

Appendix

First Parish in Lincoln Congregational Survey 2021

This appendix includes the full set of responses to any questions in the survey that offered the opportunity to insert “other” categories than those offered or where open-ended questions were asked (Questions 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, . Questions are numbered the same as in the main survey.

Question 2. We know that “good sermons” are viewed as an important element of our Sunday services, but we’d like to understand what that means to you. Using specific terms, describe briefly how you characterize good sermons. Consider, for example: the goals of the sermon (e.g., encourage change, offer spiritual wisdom or insight, educate, etc.); the content (e.g., current events, biblical references, other faith traditions, literature, and other sources, etc.); style (e.g., structured, extemporaneous, impassioned, dispassionate, humorous etc.).

- touch the heart as well as mind. Inspire. Love. Challenge.
- I’d like the overall tone to be encouraging. I’m OK with biblical references so long as those aren’t the only basis for the sermon. It’s important to acknowledge significant current events, but those shouldn’t be the sole focus of sermons. Humor is a gift which should be available in church.
- Biblical and faith traditions are essential elements of a good sermon. Perhaps not each week but on balance
- Biblical references as themes for sermons as they relate to the world today. Impassioned, heartfelt. Liberal use of music (non-classical, white Eurocentric) and literature to enhance the learning/teachings.
- Frame readings with personal understanding
- Looking for sermons with an intellectual underpinning with basis in key texts that inspire
- A good sermon should be inspirational, well researched, and provide a roadmap or course of action. Biblical references are not important to me. Current events are.
- spiritual insight relevant to today's world. multiple sources. structured
- Goals: Intellectual spiritual inspiration; Content: Less-Biblical, more literary/historical in contemporary setting; Style: Their own style, as long as accessible and inspirational
- Including personal stories, references from a wide range of sources, biblical, prose, poetry, nature, the world (political, social, economic), a well thought out argument, a voice that can speak with feeling, passion, anger, sadness.
- I like stories that show how people have applied our religious teachings to deal with various life problems. References to books or poems are often good. Written sermon is essential.
- Ethical and spiritual dilemmas. Reference to "the wisdom of the sages" per above. Celebrating the beauties of our lives and the world. NOT dark foreboding of a frightful future, frankly deceitful accounts of current social justice issues. We go to church to be

spiritually nourished, lifted up, inspired, celebrate holidays, feel joy. FPL has been deficient of these messages over the past 6 years.

- “Good sermons” should be so inspiring that you actually “take them home with you in your heart.”
- Address current local, regional, national and international challenges; bring to FPL a spiritual viewpoint, interesting angles or concerns, questions, but not "the answer"; humor is always welcome; push FPL to recognize and address current challenges; recognize we are a diverse congregation so one view will not be sufficient nor should he/she believe it will be accepted by all
- offer spiritual insight, current events, references to a wide range of faiths, literature, etc. Roger and Claire were both great at this.
- A good sermon inspires me to be more understanding of others and proactive in making the world a better place
- I love a structured sermon that is beautifully prepared: deep, broad, well-informed, well-resourced, beautiful. Non-creedal, esp non-UU.
- I like to be inspired by having good hymns, interwoven with bible lessons, current events and reflections on nature.
- Informal but structured, intellectually astute, morally candid and forthright, spiritually grounded, unstuffy and seasoned with levity, but above all inspiring
- Have real IMPACT; individuals learn how to act/think differently and are motivated to do
- All of those things
- A good sermon for me gives me something to think about that day and days afterwards. It might inspire me to action. It is not political in nature.
- A good sermon provides insight for me on personal issues. Not social issues.
- Spiritual wisdom based on life experience. Interest and board based knowledge. intellectual curiosity. Like structured sermons.
- I'm looking for sermons that are thought-provoking and educational, weaving together varied spiritual texts (including but not restricted to the Bible) and truths to more secular writings and where relevant to current events. I like well-researched, well-organized, talks delivered with commitment, energy and where appropriate, humor. My hope is that they will inspire me to think more deeply about the topic and to take more action if that is what is called for.
- challenging topics, well-resourced, responsive to concerns and events in community (might change topic in time of crisis or loss) add cheer - we have become so mournful!
- I love MOST a well-constructed sermon--no extemporaneity; show the scholarship, the pondering and researching; the depth to which one must go to write a sermon. Show the vision of bringing it to bear on us. No or little humor. YES on other faith traditions, literature, biblical study, etc. Basically, be WAY greater than the greatest of our parishioners.
- engaging speaker who has the intellectual depth, sensitivity, and energy to explore the spiritual challenges presented by our turbulent, struggling world (humor, empathy, honesty, and commitment to spiritual growth)

- I believe that a good sermon addresses current issue while embodying our most important spiritual values
- Speak from the heart and use personal experiences to make the sermon more meaningful
- A good sermon is uplifting, inspires "better angels", gives spiritual insight, relates to life today and humor always helps a sermon! Using current books to illustrate ideas adds to the richness of a sermon.
- A good sermon educates and offers strategies of hope
- spiritual growth, exploration; variety of reference sources; structured
- Good sermons are not all alike and should vary from week to week. Some should educate, some should provide spiritual uplift, some should comfort, some should exhort. Some should respond to immediate events and some should be timeless. Good sermons usually draw on multiple sources or perspectives. Humor is always appreciated. Passionate is good when done well, and otherwise off-putting; extemporaneous likewise.
- Encourage adaptation to rapidly changing times. What got us here won't get us there.
- aid us in developing our individual faith, literate, well informed, willing to face current challenges
- Spiritual wisdom and insight, from a wide variety of sources including, but not limited to, the Bible and other sacred texts. Some current events are okay, but I don't want church to be more politics. Thoughtful, well-reasoned. Hopeful and inspiring.
- "A good sermon connects me to the Universal Energy that unites us all, reminding me that we are all children of God and that on a spiritual level we are one.
- Any topic is fair game if thoughtfully organized, rooted in spirituality, includes readings from the bible and contemporary culture. Humor, insight, and wisdom are good. Extemporaneous doesn't work for me.
- "Good sermons are spiritual food, and inspire us by connecting our life challenges to faith traditions, including the bible which is part of the UCC and UU, and other faith traditions and sources of spirituality; such as poetry, inspired stories or writing . Good sermons reconnect us to the inner goodness and strength that we have inside us.
- Good sermons are not political , they are not university lectures - "
- spiritual insight and growth, historical and biblical context for current events, other faith traditions, storytelling, personal at times, well thought through and clear message
- I appreciate well-crafted sermons that draw upon disparate sources including the Bible and religious texts, poetry, history and personal experience. Humor is always welcome
- Structured sermons offering spiritual insights that draw content from all relevant sources
- Inspire and challenge me, bring a mix of mostly spiritual/values/self-improvement with some current events. Be entertaining/engaging, and provocative judiciously. Don't shy away from social issues but don't "drone on, all the time."

- Emotionally rich sermons that Encourage action on both social justice and climate activities, using current events, personal stories, and biblical references.
- Good sermons to me offer spiritual insight and education, drawing from various faith traditions and other diverse sources. I prefer structured sermons that leave you thinking about them long after. I like to be inspired, not too much doom and gloom.
- Comfort the congregation, bring us new ideas, remind of the importance of our everyday actions. Help us laugh and feel joy in difficult times.
- What a "good sermon" means to me is when a minister brings their authentic self; when they share their own personal experiences/revelations (or relate stories from other people's lives) that serve as spiritual teachings for us. I find sermons that bring new and deeper perspectives to current events, to the human condition and to biblical stories or stories from other spiritual traditions. I prefer sermons that have been thoughtfully crafted, and include humor, emotion and humility, and sometimes, music or other surprising elements.
- Roger was a good model for me. Clear sermons, literary, musical, news references. some humor. Biblical references can be useful in supporting idea of sermon, but not for the focus.
- Spiritual wisdom and insight with references to history and literature sounds great.
- I look to sermons to stretch me, open me up to new ideas, challenge me but also to care for me as I learn and might need to change. I appreciate humor, book references and the integration of the arts - music, poetry etc. I don't want lectures or be made to feel guilty. I love Sermon Talk Backs where a small group could rehear the sermon and share with the Minister.
- The hallmark of a "good sermon" is one that is well-written with the occasional poetic turn-of-the-phrase, delivered with ease (most likely with help from a manuscript, not memorized or improvised), responding to current times, tapping into biblical wisdom and references as well as that of other inspirational sources, infused with a touch of humor.
- As an atheist, I hope sermons that are thought provoking, but not heavy on Christian dogma.
- Our new minister ideally will be a charismatic speaker with a well-developed sense of humor, and able to be an intellectual equal to the smartest parishioners. Above all else, he or she must be emotionally mature.
- Roger's sermons were wonderful. More like those. I don't want preaching or focus on climate change issues. I'd like more humanitarian and insight into human nature, creativity, poetry.
- Creative, insightful, thoughtful presentation no matter what the subject.
- I especially enjoy sermons that bring a sense of history to our current understanding of the world. I also appreciate input from other faith traditions.
- To me, a good sermon is one that is thought-provoking, includes humor (if appropriate), educates and inspires me, and makes me want to look up an author or poet. Biblical references are not as important to me.
- Trigger introspection and action regarding development of spirituality

- To me, a good sermon is thought-provoking, it draws in from real life experiences and advocates for our shared humanity. A well-thought out, structured sermon, with a goal to educate us or awaken us to something seems best to me as the minister needs to spend time gathering his/her thoughts and it is hard to do that on the spot. I like it when different readings are used to bring us back to a central theme.
- Sunday sermons can comfort the afflicted or they can afflict the comfortable. What's the right balance? Is there scope to increase/amplify the question: "who are you/we called to become"? Can we move to becoming vs. being? Being relevant to a community means engaging in the issues; put another way - ministers can't live behind a veil of political abstinence. Can we confront our ideological differences by developing our shared values - can church be safely political?
- To me, a good sermon broadens my perspective, connects me with spirit and an expansive orientation to how I live my life, shakes up the status quo to inspire transformational change that we as a community can address collectively, illuminates creative thoughts and action, introduces texts I don't know, connects me with fellow parishioners and the broader world both human and beyond, and inspires thoughtful conversations.
- Honestly, coming from a Jewish background, I've never felt completely comfortable with sermons drawn from the life of Jesus or liturgical, but preferred sermons that are humanistic, universal, relatable.
- The sermon: must be written down and able to be published later, demonstrate deep intelligence and intellectual curiosity, speak to / quote from the Bible AND other literary philosophical spiritual thought leaders.
- Important to me—and what I've missed—has been a blend of making sense of the world today with biblical and literature references. Speaking to the pain and struggle of the human condition and life's daily challenges with compassion and warmth. Not personalizing too much. Using humor or current day cultural references to engage listeners. On some level I guess I am looking for inspiration and a thought-provoking message that lifts me out of my daily life and encourages me to keep going, to love myself and those around me, contribute meaningfully to the community and world.
- I enjoy sermons that get me to think about a topic and causes me to talk about it over the dinner table. I don't need an answer, just a good conversation starter.
- well written, well referenced, well delivered, organized, witty, relevant, current, inspiring
- short and inspiring
- To me, a good sermon consists of spiritual fulfilment I get for attending the service that makes me conclude that it was worth having participated because the officiant did their homework, inspired and encouraged my spiritual growth on areas I never thought of or areas I already knew but had new light/emphasis etc.
- Cause me to think critically about my own actions
- I appreciate sermons that draw upon a variety of sources, pulling from ancient texts, contemporary works and other faith traditions. The most memorable sermons, for me,

offer a new perspective, wisdom or insight. They invite me in rather than pushing or browbeating.

