

# UU Fellowship of Bozeman

## Contract Minister

Bozeman, Montana | Pacific Western Region

**Regional Contact:** Rev. Summer Albayati | [salbayati@uua.org](mailto:salbayati@uua.org)

## About UU Fellowship of Bozeman

### Contact Methods

**Website:** <https://uufbozeman.org/>

#### Meeting Address

*Same as mailing address*

#### Mailing Address

325 N. 25th Ave  
Bozeman, MT 59718-2688

This Congregation **does not have** a 501(c)(3) status of its own

## Congregation Life

### Describe your Congregation and its culture:

Do you like to hike, bike, fish, or ski? Does hearing a wonderful piece of symphony music lift your spirits? Do you enjoy lectures and adult classes that give you ideas to ponder? Most of all, do you value community and connection? Then we welcome you to join us in Bozeman. Our Fellowship is cradled in the majestic Northern Rockies, in what Indigenous people have historically called the Valley of the Flowers.

The culture of our congregation can be best summed up in two words: community and connection. Our sense of community and connection arises from the work we do together to make our lives and our world a better place. We

gather together to worship on Sundays, receiving inspiration for better lives and a better world.

We are a very open and welcoming congregation, and we like each other! This is apparent in our services, our social activities, and our interaction with the community. In a recent survey, 88% of our congregants identified “fellowship/community” as among the top five reasons they attend UUFB. When asked their favorite thing about our congregation, the most common answer was the “sense of community and the people. The people are interesting and share similar values. I can be myself here.” Another top answer was “the sense of welcome, acceptance and open-mindedness.”

At our services, we enthusiastically greet each other and the people participating via YouTube. We give visitors the opportunity to introduce themselves during the service, and we engage them in conversation during coffee hour. Two retired ministers from another denomination have said, on visiting our coffee hour, “You people are good at this!” Long-time members are not overly protective of tradition, and we encourage newcomers to be involved.

We became an official Welcoming Congregation in 1998, and the congregation voted in January 2024 to commit to Welcome Renewal. In calendar year 2024, UUFB fulfilled the Five Practices of Welcome Renewal and plans to make this an annual commitment.

The Caring Committee, Hospitality and Membership, and the Stewardship Committee all use a method of individually contacting members throughout the year. Our RE Coordinator has created activities for the children such as sending valentines to connect our RE youth with our physically isolated folks.

We have a number of social and other activities where members can get to know each other and have fun. We celebrate birthdays and anniversaries the first Sunday of each month after our service. We have inter-generational celebrations including pumpkin carving, holiday cookie decorating, Easter egg hunts and bingo. This fall, in connection with our Water Communion service, our RE kids helped us play games where we learned about where our water comes from and how it’s used. Outside of church we have Circle Suppers, Chalice Circles, a men’s group, family board game night, and a hiking group. We also hold events such as candlelight labyrinth walks, events for our over-80 members, and Adult RE book discussion groups.

We also gather together to connect to our local community through social justice work, as discussed elsewhere in this document. Most recently, our members came together to join members from other Bozeman churches to pack school meals for children in Haiti. Another example of our social justice focus is that when there is a parade, protest, or demonstration in Bozeman, UUs are well represented.

A beneficial result of our Fellowship's sense of community is the high level of trust among members and between members and their leadership. Most congregational votes are fairly lopsided: a good example is the special meeting in June 2016 on whether to undertake the process of acquiring and renovating our building. The "no" votes on the main motions were in the single digits. Congregants are willing to listen respectfully to other points of view and change their minds. There is a long-standing habit of subsuming individual agendas to the interest of what is best for the congregation as a whole. When conflict does arise between two individuals or within a small group, it is usually handled at that level, without rumors or the creation of factions.

Another beneficial result of our community and connection is our ability to come together to get things done (such as the monumental project of purchasing and renovating our building). There is a residual frontier tendency to "get 'er done" once a decision is made, along with the sense that it takes everyone pitching in to accomplish our goals. Our stewardship campaigns are generally successful. The pledge campaign for 2024 exceeded its ambitious goal. Pledge fulfillment is high (upwards of 95%). Our only capital campaign, to purchase and renovate our building in 2016, exceeded its goal of \$600,000 by \$56,000.

Although our Fellowship is the largest UU Fellowship in Montana, we are a "Size A" congregation. While there remain elements of being a family-sized congregation, as a larger community, we have been aided by the experience of those who have moved here from larger congregations. Our small-to-medium size, however, continues to contribute to our sense of community. While we may not know all of each other's names anymore, we are successful in achieving that part of our mission statement to "nurture community."

We invite you to watch [this slide show](#) that portrays the life of our Fellowship.

### **Your Congregation's mission:**

UUFB's Mission Statement adopted in January 2019 is as follows:

WE:

WELCOME DIVERSITY

ACT FOR JUSTICE

FOSTER SPIRITUAL GROWTH

INSPIRE COMPASSION

NURTURE COMMUNITY

SUSTAIN OUR LIVING PLANET

Our Vision Statement, which was developed in 2019-2020 and adopted by congregational vote in May 2020, can be found at [this webpage](#).

**Describe and provide examples of how your Congregation lives its values:**

We honor spiritual diversity by inviting clergy from other denominations to speak (some of them annually), and we invite speakers from marginalized communities to speak at our Sunday services. We hold solstice events. Recently our Humanist group presented a Sunday service. A couple of times a year, services focus on historical UU figures or ideas. Our RE programs introduce other religious traditions such as Samhain, Holi, and St. Lucia Day.

We hire affirmatively, advertising openings (in the local newspaper, at hiring websites, and on social media) and considering all applicants fairly. We value our staff and ministers and provide pay and benefits in line with UUA guidance. We have created and adopted a Personnel Handbook to assure fair treatment of staff.

During the pandemic we retained our staff, laying off only one teenage nursery aide (and paying out the remaining months of her employment). We paid modest bonuses at the end of 2020 to recognize the challenges of adapting to COVID.

We are almost reflexively active on social justice issues. Our ongoing commitments are to the Gallatin Valley Food Bank (for as long as anyone can remember), Family Promise (founding member), Fork & Spoon (our local community pay-what-you-can cafe), and Montana Interfaith Power & Light. We take a special offering on second Sundays, giving it to an organization that shares

our values. In 2023-2024 (through September 2024) the average amount donated was \$935. If there is a fifth Sunday, we take a collection for emergency relief; the average over the past year was \$1,406.

Many of our members are involved in other community social justice causes and share notices via our listserv, announcing events and organizations to support, along with occasional links to background articles and videos. As a demonstration of the congregation's ongoing commitment to social justice, the SJAC (Social Justice Action) committee is one of the longest-running committees at UUFB.

