

MUSIC IN OUR CONGREGATIONS: A Handbook for Staffing a Music Program in UU Congregations

by Donna Fisher, edited by Kenneth Herman

FOREWORD

For over 20 years, the Unitarian Universalist Musicians Network has stimulated and nurtured the growth of music in the lives of UU congregations. Made up of composers, music directors, singers, organists—musicians of every persuasion—this voluntary association is eager to share its expertise and understanding of how music can enrich our common religious journey. This short book will aid congregations and their various leaders as they develop strong, healthy music programs, a significant part of the Third UU Principle, which proclaims

“Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations.”

- **Kenneth Herman**, UUMN President

INTRODUCTION

A thriving church music program is the result of careful planning, ongoing support, and a continued commitment to provide music that addresses the spiritual needs of the church community. As components of worship, music and the spoken word are of equal importance; the search for a Music Director should be as deliberate as that of a settled Minister. If you are reading this you have taken the first step toward realizing that vision. What follows is a careful outline of that process, which at times may prove laborious and unexciting, but if followed with rigorous determination will result in a music program whose reward will far exceed the labor of its deliberation.

SELECTING A POSITION TITLE

The following naming conventions and descriptions for music staff are recommended for recognition in the wider community and for denominational consistency:

- **Music Director** – oversees the entire music program fulfilling administrative and some or all musical responsibilities.
 - Direction of at least one music ensemble or fulfillment of keyboard responsibilities
 - Supervision of other music staff (if any)
 - Accountability for music budget
 - Representation of music program at board meetings or other church events
 - Hiring of other instrumentalists and soloists, including substitutes
 - Coordination of service music with other worship leaders
 - Attendance at staff, music or other committee meetings
 - Administration of concert or recital programs
 - Maintenance of music library

- Supervision of instrument maintenance
- Development of community outreach through music
- Communication for all events and services through newsletter, public announcements, etc.

General comments: Other titles include Director of Music, Minister of Music, Director of Music Ministry, and Director of Music and Arts. If this is the congregation's only music staff position, the title Music Director is recommended over Choir Director. *See Choir Director Description below.*

- **Music coordinator** – assumes administrative responsibility only and may have any of the duties described above *except* item #1 “direction of music ensemble or fulfillment of keyboard responsibilities”

General comments: This position occurs infrequently, but can be of value in specific situations where there is a modest or beginning music program, or where there is a volunteer choir director. Indeed, hiring a Music coordinator may help educate a congregation to appreciate the benefits of a broader, more professionally led music program. In smaller congregations, these duties may also be fulfilled by the Music Committee.

- **Pianist/Organist** – may be the Music Director or supervised by same
 - Planning and performance of keyboard music for worship and other services
 - Accompaniment of hymns and perhaps other ensembles

General comments: Occasionally the Choir Director and Pianist/Organist are one and the same. It is recommended, however, that these be two distinct positions, unless the candidate has specific training as both choral director and accompanist.

- **Choir (or other Ensemble) Director** – may be the Music Director or supervised by same
 - Direction of Adult, Children's, Handbell, Chimes Choirs or other musical ensemble in rehearsal and performance
 - Selection of ensemble music for worship or other services

General comments: - Occasionally the Choir Director and Pianist/Organist are one and the same. It is recommended, however, that these be two distinct positions, unless the candidate has specific training as both choral director and accompanist.

CONSTRUCTING A MUSIC BUDGET

- **Percent of Church Operating Budget** – In a healthy congregation, the entire Music Budget including music staff salaries should be between 7 and 10% of the annual church budget.
- **Advocacy** – Continually foster the idea that in the life of a church, music is integral, not an expendable luxury, so that if overall budget cuts become necessary, the music program will not be singled out in the congregation's economic sacrifice.
- **Budget Line Items**
 - Staff salaries