- Spiritual wisdom and food for thought once we leave the church
- to inspire, provide insight and wisdom with effort to make religious values, the Bible and our Christian heritage relevant to problems we face today both collectively and individually; love the capacity to link religious thought and philosophy to contemporary concerns.
- Be inspired and keeps my attention and leave me with good thoughts
- Sermons that are based in scholarship and that provide an intellectual as well as spiritual perspective on challenges of our time. I think Jenny does an excellent job with that. However, I progressively am moving away from FP because I am increasingly not interested in Christian references and teachings, nor organized religion. I am currently a member, but I am ambivalent about filling out this survey for that reason.
- offer spiritual wisdom/insight; educate; structured; wide range of content sources
- Good sermons can go in so many directions. Our congregation prefers thoughtful and well-written sermons. Text and citations are important and revisited. At best, sermons can blend spiritual, intellectual and emotional content with important current events and the principles of our vision statement.
- I like hope not criticism. I like inspiration not scolding. I like to remember that our world is broken and that I can help, even if my capacity is small. I like to be reminded of gratitude and humility. I like hearing about different faith traditions. I like questions more than direction. I love beautiful imagery and humor because both open my heart. I like it when it feels like church (like a bible reading is great, and no problem if we mention god or jesus or both), though I don't think god or jesus or the minister or I have all the answers, so bringing in other texts is good, too.
- Offer spiritual wisdom
- I respond to a well-prepared sermon that gives context, readings from the Bible, and relevancy for today.
- Draws inspiration from nature, literature, scholarship and humor. Not necessary for me are heavy biblical references. I like Mary Oliver, Robin Hall Kimmerer, MLK, James Baldwin, Heather McGee. I prefer prepared, thoughtfully crafted, writing and delivery.
- A good sermon takes me out of my immediate, often petty, concerns and mind-frame. It reminds me of the greater awesomeness and mysteries of nature, of history, of human thought and kindness. A sermon that examines familiar ideas in a new way makes me think (which I enjoy) but there are many styles that might engage me. It's the wholehearted presence of the speaker that matters.
- sermons that focus on healing the self and community, using contemporary references and readings, leadership on issues facing the generation and the next
- smart succinct and sincere sermons that engage a highly educated and demanding audience
- I appreciate a well-structured, multi-layered sermon that draws on various sources (hopefully some of which are new to me -- i.e. not super popular/obvious). If humor could be in the mix, that would be great too. And I know that's a lot to ask!

- Humor important. Current events w/ biblical and literature references into
- "I do not agree that 'good sermons' are an important element for FPL Sunday services, and never felt that they were. Although I have heard this 'good sermons' sacred cow bandied about and trotted out repeatedly through the many years I have been a member at FPL, this seemingly stubborn community reluctance to let go of needing 'good sermons' in order to have 'good services' was and is one of the reasons why I have stopped attending services at FPL, even pre-pandemic. I have provided such 'sermon' feedback at FPL on previous occasions, only to have my viewpoint dismissed and set aside. Why are 'good sermons' so essential at FPL? Why does the FPL community-at-large so desperately need to embrace a passive role during services, and essentially be entertained on Sundays? Personally, I think the minister's community-sanctioned every-service-every-time sermon-giving role (whether by resident minister or guest minister) means that the minister is always, by design, doing much more talking than listening during services. Isn't such planning a design fault, a loss of opportunity? Why expect congregants to gather in-person weekly, only to have the majority of that time utilized in being talked-at? Shouldn't the priority in gathering a congregation together be to connect them interpersonally and share meaningfully, not just have them sit in a large room together and spend the bulk of that precious collective time merely listening to someone else speak?"

My suggestion would be to select a minister with excellent process-facilitation and community-development skills, rooted in exceptional human-relational and interpersonal abilities. Qualified with such core competencies, the FPL time spent in previous years on 'good sermons' could be better spent on community development & interactional opportunities during Sunday services, facilitated by the minister. Perhaps the point of weekly services becomes to design a Sunday session around a certain issue, with the minister thoughtfully crafting low/moderate/high-risk questions that get asked of congregants in dialogue groups, masterfully processed by the minister/facilitator in the congregation at-large, and with the minister ultimately 'reading' the congregation in order to synthesize meaning from all the sharing and then encouraging Call-to-Thought and/or Call-to-Action suggestions in a challenge-support facilitative community approach by the end of the service, all related to the original issue. In this way, the minister's role during Sunday service is not to write speeches and then orate them, but to know the congregation well enough collectively to prepare questions/inquiry effectively, to assess community awareness/readiness to address issues, as well as to guide further community development and action going forward. Such a revised approach to Sunday services would mean casting the minister as well as congregants in a more active versus passive role. It would also mean that Sunday services would actually be worth the time : An active experience grounded in less passive sitting-and-listening for congregants would provide an opportunity for closer congregant-to-congregant connections, as well as minister-to-congregants connections, rooted in authentic relationships, that could lead to intervention-like opportunities in which a minister could develop/challenge/support/move a community forward on a variety on issues with greater pace as well as effectiveness over time."

- Educate, current events, faith traditions, impassioned, humorous
- Good sermons are anchored to religious principles but need to reflect, remind, and encourage creative approaches to spiritual and real life challenges.
- "Most important to me would be that when it is finished, I can remember where it started; meaning it was not too long, or too disconnected from a common theme, that I can't follow along.
- As it fits into the service the sermon needs to be connected with the entire service; generally speaking this means it should expand upon or explore more deeply, the reading which precedes it. For many this reading is traditionally a gospel reading, but I believe it can be almost anything, so long as the sermon makes the connection.
- The goal should be to make us think, reflect, and consider how we fit into the story. The content can vary, and the style must reflect the personality of the minister more than the congregation.
- But if by the time we get to coffee hour all we remember is the last sentence, and we can't connect it to the reading...then it was just more hot air filling the room."
- Thought-provoking, new insights, liberal approach to all religions
- Offering spiritual wisdom or insight is pretty high up there for me. I find the sermons that resonate most with me often include stories from daily life or literature. It is NOT important to me that they always come from or relate back to scripture. Humor is always a positive! And relevance to current events. In general, the idea of someone reading his or her sermon to us is a bit of a turn off, but it's all in the delivery! I want to feel spoken to, not read to. I know Roger wrote his sermons out, but it didn't feel like that when he delivered them.
- encourage change, explore other faith traditions, personal stories to give examples
- A good sermon is one that offers a novel twist on how to approach life, or one that elevates an example, teaching, or story in a way that is memorable and can be applied back in the realm of our own lives. Sermons that are interspersed with humor are often more enjoyable but is not needed in each one.
- I value concise sermons which support the values of the church and are inspired by many faith traditions and understandings. At this time, we have an older, intellectual congregation who appreciate elegant services with intellectually stimulating sermons. And yet people acknowledge that the church needs younger families. The elegant church service is attracting exactly the people who are currently attending - older folks. Something may need to shift.
- Minimize biblical references. Well-thought out. Secular and spiritual. Address social issues but not strident.
- All of the above- variety- so subjective with many different opinions- variety is crucial!
- Style is going to be minister's own; goal and substance will be varied and from time to time include all of the above.
- sharing of spiritual wisdom; providing inspiration for congregants to seek and find their own connections to spirit; offer hope; references to religious text from variety of religions; inspiring speaker; good story-teller
- Offer spiritual wisdom

- I prefer less political sermons. I think encouraging change especially when referencing other religious texts is helpful but I don't like how some sermons have become very political. I think that turns off some of our members and guests.
- We like a sermon that incorporates current events, religious readings, literature and human experience
- Sermons that inspire personal growth. Sermons that refer to bible. Sermons that leave me thinking throughout the next week on how I can be a better partner, daughter, mother, friend, community member. Intellectually inspiring.
- Stop with all the political stuff it has driven me from the church
- Literature, music, inspire, thought provoking, non political
- I like sermons that teach about values and spirituality. I like sermons that connect to relevant topics and news.
- I prefer sermons that connect a thread of religious text (not always the Bible) through a current issue or event to an action or behavior that I can take or perspective I can dwell on. Of course, some humor is appreciated. I think I really like inspiration to live into the values that I ascribe to Jesus, like radical love. Reminders/inspiration relating to patience, kindness, generosity, hospitality are why I go to church.
- Thoughtful, intellectual, considered, meaningful, oriented to historical and contemporary challenges from the point of view of faith and spirituality
- I like sermons that are interesting, that offer some actionable step for me. Biblical references are interesting but it is their connection to the modern day that make the sermon most meaningful. One of my favorite sermons from the last 5 years was one that inspired me to pick up the phone after church that Sunday afternoon and call a college friend to whom I had not spoken in years. I can't remember the details of the sermon, but as part of it we were challenged to reach out to an old friend that week. I am grateful to the minister for inspiring me to make that phone call and connect with an old friend.
- Increase awareness of social justice and climate issues and present successful actions that our community could undertake.
- A good sermon sticks with me after I walk out the doors of the sanctuary. I think and ponder the words gaining wisdom in other factions of life outside of church. The sermon must be intellectual for me. Encouraging change through wisdom, insight, education, literature, a variety of sources. A good sermon is not composed entirely of readings, readings belong outside of the sermon. In a good sermon I want to hear your opinion, I do not want to hear you recite the opinions of a half dozen plus individuals while never once voicing your own thoughts. The service needs to weave through the entire service. A great sermon can easily be lost in a disjointed service lacking cohesion. A sermon delving into biblical readings relating them to current events is great, however please just summarize the reading in the sermon and leave the bulk of the reading for the actual reading part of the service.
- Sermons that touch the heart, as well as the head. That said, thought-provoking is good, extra points for humor. To quote the old saw -- we may not remember what was said, but we will remember how it made us feel.

- Offer spiritual wisdom or insight, with all of the above references in structured form.
- sermons which inspire us to communitarian values are important.
- Cross cutting with literary references, spiritual overall, not too religious, personal. We designed - so likely written...but delivered w a personal feel
- Something that will "stick with you" for guidance weekdays
- meaningful, informed, drawing from many sources including classical literature and contemporary writing, structured and humorous
- A focused and challenging message.
- In my opinion, a good sermon draws from multiple sources, including religious teachings from a variety of faith backgrounds, literature, history and prominent thought leaders throughout history, current thinking with respect to understanding human behavior, some personal reflection from their own life experiences, plus experiential events involving music, dance, etc.
- I appreciate being encouraged to think--to have my world view challenged and/or expanded. I think current events and topics are vital with a smattering of biblical references. A bit of humor mixed in is always appreciated.
- Good sermons, for me, illuminate and challenge. They use both learning (study, reading) and personal experience to bear on the most compelling issues we face in our lives in the present. Avoiding self-indulgence and pedantry, they dig deep into the speaker's experience to make the sermon an act of sharing, an invitation to spiritual communion. Whether extemporaneous or structured, their challenge is to deliver a memorable message in a short space of time.
- To the point, inspiring, humorous, mixes old and new, encourages us to do more for others
- 10 minutes, educate, any content, humorous
- Is a sermon moving? Does it inspire? Does it tell a story?
- I consume liberal media all day long. I am WELL aware of (almost) every terrifying and unfair thing happening in our world, country, state, town. What I REALLY want is something spiritually uplifting.. like many of Roger and Jenny's sermons. I need stabilization and uplifting so that I can be my best self, lift up those around me, and do good things in/for the world. I DON'T need to be lectured to and informed routinely and repeatedly about social ills, challenged, called out or cancelled. I think that might be something that has contributed to a decline of bodies in church.. people are not looking to feel more pissed off and frustrated.. in fact the opposite is true. And don't even get me started on the kids not wanting to go to church.. let's keep things hopeful! Let's focus on our commonalities. The kids are already freaked out enough about what they think is the worst condition the USA has ever been in.
- I liked Roger's sermons the best, along with Ally & Claire's
- To me, a good sermon includes elements I can connect with. Sometimes that means reflection and examination of something currently happening in the world, other times it is a look at various texts to provide a lens for thinking about the world and the human condition. I appreciate some humor and love the sermons that make my cry. I like to hear the minister in the sermon - something personal that helps it feel real and

authentic. I have heard sermons from various preachers with varying styles at FPL over the past 20+ years that have moved me and made me think - I guess that is what I really appreciate, and it can come in many forms and in fact I appreciate some variety - I wouldn't want to hear the same style or approach every week.