We have been a Welcoming Congregation since 1998 and helped with the first PRIDE parade in Montana in 1997 by providing security for the participants. Our UUFB minister performed the first legal gay marriages in Bozeman. Our members voted in January 2024 to commit to the Five Practices of Welcome Renewal, and we have fulfilled these practices in calendar year 2024, with the intention to continue our commitment to Welcome Renewal in future years.

We are subscribed to the webinar series *Transgender Inclusion in Congregations* offered by the Transforming Hearts Collective which is accessible to all in UUFB. We have held two discussion group sessions on this series. We have shown films focusing on diversity and had book discussion groups; most recently the books were *White Fragility*, *The Inner Work of Age*, *Shifting from Role to Soul*, and *Before We Were Trans*.

We are active in the interfaith community; for example, engaging in the Gallatin Valley Interfaith Association and joining Montana Interfaith Power & Light as a covenanted partner. (Bozeman clergy are prominent on the MT IP&L Board.) We partner with Beth Shalom and Pilgrim Congregational, sometimes sharing activities and working together once a month at Fork & Spoon. Following the October 7, 2023, attack on Israel, Beth Shalom asked if some of us would attend their Shabbat service, both for support and safety. Although this request came just a day before Shabbat, about 20 of us attended. Several years ago, we showed similar support for the Bozeman Muslim community when it was threatened.

We care for the planet by recycling as much as we can. One Sunday a month, a member collects glass (which is not recycled by the city) and takes it to a private recycler. We avoid using disposable food service and kitchen items, and we try to support local businesses as much as possible.

Our endowment and other long-term financial investments are in socially responsible funds. We completed our building in 2017 as an energy-efficient structure. We reused as much of the original structure as possible, including the overhead light fixtures in the sanctuary. Some of our kitchen appliances and fixtures were reused from another facility.

### **What potential applicants should know about the congregation's lay leadership:**

Our lay leadership (both lay leaders for worship and for other functions) has a long and strong history. During the times when we didn't have ministerial leadership, lay leaders found speakers for us and often spoke themselves.

Currently, lay leaders volunteer to work with ministers (and other presenters) in planning services and often choose readings, chalice lightings, and hymns. Members of the Sunday Service Committee often serve as lay leaders.

The following is a partial list of the activities supported by our lay people:

- Serve as chairs or members of committees
- Greet attendees at Sunday services
- Volunteer to provide transportation, food, set-up, and clean-up for events
- Bring meals and provide transportation to doctors' appointments for members in need
- Manage short-term tasks like the art bazaar or book sale; maintain our facility
- Support the RE program
- Lead groups such as Chalice Circle, the Humanist group, and book discussions

[Click here](#) for a current list of active committees, which provides an overview of our lay activities.

Most importantly, members serve 2-4 year terms on our Board of Directors. The Board partners with the minister to oversee all aspects of congregational life. All of these volunteers are viewed as part of our shared ministry.

### **Link to your Safe Congregation policy:**

<https://uufbozeman.org/members-friends/policies/>

### **Worship service schedule:**

Sunday Services are held in our building from at 10:00 AM and are live-streamed on YouTube. Children's RE is held at the Fellowship during this same time. Nursery care has been suspended since COVID, but the nursery space is available if needed for a quieting time. However, our congregation is quite accepting of baby noises.

Dress is casual with some people wearing jeans, others in more formal attire. We meet weekly during the summer, with monthly services at a nearby park, which has a pavilion that makes gatherings feel more festive.

Visit our website to view [past Sunday Services and sermons](#).

## Personnel

Name	Position	Paid Hours per Week	Year Started
Janine Roberts	Treasurer	Volunteer	2024
Christy Huddleston	Church Administrator	30	2019
Barbara Tylka	President/Chair	Volunteer	2024
Christine Wilcox	Religious Educator	4	2020
Laurel Yost	Pianist	3	1994
Megan Makeever	Choir Director	1.5	2024
Margo Rinehart	Interim Minister	40	2022
Joy LaClaire	Secretary	Volunteer	2024

**Describe the diversity in congregational staffing, now and in the past. Detail how leadership can assure opportunities and on-going support for people with marginalized identities in hiring practices:**

Bozeman is a city with limited ethnic and racial diversity, and the makeup of our staff reflects the community. There is strong support in our leadership to increase the diversity of our staff when possible.

The process for hiring is outlined in a UUFB Hiring Best Practices Policy following the criteria in our Personnel Manual. Both can be found at [our website](#).

Please see our responses in the "Demographics" section as well.

**Additional personnel notes:**

Rev. Margo Rinehart began her interim ministry at UUFB in 2022. From 2022-2024, Rev. Margo's position was full-time (40 hours/week). In August of 2024, Rev. Margo moved to half-time ministry (20 hours/week) due to family needs at home in western Washington. Our congregation appreciates Margo's flexibility in caring for us and her family with the new schedule for 2024-2025. UUFB is planning for full-time ministries in the future. Apologies that we did not find a good way to convey this history in the Personnel list above.

Our pianist is paid on a per-performance basis; the hours listed are a rough estimate and are variable.

## Congregation History

**Provide your Congregation's founding history:**

The Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Bozeman grew out of a small, liberal discussion group that began meeting in 1955 beginning with a visit from Munroe Husbands, Director of the Fellowship Program in the American Unitarian Association (AUA). During the next four years the group met bi-weekly in members' homes. Members or guest speakers gave presentations followed by discussion around ethical, philosophical, and religious problems. The group was visited by a Unitarian minister from Salt Lake City in 1956 and a Unitarian minister from Spokane in 1959. The latter's presentations so impressed the members of the discussion group that they urged affiliation with the AUA. This proposal split the group when a majority voted on April 26, 1959 to affiliate and become a Unitarian fellowship.

Over the following 23 years the fellowship met in different locations in Bozeman while Sunday School was held in members' homes. The need for a home for adults, children, and youth to be together prompted a yearning to own a building. The group split over the decision to find a building, build a building, or have no building. After the decision to build was made and land was purchased there were not enough dues-paying members left to build a church. This smaller group continued to meet as a fellowship.



In 1982, The Montana Cluster (Fellowships from Great Falls, Helena, Missoula, and Bozeman) called Rev. Mary Scriver, a modern day UU circuit riding minister, to travel to each fellowship once a month for services. Rev. Scriver drove her camper truck no fewer than 560 miles each month meeting with each fellowship for five days. She slept in her camper or in members' homes. She strengthened our bonds with the denomination by introducing hymns, chalice lightings, formats for services, and creating communication with the UU Mountain Desert District and the Unitarian Universalist Association. She served us for two years.

**Date founded:** 6/1/1959

**Describe important events in your Congregation's history:**

1959 – We joined the American Unitarian Association.

