

Overview of Small-Group Meetings

Emerson's Minister Search Committee conducted 10 small-group meetings between October 2 and October 19, 2022. The meetings, which were offered both in-person and on Zoom, attracted 79 participants. That number includes five children (who had their own conversation during a focus group of parents) and four staff members.

Four focus group meetings, centering on people with shared interests or connection to Emerson, were held in-person.

- religious education parents (and the side session for kids)
- past presidents
- current Board of Trustees
- staff

Six open-participation meetings, which provided all congregation members an opportunity to join the discussion, were offered either in person (two at member's homes, one at Emerson after a Sunday service) and three via Zoom.

Each of the meetings were conducted by two members of the Minister Search Committee—a facilitator and a note-taker.

Findings

The findings of the small-group meetings were very much in line with those of the congregational survey, while reflecting member opinions in a more subjective and flexible manner. Attendees at the small group meetings reflected strong preferences for a minister who:

- delivers dynamic, inspiring Sunday worship services with intelligent, thought-provoking sermons.
- motivates people to be present in Sunday worship and to get involved in other aspects of congregational life.
- is warm, personable and approachable.
- gets to know members of the congregation (adults and children—by face and name at the very least and in greater depth for people who are there regularly and are involved).
- is visible in congregational life—before and after Sunday worship and at churchwide social functions, including the annual church auction and, at least occasionally, at smaller group functions such as dinners.
- is accessible to members in times of need and establishes a clear-cut way for members to reach out.

- can inspire Emerson to re-energize, revitalize, re-establish connections and rebuild the former strong sense of community that has been lost during the last few years.
- can expand Emerson's reach and attract young adults and parents and a more diverse group of members that can help Emerson to grow—not only in membership numbers, but also in spiritual insight and depth of involvement for members.
- supports the religious education program—for both children and adults—and is willing to teach occasionally when possible (such as special sessions or series that take place at times other than Sunday mornings).
- is fully aware of the work of the church (i.e., committees and task forces) and, while not expected to attend every single meeting, meets with active groups on a rotating basis.