- Encourage change, provide spiritual wisdom, educate by sharing wider perspective of the world today, addressing global concerns that eventually affect our little community such as social justice and climate change. The world is change, we need to observe and learn from the changes for healing of our global community.
- We all know why this question is being asked... We had the amazing experiences of Roger's sermons: Expansive cultural references, poetic rhythms applied to brilliant prose, and that interlaced idea (goal, concept, consideration) interlaced throughout - which was cast over the sermon and, in the end, drawn in with a big fat fish of a closure on the hook. That AHA moment hit us every time. Given the rarity of that amazing talent, what can we realistically ask for now? A sermon given by one who walks the walk; one who sincerely cares - one who looks at us in pain, in need, as full of potential, in need of kindness and inclusion - and love, and one who sees us both as individuals and as a really lovely group. The present-day challenges, the biblical lessons, the social in/justices, and cultural lures, all belong in these sermons - and let's never forget, HUMOUR - we always need that spoon full of sugar!
- Educate with biblical references, spiritual wisdom, current events, literature and -- importantly -- ideas of theologians such as William Sloane Coffin, Ralph Waldo Emerson,, Peter Gomes, Paul Tillich, John Danforth and perhaps their counterparts in the U.K.
- I have really enjoyed and remembered sermons that were not Bible based, but were about writers, philosophers, poets, humorous stories, interesting anecdotes about the human condition, spirituality, and reflections on beauty and kindness.
- Style - be true to yourself; humility, gentle humor, share life experiences, maturity
- I consider the sermon important. Wisdom and relevance should be central. Drawing on current events and congregational wisdom is very important. Providing the opportunity for sharing insights is of great value to all.

Question 3. What expectations do you have for a minister around pastoral care/spiritual guidance/counseling /home and hospital visitation?

- an essential function
- ALL the above are extremely important. Availability to listen to parishioners is key.
- Traditional individual / family pastoral care is the foundation of a church. Do the other stuff, but don't lose this. Ever.
- Support members and their families who are struggling in areas that aren't covered by other professionals, such as doctors, psychiatrists, etc. Standard pastoral care.
- Respond with home visits as necessary and requested
- Having worked with seniors in this community I know how important it is for seniors and family members!!
- Willingness to be there when we need her.

- House visits. Hospital visits. as wanted or needed.
- When needed, a phone call to check in and home visit if necessary.
- The minister should make this a primary function.
- Very important. We are an older congregation. Roger didn't do this, Manish and Nancy did. Yet Roger very popular, except if people needed pastoring. I felt Manish might have won people over, one by one based on his pastoring, but it would have taken years and years
- I would like the minister to offer spiritual care and visits in times of need (death, illness). I'd like to see some regular hours for 'drop in' conversations. I don't think the minister should be relied on for psychological counseling but could ideally be able to guide people to resources if that is appropriate.
- Visit/guide/counsel the dying.
- connect with and care about individuals and be available in a timely fashion for people in crisis including occasional home or hospital visits
- I believe our minister needs to work hard and constantly to offer such care to our membership
- very important
- very high- available, proactive, accessible
- I think it's important for the minister to be available at critical/important points in people's lives. That's hard to do with all the tasks asked of a minister, but pastoral care is a key one.
- I would expect the minister to contact a church member or their family when there was a major life event like a death, or serious illness etc. The form of contact would depend on the situation and the person or family's needs.
- It's been great to have the chance to talk with Jenny individually even through the pandemic. I would expect for that to continue, particularly for those in times of crisis and health issues.
- End of life visitation a priority; also basic counseling triage and referral
- Be available, be empathetic, be proactive
- Expect this will be regular and valued part of their ministry
- If the new minister does this well that will be the most valuable role he or she can offer.
- Accessibility
- Availability
- If it can be done safely, I think ministerial visits are wonderful and appreciated by those in need.
- It should be available to those who want it
- It should be an important role for our minister
- I think it is important for a minister to reach out to those in need for counseling and visits when appropriate.
- The minister should be available to those parishioners who seek such care.
- I think this is all part and parcel of the job. Some are better at it than others. It is something that our future minister will make an effort to do.
- openness and availability
- Given our relatively small community it would be important that the minister shows a willingness to visit members of the parish, not just when "necessary" but also on a regular basis.
- being available to those in need
- Be available when called upon
- I think people value a minister who is available as much as he or she can be.
- see as a priority all areas of pastoral care more important than giving a clever sermon

- High expectations. Important.
- I would hope that a minister would be willing and adaptable to engage in a personalized approach to pastoral care/spiritual guidance/counseling/home & hospital visitation, depending on the specific needs and/or requests of the individual and/or family. Overall, I would expect a minister to have exceptional EQ (Emotional Quotient), including : excellent interpersonal communication skills, excellent listening skills, excellent assessment abilities in reading a situation and/or family dynamic (and within the larger community too), excellent flexibility in adjusting in the moment, and an excellent ability to assimilate learnings along the way. Frankly, this level of excellence in EQ and process skills ought to supersede IQ (Intelligence Quotient) qualifications, in my view. A minister's human relational abilities should be top priority, in the context of pastoral care/spiritual guidance/counseling/home & hospital visitation or otherwise, for without such skills academic degrees would be meaningless anyway.
- They must be available to our congregation for visiting those who cannot come to the church in addition to having a schedule of office hours; and should be available all 12 months of the year except for a limited number of vacation weeks.
- Would hope the minister would be available and interested? Managing expectations would be a great start!
- Think this is important
- Available as needed for crisis intervention or cases that are extreme in nature or duration
- I would love a minister who leads my generation of parents. A guide, a community builder amongst us. A minister who I know will be present if my parents develop an illness and offer support to us.
- That it is available
- I continue to think this is something that would be done for extraordinary events (ie major illness, birth, death) for active and engaged members of the church community but not as part of a routine ministry, perhaps except in special circumstances. This I see as a question of time and need for a minister to reasonably manage time.
- I expect the minister to reach out by phone or in person to parishioners who are very sick or in the hospital, and to those who lose a loved one.
- Home visitation;
- availability, attention and concern
- I would hope that our next minister would take an active interest in the wellbeing of members of the congregation. Home and hospital visits to every member may be unrealistic, but demonstration of interest, especially in a small congregation, seems basic.
- I think this is an important role of our minister especially with aging congregation
- Know what's happening with each member and friend of the church most of the time
- Very important! This would be impactful for those receiving the attention when in need.
- This is crucial. Families are the backbone of any church. They need support and at the worse times, they need deep care. Historically, FPL has done this in beautiful ways, and sadly - has also missed the mark here too. I STILL hear wonderful stories of how deeply this care has affected families when done well.
- High expectations
- I would hope that the minister would reach out to and/or visit anyone who needed such care.
- Be able to train lay leaders in the work so to have more care available
- designated time

- Sensitive funeral services, direct parishioner counseling when asked, develop and support lay group in this area
- Too time-consuming. The CARE Committee should perform these functions. The exception is baptism, wedding, and funeral planning.
- To have a sense as to what individuals or families may be experiencing that requires “showing up.”
- This can be extremely time consuming. Support current sub committee while setting priorities for in person involvement.
- Would expect them to step up upon request, but not necessarily otherwise.
- Important but should not be all consuming
- Provide guidance and support for lay leaders, always available in crisis
- Minister should provide guidance as needed to ensure a strong Care Committee or equivalent. Minister should do some personal visitation and counseling, as feasible given the trade-offs with other duties.
- Do them in conjunction with the Care Committee.
- They do this, but to a limited extent. They are not an ongoing therapist / social worker, but they will visit or call someone in the hospital or who is not doing well.
- It would depend on the volume of care being requested at any given time I would expect they'd be able to get assistance from an intern or lay persons if needed on this.
- Lead and coordinate these efforts using volunteer members who have been trained. Participate personally as time and other responsibilities allow. Stay in touch with the pastoral care team.
- I would hope that a minister would respond in a timely way to urgent crisis situations, such as a death or serious medical event. For spiritual counselling and pastoral care/home/hospital visits, I would be comfortable with scheduled times or specific pastoral care hours.
- Teaching others in the community to do this. A strong pastoral committee.
- If he/she can do it, great. Maybe organizing/inspiring members of the congregation to provide pastoral care is a better idea.
- A trained and respected lay pastoral care committee in collaboration with the minister is ideal. Both sides of this coin can advise the other of where need exists. Developing spiritual directors/guides might be considered. Some exist in our congregation.
- To encourage and support a lay leadership committee who will take on the role of reaching out to those who are sick. People who wish to have spiritual guidance/counseling should be able to make an appointment (or 2 or 3) with the minister who may refer that person to professional counseling resources after a few sessions.
- Personal action by the minister matters, but perhaps more important is to find a way to find leverage. In other words, how can the entire community be caring and supportive, so the minister does not carry the load.
- If FPL is growing, there might be a pastoral care committee of volunteers to support many dimensions of this capacity. I don't know what order of demand Jenny is dealing with (10 hours a week, 2 hours a week, 30 hours a week) - if there is demand it needs to be served.
- At a minimum, make themselves available through regular and publicly shared ‘office hours’ for those who choose to come in; call those members who are grieving or sick to offer in person meeting; and make in person visits.
- I've never asked for/needed pastoral care from our minister, but I know that it is an important part of our FPL community and is greatly appreciated by those who have received it. I wonder,

with the age of our congregation, whether it is realistic for us to expect our minister to be making regular home and hospital visits. Phone calls, yes, absolutely. Visits? I'm not so sure.

- Depends on the level of need, but certainly a telephone call; a designated assistant or volunteer can represent the minister for most visits.
- Active engagement, and support of an FPL group doing the same.
- We are blessed with many members of the congregation who do a lot to visit and support each other when needed. The minister's role is more manageable for that reason. It is important for the minister to meet with people, perhaps mostly at FPL, to deepen relationships.
- I hope that a minister will be comfortable calling on members of the community in crisis, at home and in hospital. I hope that a minister will help community members develop self-care capabilities so that they don't need the minister when their dog is hurt (I love dogs). I hope a minister will strengthen our lay capacity for meaningful care such that community members are equipped to deliver more than casseroles, and are accepted in that role.
- Our congregation is small--to be aware of everyone and to work with our volunteers to service needs.
- As needed but not often. In an emergency would be good.
- I might request personal support/guidance in a crisis situation (a death, family illness or other immediate challenge) but not for general malaise. If facing a terminal diagnosis, maybe a home or hospital visit would be welcome, but I don't think of that as essential. A phone call might be enough to make me feel cared for.
- teach and support Care counselors, visit parishioners in critical need
- Be a facilitator to ensure the church provides this kind of care. Doesn't necessarily need to be the primary provider.
- To support lay visitors; to respond to requests for the above. (no mind-reading required)
- Be available and lead/teach others to also provide that care
- I expect a minister to be available or have designated a qualified individual to handle pastoral care etc., during the entire year. It is vital to be there for our members when they are in need, however that may look. Hospital, rehab, and home visits are crucial.
- i think reaching out to the community is very important for the members of the church who may not be able to access the services
- To develop a contingent of interested parishioners through education, training and facilitation to expand our resources in providing pastoral care within our community, thus relieving some of the pressure of doing so alone.
- knowing who is hurting and who needs care
- provide a personal touch of grace
- I look for a minister that has a deep spiritual connection, united with the ultimate source, which would naturally carry over to pastoral care and guidance to those seeking counseling.
- a gentle and compassionate listener, able to offer guidance that encourages growth
- An ability to connect on a personal, human level, follow through and stay in touch. Roger never did, the manner in which our previous minister left, though I connected with him well. Left a sour taste in my mouth and as a result, I have not participated in anything related to FP, during a time in my life of great anxiety, pain, stress and change in life as I know it.
- Good listener; open door policy.
- That he/she be wise, mature, and empathic
- Deep perception of level of need of recipient.
- A warm and caring presence. Someone with whom one can talk.