- Professional Development for music staff
 - Sheet music, including choral music, children's music, solo vocal music, and instrumental music*
 - Music reference library (single copies of possible major works, new choral publications and reference guides)
 - Music supplies, i.e. choir folders, filing cabinets, music paper, music-specific computer programs
 - Congregational music, i.e. hymnbooks (including hymnbook replacement) and songbooks
 - Maintenance and tuning of the congregation's instruments
 - Guest musician fees
 - Instrumental ensembles for special worship services (e.g. Christmas Eve, Ingathering Sunday, etc.)
 - Professional organization membership fees
 - Publicity for public musical events
- *a keyboard player (organist or pianist) usually supplies his/ her own solo music, but music for ensembles (i.e. organ and brass, violin and piano, etc.) should be provided by the congregation and remain in the congregation's music library.*

▪ **Accountability**

- In most cases the Music Director is responsible for all expenditures, with the exception of salaries
- All music budget expenditures should be pre-approved by Music Director or other accountable entity

▪ **Donations and Gifts**– Financial Reports should reflect all costs pertaining to the Music Program even if the acquisition or service rendered is a gift. This information will lend credibility to future budget requests.

- Any gift or purchase made with personal funds should be noted in budget as a “wash” item
- Guest Musicians should always be paid for their services. This is an important matter: the ethical treatment of workers. It is the *performer's* option to donate their fee back to the church, if they so desire.

SEARCHING FOR MUSIC STAFF

- **(Re)Assess Music Program** - Whether you are between music directors or hiring for the first time it is important to gain an understanding of the type music program that will best serve the needs of the congregation. Survey the congregation as you would in a ministerial search.

See Attachment 1.

- **Form a Search Committee** - This may be the Music or Worship Committee itself or a group appointed by such committee or the ruling church body, the process for which should be clearly stated in the church by-laws.
- **Create/Update Job Description** – The job description is a detailed account of job responsibilities including but not limited to the following:

- Maintenance of Choir and/or other ensembles
- Supervisory role if any
- Accountability for music budget
- Time requirements, represented as either percent of fulltime or hours per week
- Communication lines

See Attachment 2.

- **Develop a Profile** – Using the survey results form a “sketch” of the ideal candidate citing skills, education, training, experience, attitude. The preferred candidate would be someone who is familiar with Unitarian Universalism, however a person without knowledge of the denomination but with compatible values can be just as successful.
- **Assume a Positive Attitude** – Expect success. Present the position as desirable and one which has a lot to offer. Neither apologize for nor misrepresent any aspect of the job. Present areas in need of improvement as a challenge not a drawback. Adopt an attitude similar to the one you are looking for in a candidate and you are more likely to attract her/him.
- **Publish Ad** – The most effective ads are terse and to the point and include the items below. Save the details for the job description.
 - Position title
 - Church name
 - Scope of responsibilities – preferably one sentence
 - Time requirements
 - Salary range
 - Submission address
 - Submission deadline

See Attachment 3

- **Interview**
 - Narrow number of candidates to top choices
 - Conduct a personal interview with each
 - For those candidates who have a satisfactory initial interview, schedule a “working interview” to include running a choir rehearsal and directing the choir (or accompanying the choir and playing a service, in the case of a pianist/organist) in the following Sunday morning worship. This allows both parties to analyze the “fit”. The candidates, of course, should be appropriately paid for their “working auditions.”
- **Make a Selection**
 - Come to a consensus and select the candidate who best fits the profile. If the committee is deeply divided chances are you should continue the search.
 - If your first choice turns down the offer, go to the second choice only if they too fit the profile. If you settle for something less than your expectations the likelihood for success diminishes exponentially.

THE HIRING PROCESS

- **Church Personnel Policy** – every hiring body, even and especially churches, should have a personnel policy to which all employees subscribe. It addresses overall employment policies and practices from both an employer and an employee perspective, including an initial probationary period, and a termination clause.

See Attachment 4

- **Contract** – The contract need not be long if, rather than reiterating responsibilities and behavioral expectations, reference is made to adherence of the church personnel policy and the job description. It should include items specific to the position not addressed elsewhere:

- Begin date
- Contract renewal date
- Reporting hierarchy
- Salary
- Time requirements: hours per week and weeks per year
- Benefits specific to the position

See Attachment 5.