1982 – Rev. Mary Scriver begins her ministry with the four UU fellowships in Montana.

1984 – We celebrated our 25th Anniversary.

From the mid-1980s into the late 1990s, the Fellowship hired consulting and visiting ministers to help us grow not only in numbers, but in social justice activities, organizational skills, training for lay leader and visions for the future. We welcomed ministerial support as we remained a lay-led congregation yearning to have a minister of our own.

1988 – The land purchased by the Fellowship in the 1960s was sold as the group realized it was not an appropriate site for a church.

1990 – We sent our first representative to General Assembly.

1991 – Our church year began with a fall retreat. Men's and Women's groups began meeting.

1995 – We cooked and served a Thanksgiving dinner at a restaurant owned by members of the Fellowship for those alone and wanting to share the holiday.

1997 – UUFB participated in the first Montana Gay Pride Parade in Bozeman by providing security, sharing our Sunday Service with the PRIDE community and holding a same-sex Commitment Ceremony.

1998 – We became a Welcoming Congregation.

1998 – Our first paid position was a Coordinator of Religious Education.

1999 – A large group of members and friends traveled to Salt Lake City to attend General Assembly.

2000 – We designed and created a six-paneled fabric screen for an altar backdrop as we continued to hold services in various venues.

2002 – Welcoming Congregation adult workshops were held.

2003 – The “Very Occasional Choir” was formed.

2003 – We have a minister! We welcomed Rev. Lois Van Leer to a half-time position as our first minister with us in Bozeman.

2005 – A new UUFB logo was created by one of our members.

2006 – 2007 We hired an Administrative Assistant and rented office space we called “UU Central.”

2009 – Our 50th anniversary!

2011 – Rev. Dr. Nina Grey began her 5-year ministry with us.

2015 – With a generous jump-start from a member, we purchased the Shining Mountains Lutheran Church, which we transformed into our current home. Following a vigorous, enthusiastic, and successful Capital Campaign, we undertook extensive remodeling and renovation of the building, helped by amazing contributions of time and talent from members and friends, including the gift of professional architectural services.

2016 – During this exciting time Rev. Dr. Grey retired in 2016, and Rev. Dennis (Duffy) Peet was called to serve the congregation. During his ministry, the position grew from 3/4 to full-time. Finally, we had a full-time minister AND a building.

2017 – We held a dedication for our first UUFB home.

2018 – We began holding Sunday services in the summer.

2019 – Our long-time volunteer pianist was hired as a paid staff member, and a new Coordinator of Religious Education joined the team.

2019 – We celebrated our 60th Anniversary with a service led by Rev. Duffy Peet and Rev. Sarah Schurr, from the UUA Western Region.

2020 – Responding to the challenge of COVID, we quickly learned about and created virtual services. Our building remained closed for Sunday services and meetings through May 2021. When we opened our doors and began meeting in person, we continued sharing our services by Zoom.

After Rev. Duffy retired in the summer 2022, Rev. Margo Rinehart joined us as interim minister in August. In 2023-2024, we searched for a settled minister; that search was not successful. In the fall of 2024, we began searching for a full-time contract minister to join us in Bozeman.

## Ministerial History

Start	End	Position	Name	Job Title
2022	Now	Interim	Margo Rinehart	Interim Minister
2016	2022	Called	Dennis Peet	Minister
2011	2016	Called	Nina Grey	Minister
2010	2011	Interim	Jacqueline Ziegler	Interim Minister
2003	2010	Called	Lois Van Leer	Minister
1999	2000	Contract	Judith LaFollette	Consulting Minister

**List non-UU ministers who have served the congregation, including their names, denominational affiliation (if any), and approximate dates of service:**

Rev. Lois Van Leer was a minister in the United Church of Christ when we met and welcomed her into a half-time ministry with our Fellowship in 2003. She was exploring becoming a Unitarian Universalist minister and became one after years of growth in ministry with us, much reading and study, and many trips to Boston to meet with the Ministerial Fellowship Committee. We grew together in Unitarian Universalism during the 7 years that Lois was our minister.

**Recall if a minister with a marginalized identity has served the congregation, and describe how this ministry did go / is going:**

Rev. Lois Van Leer and her partner, Lori, were heartily welcomed to our congregation. During their time with us they returned to the UU Fellowship of Corvallis for their wedding celebration and celebrated with us on their return to Bozeman. Neither the fact that Rev. Lois was a UCC minister nor that she was a lesbian were barriers in creating community with our congregation and representing us in the Gallatin Valley Interfaith Association or the Bozeman community.

**Additional ministerial history notes:**

From the mid-1980s into the late-1990s the fellowship hired consulting and visiting ministers who provided a variety of sermons in Sunday Service. This ministerial support inspired us and helped us grow not only in numbers, but in social justice activity, organizational skills, training for lay leaders, and visions for the future.

We met Rev. Lois Van Leer when she was visiting the area and invited her to be a guest minister one Sunday. She easily made a connection with both adults and children. In 2003, Rev. Van Leer became our first minister living in Bozeman.

We continued to be a church in a Subaru, meeting at Pilgrim Congregational UCC, The Senior Center, Temple Beth Shalom, an Episcopal church, and Christus Collegium, a campus ministry.

As more ministers joined us, each brought different gifts. Rev. Jackie Ziegler, our first interim minister, provided the bridge during a challenging time between the ministries of Rev. Van Leer and Rev. Dr. Grey. Rev. Nina helped strengthen our Adult RE program with Spiritual Pluralism discussion groups – Humanism, Buddhism, Mysticism, and Earth-Centered Spiritualities.

During the exciting time of moving into our own building, Rev. Dr. Grey retired and Rev. Duffy Peet was called to be our minister. In time Rev. Duffy's 3/4-time ministry became full-time, and we finally had a Fellowship home and a full-time minister. Rev. Duffy guided us through the most difficult years of COVID.

Rev. Duffy retired in the spring of 2022, and we welcomed Rev. Margo Rinehart as our interim minister. Rev. Margo was with us full-time until June 2024 and will serve us half-time through June 2025 while living at home in western Washington and commuting to Bozeman at least 8 days each month.