- A good listener who is able to see virtue in multiple points of view and priorities and then project these to members of the parish.
- "Just Friendliness and easy to talk to.
- Responsiveness, caring manner, thoughtful words. Warm demeanor.
- All of the above would be well served by a strong spiritual compass. And a well developed sense of humor.
- Be with us with empathy.
- I would be willing to tolerate somewhat who is not good at this if that person is good at leading the church
- I don't have high need or expectation of one-on-one pastoral care time with our future minister, but I do believe it is important for a segment of our church family, particularly the older folks. And I would wish that our minister would be approachable for all of us.
- This has been a significant thing for older members of our congregation. At this time, not many families parenting young children or youth seem to access this.
- None.
- Very little (one on one).
- cf. John Nichol's sermon, "Your Next Minister." The person won't be able to do everything equally well—though I suppose there's a chance they could do everything equally poorly.
- I think it's important that there be an understanding of what we CAN expect; it seems that ministers vary a great deal on this. At least a phone call and a referral if not some ongoing support.
- Would be great if minister helped families prepare for funeral service collaboratively when again members are still alive and "with it" to participate in planning of their "life celebration". It's a hard thing for family to do with each other.
- I think being there for those who get sick, are elderly and struggling or have other hard times is really critical. Encouraging groups like the wide-ranging age men's group that started in the church would be powerful too (not religious, but started through church and is autonomous now)...in other words, enabling the creation of other communities that can even be self organizing would be powerful. (The chairs outside the church did some of that too during Covid.)
- Expect minister (or somebody from this parish) to look in on John MacLean at Matlock Farm homestead ASAP. He is in absolutely DEPLOABLE condition and needs assistance with all ADL's (Activities of Daily Living) bathing, dressing, eating, toileting, mobility, etc. Of primary importance is his low-blood pressure condition; needs to rest while going down stairs to answer doorbell. John's phone number is 781-259-8069. He is at risk for falling down the stairs so better to call in-advance rather than ring the door bell which will take him several minutes to get there. He needs to get out of that house into the sunshine and fresh air. Meal-on-wheels are being delivered but the food is rotting on the premises and stinks. The whole house needs to be disinfected. Flies are everywhere. No kidding.
- I would like a minister with proven counseling education and experience.

Question 4. We'd like to explore further any expectations you may have for a minister with respect to social justice. Thinking about the future of FPL, of these possible ways to work on social justice activities, which best describes the role(s) that you think are most important for our next minister? Please select up to 3.

Additional comments:

- Shouldn't be a social justice organization (although also chose participation, education)
- Tough issue to deal with -- what we DON'T need is more political indoctrination in our church. Such overt politicking has already driven many people from FPL.
- Social justice is a minor interest
- PLEASE do not take pulpit time away from minister; let's have this both ways! (also chose Develop.. and Inspire...)
- The minister of First Parish should not have the mandate to lead social justice efforts, but rather, to inspire congregation members to form and lead such committees. While Sunday morning sermons may naturally focus on any number of social justice topics, they should not be the mandate of every Sunday service.
- Link action to words - walk the talk (also chose Participate...)
- The minister is a spiritual leader, not a political one. The congregation must decide on social justice issues; the minister helps us be the best citizens and people we can be. (Also chose Participate..)
- Encourage and provide forums and meeting venues for these activities and ensure information about participating in these activities are share in newsletter, website and during services. (Also chose Inspire.. and Participate..)
- Importance of having varying types of engagement, being inclusive to all persuasions, and making sure we avoid small group of people set your Social Justice agenda (Also chose Inspire.. and Advocate...)
- Community service trips to underserved areas as Manish had done. (Also chose Develop...and Inspire...)
- I'd like to qualify my answers... a minister should preach on the values represented/understood by theology and faith and support the work of the laity. Church members should decide how/what the important issues are. The collective rather than one person should lead. In this way, the values of the church (church members) are best reflected and it's not one person. At no time should politics be delivered from the pulpit. Services should be spiritual - and can link to a guest speaker after worship. Worship should be worshipful. (Also chose Inspire.. and Educate..)
- No politics in church
- Participate in social justice projects that may be led by people within OR outside the congregation. (Also chose Advocate... and Educate...)
- Focus on the congregation. This is social. This is justice.
- Take a poll on which social justice issues people care about.. supporting local youth and supporting women's issues should be added to the list..which feels a bit limited. (Also chose Educate...)
- I think the schools already do a lot of this for our kids. (Also chose Educate..)
- Maintaining a realistic balance - prefer working on local/regional needs while not forgetting to minister-uplift- to spiritual/personal needs of congregants

Question 5. We'd like to explore further the expectations you may have for a minister with respect to climate/environmental action. Thinking about the future of FPL, of these possible ways to work on climate/environmental activities, which best describe the role(s) that you think are most important for our next minister? Please select up to 3.

Additional comments:

- Shouldn't become a climate church. (Also chose Inspire... and Educate..)
- I don't think that this is an important key function
- Another zone that enters the political rather than spiritual realm. Much of current climate panic is manufactured nonsense (Reference multiple August op-eds in the WSJ).
- Environment is a personal issue.
- I have NO necessary place for our minister in this area.
- The minister of First Parish should not have the mandate to lead [environmental] efforts, but rather, to inspire congregation members to form and lead such committees. While Sunday morning sermons may naturally focus on any number of [environmental] topics, they should not be the mandate of every Sunday service. (Also chose Inspire...)
- Support action to reflect the words we speak. (In addition to Participate.. and Advocate..)
- The minister is not a political role; it is a spiritual role. (In addition to Participate.. and Educate..)
- Again, encourage local practices...
- Again - the actions of church members should decide where time and effort are spent on any social issue. The minister can support, and be a tremendous resource, but should not direct.
- Teach about god and being good, no politics
- Know that sunlight + water + carbon dioxide = a green Earth & food.
- I feel like this is only honoring the UU half of the church. I'm not interested in only having social justice rallies replace spiritual church time.
- I don't see this as (necessarily) the territory of our minister.
- We can't expect our church or the minister to address every issue.
- I don't go to church to learn about climate change. We can do that in other areas of our lives. I want a spiritual sacred space.
- Help build confidence among children that their future environment matters to us and that they can count on community to see them through it.
- Invite the American Chestnut Foundation to give a presentation for work "beyond the pew" and for congregants to plant their own American chestnut trees.

Question 7. Describe one mistake/change a minister could make that you think would seriously affect the ministry:

- misunderstanding our values and the challenges of young families
- Act without humility.
- failing to engage the whole church
- Changes to music, liturgy and Order of Worship without warning...although I believe changes to all three would be essential to being relevant in today's church world.
- Not being honest and open

- Talking down to the congregation- very intelligent and informed people want to be inspired
- favoritism
- Putting the organization of FPL ahead of community and parishioners' needs
- Any form of dishonesty would be a game changer.
- See themselves as an enlightened leader bringing THE ANSWER to the congregants rather than a fellow seeker.
- Preaching partisan politics and issues.
- Speaking and acting too quickly before listening to us.
- Perceive of his/her role as CFO to implement a particular program or viewpoint rather than assist and lead FPL to recognize opportunity/challenges and then to grow, learn and help in ways we can.
- Follow UU doctrine too closely. I like the Unitarian-Congregational model. It feels that when we affiliate with the UU church, as Manish did, we lose creativity, thoughtfulness, deep thinking.
- Be unwilling to listen to the ideas of others
- Too-close adherence to either denomination--esp the UUA!
- Wanting to lead from top down and showing it
- Insisting on making change totally her/his way!
- A strong belief in an actual functioning God.
- Exclude a group with whom he/she might interact with (such as children)
- Not being open to differing views
- Top-down leadership style that doesn't involve deep listening. A minister who is unsure and defensive. Jenny so awesome and knows herself.
- If the minister were to try to implement changes to the service too quickly without first getting to know and working with our congregation toward positive change.
- not listening
- Drifting too close to the UUA schtick. Also, falling for people who want to be "favorites."
- letting personal ambition for success in their denomination steer the ministry
- Being too strongly attached to their personal values to the detriment of the overall perspective of our congregation
- I would not like it if our minister became a strong advocate for a political position I prefer the minister to be open and reflective on many issues and bring them forward in his or her sermons
- A mistake would be not having a cooperative leadership style with the congregation.
- over reliance on biblical traditions
- bad question
- Almost any change could be a mistake if presented without getting a congregation-wide sense of roadblocks and divisions.
- Not speaking with all prior ministers and interims before taking the job.
- narrow the religious focus to one tradition

- Make assumptions about us based on demographics (white, affluent, well-educated) without getting to know us.
- Framing the question in the context of "the ministry" is ambiguous. The minister being too closely aligned with doctrinal Congregational or Unitarian theology, would be a serious issue for me.
- Changing the service radically or quickly would be very upsetting to many people
- eliminating Deacons. Dissolving long term small groups.
- taking a unilateral public position on something without the backing of the congregation
- Functioning as CEO
- Return to Manish-like excessive focus on social justice (and/or Manish's view of governance)
- Lying to the congregation about themselves or their beliefs.
- Non inclusive leadership style.
- Let the views of a few members lead us in the wrong direction.
- Disregard historical traditions and radically change elements of our worship service.
- Making changes too quickly. A minister must listen and learn for at least a year.
- Gitin' too Popish.
- Inability to listen and moving too fast to change things.
- Using the pulpit as a mouthpiece for your personal mission in social justice.
- Ouch. This question upsets me, and reminds me of examples of our over-entitlement.
- To be demanding and dictatorial and not listen to from feedback from parishioners.
- Arrogance, limited accessibility, preference for certain members, bad sermons
- Radical Change provokes instability in the congregation
- The success of ministry would be seriously affected if the new minister holds judgment against the congregation for our privilege as a community.
- bad sermons
- Be deceitful, cause a loss of trust
- Trying to change who we are or how we operate before they understand who we are and how we operate
- Act from a place of scarcity
- To implement change without getting to know the members of the congregation.
- Assume we are a Unitarian church.
- Making it about them
- One mistake would be not to include the entire congregation. I feel that there needs to be more involvement from the congregation.
- To be driven by ego and personal agenda, to not listen
- dishonesty
- lack of empathy and genuine concerns for individual and corporate wellbeing of the members
- I think it would be a mistake to unilaterally initiate a change to any long standing tradition of First Parish without first enrolling and engaging the congregation in the reasoning behind the change.

