

BEYOND CATEGORICAL THINKING WORKSHOP

First Unitarian Church hosted a **Beyond Categorical Thinking** workshop facilitated by Rev. Keith Kron from the UUA Transitions Office.

The workshop drew **72** participants. During the workshop, participants examined potential concerns related to calling a minister who identifies as a person of color; as a person with a disability; as bisexual, gay, lesbian, and/or transgender; or as a person within other identifiable categories such as gender, age, size/weight, socioeconomic class, etc.

Here's what the **BCT WORKSHOP** unveiled . . .

RACIAL/ETHNIC Identity

Over half of participants indicated they have no personal concerns and are not aware of any congregational concerns related to calling a minister who identifies as a person of color. Participants noted they might prefer a minister of color in the hope of that action would attract a more racially and ethnically diverse population to the church and would improve connections with minority populations in our community.



Of the concerns noted by other participants, two themes predominated. The first related to challenges a minister of color might experience: the minister's possible discomfort serving an overwhelmingly white congregation in an overwhelmingly white community; uncertainty about the congregation's readiness to fully embrace a minister of color; and the minister's ability to communicate effectively with the congregation because of language barriers or differences in pronunciation or articulation. Secondarily, some expressed uncertainty about the community's perception of the church if it were led by a minister of color.

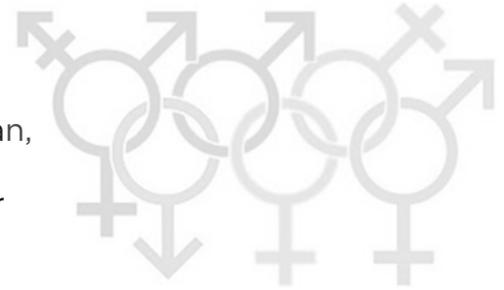
DISABILITY Identity

One-fifth of participants indicated they have no personal concerns and are not aware of any congregational concerns related to calling a minister who identifies as a person with a disability. By far, participants' greatest concern related to building accessibility. Participants also noted concerns about calling a minister with a mental, emotional, or cognitive disability and that minister's ability to be fully present for the congregation and to fulfill all requirements of the role.



SEXUAL ORIENTATION/GENDER Identity

Over two-thirds of participants indicated they have no personal concerns and are not aware of any congregational concerns related to calling a minister who identifies as bisexual, gay, lesbian, and/or transgender. Many participants wrote they might prefer such a minister in hopes that a bisexual/gay/lesbian/transgender minister would attract a more diverse population to the church and would improve connections with sexual orientation minority populations in the community.



Of the concerns noted by other participants, the most frequently mentioned concerns included uncertainty about the congregation's readiness to accept a bisexual/gay/lesbian/transgender minister, and/or whether the minister would devote sermons and social justice activities only to matters related to sexual orientation. A few individuals expressed concerns about the community's perception of the church if it were led by such a minister.



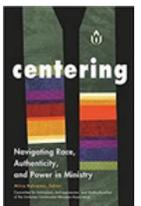
OTHER Identities

Participants were also asked to note any concerns related to other identities. Here's a list of some of the identities with which participants had concerns: weight (overweight), age (both young and old), religious background (Christian and Muslim), political affiliation (Republican), and socioeconomic class (working class).

Here are a few **RESOURCES** to explore . . .

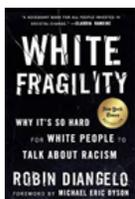
CENTERING

A joint project of the Committee for Antiracism, Anti-oppression, and Multiculturalism of the UUMA and Skinner House Books, *Centering* is the first book to center on the stories, analysis, and insight of UUs of color offering their religious leadership.



WHITE FRAGILITY

"White fragility" refers to the defensive moves that white people make in the face of racial diversity. This book unpacks white fragility and addresses these fundamental questions: *How does white fragility develop? What does it look like? How is it triggered? What can we do to move beyond white fragility and engage more constructively?*



DEAR WHITE CHRISTIAN

After a trusted white friend told Aaron Layton in response to Ferguson: *Here is the deal: we don't understand it; we don't know what to say; and we don't know what to do*, he was propelled into action to deepen the understanding of his white friends. The lessons he learned are the foundation of this book — a letter to the white Christians he dearly loves, as well as those he hopes to one day meet.