# Membership & Finances

The data for the table below comes directly from the UUA's annual congregational certification.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Total Pledge Income</b>	<b>Total Operating Expenses</b>	<b>Membership</b>	<b>Youth Enrollment</b>	<b>Avg. Attendance</b>
2024*	\$205,050	\$216,774	110	16	51-75
2023*	\$199,874	\$185,875	116	18	51-75
2022	\$180,495	\$167,045	141	17	26-50
2021	\$185,627	\$167,125	143	18	51-75
2020	\$170,397	\$162,594	144	32	92
2019	\$159,911	\$138,855	140	34	87
2018	\$136,555	\$167,213	130	30	83
2017	\$131,900	\$140,800	121	21	88
2016	\$124,606	\$115,297	118	33	92
2015	\$118,139	\$116,682	119	31	90

The following notes and/or explanations have been offered by the congregation:

Year	Note/Explanation
	<p>As of November 2024, we have 110 members. In 2024, attendance at Sunday services (including online attendees and children) is typically around 70 each week. Except for voting and positions on the Board, we do not make a marked distinction between members and friends. We have some long-time friends who have served the congregation in many capacities.</p>
2024	<p>In the past two years, we have been offering orientation sessions twice a year for prospective members, and we expect some of our regular attendees will become members.</p> <p>Regarding finances, our pledge campaign for 2024 had 101 pledge units and exceeded its goal. As of 11/22/24, our pledge campaign for 2025 has received 78 pledges and reached 98% of its ambitious goal of \$234,000, with at least 20 more pledges expected.</p>
2023	<p>Before COVID arrived in 2020, UUFB sometimes had more than 100 attendees at Sunday services. In 2021, we averaged only 43 attendees per Sunday at our Zoom services.</p> <p>From the resumption of in-person services in March 2022 through the end of 2022, there was an average of 64 attendees per Sunday service, which included in-person adult and child attendees and live stream (YouTube) viewers.</p> <p>For the first ten months of 2023, average Sunday service was 66, again including adult and child in-person attendees and live stream viewers.</p> <p>The number of in-person adult attendees has gradually trended upward, while the number of live stream viewers has decreased correspondingly.</p>

## Demographics

**What percentage of members do you estimate identify as people of color?**

5-9%

**What percentage of members do you estimate identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer (LGBTQ)?**

10-24%

**Please describe the gender makeup of your congregation**

From our congregational survey, we had 76 responses to "With which gender identity do you most identify?" Our responses were:

1. 72% woman
2. 22% man
3. 1% Two-Spirit
4. 2% prefer not to answer
5. 1% questioning woman

No one identified as Gender Queer/Gender Fluid, Transgender, Agender/Gender Androgenous.

**What number of staff (including full and part time) identify as people of color?**

0

**What number of people of color serve as leaders or chairs of your volunteer committees and program teams?**

1

**What number of your Board of Trustees identify as people of color?**

0

**What can you say about the diversity in congregational leadership, now and in the past? How does leadership assure opportunities and on-going support for people with marginalized identities in leadership development practices?**

Bozeman is a city with limited ethnic and racial diversity, and UUFB membership, leadership, and friends of the congregation reflect this fact.

The following lists the racial makeup of the community from the 2020 US census, followed by the racial makeup of those who answered the 2023 UUFB Congregation Survey:

White: 92% census, 89.5% UUFB survey

2 or more races: 3.26% census, 1.3% UUFB survey

Asian: 2.24% census, 1.3% UUFB survey

Native American: 0.95% census, 0% UUFB survey

Black: 0.72% census, 0% UUFB survey

Other: 0.75% census, 3.9% UUFB survey

Additionally, 16% of families responding to the survey said they considered themselves to be part of a multi-racial family.

We have offered positions of leadership to persons of color and marginalized identities based on their skills, interests, and history with the community. To be fair, there have been few such opportunities in our largely White congregation. We hope to see this situation improve as our surrounding community and the Fellowship become more diverse.

## Accessibility

**Does your Congregation provide assisted listening systems? Yes**

**Assisted listening system details:**

We have wireless listening devices available for use with hearing aids or cell phones.

**List parts of the building(s) which are accessible to people who use wheelchairs or have disabilities which affect mobility:**



Our building is all one level without stairs to entry. The sanctuary, gathering hall, minister's office, restrooms and children's room are all on one level. We have accessible bathrooms with rails and lots of space for wheelchairs. The parking lot has reserved parking adjacent to a sidewalk ramp access with tactile paving for the visually impaired.

**List parts of the building(s) which are not accessible:**

The chancel with the lectern has two steps without a ramp for access at this time. A hand hold has been added to support those who need additional stability on the stairs.

**Does your building have accessible, automatic exterior doors? No**

**Describe other ways your congregation is working toward being more accessible:**

As our congregation grows we are becoming more aware of the individual support that is needed for the visually impaired. We've found the facility to be accessible, and we are learning how to best provide additional one-to-one support. For example, we have invested in a Braille copy of the hymnal. When blind individuals attend our services, we are able to provide them with this support.

## Resources & Programs

**List the resources and programs your Congregation used or participated in during the past year:**

- Welcoming Congregation Renewal resources since 1998
- "Music for Online Worship" is a major source of music. We honor copyrights and fair payment for our live-streamed services
- Soul Matters provides themes and materials for services, RE, and monthly Chalice Circle meetings
- Transforming Hearts Collective, web series subscribed in 2021; two rounds of discussion held. We last offered the program in 2022. We have purchased the web series, so we can use it again as we desire
- UUA Website template, communications, social media resources
- UUA resources for the Committee on Shared Ministry

- UUA resources on evaluation of ministers and ministries
- UUA listservs for administrators and finances
- "Stewardship for UUs" webinars and consultants
- Leadership development, Leader Lab, governance resources
- *Heart to Heart* and *Soul to Soul*
- Board President Regional group facilitated by our Congregational Life representative
- *The Interim Minister as System Analyst* by Richard A Nugent of the UUA staff

**Describe your religious educational programs across the lifespan:**

UUFB's RE programs consist of a school-age RE class during services and special events and programs for families. Children participate with the whole congregation during the Story for All Ages at the beginning of the service. The RE curriculum is aligned with the Sunday services by using the same Soul Matters themes.

Adult programming has included small groups meeting for a specified period of time to discuss books and explore personal ideas about spiritual and personal topics. Our Humanist group has been meeting for a number of years. Recent activities are listed in the "Ministerial expectations for RE."

**Describe your youth and campus ministry programs:**

There is a newly formed Gallatin Valley Interfaith Youth Group (grades 6-12), and the UUFB Lifelong Religious Exploration committee is actively participating. For instance, we hosted a crafting evening and provided a meal for this group in Fall 2024.

For many years, each fall we have participated in Catapalooza, MSU's campus welcome event, where we distribute handouts and collect sign-ups for further contact.

We held several Our Whole Lives programs in partnership with Pilgrim Congregational UCC from early 2004 until approximately 2022. We have trained OWL facilitators for different age groups and are prepared to offer this program in the future.

# Surrounding Community

**Describe the character of the surrounding community, including population and demographics:**

Bozeman is a vibrant, fast-growing community located in the Gallatin Valley in southwest Montana. The breathtaking scenery and outdoor recreation opportunities provided by the mountains and National Forest lands surrounding it, as well as its close proximity to Yellowstone National Park, make it a popular tourist destination. Bozeman Yellowstone International Airport (BZN), just 13 miles from downtown Bozeman, is the busiest airport in the state.