- A lot of changes in a short period
- Failing to address the need to broaden the congregation to a younger membership
- "Don't change much to the worship service the first year"
- The minister must be able to attract and retain a new generation of members to keep the church financially viable.
- Believing FPL is a hierarchy; it is much better to see us as a Team.
- Disregarding and unilaterally changing church governance practices and procedures.
- Taking out the music program
- Define and maintain the responsibilities and the respective roles of Communications Coordinator and the Parish Administrator
- Leading from the top, not through the congregation.
- A minister who is NOT mature, grounded in their own sense of self. I don't think we could survive a minister like Manish who was detached, not self-aware, unable to accept criticism.
- This is a tricky one. I suppose firing a staff member would be distressing.
- not to prioritize the youth ministry
- too much politics from the pulpit
- Not listening and imposing a "mission" in the first year or two would not be wise
- changing the Sunday service too for no valid reason
- A crucial mistake would be to lead with arrogance, even if subtle. Whether that attitude sourced from academia, ego, entitlement, etc would hardly matter : Humility grounds leadership, not arrogance.
- Inability to create a warm and caring community
- Self-centered rather out-reaching priorities
- Listen the loudest voices rather than seek out the opinions of those who don't speak up.
- As we learned with Manish, the congregation may THINK is it open to change, we were not as open-minded as we thought. Change must be gradual.
- Keeping FPL Lincoln centric, relying on long time parishioners for filling so many roles
- Delivering sermons that frequently draw on anecdotes that have to do with their own personal journey. Content must come from broader stories, reading, summaries beyond themselves.
- Underestimating how aggressively lay led FPL is. We do not like to be told what to do and how to do it. Vague governance is preferred.
- "Not listening carefully and getting to know the community before beginning to implement needed change
- Coming in with an attitude that they need to get us to focus on something that is of importance to them without first building relationships and discovering what is important to us.
- We need someone who is a LEADER. I think the church will flounder if we don't have a strong leader in the ministerial position.
- Be political

- Being too political.
- Rigidity particularly with regard to religion
- Changing our call to ministry and covenant.
- Getting too political
- Ignore the religious Ed and younger generation, make changes quickly
- NA
- I think sermons are really important, and if they were wildly different than what we're used to (length, tone, not hugely Jesus-y) it would mean folks might stay involved but not Sunday morning.
- divisive
- Focusing on single isolated issues.
- Any type of change quickly! We are slow to change and generally do not like it. Change must be slow and taken in small steps.
- To betray our trust. The last settled minister promised the SMSC that he would leave the Order of Service unchanged for a year, to take the measure of the congregation's sensibilities.
- Not listening.
- i am not sure
- Making it overly formal or too religious/Jesus focused in church service
- Work with town's senior center advocating for deprived senior citizens and "people of color" LGBTQ, etc.
- focusing only on problems external to the congregation
- Making any change too quickly. Listen first.
- Lecturing to well-educated and generally successful individuals is bound to fail. Their success will increase by teaching how we can better fulfill our mission by walking with rather than ahead of us.
- I would be concerned if a minister came across as overly 'preachy'--I want to be encouraged to think but not be told what to think.
- Making the service too formal/stiff
- not understanding the culture of Lincoln, eastern MA & New England in relation to the rest of USA and the world
- Watching the news.
- keep doing things exactly as you have been.. The problem is.. you've already lost the people you should have listened to all along.. and they are no longer in the room. Not sure how you recover that.
- assume that my kids aren't really your parishioners, assume that I want to be preached at
- We have a difficult time with change so any change implemented by a minister would need buy in and discussion with the whole community. The change in the order of service is a good example of this.
- A major mistake would be to favor and succumb to the opinions of the loudest, wealthiest, and "well-connected" members of the congregation.
- Being dishonest.

- Contentious divorce or ... perish the thought .. an extramarital affair.
- Be unwelcoming to young/new families.

Question 8. Describe one change a new minister might make that would be unifying and energizing:

- involvement with families in the the greater Lincoln community
- Personally re-fund the capital reserve account.
- making time to get to know people
- Create a strong cultural of giving, first to the church financially, then to the church time and talent wise and lastly (but no less important) giving to others.
- Inclusive and welcoming attitude
- Getting us safely back to the sanctuary
- community building
- (Maybe) pulling together focus on one issue --climate change -- in the way they did in the sixties for civil rights
- Spend your first year being visible and available to your congregation, asking for input from the congregation AND letting us get to know you.
- Schmoozing with people at FPL activities.
- Sermons that uplift and bring joy to the parishioners.
- Anything to attract young families, but that seems to be easier said than done...
- Be unifying and energizing
- Pulling church together more around climate change, in a broad sense.
- Inspire us to social and environmental action (not just education)
- Teaching.
- Once you have new members invite them personally to participate.
- Starting with extensive group and individual listening sessions, and significantly including those who are not currently active participants!!
- Work with various committees to grow our membership, especially our families.
- Helping individuals in the community with problems.
- Jenny has been awesome.
- Learning to greet every congregant by name - in essence making each person feel noticed and important.
- join the social life of the congregation and community
- I really do not know!!
- expand post sermon discussions and short term (3-4 session on a theme) classes with the minister (we are already doing this, but each minister shows their own style of connecting with the community)
- Accepting the great variety of the personal background of our congregants, it would be helpful to relate less to particular biblical references with too great an emphasis on a particular faith

- Jenny has a wonderful sense of humor I will miss that and hope that a new candidate would have the same
- Inviting everyone to a potluck brunch as Roger and Kay did.
- This is a hard question because Jenny has already unified and energized the congregation. So.....continue along and expand the paths that have been taken
- Broadening the music -- but only if it can be done with support of the devotees of the current program.
- Openly embrace the content and meaning of Covenant and Call To Ministry. Plant the flag.
- be attractive to younger families
- Move into the parsonage and get involved in the community.
- Be comfortable in their own skin, laugh, smile, and not be in a hurry to put their stamp on anything.
- To make an effort make everyone feel included, to attend a community meal or picnic and enjoy themselves and the congregation,
- Engage with the 3 different demographics separately: youth- especially high school, families and those nearing retirement and later.
- Attract new members
- Concerted effort, coupled with real skills, in the area of community outreach
- spend extra time with the congregation outside of worship time, social setting /community building
- Support and inspire social justice activities.
- Listen carefully to the less vocal members of the congregation.
- Engaging in more informal settings with the congregation, such as picnics on the parsonage lawn, a coffee house evening, helping decorate a FPL float for the 4th of July parade, softball game, etc.
- not sure
- Bringing in other ministers or guest speakers for focus on specific subjects.
- Making it a priority to get to know us - our names - and finding ways for us to get to know him/her. Connecting with our children.
- Engaging the broader Lincoln residents, especially young families, in a way that encourages them to want to see what FPL has to offer, and then keep coming back.
- Invite Greg Epstein to preach.
- If the new minister strived to make connections with community leaders of all sorts, attended Town Meetings and the events at the schools, this would a refreshing change from our previous ministers.
- Great sermons, strong intellect, open us up to seeing life in different ways
- Bringing in young families is critical!!!
- Have a party
- improve the quality of the sermons
- Make a point to meet as many people as possible, outside of the just the leaders of the church to have coffee hours, home visits, open houses etc.
- Act from a place of abundance

- To spend the first year connecting with the members of the congregation, to truly listen, and to form relationships.
- Encourage true diversity. I hated how Manish was treated, In truth, the church was neither as accepting or open-minded as it would like to believe itself to be, his misreading of why aside.
- Not attached to a particular denomination.
- Get to know a lot of people...actively invite members to meet with him or her...do a listening tour of sorts for the first year. Spend time meeting people and Lear's from a broad swath of our community
- Spread the net wider for involving the congregation.
- To listen and embrace this community, and work to build membership
- actively engage in the congregation to get know as many as possible..not just the obvious ones
- Being empathetic to member's concerns and genuine effort to cater to individual and corporate needs of the church membership
- Be actively involved in the local community - engaged with the schools, the COA, Hanscom, the Food Bank.
- Dynamic speaker
- Introducing new ways to reach out to others who share our values on specific issues (such as the METCO dinner)
- Revamp Christmas Eve service
- Develop programs that specifically attract younger parents and single adults that are socially or thematically appealing. So many of my friends who were at FP no longer are.
- COVID has disrupted traditional practices; this may be an opportunity for new minister.
- Demonstrating awareness and understanding of an existing shared value, and suggesting ways to improve and deepen the commitment and the effect.
- Energizing small groups organized around mission work (climate or racial justice or) that would both support each other spiritually and also take action together. Faith in action in small groups
- The Director of Religious Education should report to the minister.
- Knowing himself or herself and moving and working comfortably within our congregation. Someone who sincerely likes people.
- Listen well; cherish what we have in our Covenant and Call to Ministry
- Creating an alternative way for families to engage in worship together, beyond traditional Sunday service.
- strengthen the youth ministry
- listen to differences of opinion especially those who more diffident
- Strengthening/honing an already existing initiative into an actionable plan
- social gatherings
- A minister who skillfully inquires, gains insights, and then uses that wisdom to evolve the congregation further would both unify and energize. Can s/he listen deeply and talk less?
- Provide a warm and caring community

- The ability to encourage the open expression of views and priorities coupled with the willingness to share and obtain constructive feedback from parishioners on these.
- Be involved in activities beyond Sunday services and social media post worthy events, and attend something that involves all of the little factions of our congregation.
- We need more young families! - though I'm not sure a new minister can do that on his/her own.
- improving communication between committees and small groups.
- Figuring out a way to connect to youth and offer them dynamic, non-Sunday based activities that are active and indirectly promote spiritual development, but is not "traditional" Sunday school.
- Not sure what they would be allowed to do.
- Small dinners with the new minister
- Inviting a conversation about integrating some variation in our marvelous music program (e.g. adding jazz, gospel, folk, etc. from time to time).
- Inspire congregation
- Finding a way to bring more families to the church.
- Give really thought provoking inspirational sermons
- Guiding us in committee work.
- Talk more about religion, god and being good and do more charity work not political stuff
- Visit small groups attend gatherings
- Doing whatever they're passionate about, in a way the congregation can plug in.
- find something we can all hold in common
- Increasing the number of young families in church.
- Motivating and leading community efforts.
- Show us and lead us in justice. I am reminded of the quote: "Never forget that justice is what love looks like in public."
- Encourage friends and members to get involved.
- Listening to the congregants.
- engage the community in more reflection
- More outdoor services, great sermons the reach many and are broad based (literature, life) not narrowly religious. Attract a more diverse congregation - though Lincoln is not v diverse so that is hard
- Revitalize Matlock Farm and honor the town's historian: John MacLean
- focusing principally on the problems faced by the congregation within the environment of Lincoln
- Guest speakers for timely topics. From Outside/inside the congregation. We can learn from each other with cross pollination! We need to know each other better.
- Willingness to work with a group of leaders right from the start to understand our background and mindset before trying to impose changes on parishioners as if we were just sheep.
- I think we need to encourage more people from the pulpit to do/give more - it's always the same people doing everything! Make it a team effort to build our church community

- Getting to know each member , their family and the friends of the church
- Ask half the congregation to avoid MSM for three months. Rinse and repeat.
- IF YOU WANT TO KEEP CURRENT FAMILIES AND ATTRACT NEW ones, you need to figure this out. already a decade late. Roger was the last one who did this. It can't fall on Margit or sunday school alone.
- hold as many outdoor services as possible as it's a pandemic
- Once we are past COVID or have figured out better how to live with it encouraging monthly gatherings such as potlucks or community sings or hikes would help our community.
- To represent all in the congregation, with particular attention to the quiet members, the suffering, the less advantaged (POC, financially disadvantaged) - to be a voice for the disadvantaged.
- Being genuine.
- The new minister would write to every new resident in town, timed to draw attention to an upcoming non-religious event e.g. Live in Lincoln or a presentation upon return from the Border - nothing more
- Be involved in bringing in young/new families.