- **Salary** – The UUA Committee on Compensation, Benefits, and Pension has developed 2004 salary recommendations which are posted on the UUA website at <http://www.uua.org/programs/ministry/finances/2004salary.html>. The American Guild of Organists (AGO) Salary Guide may also be consulted.
- **Benefits** – to be administered according to size of operating budget. Even the smallest church can offer some of the following
 - Annual membership in Unitarian Universalist Musicians Network
 - Use of church instruments for personal practice
 - Use of church space and/or instruments for music lessons and recitals
 - Paid vacation
 - Sabbatical
 - Health care and other insurance
 - Professional Development- conference attendance and other costs

PROVIDING CARE and MAINTENANCE

- **Support for the Music Program and the Music Director** –
 - No happy, successful employee ever worked in a vacuum. Make it known from the beginning exactly what the expectations are and where and from whom the employee can seek confidential advice, support, and feedback.
 - Address important issues as they arise. Major problems are best discussed immediately, not put aside until the annual review.
 - Approach matters with the attitude that everyone has the same the goal - a successful music program and a contented, productive Music Director.

- **Establish a Schedule for Periodic Evaluation** – An annual review is a must for every staff member and may be done by the immediate supervisor or by the Personnel Committee or both.
 - Prior to the review develop an evaluation tool to be filled out beforehand by both parties and brought to the meeting. Include generic questions that apply to all employees as well as those related to the specific job.
 - Establish a meeting protocol. Allow each party the opportunity to speak without being interrupted.
 - Adopt a team resolution approach to all issues. If there are areas of disagreement attack the problem not the person.
 - Give equal time to address successes as well as areas for improvement.
 - Develop a set of goals and timeframes for the upcoming year, which can then be part of the evaluative tool for a subsequent review.

- **Provide for Salary Increases** – There are 3 distinct types of salary increases, each to be addressed separately.
 - Cost of living increase – given to all staff each year within budget parameters, 2.5 to 3% in each of the past three years, unless the individual review results in a warning or an imposed probationary period. If after such time the probationary period has produced positive results, the increase may be granted.
 - Increased responsibilities – when the number of worship services is increased, new music programs added (e.g. directing a hand bell choir), additional staff to supervise, or increased administrative duties.
 - Merit – According to Ralph Mero, Director of UUA Office of Church Staff Finances, since 1995 the denomination has urged its member congregations to annually review and adjust the church staff salaries according to merit, not just cost of living. Merit increases acknowledge growth in skills or performance over time.

“ These help move salaries from the beginning minimum to the midpoint within the UUA recommended salary ranges. Since success in church employment is so dependent on relational factors, it is unfortunate that many church staff believe the only way they can get a raise is by changing jobs, which is the pattern in many forms of secular employment. Criteria can be developed for non-ordained church staff such as religious educators, administrators and musicians. Committees and staff are urged to jointly identify in advance those criteria or areas of growth they would like staff to work on during the coming year. These can be fleshed out with goals, activities, and a time frame. Then when it is time to consider whether performance warrants a merit increase, there is some specific information to consider rather than vague and general impressions.” (Ralph Mero, UUA)

- **Encourage Professional Development** – Provide the employee with the means to draw on opportunities for professional growth including workshops, seminars, and conferences.
 - The Unitarian Universalist Musicians Network holds an annual summer conference in a different geographical location each year. It offers UU musicians an opportunity to improve musical and administrative skills, gather music resources for the upcoming year and network with other church music staff. A

church that budgets for such is making a wise and profitable investment in the maturing of its own music program.

- The Unitarian Universalist Musicians Network in conjunction with the UUA Department of Ministry and Professional Leadership is designing a Professional Leadership Development Program for church music staff. The program will offer a credentialing process which provides concrete and denominationally uniform criteria to be used in the music staff evaluation process.

- **Show Appreciation** – This is simple but invaluable. Offer genuine praise and provide public acknowledgement that the employee's contribution to the life of the church is valued and appreciated.

Attachment #1

Sample Congregational Survey

This survey is designed to get congregational feedback about the quality and status of the music program in your church. It is a chance for congregants to address issues anonymously about which they have strong, little or no opinions. While it is important to tailor this survey to your congregation's situation, remember to ask questions in a positive tone. (Your questions may be worded differently if you have a music director in place than if you are in the search process.) The purpose of the survey is to discover aspirations and develop goals rather than encourage complaining. Look for trends and chart a direction of the responses, but don't let a single strong comment sway your committee. The Music Committee or other Hiring Body should discuss the results and form a consensus opinion before proceeding. Publish the results in the church newsletter or other suitable venue.

