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A Just Peace, Open and Affirming Conference

ADDITIONAL CONGREGATIONAL SURVEY AND RESEARCH RESOURCES

Search Committees may wish to explore a contract with an institution that has extensive experience in surveying members of local churches. Such institutions will provide survey instruments, tally the instruments after the members have completed them, and produce a report whose narrative text and graphs give an extensive “picture” of your congregation.

The websites for these organizations will offer you samples of their questionnaires as well as sample reports. Please note that these materials are subject to copyright laws and may not be reproduced or incorporated into your own survey instrument. If your congregation is interested in an in-depth study of your church, it would be wise to check out a variety of research resources. Costs vary; customarily there is a basic contract fee, a minimal charge for each questionnaire used, and a charge for processing the final report.

The Hartford Seminary Institute for Religious Research offers a questionnaire that is specifically focused on a pastoral vacancy; their “*Pastoral Search Inventory*” has been used by many UCC congregations. (Go to www.hirr.hartsem.edu and type *Pastoral Search Inventory* into their search engine.)

Another survey instrument suggested by some UCC Conference/Association Ministers is available from US Congregational Life. That survey is titled “*Discover Your Congregation’s Strengths*.” In addition to providing you with the results of your own survey, their report also provides data that allows your committee to compare your strengths with those of similar-sized churches. (www.uscongregations.org)

Other survey instruments offer full service demographic information that is particularly focused on faith-based communities. Context is another demographic organization (www.perceptgroup.com), and the internet will reveal many other possibilities. If you are considering a contract with a congregational research organization, be certain to consult with your Conference/Association staff person; she/he will be aware of the survey instruments that other search committees have found helpful.

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Members of your Search Committee may also wish to explore recent research reports and informative articles about congregations. “*What Do Lay People Want in Pastors?*” is a helpful research report by Dr. Adair T. Lummis; the project includes a valuable section on “*The Plight of Small Churches*.” available for downloading at no cost. (<https://faithandleadership.com/programs/spe/resources/ppr/pastorsearch.pdf>). The Alban Institute produces a wide variety of resources for congregations, and their weekly newsletter is available free of charge. (www.alban.org) There are numerous other websites that UCC congregations have found helpful, including (but not limited to) www.centerforcongregations.org and www.congregationalresources.org.