Question 9. What's your favorite thing about our congregation?

- community, taking care of one another
- The people
- Sermons
- Fellowship
- "Services on Sunday AM and holidays"
- community and vision
- Stimulating thoughts and leading community through participation and inspiration, institutionally and through parishioners
- Wide range of people, MANY experts in their fields, wisdom and experience of the older folks, graciousness of all.
- The recent attempt to build community through outreach activities.
- Music. Community.
- That we are respectful of members beliefs and non-beliefs.
- Diversity
- The people and their support and intelligence and depth.
- Commitment to a supportive community that works toward social and environmental justice
- United devotion to the church.
- The people in our community, the volunteers, the unsung heroes who do things behind the scenes to make the church work!
- Community-opportunity and motivation to develop additional meaningful relationships
- Diverse group of people, both in age and in thinking, that work together to support each other.

- Community.
- Our creative and caring community of individuals committed both to the well-being of the church and of our town.
- concern for each person
- --There's someone there for everyone....
- we are a community of intelligent, committed, and concerned, people who are skeptical of dogma and want to deepen our connection to others and to the living earth
- Its diversity and its basic respect for fellowship
- A friendly atmosphere with others can share personal experiences that relate to our spiritual faith
- The warm community it provides.
- Multi-generational friendships
- bad question
- Most in the congregation are warm, smart people with good intentions.
- Those members who do what needs to be done without ever being asked.
- the sense when we are together that we are a vigorous community
- Community.
- Community sense and purpose.
- I love First Parish's open and welcoming theology rooted in our common humanity and the spiritual stories of the new testament rather than the doctrinal theology of the Congregational or Unitarian denominations. I love that all are welcome. We're all human. We're all seekers.
- Sunday service in the church
- Diverse religious views, and the caring that develops over time with sharing.
- Our warm regard and love for each other
- We are open-minded and welcoming seekers
- The sense of community
- The mighty community that steps up when duty calls.
- Strong community that inspires one another and provides spiritual comfort and growth.
- They care.
- "The congregation is deeply compassionate and generous.
- My favorite thing about our church is feeling the sacred space filled with seekers, music, and sunlight on Sunday morning."
- To belong to something bigger than myself with somewhat like minded people (sharing covenant). Community.
- That it combines both familiar friends and new faces, and that it is multi-generational.
- As a relative newcomer back from years away, FPL is where I can find spiritual community and support. It is also a place where I know I can put my gifts to use.
- Our members are caring, intelligent, thoughtful. It's one of the few ways to gather multi-generational folks together, although we are light on the younger folks.
- The sense of community
- We're a big extended family that supports each other, despite our religious differences.

- Community
- The people
- First Parish often brings social justice issues forward that advance my thinking before it arises in the mainstream culture of MetroWest Boston. For example, we were doing workshops on gender identity before most of my other cis-gendered friends were pondering such concerns. I think that's wonderful.
- Interesting and committed group of people (from someone who has unfortunately been less engaged with the church over the last few years)
- The way our members are open about, participate in, and care about each other's spirituality
- Sense of community, multi-generational, advocates for social justice and climate change.
- Multi-generational, and getting increasingly old and not multi-generational
- The loving community of people who care deeply about each other.
- The people who attend.
- "We are NOT just Unitarians; we come from many different faith backgrounds.
- The willingness to step up when needed. We are a congregation to be counted on.
- community, people
- the people
- The sense of being accepted regardless of my beliefs/background and the intellectual stimulation I get from engaging with different members
- The sense of community
- The depth and breadth of experiences, knowledge and curiosity of the individuals who make up our congregation.
- Sense of community
- sense of community and belonging
- Caring friend and church community
- The lovely, thoughtful people I have met.
- Sense of spiritual community during church service offering sermon & music to reflect upon.
- We have a big tent that encourages people to find and follow their own path, and we care deeply about each other. We've taken the time to be open and share so much in our small groups and our work together.
- I love how this congregation shows up for each other when things are rough. Elders and young people all come together to show love. There's nothing like a having a multigenerational posse when life goes in a bad direction. It's even more powerful than having good friends at your side.
- Community and intellectual spirituality
- participation!
- Sense of community and caring for each other. I seek shared values around social justice, equity and inclusion, and walking the talk through efforts to include diverse housing in Lincoln as well as sustainable earth-friendly practices.

- I'm always learning something new and surprising. Plus, most people are sincerely open to listening to others.
- very accepting
- community
- Friends
- I appreciate how bright and resourceful we are as a whole as well as the ways we (sometimes) show up for each other.
- supporting each other
- My favorite thing about FPL, also my favorite thing about our Lincoln community in general, is our huge potential to connect deeply : Our small population drives very few degrees of separation, and having fewer folks means more contact with the same people and understanding each other better.
- Community and friendships
- Willingness to listen, give, and change.
- A sense of community.
- The children
- Smart, multi-faith, multi-generational, generally open-minded people!
- Welcoming and inclusion
- Coming together to spend time with one another each week and many years ago, the feeling of working together I had when engaged in youth outreach trips.
- Community.
- Wonderful community of individuals
- Community of caring people of all ages.
- Its willingness to pitch in; its generosity (time, talent, and treasure); it's openness to growing.
- Caring congregants
- Meditation, Small Groups and Sermons
- The focus on our earth and our community.
- Being inspired and connecting with members of the community
- A caring community that deeply cares for their committees and members. Our sanctuary fills me with peace. Choir and Singing hymns with other parishioners.
- The people and community
- Meeting people having other adults and older children mentor and support my children, the pageant
- Our congregation connects different generation.
- The love for my kids, the music, Margit, seeing people I care about, quiet time.
- generosity of spirit, inclusive (even if it can also be exclusive), sense of commitment
- My favorite thing is that it's a mixed age group with a communal belief in the importance of community, of social justice and of the importance of cherishing the living earth.
- The people.
- The way we show up to help each other when in need.

- The community
- The congregants care for each other.
- the spiritual community
- community feel, pretty manageable size, love the outdoor Easter service and the feel of Christmas, inclusive, not overly formal
- Welcoming strangers well
- Sunday service in the sanctuary
- Community. Inspirational sermons. Music.
- The sense of community and general commitment in striving to live according to our faith values.
- The sense of community it fosters--mostly by shared experiences and connecting with people.
- Its core of caring, socially engaged individuals, who come together to think and do.
- The feeling of community, knowing old and young, and connecting people together
- knowing about everyone's families and their interest in a variety of music
- People show up.
- when people do and say kind and supportive things for other parishioners. when the kids are involved in services and treated like " real" members of the community.
- my kids like to go and see their friends and make friends with older community members who know and care about them. My wife likes to see friends and we value a spiritual community for our kids.
- The variety of people.
- Ian Watson, the choir, and still feeling the lingering gifts left behind by former minister, Manish. I'm also encouraged by the apparent growth for a portion of the congregation who have interest in learning more about racial and social justice.
- Its warmth and energy.
- Bumping up against folks with interesting free-time voluntary occupations with family and friends -- causes, music, art, travel, non-profits
- The people. What a kind, warm, enlightened group of humans.
- Sharing concerns from your seat about parishioners needs
- A loving caring community
- Friends

Question 10. What would you want to say to convince a future minister to join First Parish for the next chapter of our journey?

- you will be surrounded by amazingly bright, committed, and caring friends
- We're a community of bright, kind, accomplished people who struggle and fail while trying to navigate life's complexities. Can you encourage and embrace the successes while acknowledging and supporting the struggles and failures?
- People are looking for leadership

- Lincoln is a beautiful town to live/work in. The challenges for the future are BIG, but if you prevail or not during your time here, it will have been well spent.
- We are an open and welcoming community
- Congregation at turning point - good leadership would have a major impact"
- we need you
- Welcome. Please make us Think and help make us Act
- You will find a very strong core of people who are committed to this particular church and will give their all. We are looking for the right person to guide us for a generation or more. We're tired of losing ministers!
- A lot of intelligent, engaged parishioners willing to work hard to energize this church.
- Politics and religion do not coexist well. Keep the latter, dump the former.
- It's not really about the destination, but rather the journey, and we are all in this together.
- FPL is a diverse group which seeks an exciting, intelligent and self-confident minister who will challenge, support and lead us in ways we might not have thought possible.
- The values of the town of Lincoln provides an amazing base for the church to build on, while people from anywhere are welcome.
- We are a committed supportive community with lots of ideas and energy. And we are fun.
- We are a devoted congregation, willing & able, looking HARD for a new center of our solar system!
- Lincoln is a very a very special place!
- This is an opportunity to greatly increase the IMPACT a minister can have on individuals, a congregation and a community
- We will work with you to make your journey inspirational and rewarding as you inspire our growth.
- This is a challenging job. But with deep rewards personally.
- Don't know
- We are both a caring and challenging community that has demonstrated great commitment to our covenant, our ministers, our congregation over most of our history. We're eager for new leadership, to learn, to have fun together as build a vibrant and effective spiritual community for the future.
- small but dedicated group will support thoughtful leadership, greater community looking for inspiring vision and brave action
- It's a good, good church with deeply devoted lay leadership and a loyal, faithful congregation.
- We believe in our church. We want you to use your humanity and your talents to help us grow spiritually and to unite our community to take action to meet the challenges of this extraordinary time of crisis for our fragile, fractured country and our beautiful, endangered planet
- That we (FPL) are at a crossroads due to the aging of our parish which gives the new minister an opportunity that by their leadership they could again grow our numbers and encourage younger folk and new arrivals to become members

- We are in an inquiring group and open to discussion I've many topics for that I am proud of First parish
 - First Parish is a friendly, welcoming church.
 - We are an open and VERY friendly congregation
 - There is an unusually high level of talent and energy in the congregation and a genuine desire for and openness to spiritual leadership and growth.
 - We have so much potential to be more effective than we are. The right minister can help.
 - This is a unique church that is much more likely than most churches to survive and thrive
 - First Parish is an interesting group of people with the inclination and means to have a positive impact on each other, in the community, and in the world. We have done some important healing after a traumatic experience, and are looking to continue the positive momentum we have right now. First Parish offers a good opportunity for a minister that wishes to build on this positive momentum and engage and inspire the next generation of leaders of the community.
 - We welcomed and benefited from an Interim minister (going on four years) leading us through the processing of the abrupt resignation of the prior minister after only three years, then dealing with the crisis of the COVID pandemic, and all the adjustments that entailed, and all with strong capable lay leadership in all areas of church life. We have been tested and we are strong.
 - Are you curious about where your spiritual journey may lead if you shake the bounds of doctrinal theology and follow the human spirit and the teachings of Jesus? So are we and we welcome you to come along.
-
- We are midstream in trying to understand our obligations and role in the world and to each other in these tumultuous times. And we need a leader that is compassionate with our struggles but has high but realistic expectations of who we could be.
 - We are a committed Community that would like to grow (in numbers and other ways) and are looking for a partner to challenge us
 - We are a passionate, fun and smart community!
 - We have untapped potential, good hearted people with a high willingness (potentially) for volunteering for good acts, and for making FPL an exciting place for parishioners and the community at large
 - We have become much more self-aware , vulnerable and open to change.
 - This is an energized, vibrant community that has been working hard at understanding ourselves and our future in preparation for this transition.
 - We are a fascinating and effective congregation.
 - Our congregation has risen to the challenge of the pandemic with remarkable energy, resilience and creativity and has thoughtfully participated in a long transition period. We are poised for a rejuvenation of our church and ready to realize our vision with a new minister to help and guide us.

