



Ministry Information Packet

Name of ministry: Unity Church in Albany

Address: 21 King Avenue, Albany NY 12206

Ministry website: www.unitychurchinalbany.org

Description

Unity Church in Albany is a welcoming, dynamic and inclusive community of spiritually hungry learners from a wide-range of backgrounds. We are a praying community that seeks to deepen our spiritual consciousness through Unity principles, Eastern and other spiritual traditions, and a dedication to a path of Oneness and Wholeness. We sing and play music with joyful abandon. Located in NY State's Capital, we are a 4-season community nestled between the Adirondacks, Catskills and Berkshires, with easy access to NY City, Boston and Montreal.

We seek a spiritual leader who walks their own spiritual path with gusto, openly sharing it with us. Our new minister will deliver thoughtful and provocative messages, lead with an open heart, and be committed to growing a youth ministry. Sense of humor required.

He/she is a team player – creative, resourceful, a good listener, a wise and mature soul, compassionate, a good communicator with a balance of strength and serenity. He/she also has strong leadership and administrative skills -- a vision of what is possible and the ability to execute and implement.

Ministry's description:

Unity in Albany is located in the city of Albany, NY, the capital of New York State. Albany is located on the Hudson River and is within driving distance of New York City and the Adirondack Mountains. We are also located near the Omega Institute, Kripalu Institute and other major retreat centers. Additionally, Albany is the home of several colleges, universities, large parks, and the arts. The Capital District and its surrounding region has a vibrant cultural life, including Tanglewood, Saratoga Performing Arts Center, repertory theatres, art and history museums and music venues, as well as a diverse selection of restaurants. Unity draws congregants from all over the Capital District, which includes Albany, Troy and Schenectady. We have a climate with 4 seasons, which lends the opportunity for varied outdoor activities in each season. There is a wide and varied health care system, including teaching hospitals and alternative health care providers.

Unity in Albany is a dynamic, prosperous and thriving, spirit-led church community. We are committed to maintaining an open and welcoming environment where members, non-members and

visitors can study, practice and grow in an atmosphere of love, prayer and mutual support. Our focus is on growing deeper in spirit, opening our hearts and moving inward while reaching outward. Our music program is central to our way of worship and celebration. Our ideal minister will be a dedicated spiritual learner as well as teacher, actively working to deepen and expand his or her own spiritual life. He/she will also be a team player, with strong leadership and administrative skills.

It is very important that our music, youth, special events and programs be supported and expanded. We are a spiritually inclusive church, placing great value on diversity. In addition to traditional and recent Unity teachings our ideal minister will also have an appreciation for the transcendental and Eastern teachings that influenced Unity's early development, and for contemporary spiritual teachings such as those of Eckhart Tolle, A Course in Miracles, and A Course of Love.

Our new minister's focus will be to:

- Offer inspired, insightful Sunday messages that resonate.
- Teach, speak, practice and model spiritual principles in general, and through the provision of stimulating and engaging classes and/or workshops on a regular basis.
- Have a good sense of humor, a loving, compassionate and inclusive approach to all congregants.
- Bring a clear, aligned vision of leadership that is complementary to this body and enables us to continue to grow and thrive.
- Bring a strong administrative, operational and team building skill set.
- Bring empathy and good listening skills to congregants and staff.

Unity Albany's Focused Priorities for Growth: Expanding diversity; community outreach and involvement; strong financial stewardship through helping to maintain and expand the current financial infrastructure.

Locality: Area Served: Upstate New York's Capital Region

Characteristics: We are a regional church located in an urban 3-city area which includes Albany (state Capital), Troy, and Schenectady; total population 900,000. Many congregants travel up to 50 minutes to attend.

Proximity to: New York City (2.5 hrs) Boston (3 hrs) Montreal (4.5 hrs)

Physical description of area: Located in beautiful upstate New York along the Hudson and Mohawk rivers, and between the Adirondack Mountains to the north, the Catskills to the south, and the Berkshires to the east.

Proximity to other Ministries: Unity ministries in NYC (2.75 hrs), Syracuse, (2.5 hrs) Greenfield MA (2 hrs) and Hartford CT (2 hrs) as well as driving distances.

What makes your ministry unique? Describe the strengths or positive qualities of your ministry. We are a dynamic, spiritually engaged community that sees the spiritual path as a 7 day/week path instead of a 1 day/week path. We are upbeat and fun to be with, while possessing the ability to go deeply into Spirit. Our music ministry is a key component of our spiritual path. We are a learning community, with workshops and study groups happening year-round.

Did your ministry participate in transitional ministry activities relating to the current opening?

Yes

If yes, please list date, activities and the facilitator:

Yes, from March 2020 to present. Our transitional minister is Steve Colladay. Transitional activities include: HOPCOF (Honoring Our Past, Creating Our Future) process, implementation of a transition survey, updating of Vision, Mission, Core Values. Successful conversion to a completely online Sunday service, with weekly meetings, study groups, grief and loss group, ongoing prayer chaplain outreach project and the Thursday prayer hour during the pandemic.

