kristen has been with us as a contract assistant minister since 2023, so we could not ask her to “throw her hat in the ring” with other candidates. Instead, the appropriate process to call Rev. Kristen is the “Contract to Call process” – going from a contracted minister to a Called Minister. That is the process we are embarking on now.

Q: How and when will we vote?

A: If our Congregational Conversations reveal broad support for calling Rev. Kristen, a congregational meeting will be held to vote on whether to call her to be our settled associate minister. The date for this proposed meeting and vote is Sunday, February 8, 2026, immediately after service. All eligible First UU members are urged to attend this meeting and to vote on this momentous decision.

Q: What are the requirements for this vote?

A. Our bylaws reserve for the Congregation the authority to call a minister. The Call of a settled minister may be made only at a Congregational Meeting convened for such a purpose. At such a meeting thirty-five percent (35%) of Voting Members constitute a quorum, under Article III, Section 3. To pass, the Call must be supported by two-thirds (2/3) of the ballots cast by Voting Members according to Article IV, Section 1.

We encourage all those who would like to vote to complete the membership requirements, under Article II, section 2, as soon as possible. (Contact Valeria Aguilar, valeria@firstuusandiego.org, for details on becoming a voting member.) **Please plan to attend this important Congregational meeting to ensure we have a quorum.**

Q: Can a minister decline being Called?

A: Yes, a minister can decline the Call, even after the congregational vote. However, Rev. Kristen has accepted our invitation to begin the Contract-to-Call process.

Q: What is the Timeline?

11/2	All-congregation informational meeting @ 11:30 am, Hillcrest
11/9	The Call sermon @ 10:00 am, Hillcrest
11/9 - 12/29	Congregational Conversation meetings
1/6 & 1/13	Team analyzes and summarizes findings from Congregational Conversations
1/16-1/20	Team shares summary findings with Rev. Kristen, Board and Rev. Justine
1/25	Summary findings shared with congregation
2/8	Congregational vote

Q: Didn't get your question answered?

A: Contact a member of the Call Discernment Team:

Christy Anderson

Leland Beck

Susanna Concha-Garcia

Martha Hall

Mat Kaplan



Call Discernment Process Webpage