- Meet us where we are, nudge and support us in directions we want to go, even ones that we don't quite understand yet. Help us grow in our thinking. Shake things up creatively.
- That our members very much want to embrace and include him/her as a member of our community, and as a friend.
- We are a mid-size, generous congregation of young people, families, elderly, retired with energy, singles, widows, widowers, active, inactive, long term members and predominantly white . We need a minister who sees this diversity as a challenge he/she has acted upon in the past and believes he/she has personal qualities and experience to guide and support us going forward.
- We have a passionate, intelligent congregation who will be a strong support system in building a thriving church community.
- We have not done a good job of understanding and accepting our responsibility in Manish's failed ministry. If you see this as an opportunity rather than (or at least more than) a sad stain on our character, then this might be the place for you. We are far more than our worst actions.
- This is a very special congregation and ministers who have seen succeeded here have flourished and stayed a long time.
- Big challenging job ahead to get new younger members
- How do you like challenges?
- We are a beautiful and imperfect congregation with great capacity to love to and be loved. I think you will find our conversations to be rich, intelligent and wide ranging. It's a small town life with lots of interesting folks.
- make sure they are comfortable with the ethos of Lincoln
- We are a loving, open, supportive, active, and helpful congregation that will grow as you grow
- The First Parish is filled with endless opportunities and potential for growth. We comprise many smart, committed people that want to make this church stronger.
- Established institutions are critical actors in building a beloved community - FPL has standing in a wealthy community that seeks to contribute (to be called) to god's work and with love, compassion and direction - a minister could support that transformation
- We are a caring church with a strong community that is eager to reenergize, to adapt to these changing times, to be relevant, flexible and open-minded, and that we hope can meet the needs of young families who seek a spiritual community.
- We are an incredibly intellectually curious community that engages deeply in conversations about that is good and ethical and how to be our beat selves.
- There is so much kindness and thoughtfulness in our community. We want to share with him/her and each other. They can be the catalyst for enabling rich and meaningful community to flourish.
- I think the past several years have been hard on FPL and we're looking for a new start. We are looking for someone to bring us back together and heal the rifts. It won't be easy or quick, but if you're up for a challenge in a challenging time, please come join us.

- This is an amazing community of wise and thoughtful people. Get to know us, walk on our trails, come to town meeting, volunteer at one of our local farms. The outdoors is an important part of our DNA. Help guide us into next chapter of FPL. Do your homework on who we are, the unique place that is Lincoln MA before you sign on. We are motivated and committed to make an impact on social justice issues. We wish to be of service to people in need and wider communities that surround us.
- We might be challenging but we are so worth the work...
- Wonderful church community filled with passionate people who have true interest to see our church grow and flourish
- I doubt you will ever find a congregation more dedicated to a church than this one. As individuals, we don't all agree on everything, but we do, without hesitation, come together for First Parish.
- Nice congregation
- He or she will have an opportunity to demonstrate leadership enabling a church confronting a variety of challenges as a church and as a valued institution within a community to actually address them
- We're a great, supportive congregation
- We need you to help make this church an appealing community church for all.
- FPL has lots of positive energy; learned a lot from Jenny's leadership on listening to one another; has done some careful analysis of the challenges ahead; is ready to succeed.
- Although the church community is aging, and struggling to attract new generations, it is a resilient, talented and caring community that works together very well.
- We need a minister who can see our hopes and dreams and help us own them and take action on them, rather than wringing our hands about the ways we don't all see everything the same. A minister who catalyzes shared commitment and action.
- It's a great opportunity to develop your leadership and political skills to unify an energetic, educated, and highly individualistic congregation.
- We are a very caring congregation--about ideas and people.
- We are a strong, self-directed community, intellectually hungry congregation seeking to make the world and ourselves better, more just and caring.
- We're hungry for inspiring leadership!
- help fortunate people live lives that are fulfilling and generous that enrich their families community and the broader world
- we are an open, fun, diverse group of people.
- I view FPL as an exceedingly challenging congregation, for various reasons, so am not sure of my response here.
- We are ready for you
- We need to strike a clear balance between our "felt" priorities while indicating our willingness to think, to be flexible, and to grow!
- There is a lot of positive energy in this community and motivation to get involved; there is also a lot of history to wade through and potential to hurt feelings along the way. Bring tall boots and perseverance; if you hang in there as a leader the flock behind you will grow.

- We are smart and thoughtful.
- We are a bright and interesting, intellectually diverse and "seeking" congregation. We have learned from our past mistakes and become more introspective over the past few years. I believe we are ready to commit to a new spiritual leader.
- The congregation is deep in talent and by and large with to contribute
- The congregation is strong and principled, but aging. Your challenge is to harness the strength of the established congregation to promote growth in the church by including diverse groups of Lincoln (and beyond) residents that have historically felt excluded.
- There is a lot of potential at FPL.
- Interesting and motivated parishioners
- This community provides a challenge and a great opportunity!
- We are a generous, thoughtful, curious lot and are open to grow together with you in the service of all.
- It is an open church
- We have a wonderful warm and engaging congregation
- We're eager and energized!
- I don't know
- It will be a challenge but it is a loving community with a special history
- FPL is a small but deeply dedicated congregation where you have the opportunity to engage passionately about the things you care about most.
- I don't have a good answer for this. It ends up being more about Lincoln than about the church, but I guess the traditions are long-lived in that way that gives stability and predictability. I think it's unique that we have these long roots and also the flexibility to reach in new directions. first parish (and Lincoln) is defined by strong and independent thinkers, even experts -- it is one of the community's greatest strengths and one of its greatest weaknesses. this carries with it extraordinary energy, promise, conviction and a desire to engage. it is therefore an opportunity to help that community more fully find itself and to engage more fully in that process with the world.
- We need leadership and want to excel in our creed.
- We are a congregation with tremendous potential to grow, or flounder if we continue to segment the congregation and not come together as community. Lead us and help us develop our true potential. Currently we are great at performance activism, come be our leader who can bring us to our true potential. We are quietly doing great work, in need of someone to help us take the next steps.
- If you're seeking a caring community that views the church as a true partnership between congregants and their ministers, FPL is for you.
- We have a very interesting, engaged group.
- consider that the parish is open to change
- It is a warm, committed community. We are open and inclusive.
- We will put our money where our mouth is and have the means to do it
- the rough beginning will be worth it
- Care about justice, kindness and humility.

- Our congregation is brimming with potential to be instruments of change if we could only better understand our legacy and role in preserving the status quo with respect to white privilege and all its implications. Properly unleashed, we could be awesome in attracting younger generations to our fold.
- We are welcoming people who come from a pretty diverse background given where we exist and we are committed to enacting sustainable change in the world.
- You will be enlightened, challenged, given the opportunity to make a difference after a very challenging few years and we will welcome you with open arms if you believe in us.
- Always know the membership & understand the finances plus get the governance organizations permanently solidified right away
- You'll have a lovely home with us.
- we mean well, but we need leadership like we've never had before. our message resonates well with much of lincoln - we just need better gameplan, messaging, PR and it has to be HOPEFUL not SHAME/GUILT based.
- there are good people here - please help us work better together as a functional community
- We are working really hard to redefine what it means to be a viable, meaningful organization today. We are energized to lean into this work and to try to make a difference in ourselves and in the world. We are excited to partner with someone who can walk this journey with us.
- There is a good portion of the congregations who have big hearts, and care for their community, their environment, and are concerned about the suffering globally. They would welcome you with open arms.
- A beautiful group in an amazing setting awaits your kind support and inspiration. The opportunity to work with some amazing people is here. A variety of members will always keep this a vibrant opportunity. There is a lot of love to be found here but a lot of work as well.
- "When the Minister's ""work day"" is done, she/he and kids would join parishioners who truly ""cherish the living earth"". After WW II the Town consciously found ways NOT to break up the Flint property, for example, into 1-acre house lots e.g. an embrace of a strong conservation ethic. The minister's young children, if relevant, would thrive in an excellent school system.
- Easy access to Concord/Cambridge/Boston's cultural and academic resources.
- This is an interesting, caring community of people who want to make the world a better place.
- Be honest, be open to new experiences. FPL truly is a kind, caring, compassionate community – you will know if you want to join the challenge.
- Good luck!

Question 36. What do you take into consideration when deciding an amount to give or whether to increase (or decrease) your pledge?

- my finances/the church's finances/how hard the church is trying
- Other financial obligations play a large role.
- Needs of the Church
- The message I am sending to church leadership about how they are running (or ruining) the church.
- Our income
- Family income - heading to retirement
- Strength of sermon determines how often I go. How often I go, determines pledge.
- the minister
- My capacity, the effectiveness of FPL in community issues, DE&I beyond words
- I ask myself what I have received in the way of spiritual enrichment from the church
- I have a fixed charity budget. More for the church means less for other causes I support
- Church need and our income.
- What I can afford to give.
- Try to keep up with FPL requirements and push our contribution.
- I am not heavily engaged but really value a "high quality" church that is there when I can come
- Needs of church and importance of church in my life
- What we can afford on our two fixed incomes) -- though we have NEVER decreased our pledge.
- Unemployment, underemployment
- Anticipated income and expanses ... FPL will always be highest % of my charity dollar
- I consider the impact the church is having on me, my family, the congregation and the community
- Did my income increase this year or not.?
- On a fixed income, so modest increases
- Does the church focus mainly on issues important to me. We need to help OUR community.
- Retirement. I feel we are giving max we can
- My other charitable donation goals; the financial needs of the church.
- Need, other charitable commitments, social justice activities
- Ability to contribute on 2 fixed incomes.
- what seems fair given our commitment to support other charities as well
- Available funds
- my attendance in church services and the sense of community that I experience is my measure
- family finances and expected expenses
- FPL budget needs, our personal level of participation, our household budget
- Household's fixed income and obligation to other causes
- How much we can afford

- Our engagement, do we value what FPL does for the community, affordability
- Increased pledge this year, plus, to show support for all the extra effort during the COVID crisis.
- How lucky we are to have the resources to give
- other giving across political and social justice causes
- our resources and the value of FPL in our lives
- My portfolio status, unexpected extended family needs, other charitable organizations we support
- Depends on how our finances look for the year
- Ability to pay, church's need
- The increased expenses of the church. Community generosity.
- Primarily, our personal financial situation. We give as much as we can afford.
- having to be more careful with giving due to recent retirement
- The need; our financial capability; how much volunteer time I provided that year.
- Our overall budget and giving priorities.
- How much I'm involved in the church; church need; my resources; larger community's participation
- Need and ability.
- As much as I can afford to give, First Parish is the highest priority for my wife and myself.
- Income level
- Supporting our community and friends
- My personal finances
- my attendance: children's involvement i.e., I used to give more when my kids attended Sunday school
- need
- The churches need and our ability to help
- This feels like a conversation starter!
- Current relationship with church
- Need, role in my life, commitment to other charities.
- I was not happy with the previous minister and stopped going to church and decreased my gift.
- the economy, other home/child expenses
- the health of the church
- What I can comfortably afford in conjunction to how pressing the needs are at the church
- Financial stability of the church
- The current operational needs along with anticipated upcoming capital requests.
- Our attendance
- Other financial obligations; tremendous gratitude to the church community during this COVID year
- What the church offers me
- My level of participation.