Bozeman stands high in several national livability rankings and publication reviews, which consider Bozeman's cultural, artistic, and educational assets; the safety of the community; its extensive free public bus transportation; lifestyle healthiness; community life; outdoor recreation opportunities; and the vibrancy of the area's economy.

Bozeman has cultural amenities usually found in much larger cities. It boasts numerous performing arts organizations including a symphony, opera, ballet, and several theater companies. There are multiple unique museums including the world-famous Museum of the Rockies. In addition, Bozeman has a fantastic public library that is large, well-used, and hosts public lectures, outdoor concerts, and activities and groups for individuals of all ages. Bozeman hosts the annual Sweat Pea Arts Festival, Music on Main (street) in the summer, and the downtown Christmas Stroll.

Bozeman abounds in outdoor recreation opportunities, including miles of hiking and mountain biking trails, camping, world-class fly fishing, kayaking, world-class downhill skiing at the Big Sky destination resort and at close-in community-owned Bridger Bowl, and cross-country skiing at Crosscut Mountain Sports Center (which offers biathlon and para-athlete programs). Nearby are several National Wilderness Areas, extensive US Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management land, and a robust system of state parks.

Bozeman's estimated 2023 population was 57,305; the metropolitan area contains about twice that number of people. Although estimates vary, about 87% of Bozemanites are non-Hispanic white, and 5% are Hispanic. The population of Bozeman is quite young, on average, with a median age of about 28 years old.

Whereas Montana is a “red” state, Bozeman is liberal and progressive. The state’s constitution guarantees a number of important rights, including the right to a “clean and healthful environment,” the right to know (open government), and the right to privacy. Montana voters overwhelmingly approved in November 2024 a constitutional amendment to secure reproductive rights.

Education is highly valued in Bozeman, and its public schools are consistently among the highest-performing school districts in the state. For students for whom the public schools aren't the best option, alternatives include Cottonwood Day School, Bozeman Field School, and Headwaters Academy, among others.

Bozeman has a thriving local economy that includes large employers such as Montana State University (MSU), Bozeman Health Group, and the tech company Oracle. Bozeman is also home to manufacturers such as Simms and Gibson Guitar, as well as a plethora of laser technology companies.

Although Bozeman has a great community feel, it does have some challenges. The lack of affordable housing is a primary concern to the community. Many middle-income people, including professionals, live in nearby communities where housing is less expensive. Nonetheless, our congregation will do everything we can to help our new minister find appropriate housing in Bozeman, as we have done for previous ministers.

Bozeman’s scenic beauty, outdoor activities, clean air and water, as well as its abundance of gyms, trails, yoga studios, and educational and cultural offerings combine to make Bozeman a place for anyone to be healthy, happy, and thriving. Yet, it is Bozeman’s human assets that make it a “most livable” place.

**Describe how your Congregation is known/perceived by the larger community:**

Our congregation is known for its participation in social justice events in the city and at the state level. UUFB members and friends joyfully participate in local PRIDE events, serve food at the “pay-what-you-can” restaurant in town, host interfaith gatherings, and march in support of our values and in opposition to legislation that harms marginalized populations. We are proud of our social justice work and our strong positive relationships and collaborations with organizations that share our values.

At a recent parade in the city, members of all ages marched carrying signs displaying our UU principles. One of the parade judges shouted, “We love UUs!!” Although we were enthused with that response, we know that many people in the

community have never heard of UUFB. The Fellowship building is somewhat out of the way, in a residential neighborhood. Thus, we have room to grow our community presence and provide a spiritual home for more people in the Gallatin Valley.

**Describe how the surrounding community shaped your congregation, and how your congregation has shaped the surrounding community:**

Montana is strikingly beautiful and has vast open spaces and diverse natural environments and resources. As such, many members of our UU community not only like the outdoors, but feel a special spiritual connection when adventuring in nature.

With regard to the broader political context in Montana, the state has turned increasingly conservative. This context has only reinforced the importance of our fellowship and our commitment to peace as well as social and environmental justice.

Our congregation shapes the surrounding community as we aim to live our values every day. When we say “service is our prayer,” we mean it! Members and friends of UUFB give their time, energy, and financial support to countless individuals, families, and organizations across the Gallatin Valley. These acts of service and support help to strengthen our community, protect our earth, and support the most vulnerable among us.

## Position Basics

**Anticipated Start Date:** August 2025

**Term:** 3 years with anticipation of contract-to-call

**Percent Time:** 100% Time

**Minimum Salary + Housing:** \$71,200 | The compensation package is based on the UUA template and can be accessed at this link:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1MVkyf3l5lSI3bpZC1wi3Rcpl6wXcGd6S/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=105675724625616426789&rtpof=true&sd=true>

**Benefits:** Self-employment offset tax; Retirement Plan; UUA Health Plan; Disability Coverage; Term Life Insurance; Dental; Professional Expense Allowance

**Plan to offer relocation expense reimbursement:**

The congregation is offering \$15,000 toward relocation expenses.

**Information about the draft ministerial agreement:**

-The position is full-time, and the contract reflects this.

-The offer is for a three-year contract.

-The board and minister will mutually consider moving into a call process in the third year of ministry partnership.

-Tracked changes to the UUA template were made in Google Docs "Suggestion" mode. All changes are noted in-line and in the comment sidebar.

-Link to draft agreement:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1AauxG1fMSCQf0PhlhWltoSh2CXUNGMFt/edit?usp=sharing&oid=105675724625616426789&rtpof=true&sd=true>

## Questionnaire

**How did the last ministry end (or how is it ending)? How is the congregation doing with this time of transition? What momentum would you like to maintain in the next ministry?**

Our last minister, Rev. Duffy Peet, retired in 2022 with the thanks of the congregation for his leadership, particularly through COVID. We now have an interim minister who is greatly appreciated and are looking forward to having a new, permanent minister.

The congregation has done well with this transition. Our interim minister has helped us look at areas that need improvement as well as supporting all of the congregation's work. We will say goodbye to her with great thanks and wish her well. The congregation she serves next will undoubtedly feel as lucky as we have during her time with us.

The congregation is aware of the distinct role of the interim minister, and it was well-informed about the ultimately unsuccessful settled ministry search process in 2023-2024. This fall (2024), the Board and Search Committee have educated our members about the rationale for conducting a contract ministry search, which we believe offers our Fellowship the best potential for a long-term ministry placement. With unanimity, the congregation looks forward to building a long-term relationship with our next minister, as we have with our past settled ministers.

