

Responses Part 3 — Thoughts About Our Next Minister

These questions guided the discussion about our congregation's expectations for the new minister:

- *After our new minister has been with us for a year, what will be your personal measure of success?*
- *How should the congregation as a whole measure the minister's success? Should the congregation as a whole use the same yardstick as individuals?*
- *What achievements will make you say you're glad the minister came to Emerson?*
- *Which of the expectations that we've described do you think are realistic (doable)? Are there any that aren't?*

What are our expectations and how will we measure success?

- Their work on inclusivity. How inclusive are they with their sermons? Do they include things that relate to my own spiritual practice or just one side of spiritual journeys for the congregation?
- What type of personal support has the minister given to us that have been slighted by the church before?
- Do they know what is going on at church or are they oblivious to anything not directly affecting them?
- More children, more families
- Quality sermons. Easier to invite people to come.
- If the mood of the church changes, more stimulating to attract new people
- Liven the place up, attract younger people
- How much people are talking to each other about the sermon
- Minister greets people as they leave church.
- Perhaps a year is too soon, but within 1-2 years...
- More people in the sanctuary.
- Rebuilding a sense of community.
- Getting people back into church and engaged with committees, etc.
- A warm connection with the minister
- I want them to know me when they do my funeral.
- How we feel about our minister and the community affects stewardship. We get more people and more money when we feel connected.
- How do we feel about the minister 's involvement in the community at large and social justice issues? The Emerson community must come first over social justice activity.
- Children's story being told to children, not adults. (a new minister won't immediately bring more children, but it would be better if the lack of children wasn't shoved in our faces.
- Sermons to think about later
- Intellectual sermons with a call to action
- Leave members feeling good
- Not just platitudes in persons - want specifics

- Find something every Sunday
- The minister listens
- The minister knows me/know my name
- accessible/available
- Make sure the congregation knows their availability - mechanisms for getting in touch
- Interface with congregation
- Greet everyone
- Hangs around in the Gathering Place
- Comes to social events
- Well-organized
- Gives good memorial services
- Friendly
- There are concrete goals - lead measures - measurable.
- There are action steps.
- Able to pivot if things are not working
- Collaborative goal setting & evaluation
- Goals with measurable objectives
- Minister wants to be here.
- Minister wants to be a voice.
- Has energy and vision
- Motivated to help us grow
- Quality of services
- How minister interacts with those in need of counseling in the congregation
- Minister likes living in Houston
- Emerson has become revitalized at bit
- Strong ethic of caring
- New ideas stimulate thoughts.
- WOW(!) sermons at least now and then.
- Remind us of our values.
- Positive attitude and energy.
- Passion.
- Knowing congregant names, including children.
- "In the middle, but not the center."
- "I am optimistic and hopeful."
- Should know the names of adults, youth, and children.
- Not a doomsayer.
- Minister needs to be very accepting.
- If I want to go to church on Sunday.
- A feeling of sacredness
- Comfort
- Staff has not quit.
- Preaching is important.
- Livelier worship
 - Less music from dead white men

- Liturgical dance
 - Drama
 - Energetic worship; excitement
- End/reduce loss of members
- NEW families are coming
- Visitors return....and stay.
- Energetic congregation
- RE for all ages at 10:00am
- Adult RE includes more than one offering
- All ages in Worship at 11:00am
- The minister needs to help us grow. (Board)
- Be engaging when doing sermons.
- Encourages a dynamic music program.
- A people person. Knows people's names. Warm, personable and approachable.
- Drawing people in is an important ability.
- Administrative skills are less important than the other traits.
- They have to be able to connect with millennials and Gen Z, both with technology and relevant preaching.
- Less about responding to our needs than getting people from the outside into our church. Ignore us to some degree to reach those others. (Board)
- A minister who can expand the definition of church. Out of the box thinking.
- Charisma.
- A minister who co-leads and collaborates with the Board of Trustees.
- Be realistic about what we can expect from the minister.
- We have a right to have an expectation of the minister to bring in new people.
- Sustainable rather than just growth.
- Larger crowd in the sanctuary on Sunday.
- More people involved in various projects, programs and committees.
- Building a community.
- Get engagement and excitement from our own members.
- Growth in children/youth religious education with enough volunteers to run the program without totally depending on parents.
- If I want to be there regularly
- If he/she knows our names
- See metrics that show we are a vibrant congregation
- Are the changes that the minister has put in place feel like they have gone smoothly? Have we gone through the transition smoothly? Are the new things that are happening working?
- Want to see metrics that show we are a vibrant congregation (attendance, RE attendance)
- I want to be there in spite of whatever else is happening in my life
- New members, more diverse (socio-economic, race, age, different abilities, LGBTQ)
- Programs that foster community and interaction initiated or revived
- Stable or growing, satisfied membership

- Increased attendance
- Increased participation on committees / at events
- Increased participation at Coffee Hour
- Stable, satisfied staff
- More intergenerational activities
- More volunteer participation
- More pledge income
- More young people — a younger average age
- More kids in RE
- People like the worship service
- Inspirational services, energetic, with life lessons
- Strong sermons — intellectual
- Openness of minister
- Not using pre-packaged worship materials (SoulMatters)
- Sermons from the heart — personal
- Willing to share personal feelings / insights
- Educational sermons
- Some religious content
- Minister is a caring presence
- Genuine pastoral caring
- Warm, personal
- Minister is open to all, not just cliques
- Good relationship between minister's spouse and the congregation
- Long-term: minister who is visible and active in the wider religious community
- Congregational satisfaction
- A feeling of "I can't wait to get to church"
- Increased membership
- Increased attendance
- The minister should greet members and visitors as they arrive.
- The minister should know member's names and basic information about them.
- The minister should be present.
- The minister should be hard-working.
- The minister should inspire enthusiasm.
- Increased energy and enthusiasm among volunteers.
- Phone calls should be answered.
- Their work on inclusivity. How inclusive are their sermons, do they include things that relate to my spiritual practice or just one side of spiritual journeys.
- Do they know our names?
- More people in the sanctuary - More children, more families, more diversity
- If the mood of the church changes, is it more stimulating?
- How much people are talking about the sermons
- Rebuilding a sense of community
- Minister has energy and vision and has motivated us to grow.
- If I want to be there regularly.

- Are new things happening, are the changes that the minister has put in place gone smoothly? Are we transitioning?
- More excitement in the Gathering Place
- Inspirational sermons - sermon ends and there is a gasp from the congregation
- Kids steal cookies from coffee hour.
- Sense that the minister belongs - both ways: minister feels it and congregation feels it
- Personal connection between the minister & congregation
- In charge of staff/church; has attention and awareness of what's happening in the church
- Sense of positive leadership at the helm
- The minister is inspired by us, we are inspired by the minister.
- Sunday morning attendance (measurable)
- Conversations after the service about the service
- Atmosphere when the congregation is together - approval or disapproval
- Is the minister comfortable and happy in Houston?
- Provides leadership toward diversity - people with kids, ethnic diversity. (measurable)
- Minister is present in outreach activities & attends at least some church committee meetings. (measurable)
- Minister knows the name of at least the most active church members. (measurable)
- Minister is available to talk to members in crisis. (Measurable? How? LPM?)

Which of the expectations that we've described do you think are realistic (doable)? Are there any that aren't?

- Achieving all of these in one year may be unrealistic
- More kids in RE will be difficult / will take time
- It will probably take more than one year for the minister to become visible and active in the wider religious community.
- Do we have unreachable expectations?
- We have to acknowledge that there's no perfect minister.
- We have to understand what one minister can accomplish vs. two ministers.