- Time since last increase; perceived direction church is going; happiness with Sunday service.
- Becoming semi-retired and moving away has led me to diminish the amount of my pledge.
- My financial situation
- our love of the Church and community
- My present household income, current family situation and retirement funding
- involvement in church
- I consider my own financial sustainability first
- Hopefully will never have to decrease
- Our involvement at FPL has decreased steadily in recent years, and so has our pledging.
- My income
- Our financial situation vs. degree of involvement in the church
- Our own ability to give
- just random
- Church need, our financial position and other organizations we give to
- Our family budget. I keep pushing it every year to increase my donation,
- Donation capability in relation to earnings
- Our personal finances and what we can afford.
- Own financial situation, church needs
- how much the church means to us.
- How often our family participates in church related activities.
- What my income is and what I think is fair
- How inspirational the sermons are
- How much we can afford.
- Activity of church in community and my own engagement
- Effectiveness of competing charities which we support.
- What we can afford.
- Financial resources. Church needs.
- My income fluctuates, so it varies according to that.
- began to work part time
- role of church for -my spouse much more involved so it rises to a top philanthropic priority. need
- I attend First Parish in Wakefield "religiously" every Sunday so sorry I am not (yet) a member.
- perceived need
- Needs of church. Importance of church to me.
- Parish need and personal ability to contribute.
- We rarely decrease as we know how much is needed
- Recognition of my family and my volunteer efforts
- My financial status.
- i want the church to survive

- We have look at the organizations we give to and divided what we have to give between them
- Whether I feel aligned and welcome as a member or not.
 - What we give in other ways; pro-bono work, resources, etc. - Our budget.
- Increasing expenses, especially pay for the exceptional Staff
- How often we make it to church.

Do you have any other comments you'd like to make to the Search Committee at this time?

- find a minister who is aligned to our reality and strategy
- I hope the right people are available as that will make your job a lot easier.
- thank you
- We need someone who makes us both think and feel and can engage the next generation in leadership
- of course: THANK YOU for continuing in this marathon
- I'd prefer a minister who finds inspiration in all kinds of music. Music is important to many parishioners. I'd like to add that Claire Feingold gave the type of sermons I loved.
- NO POLITICS!
- Thank you for all of your efforts! I am so grateful.
- While FPL governance may be strong, we may not all understand it, nor recognize the importance of the Congregation. but we do feel it is important to select a minister who can accept the Congregation, challenge us and assist us in a myriad of ways we are aware of as well as others that will be new.
- FPL provides me with what I want from a church, because of the care, intelligence, hard work, and deep respect of its staff and members. I am not looking for "religion" but for a spiritual approach encompassing the outdoors. Roger's approach really worked for me! Thanks very much for taking such a careful and thoughtful approach to picking a new minister!!
- Please look earnestly at UCC candidates, since I think brilliance in the pulpit is a top priority..
- Focus on connection not money
- Make extensive reference checks on a finalist irrespective of the UCC rules; make sure there is extensive involvement after the search is completed, both during pre arrival and during the first year
- "We ""see-saw."" Our surveys reflect what we missed in our last minister. After Nancy we wanted someone would bring us together (forgetting her pastoral work, her classes, her creativity). After Roger, we wanted pastoring and social concerns. We assumed or took for granted his ability to bring people into church, his good social skills, his sermons with quotes.

- Will we see-saw from Manish or will Jenny's balance allow our responses to be balanced? I feel Jenny is the best ministerial fit for our church that I have seen in my 34 years as a member.
- And I love Sarah's sermons.
- At work, when I hired people I would ask this question. What has really inspired you in your past positions? After hearing that. I would ask what activity makes it hard to get up and go to work? I would say we needed a good fit.
- I think we don't always get a feel of what turns a candidate on and off. I heard Manish was disappointed in us being so old and not a young vibrant community. (Although I am sure the prospectus showed who we are) Thank you all for doing this work!!"
- Thank you for your service!
- Good luck. Thank you for doing.
- We currently have a wonderful interim minister, and I believe that we can find a minister who can do as good a job of leading us as she has.
- None
- I am grateful to the Search Committee for all that it is doing
- Wishing you wisdom when you need it and good luck throughout!
- Bless you all for taking on this crucial challenge. Educate candidates fully about the FP.
- Be bold, these are difficult times for churches
- Thank you for your hard work.
- Choose someone you like and who relates well personally to others and who is spiritually grounded. I trust your good judgment! Thank you!!!!
- Thank you for your work on our behalf. Our faith is with you.
- Thank you. We're behind you.
- thank you for your important work!
- "Is a 2 year probationary term a possibility?"
- Followed by a congregation wide vote to continue or not?"
- Go for it
- Good luck.
- Thank you for your work.
- You are great to take this on; thank you!
- Thank you for all the time and energy you are giving to this important work. The new minister will not be perfect, but I hope whoever it is comes with enthusiasm, energy and ideas to help us grow and thrive.
- I gave mixed messages re: church lay leadership. I do believe there are a few folks who have outsized influence and listen to themselves more than others, pushing their own point-of-view forward over the majority's. But by and large, I have faith in the lay leadership of our community and believe that all are acting with a good heart, even with those shortcomings.
- Thank you for the effort that went into this survey.
- Take your time, carefully conduct background checks, and make sure that you have the right candidate.
- Good luck! Tough to find just the right person but you're doing a great job!! Thank you!

- Thanks to the Search Committee for the work you are doing!
- Thank you!
- The biggest challenge that I see with the First Parish is our aging community - we need to draw in more younger families, and that is not an easy thing to do.
- Thank you each for the enormous commitment of time, energy and spirit you are gifting to our community!
- Thank you for your extraordinary effort!
- I do not believe FPL is a Unitarian church. I believe our search will be much improved if the search committee starts with the premise that we are a multi-denominational church. I would go so far as to decline the Unitarian church's nominations for candidates, in order to avoid becoming beholden to the Unitarian church and its candidates in our search process.
- Thank you for doing this survey and for volunteering your time on behalf of all of us.
- I am hopeful for our future. Thank you for working so hard to bring us together again.
- Thank you so so very much for all of this...great survey....so generous of you all. Bless you!
- To me, it's important to get a minister with proven history of being a "good leader/minister" even if they might not have high credentials on all areas we hope for (Ph.D in theology, MBA's etc etc, or having othered many books/journals on social justice/environment etc etc)
- Thank you - I appreciate how much work you've committed to do and am thankful for your time, energy, wisdom and dedication.
- No
- Do your best to replicate Jenny! She has been and continues to be a wonderful inspiration in so many ways combining thoughtful leadership from the pulpit, activism on a variety of critical issues, and a warm pastoral presence for all of us.
- I hope that my answers have been helpful.
- Good luck!
- Thank you for your good and thoughtful work on this universe of issues!
- Godspeed, good luck.
- Good luck!
- Good luck! This is not an easy job. I was going to say my preference is for a New Englander but decided that wasn't fair!
- Best of luck and thank you!
- You're doing Goddesses work!
- Background checks and references on selected minister. make sure you interview prior employers of selected minister There were plenty of red flags with the last settled minister if we had the will to look deeper into his past employment. We should not be dictated to by UUA protocol. Make sure there is a anonymous congregational vote
- I wish you all the very best of luck!
- Selection of a permanent minister is a key issue.
- I arrived after the last minister departed but feel like since he did the many different communities within the church have drifted farther apart. This survey feels very slanted

towards answering a perceived call towards social justice outside our immediate town limits, and less about reunifying our existing community so that we can help it grow. Please don't lose sight of the elements we need in a minister to remind us that we are one community and help us to come together again. And know that you cannot please everybody all the time, there will be initial hurt feelings. Please don't confuse loud outspoken voices for representing the majority of needs or desires; seek out the quiet voices and listen to them, as they might be the actual majority of active participants and contributors.

- Jennie won't do it?
- Thank you, Search Committee, for taking on this important and gigantic task! I am grateful for your work and your leadership.
- It's important to listen and seek out introverts for opinions,
- Through the demographics information requested and with so few staff, it is likely you'll know exactly who filled this out. Some of my answers are pretty raw... this is too important to sugar coat. FPL has amazing potential, else I wouldn't be here. But it will require change... which is not, generally, welcomed. There is work to do and we'll have someone willing to help us do it.
- Think outside the box!!
- Thank you!
- thank you for undertaking this essential and arduous task. we are in your debt.
- Thanks
- Thank you for your work and dedication!
- May the Force be with you :)
- Thank you for your work on this.
- Good luck!
- Take your time and listen deeply. Try your best to set aside bias. This is a congregation who believes we are much more diverse than we are in reality. We have lofty aspirations of diversity; reality we are a very privileged over-educated old predominantly straight white congregation.
- Thank you, thank you, thank you for this labor of love!
- thank you for all the effort you have put into this search!
- I am a friend of the parish and likely to remain so.
- As best you can, please try to read between the lines of any candidate considered; that is, seek as deep an understanding of their motivation(s) as possible in order to avoid surprises in their behavior as time passes. Thank you!
- Yes, thanks to each of you for your commitment to this important search. We are depending on you.
- Please get to know more about the congregations/organizations where the candidate has served; do anonymous site visits
- Thank you for these good questions. I hope our answers help.
- please find someone who has/likes/values families. please know that we are already teaching every social justice issue to our kids.. as are the schools. just help us be part of a happy and healthy intergenerational community. go light on the preaching, fire,

brimstone. Go heavy on the joy, traditions, commonalities and shared service to all. My kids best times ever have been xmas pageant, jewish seder (with Mandy), collecting food and clothing for local drives, anytime they spoke in church, hearing other parishoners tell their stories in church. Also, please consider the role of music and mixing up the musical aspect of church. maybe we could all end together in song. I personally don't like organ music or standing there for a while as Ian performs -- when I'd rather be discussing enlightening things with my fellow parishioners. It's a bit presumptuous that we all want/prefer this. Strive to include children in every service.. especially if Sunday school is dwindling/folding. We need a leader who can set the tone for how "established members" talk with and interact with newer/younger potentials/members. I've heard some amazing things come out of older peoples mouths -- as well as some ridiculous and hurtful ones.. Many folks experience the latter and assume that is how the entire church behaves/believes.. what a shame!.. we need a standard of decorum, politeness, inclusion within our own community.. It all comes down to leadership - and managing the generational divides, and notions of who are the "real" church members, the "real" lincoln residents, the culture of who gets to have an opinion - or who doesn't. that would be true inclusion and diversity:) Thank you for your time.

- thank you for your time!
- "I really struggled with question 9 because I believe that we have done a lot of work thinking about our values, mission, and vision as an organization but we have not addressed decision making adequately. Often, decisions are made in a vacuum and/or by just a few individuals. I think we are taking steps to try to improve that process but I don't think we are there yet and I think we should do some work around this as an organization. An incoming Minister needs to know that at times we still function like an ""old boy network"" for lack of a better term.
- Thank you all for all the work you are doing on our behalf. I am grateful that you all were willing to take on this important job!"
- I am hesitantly consider re joining as a member since I've heard there have been development by members who have interest in social and racial justice education.
- "We're estranged from the flock at the moment; we deeply appreciate the space we are experiencing as we decide when and if to reengage. We still discuss this regularly. But I will be very honest with you here, given how our (FP's) processes for review, the behavior of members in charge tasked with dealing with issues and our history of how a huge challenge we faced together was handled, I am extremely gun shy about reincorporating church into our lives, specifically FP.
- I really do appreciate you asking and listening. You're doing a really tough thing and asking for outsiders' comments is huge.
- PS: the 0 on pledge contributions is because we have been estranged. We did give to stewardship as best we could - not as high as we'd like, but we did contribute."
- Please be open to the idea that best way forward, given growing Covid uncertainties, might be to extend Jenny for two more years.