### **What does the congregation hope the minister will focus on in the next ministry partnership?**

We feel certain that our new minister will be warmly welcomed into our community and will enjoy our company. Being visible to the extent possible will be appreciated. Welcoming people as they arrive at the service, joining the coffee hour, and attending whatever social activities feel inviting will be important for connecting with us. When our interim minister arrived, she invited us to participate in small group discussions about ourselves and our relationship to UUFB, which helped congregants connect to her.

The Fellowship could use help with leadership development. Several members put together a leadership training about five years ago. It successfully provided training to existing leaders and encouraged new people to step up into leadership positions. A number of people have mentioned that we need some sort of leadership training again, both for members in general and for Board and committee chairs in particular. In our small group discussions, we often heard about the need for committee meetings to run more efficiently. It would also be helpful for the minister to provide support to the Board President, perhaps with monthly meetings.

We know that recruiting new members is not up to the minister alone, but also know that in addition to Sunday services, personal relations with the minister are important as people decide whether or not to continue coming and possibly become members. Thus, making a strong effort to connect with newcomers is important. We have been heartened by the presence of more young people at our Sunday services over the past year. The ability to make younger adults--and also men--feel comfortable and welcome will be especially valuable.

We have a long history of social action. Ministers have seen this as an important part of Fellowship life since Lois Van Leer was minister in 2003. We hope a new minister will share this focus and be on the front lines with us as we try to make

the world a better place. Our Social Justice Action Committee (SJAC) is aware and active. The role of the minister will be to collaborate with SJAC for ideas and actions.

We expect our minister to be active with the Gallatin Valley Interfaith Association and look for opportunities for interfaith activities for the congregation. Our interim minister has continued our relationship with the leaders of the Jewish and the Muslim community. We expect our new minister to continue these relationships.

Bozeman and even Helena (our state capital) are small communities relative to major cities elsewhere. As the only full-time UU minister in Montana, our next minister will have many opportunities and invitations to represent our values. Rev. Margo, our interim minister, wrote in Fall 2024, "There are great platforms here in city & state venues to be a representative of liberal religions. I testified twice at the state legislature & gave testimony at the City of Bozeman Council meetings. And my testimony in the legislature was in response to Rabbi Ed [Staufman, retired rabbi of the Bozeman temple and current state legislator] asking faith leaders to do so. And, with others, I represented UUism at Climate Justice Day and Transgender Visibility Day, both held at the Capitol Building in Helena. I didn't speak on those days, but wore my stole and a UU name tag. And a few times a year the UU minister here gets to write a guest column for the religion section in The Bozeman Daily Chronicle."

We would also encourage our minister to become part of local organizations of interest that are not church-related, as part of our effort to become more known in the community.

**Describe the minister's relationship to other paid staff. Who is responsible for hiring and firing other paid staff?**

The minister supervises the Office Administrator and the Coordinator of Religious Education and collaborates with the choir director and pianist. The CRE supervises RE staff.

Paid employees are hired by the Board after candidates are presented by a search committee. The minister is an ex officio member of the search committee for a paid employee. The process for hiring is outlined in a UUFB Hiring Best Practices Policy following the criteria in our Personnel Manual. Both can be found at [our website](#).



A letter of agreement is created and approved by the employee, minister and a Board delegate and finalized before employment starts. Supervision involves at least an annual review. Additionally, there are many opportunities for interaction, as two of the employees work in offices in the building and both collaborate with the minister as they do their work.

We feel lucky to have our staff members. They are experienced and capable of doing their jobs well. Our present minister describes them as people who are easy to manage and do great work. That said, our Coordinator of Religious Education indicated her intention to step down in December 2024 because of competing work demands, and we are in the process of hiring a new CRE.

**Is your congregation designated as a Welcoming Congregation? Please include information on Welcoming Congregation Renewal status.**

UUFB has been a Welcoming Congregation since 1998.

The congregation voted at our annual meeting in January 2024 to commit to Welcome Renewal. With the leadership of the Social Justice Action Committee and Sunday Services Committee, UUFB fulfilled all five Practices of Welcome Renewal in calendar year 2024.

The Fellowship expects to continue practicing Welcome Renewal in 2025 and future years.

**Is your congregation designated as a Green Sanctuary? Are you participating in the Green Sanctuary 2030 process?**

UUFB has not sought approval as a Green Sanctuary congregation, though we do practice the UUA's Seventh Principle of "respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part." When we remodeled and expanded our building, we did as much as possible to keep it environmentally friendly. For example, it is over-insulated and we do not need air conditioning. The radiant floor heat is designed to use warm rather than hot water. Eight circuits are installed in the roof for potential solar panels (though we have subsequently learned that the building is not well positioned for efficient use of solar panels). Interior paint was chosen for its low volatile organic compound (VOC) content. All lighting is LED for low power consumption and long life. We have an exterior outlet by the parking lot which our minister uses to charge her electric vehicle. Our interior carpet and furnishings were chosen to be hypoallergenic. Once a month we collect glass for recycling. We have had Sunday services celebrating our respect for our beautiful surrounding environment.

**Does your congregation support our association of congregations through the UUA's Annual Program Fund at the Honor level?**

Yes, UUFB has contributed at the Honor level since 1983. This is a routine budget item for UUFB.

**What debt does the congregation have? How is the debt structured (terms)? Reserves? How are reserves used/accessed?**

Our only debt is the mortgage on our building. The remaining balance on the mortgage is \$251,029. In 2024, UUFB will pay \$25,817 on the mortgage.

The Endowment Fund balance is \$8,549.

The Capital Improvement Fund balance is \$1,371.

The Fellowship & Development fund balance is \$356.

The Justice & Outreach Fund balance is \$2,146.

The Long Term Facilities Reserve balance is \$14,087.

The Minister Sabbatical Reserve balance is \$18,159.

The Operating Fund Reserve balance is \$65,340.

The total Special Fund and Reserve balance is \$101,459.

All of this information is as of October 31, 2024.

The following context was provided by our Finance Committee chair in November 2024:

UUFB has one debt, its mortgage, with a balance of \$251,029 as of 10/31/24. It is a balloon mortgage, which means that every 5 years we need to renegotiate the mortgage. At that point the mortgage will continue at a new interest rate, which is determined by an established index that has a cap on how much the interest rate can be increased. Our next interest rate adjustment will be on 9/22/27 and should not be a big issue. Our mortgage is held by First Security Bank in Bozeman. The mortgage is amortized on a 30-year basis, and the current rate is 4.25% annual interest.