Here are some sample questions:

(using a scale of 1 through 5 with 1 being of no importance and 5 being of utmost importance please circle the number which best reflects your answer)

How important is music to your worship experience? 1...5

Do you generally like the hymns we sing? 1...5 (1 = not at all, 5 = always)

Would you like to learn more new hymns? yes/no

*How important is it to you that the **hymns** be related to the worship topic? 1...5*

*How important is it to you that the **choir anthem** be related to the worship topic? 1...5*

Do you think a song leader (a miked person up front leading the hymns) would help congregational singing? yes/no

Do you enjoy hearing the choir? 1...5 (1 = not at all, 5 = always)
(If you have other music groups, i.e., bells, family singers, children's choir etc. include a question about each).

*Do you usually like **what** the choir sings? 1...5 (1 = not at all, 5 = always)*

What mix of piano and organ music would you prefer? More piano, less organ. More organ, less piano? An even mix.

What musical styles would you like to see in the worship service? Classical, popular, world music, folk, other? Circle any/all that apply and make other suggestions if necessary.

(Congregational Survey continued)

Do you like congregational rounds?

*Would you like to have the congregation seated and quiet for the prelude? yes/no
for the Postlude? yes/no*

*Would you like more opportunities to sing outside of worship? yes/no
If yes, what might they be _____
and would you be willing to help organize? yes/no*

*Would you support other church music activities such as a concert series or coffee house?
1...5 (5 as often as possible, 1 never)*

In general, how would you rate the music program in our church (5 being excellent, 1 being poor) 1...5

*Are your church musical needs being met? 1...5 (1 = not at all, 5 = always)
If not, please explain _____*

Do you have suggestions as to how it could be improved? _____

What are your top 5 favorite hymns?

Other comments _____

The following sample job descriptions will need to be adjusted to each congregational setting. They are not “universal boilerplate,” but an outline to be completed by your Music or Personnel Committees.

Attachment 2a

Music Director Sample Job Description

Requirements: A degree in Choral Conducting (or Music Major with choir emphasis) and/or Sacred Music, or comparable experience, as well as training and experience to carry out the duties below.

Responsibilities (Average 20 hours per week):

The Music Director at _____ supervises the entire music program and the music staff of the church. Particular responsibilities include:

Worship

- Collaborate with ministers or other service leaders in the creation of worship services.
- Choose anthems and hymns, in consultation with ministers/service leaders.
- Arrange for musicians at alternate (non-choir) services.
- Communicate with organist about service plans, hymns, organ, and choir music.
- Design and implement special musical worship services.
- Support and develop the experience of congregational singing

Adult Music

- Encourage singers/musicians to join the Adult Choir and Bell Choir

- Rehearse with adult choir once a week, September – June and lead choir on Sunday mornings.
- Consult with and support Bell Choir director in scheduling and programming of Bell Choir performances
- Recruit and prepare choir for some special services, such as memorial services, installations, ordinations and other “state occasions.”
- Serve as an important contact in church’s pastoral ministry to the choir.
- Create ad hoc choirs or other musical groups to expand the musical experiences available to adult musicians.

Children’s and Youth Music

- Supervise Children’s Choir director and other children’s/youth music leaders in development, planning and support of music program for young people.
- Recruit, encourage, and coach young musicians to provide music for worship services and other Parish events.

Summer Music

- Hire and schedule soloists and organist for summer services.

General

- Work with Music Committee and other Parish committees to plan programs and activities that will enrich congregational life and reach out into the community with music.
- In collaboration with church staff and church leaders, cast a vision for the future of _____.
- Maintain contact with music colleagues in other churches and with the wider denomination through involvement in the Unitarian Universalist Musician’s Network, American Choral Directors Association and/or other professional and denominational organizations.

Attachment 2b

Organist/Pianist Sample Job Description

Requirements: A degree in Organ and/or Sacred Music or comparable experience, and training and experience sufficient to carry out the duties listed below.

