

UUA - Beyond Categorical Thinking Evaluation

To Facilitators and Congregational Leader: After the workshop, please complete this evaluation and send as an email attachment to transitions@uua.org. We expect a separate evaluation from each facilitator as well as one from the congregational leader. Thank you!

Note: Input fields will expand as you type

Person completing the evaluation: Nancy Baker
Congregation (include city and state): Milford, NH
Date of Workshop: 10/07/2018 (small group session 10/21/18)
Names of Facilitator(s): Rev Jane Dwinell

Arrangements: How did the process of getting to the BCT weekend go?

(Was there information that was not provided that would have been more helpful?
Were there any communication issues that could have been handled more smoothly?
Was contact between the congregation, facilitators, and office staff sufficient?)

All went well. Communication was good; Jane Dwinell was easy to work with; we had the materials we needed well in advance.

Congregation Application: What did you learn?

(The process of completing the application and/or reading the application is often very educational. Did you learn something you didn't know from the application process?)

Yes. We learned a few things about individuals in the congregation that we hadn't known before and it made me even more aware of the depth of diversity in the congregation which on the surface seems more obvious than it is.

Meeting between Ministerial Search Committee and BCT facilitators:

What was useful for you in this meeting? Did things become clearer as a result? Were there insights you gained from this meeting? How many attended?

The most useful thing was just relaxing with Jane, getting to know and trust her, becoming comfortable about sharing with her and letting her see the Search Committee in a deeper way. In addition, hearing about a few other congregations' challenges was helpful. After this meeting, the Search Committee knew more about what to expect, and we could better participate in and help to facilitate the workshop that followed the BCT

service. Rev. Dwinell explained that our role during the workshop would simply be to participate. Every member of the Search Committee attended this meeting.

Sunday Service:

Did the service work well to help people think more about the issues of Beyond Categorical Thinking? Did people decide to come to the workshop as a result of the service? What stood out in how this went and unfolded? What was the estimated attendance?

The service went very well, setting a good groundwork for the workshop that followed. Rev. Dwinell's sermon was engaging, interesting and inspiring. It challenged and occasionally amused the congregation. Several people told us that they decided to stay for the workshop as a result of the sermon. Some people even stayed for the workshop based on what they heard. It was a holiday weekend with a local event as well, so attendance at the service was a little low, but attendance at the workshop was a high percentage of those who came to church that day. We had 42 adults in the service and 29 at the workshop and 5 more at a follow up workshop the Search Committee held for those who couldn't attend the one with Jane Dwinell. (We used the same materials and format.)

Workshop:

Actual attendance: 29 (34 with the follow up group)

Were there people of color in the workshop? No (there are none in the congregation at present)

BGLT People? yes

People with disabilities? yes

Other groups?

Were these people open about their identities and engaged in the workshop?

Yes, as much as is possible in a largely homogenous congregation.

How did the workshop go? **Very well**

What generated the most conversation? Gender identity, how to handle issues of mental illness or substance use, and potential costs of physical plant upgrades would the congregation engage a minister with significant mobility limitations.

There was some discussion that we might not be ready for as much diversity as we thought we were.

In general:

Around issues of race and ethnicity? **Concerns a minister of color feeling comfortable and relating to our largely white community**

Around issues of disability (visible and invisible)? **Concerns about accessibility in the church (only the pulpit area is not accessible and discussion was more problem solving than concern) and about addiction issues.**

Around issues of sexual orientation and gender identity? **There were few concerns here though a transgendered minister was the subject of the most discussion.**

Other areas that were raised that produced significant conversation?

The issue of a transgendered person as our minister was the most significant, but all conversations were open, honest, and nearly everyone spoke at some point. The breakout groups were lively and productive. We have made improvements to the facility (ramps, elevator, railings, hearing assisted equipment) that help, but at present our pulpit area is not accessible to someone in a wheelchair. There was lively discussion about this which was more problem solving than a discussion of having a disabled person as a minister. The type of disability was a concern. There were few concerns about physical limitations, but more about persons who may have emotional issues or addiction problems.

What did you learn as a result of the experience about the congregation at this stage of its ministerial search and/or in general?

Though generally the congregation is open-minded, there seemed to be significant reservations regarding the congregation's readiness to have a transgender minister at this time. There seemed to be concerns about finding a minister who is able to integrate, and be comfortable, with our local and church community. There were some concerns about hiring a minister with unknown disabilities, including mental health issues. Older people make up the largest and most vocal part of the congregation, so generational differences in awareness of issues was obvious. A majority of the workshop attendees have been part of the congregation for more than 10 years.

We now have a better sense of where the congregation is “at” in their work toward acceptance.

Please identify the benefits the search committee may anticipate from doing this work.

It was a more mixed grouping than some of the focus group conversations we have had and we were able to participate as well as listen which opened up more awareness for us. The workshop allowed the Search Committee to better understand the boundaries of the congregation's comfort zone regarding a minister. It served to remind the Search Committee of its role representing the whole congregation (to the best of its ability), rather than the personal views of Search Committee members.

Please identify the benefits to the congregation from doing this work.

Some in the congregation may have questioned the benefit of the workshop, but responded to our call to participate. They seemed to have been glad to have a chance to share and listen, and by the end of the workshop people obviously understood the reason why it was an important part of the process. Being together, eating together, talking together all are key pieces of making any initiative work in our congregation and this one went well, was clearly relevant to the search, and involved people equally in the process.

Are there areas where you would like to have more information/help that arose from the weekend?

We plan a debrief with our Interim Minister very soon to address the issues that need some further investigation. For example, at some point the congregation would benefit from an extended workshop regarding gender identity, with guest speakers. Some of the concerns that were raised during the workshop, e.g. about mental health issues and substance misuse may best be addressed during our next settled ministry.

What else happened that we need to know about? **Nothing in particular.**

How did the facilitators do?

Jane Dwinell is very experienced at facilitating BCT and was very effective. People trusted her judgment and skills and she was able to get the group to engage with her and with each other easily and in meaningful dialogue. She managed the task of recording while facilitating quite well and so we could participate yet get concrete

data for later use. She did well with keeping the workshop moving and getting us talking about so many different aspects of our possible prejudices.

Was there a particular area of resistance from someone?

No. Discussion was lively, but never contentious.

Were there extenuating circumstances that affected the weekend?

Yes. It was Columbus Day weekend, when Milford, NH holds a large festival in the town's center that makes traffic patterns and parking very difficult. In addition, Milford's schools were closed both Friday and Monday, making this a four-day weekend for some. These factors probably reduced attendance for the service and the workshop. Two members of the Search Committee who are experienced facilitators used the materials and followed the format Jane Dwinell used. We had five additional people participate, and offering this opportunity helped the process seem even more open to the congregation.