Reserves are in place to provide funds for larger expenses that are not normally incurred. A long-serving minister would be entitled to a sabbatical on a periodic basis, which is the reason for that reserve. Note that in recent history, UUFB has not had a minister take a sabbatical, because our ministers have not served for a long enough period. The long-term facility reserve will be used to pay for new front doors of the church this year. UUFB has built up its reserves over the last 5

years and will be much better able to handle large unanticipated expenses going forward. Use of funds from either a reserve or a special fund requires approval of the UUFB board in the form of a resolution.

### **Describe how the congregation defines good preaching and worship:**

Based on our survey results, our Sunday morning worship services are what make people feel the most UU, inspire people to stretch and grow and give people the deepest sense of belonging. One of our congregants aptly said, "A good sermon is one that transforms people, gives people something to think about and teaches people." We appreciate preaching and worship that lean toward these goals.

Of course that's not always easy, since different people look for different things from worship. A large number of our congregants have advanced degrees. For this reason, to some people, some of our services may feel more "professorial" than "spiritual." As with all things UU, a good sermon finds the balance between head and heart.

Our services are enriched by the beautiful playing of our pianist and guest musicians and the contributions of our choir. The minister's ability to bring all threads of the service into harmony will be appreciated.

### **How does the congregation handle conflict?**

The Search Committee has a sense that our congregation does not have serious conflicts, and that those in leadership positions have had the skills and practices to resolve conflicts when they arise. We asked many questions about this topic in our survey to be sure that we were understanding correctly.

We have had no major conflicts in the last few years. There has been some unhappiness about changes in the Sunday service regarding Joys and Concerns (which are no longer stated aloud by participants) and making announcements as part of the service. Our interim minister has talked personally with those who were concerned. Some would still have liked things to be as they were in the past, but they have felt listened to.

We are not aware of a lot of interpersonal conflict. When frictions have arisen they have been dealt with in respectful and problem-solving ways, so that the greater congregation is usually unaware of them. Some members have come to our

interim minister to ask for help rehearsing before having a difficult conversation with another congregant. In the survey, there was strong support for the idea that we do a good job of having difficult conversations and staying in relationship.

Another plus is that we have policies that address many of the situations that could lead to conflict - for example, when questions arose about what flags can be flown on our flag pole or which Sunday services can be saved on YouTube, the Board was able to point to policies we have in place to answer those questions. We also have a strong disruptive behavior policy. Policies may be found at [our website](#).

Also, perhaps we do not have serious conflicts because those congregants who responded to the survey give UUFB high marks (a rating of 4 or 5 on a scale of 1-5) for being open to change and see the congregation as flexible enough to implement new ideas easily. Congregants trust the Fellowship leadership and feel there is a core group of leaders who are able to lead change in a productive way, because leaders focus on our mission rather than the preferences of individuals.

When asked in our survey how they would handle a disagreement with the minister, 78% responded that they would either think about and then meet with the minister or write the minister a note. None said they would stop coming to services or contact the Board. Others (about 10%) indicated that they would keep their concerns to themselves or share with friends.

Finally, we have a [disruptive behavior policy](#) to address truly problematic behavior. To our knowledge, this policy has been implemented only twice since it was created in 2008. One of those times involved a person who had visited us only three times and had mental health challenges.

### **What is a current source of pride for your congregation?**

In Fall 2024, we are especially proud of:

- The social justice work our members engage in, both through the Fellowship and in our personal lives
- The way we work together
- The way we take care of one another, as a community and person-to-person
- Our ambitious and successful pledge campaigns for 2024 and 2025, which exceeded our goals
- Our financial stability
- Our recently renovated building, which continues to serve us well
- The strong attendance and new faces at our Sunday services this year

- Our inclusiveness of LGBTQ+ folk
- Our year-old Chalice Circle group, which has 14 participants
- How we picked ourselves up quickly and kept going during COVID, including our pivot to online services

### **What work is slow, stuck, or left undone within the congregation?**

Perhaps the most important area where we need to get “unstuck” is in attracting members and friends to lead or serve on committees and the Board. We also need more volunteers to support our other needs, such as fund-raising, membership recruitment, social activities, and social justice activities. We have a cadre of people who have served UUFB in many capacities over the years and are, to put it frankly, slowing down. Perhaps we need a new paradigm. If so, we need help developing one.

We have been slow to bring our live-stream viewers back to the in-person services, which could lead to their taking a more active role in the life of the fellowship. We might need to learn new ways of helping YouTube attendees be more active in the life of the Fellowship.

We have not systematically attended to raising our visibility in the greater community. Despite the fact our members and friends are involved in a great deal of volunteering in Bozeman, too many people are unaware of Unitarian Universalism and the values it represents.

A new minister may want to pay special attention to valuing our families, RE staff, and volunteers. We need to continue to be careful about considering their needs and demonstrating our appreciation.

When we asked our current interim minister, Rev. Margo, about the "surprises" our next minister may experience, she responded with details that we believe will be helpful to candidates. We are including Rev. Margo's message here with her blessing (unedited):

"Positive surprises were how a congregation of this size manages to get so much done. Also the depth of caring and breadth of grace that is extended to one another. People are so willing to provide rides, meals, visits, etc. The staff is awesome and so easy to work with. And the resources that members bring because they are connected to people in the community who are great Sunday speakers for us. We have a good connection with the greater Bozeman community through our members/friends, especially with MSU and LGBTQ community. And the hiking group was an excellent surprise. I was cautious about

hiking alone due to wildlife concerns, so as a new person to Bozeman who could not do BWAGS because of my work schedule - the UUFB hiking group was fabulous even though I couldn't go every time. And let's not forget all the work done in prior years by the Board to develop thoughtful, thorough policies that, many of which, you can even access easily through our website!

"Disappointments probably isn't the right word, rather just surprised and feeling empathy for those involved are the following. 1) The lack of training and empowerment for Board members - at times they flounder and are unsure of themselves which makes their job harder. As does the lack of a VP. They really need a better system to train the incoming Board. 2) Under working of hours by our Coordinator of Children's Religious Exploration over the past 18 months and lack of volunteer support for that program. When Beth started her job with UUFB she was working a 1/2 time job outside of UUFB and then 14 hours a week for us. When her other job increased to full time, she had to reduce her hours with us. And it has been very difficult to find volunteers to step in and fill some of that time. Beth is stepping down from her position at the end of the year because she can't sustain working two jobs. We will really miss her in the position as she is so wonderful with the kids and parents and in organizing the once a month family activities after the service. She's thought of fondly by everyone I know of. But she will be able to join us as a congregant! We hope to hire a new CRE soon, and drafting an advertisement and selecting the interviewing committee are already in process. Beth has done a wonderful job but there was a lot more outreach to families already registered and in the greater community that didn't happen due to limited hours. While we hope to have someone new starting in January, there will still be a lot to do between then and the new minister coming. The upside of that is that the new minister will be able to shape that a bit as all will be fairly new by the time the new minister arrives.