Responsibilities (Average 15 hours per week):

- Provide organ music for the two Sunday services September through June, and for the single weekly service during July and August. The church prefers a contract for organist services covering 12 months, although other arrangements are possible.

- Accompany Adult Choir rehearsal once a week on Wednesday evenings from September through June.
- Rehearse with musicians for alternate service as needed.
- Rehearse occasionally with Children's Choirs in preparation for performance.
- Work with ministers and Music Director in area of general planning and leadership of music program. Organist shall be directly responsible to the Music Director.
- Supervise, with Music Director and Music Committee, the maintenance of the organ and the sanctuary piano, and set policies for their use.
- Provide organ music for weddings and memorial services, or assist in securing the services of a suitable substitute organist. Resident organist/pianist has "right of first refusal" for all such services.

Attachment 2c

Youth Choir Director Sample Job Description

_____ has two choirs for singers in elementary school. The Junior Choir is comprised of children in grades K-3; the Chalice Choir is for children in grades 4-6. Each group meets once a week on Wednesday afternoon to rehearse for 40 minutes. Repertoire for the choirs has included sacred and secular music of various styles, cultures and religious perspectives. The Junior Choir sings mostly unison songs, while the Chalice Choir can perform more difficult repertoire. Both groups generally sing from memory when they lead worship, which is about every six weeks or roughly eight times a year. Usually one group sings at the 9:00 service and one group sings at the 11:00 service.

Responsibilities of the Children's Choir Director:

- Prepare and lead rehearsals one afternoon a week (presently Wednesday from 4:00 – 4:40 and from 4:45 - 5:30) from early September to early June, with the exception of school vacations.
- Choose repertoire that reflects Unitarian Universalist principles both for worship services and recreation.
- Lead the choirs in approximately eight worship services per year, including Christmas Eve, as well as any other opportunities (nursing home performances, festivals) that might be arranged.

- In consultation with Music Director and Ministers, schedule appropriate Sundays for singing anthems in church.
- Communicate plans to choir parents through notices, newsletter announcements, etc.
- With the help of the choir parents, Music Committee and Religious Education Committee, recruit singers in fall.
- Bring creative new musical ideas and, with the Music Director, help develop the music program for Children and Youth.

Qualifications:

- Experience working with children's choirs and an appreciation of the needs and abilities of elementary-aged children.
- Appropriate vocal and keyboard skills.
- Respect for Unitarian Universalist values and principles.
- Availability one afternoon each week (preferably Wednesday) and selected Sunday mornings and Christmas Eve.

Attachment 3

Music Director Sample Ad

Sample #1

The Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of _____ is seeking a Music Director, quarter-time for 10 months/year, starting August, 2002.

Duties include overseeing the music program in consultation with the Minister, regular choral rehearsals and direction for two Sunday services per month, and occasional special music programs.

Qualifications: choral directing experience, knowledge of choral repertoire.

Salary range: \$9,250 – 14,500

Sample #2

The Unitarian Universalist Church of _____ seeks to hire a full-time Music Director to accompany and direct the church's 60 + voice all volunteer adult choir with Sunday Services and concerts of larger choral pieces. Additionally, the candidate will direct or assist others with the church's two hand bell choirs, its two children's choirs and other ensembles in its growing music program. Candidates should be competent in organ, piano and voice, have good administrative skills and be willing to work with the ministers and staff in service preparation and other church activities.

Salary range within AGO and UUA recommended guidelines.

Attachment 4

Personnel Policy Sample Table of Contents

- I. Employment Policies and Practices
 - A. Statement of Purpose
 - B. Objective
 - C. Employer Mission and Guiding Principles (UUMN Code of Professional Practices)
 - D. Equal Employment Opportunity
 - E. Sexual Harassment
 - F. Other Harassment
 - G. Resolution of Employment Complaints
 - H. Internet Policy
 - I. Media Inquiries
 - J. Confidentiality
 - K. Conflicts of Interest
 - L. Outside Employment
 - M. Employment of Relatives and Members
 - N. Personnel Record
 - O. Initial Review Period
 - P. Position Descriptions

- Q. Performance Evaluation
- II. Wage and Hour Administration
 - A. Employment Classifications
 - B. Hours of Work
 - C. Break Periods
 - D. Timekeeping and Overtime
 - E. Pay and Payroll Deductions
- III. Employment Benefits
 - A. Paid Days Off
 - B. Holidays
 - C. Leaves of Absence
 - 1. General Provisions
 - 2. Medical Leave without Pay (not available at present)
 - 3. Personal Leave without Pay (not available at present)
 - 4. Military Leave without Pay
 - 5. Funeral or Bereavement Leave with Pay
 - D. Vehicle Usage and Reimbursement
- IV. Other Employment Policies
 - A. Attendance and Punctuality
 - B. Work and Disciplinary Guidelines
 - C. Separation From Employment
 - D. Safety and Accidents
 - E. Personal Property
 - F. Workplace Threats and Violence
 - G. Professional Behavior
 - H. Inspection Rights
 - I. Employment Authorization

Attachment 5

**Sample
Employment Contract
Music Director – First Unitarian Universalist Church of Whoville**

This document represents an employment agreement between (Employee's name), hereafter referred to as Employee, and (Church Name), hereafter referred to as Employer.

Employee will assume the titled position of Music Director for (Church Name) on (Month/Day/Year) at an annual salary of \$_____ paid in monthly installments, salary to be reviewed annually, with reporting responsibility to (Name of Supervisor or Supervising Body).

Employer agrees to provide the following:

- 4 weeks paid vacation per year
- use of church facilities and instruments for personal practice subject to availability
- use of church facilities for teaching and recital purposes (subject to availability)
- annual membership in the Unitarian Universalist Musicians Network.

- access to group Health Insurance
- contribution to UUA pension fund at rate determined by Church Board of Trustees

Both parties do hereby agree to the terms of the Music Director Job Description (attached) and Church Personnel Policy on file in Church Office.

Employee Signature

Date

Board President Signature

Date

Attachment 6

MODEL ANNUAL EMPLOYMENT REVIEW FOR CHURCH MUSICIANS

The following is adapted from the American Guild of Organists website (<http://www.agohq.org>).

Users are encouraged to adapt and re-format this form to serve their own needs.

Name and Position Title _____ Date hired _____

Review period _____ Date of last review _____

The following items are to be completed by the musician:

1. Does your current job description/contract adequately match the work which you are required to do? If not, how should the job description be changed?
2. What have been your accomplishments and successes in the past year?
3. Are there any particular aspects of your work that you especially enjoy or find rewarding? If so, what are they?
4. Are there any particular aspects of your work that you do not especially like? If so, what are they? What changes would you like to see with regard to these concerns?
5. Is there any way in which the supervisor could be of better help to you in your work? If so, please describe.
6. Is there any way in which your fellow staff members and lay leadership could be of better help to you in your work? If so, please describe.
7. What goals would you like to set for yourself for the next year?
8. In general, how would you evaluate your performance over the past year? To what extent were last year's goals met?
9. Is there anything in particular which you would like to discuss with the reviewer? If so, please describe.

MUSICIAN _____

The following questions are to be completed by the reviewer:

1. Does the current job description/contract adequately describe the work expected of the musician? If not, how should the job description be changed?
2. In general, what is your evaluation of the musician's performance over the past year? To what extent were last year's goals met?
3. Has the work been done in a manner that facilitates good relationships on the part of co-workers? If not, what improvements should be made?
4. What goal(s) do you set for the musician for the next year?
5. Evaluate how well the musician interacts with choir members and members of the congregation.
6. If applicable, evaluate how well the musician supervises the work of other persons.
7. How could you be of better help to the musician?
8. Is there anything in particular which you would like to discuss with the musician? If so, please describe.

REVIEWER _____

The musician and the clergy-person/reviewer are to meet and discuss the comments on the previous pages. After the conversation, each should respond to the following questions:

What goals have been set for the musician for the next year?

Has this evaluation process been beneficial to you? If not, how could it be improved?

MUSICIAN'S RESPONSE:

REVIEWER'S RESPONSE:

MUSICIAN'S SIGNATURE

REVIEWER'S SIGNATURE

DATE