"Lastly, getting most things done around here takes longer than it should. I spend a fair amount of time shepherding projects - And I don't really feel that that is part of my job. An example I can give was the deep clean of the church last spring. I'd been asking about it for months as 1) the church needed it - I'd been doing a lot of the dusting and reorganizing and 2) I really wanted it clean for when the ministerial candidates came through during their February weekend interview. I had to stay on top of it as it kept getting pushed back & back, it almost didn't happen before the candidate came. Another example: the framing of the UUFB Mission Statements. I have been asking for that to happen for well over 15 months, when I finally just took over the project myself. There are many other examples. And when the minister takes over those things, they run the risk of

being told they are overstepping. But UUFB says they want new people and young people. Groups with young people met here for months and there was no Mission Statement on the wall. For months it was a terribly missed opportunity and that's why I just did it. (The one I framed is now in the foyer and Tanya just framed one to hang in the Social Hall. Hers looks way nicer than the one I did!)

"I don't want to leave this on a negative note. UUFB is a wonderful community and I have had a deeply meaningful experience here. Many times I have wished I could be the called minister here (but life circumstances do not permit, even if the UUA would grant an exception). I love this congregation and would have 96% positive things to say about UUFB should a candidate call me and ask - and any serious candidate will call me. Feel free to give out my cell!"

**How is trust in your congregation right now? Historically? Do people trust the minister? Do congregants trust leaders to lead? How can the minister best build trust with the congregation? How could a minister break trust in your congregation?**

Our survey indicates that there is a high level of trust in our leadership. 84% of respondents rated the trust level at 4 or 5 on a scale of 1-5. When asked if we have a core group of leaders that are able to lead change in a productive way, 80% responded with a 4 or a 5.

Although we did not ask a question about trust in our interim minister, we feel that it is high. She is responsive, provides Sunday services that challenge us and is a model of UU values. People enjoy being with her and see her as someone who is capable of helping us prepare for transition to a new minister.

Members and friends expect from the beginning that they can trust the minister and that the minister can trust them - and that if issues arise, we will face them, rather than ignore them in the hope they will go away. Our interim minister stated trust developed quickly and easily and she would expect the same to happen in the future.

One thing that has been appreciated is our interim minister's trust of committees. Although she attended meetings at the beginning to get to know the committees and their members, she then trusted the committees to reach out when they wanted input.

Some families felt that they were not fully supported during COVID and as we were transitioning back. Better communication among the minister, families, and the congregation can help build trust.

**How has your ministry changed since COVID began? Where do you see decline? What have you let go of? Where do you see fresh energy?**

We did not meet in person for almost two years and waited longer than most other Bozeman churches to begin in-person services. In the time we were not meeting in person, we purchased and learned how to use technology for meetings, streaming Sunday services, and RE classes.

Although Zoom attendance was high and a Zoom coffee hour was offered after the service, the general sense was that the pandemic had a negative effect on our sense of community. Since resuming in-person services this has begun to turn around, but there are still several who choose to watch services via YouTube. We miss our connections with them and realize that they are now a lesser part of our activities.

Regarding "fresh energy," we have an intense increased desire to be together, both in worship and socially. We are holding more social activities following services such as celebration of birthdays and anniversaries, soup and bread lunches, and activities with children (carving pumpkins and learning about the water cycle were two recent ones). A hiking group was established, and we have a monthly family game night. These activities are well attended.

In 2024 there seems to be new energy in our services, with many new faces and younger people in attendance. We have many opportunities for growth.

**Imagine that, early in the next ministry partnership, a member of your congregation behaves in a way that escalates over time from curmudgeonly criticism to disruptive actions to bullying staff or other members. Keeping in mind your congregation's real experiences, policies, and covenant, how would leaders handle this situation?**

An experience similar to this more than 15 years ago led to the development of the UUFB Congregational Policy on Disruptive Behavior. This policy states that in the first instance, "the minister, committee chair, or other Fellowship leader will initiate necessary action."

Based on recent, less intense disturbances, we believe most members' response to disruptive behavior is to call on a board member or other respected leader to de-escalate the situation. The minister would no doubt be made aware and might also intervene.



**There have been some theological divisions and spirited discussions in Unitarian Universalist circles in the last several years about our shared values, how to articulate these values, and what these values call us to do, especially around equity, inclusion, power, and covenantal relationship. Please share some examples of how this is playing out in your congregation.**

Our minister offered three workshops on Article 2 in 2023, and they were well attended. Our Fellowship has not yet taken up the 8th Principle. Our congregation committed to Welcome Renewal in 2024 without dissent, although a few years earlier there was less interest in making this commitment.

Our committee's sense is that our members are not overly energized about denominational issues, and they do not create controversy in our community. We are Unitarian Universalists and follow denominational practices, but our Fellowship has limited interaction with the larger denomination. In part, this may be attributed to geography; for example, the General Assembly is rarely held in a location that our members can feasibly travel to.

**What else would you like potential applicants to know about your congregation?**

**How UUFB can help a new minister find housing:**

Affordable housing is an issue in Bozeman. It is a community-wide concern and there are many efforts by the city government, the Human Resource Development Council, and some builders to increase the number of moderately priced homes and apartments. New apartment buildings are springing up in every part of town. Our City Commission recently passed an ordinance disallowing some types of vacation rentals, which may free up some additional housing.

We have a number of ideas that we think will be helpful for locating housing in Bozeman. We hope any candidate having an interest in our Fellowship will not be deterred by the housing issue. We are a determined and skilled group with many contacts, and we feel confident that we can help our minister find a home in Bozeman.

**What about UUFB would be attractive to a potential minister:**

The cottage meeting responses to this question can be grouped into three areas: our people, our Fellowship and our greater Bozeman community. The answers overwhelmingly focused on our members and friends. Adjectives used to describe them included warm, friendly, welcoming, committed, energetic,

progressive, open, caring, supportive and diverse in faith orientation. We have a strong sense of community, are committed to social and environmental issues, embrace a wide range of ideas and consider ourselves open to new ideas and accepting of change.

The second most cited attractive factor is our strength as a Fellowship. We have a lovely building, are in a sound financial position and have an excellent Office Administrator and RE Director. We are long established and stable, but with possibilities for growth. We have strong leadership and good communication. We have little or no conflict or squabbling factions, but we know how to handle conflict if it arises. We collaborate with other organizations and have an opportunity to grow intergenerational connections.

The third most often cited attractive factor is our greater Bozeman community. Respondents believe this area is a great place to live. It is in a beautiful setting, is vibrant and growing, has close connections to nature and a stimulating culture. Its political culture is progressive.

We invite you to watch [this slide show](#), which portrays the life of our Fellowship.