People: Size of mailing list: 400 approx.

Average Sunday attendance: 40-50 online during live service, with 150 additional views in the following week; Pre-pandemic Live Attendance: 112

Formal Membership: 110

Special group if any (ex: YOU, NGU, Youth & Family, women's group, support groups, etc): Beloved community healing racism group; Earthcare group; Prayer Chaplain group; Prayer Team; Butterworth Book Study group.

Unity Licensed teachers: None at this time.

Other: Dennis Ryan is our ministry's carrier of Unity wisdom and history.

<u>Meetings & Classes</u>	<u>When</u>	<u>Attendance</u>	<u>Teacher</u>
Sunday Service	11 AM	40-50 live online	minister
Sunday School	N/A due to Covid	-	-
Classes/Book Study	Mon, 7 PM	8-12	Rotating Leaders
Small Group Ministries	Many (ie, Spirit Groups)	6-8	Community Leaders

Do you participate in any of the following activities?

Community Outreach (Compassionate Social Action)? Yes

Publications? Email newsletter

Social Media (ex: Facebook, Twitter, live streaming, etc.)? Yes. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Live Streaming via YouTube

Other (please list)? Zoom: classes, support groups, prayer groups, book groups, and fellowship

Articles of Incorporation: Date: 1984

Bylaws Adopted when? 2002, updated 2019

Structured as recommended by Unity Worldwide Ministries? Yes

Full Status Member Ministry: Yes

Ministry Vision

Has the ministry developed Vision, Mission, and core values? Yes

Date: Updated 2020

Has the ministry developed short-term and long-term goals? Yes, short and long term goals

What is the focus of these goals? We have ongoing goals that came out of the HOPCOF transition process. They are focused on communication, programming, membership and attendance, education, sacred service, and spiritual social action, including a focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion. Please see attached document for more details.

What have been the three most important events in the history of your ministry? (Include dates]

- March 17, 1996 - First Sunday service in our newly purchased Church building. The mortgage was retired in 2005.
- 2013 - Added 6:00 PM Multi-Faith Music and Meditation Sunday Service. The Music Director was promoted to full-time Assistant Minister.
- 2020 - Our congregation committed to multiple workshops known as “Honoring Our Past, Creating Our Future” (HOPCOF). We reviewed the accomplishments of past Senior Ministers and gained a clear sense of what we want to achieve under the guidance of our next Senior Minister. The UnityAlbany vision, mission and core values were renewed at this time; all while meeting digitally rather than in person.

In the last 3 years, what activities/special events in the ministry were well attended /appreciated?

1. Activities that fostered connection, community, and fellowship: Pre and post service fellowship hour for food and conversation, picnic and social gatherings including outdoor church services in the park, shared Passover Seder, Thanksgiving, and Christmas dinners, and several weekly Zoom conversation opportunities.
2. Activities that fostered outreach: Adopt-a-family; affiliation with FOCUS (an area-wide community service organization comprised of 7-8 local churches that provides food security and advocacy services to needy populations); participation in the local PRIDE parade; Unity Albany spiritual social action groups that work to break down racial barriers and build interpersonal harmony and understanding; Zoom and Youtube broadcast of the Sunday service.
3. Activities that build and sustain spiritual life: End-of-year Burning Bowl service and the New Year White Stone service, annual church retreat, classes and book study groups, an active chaplaincy program and prosperity classes.

What does the congregation want to accomplish in the next 3 years?

1. Develop and sustain a vibrant youth ed program through expanded membership to include young families and more racial/cultural diversity.
2. Deepen spiritual practice through: meditation, spiritual study, book groups, prosperity consciousness courses, workshops, etc.
3. Increase outreach to our neighborhood and wider community in which our vision and mission are realized.
4. Continue AV/tech upgrades to increase accessibility to worship and fellowship, along with continued nurturing of the upgrade to our physical building.
5. The Board of Trustees at Unity in Albany just adopted the Agree and Disagree in Love policy, to be edited to fit our needs and to be used as a Board. We will present it to the congregation in the near future.

Incoming Minister

Vacancy needs filled by what date: ASAP Status: Full-time

Proposed salary: \$52,500-\$67,500

Proposed additional arrangements, benefits, insurance, manse, etc.: Negotiable

Manse allowance included in Salary, individual health insurance, national and regional conferences, paid vacation, support for Personal studies.

Moving expenses paid by ministry? Negotiable

Describe housing, school standards, etc.: Housing costs are average for urban areas, several excellent school districts, many colleges and universities.

This information was collected from:

_____	The board of trustees only
_____	The board of trustees and the search team
_____	The board of trustees and congregation
<u> X </u>	The board of trustees, congregation, and search team

Other comments: _____

UNITY CHURCH DURING COVID

Unity Church in Albany is a spiritual community where fellowship and connection are vital parts of its ministry. Following the instituted COVID-19 safety protocol presents challenges that this community continues to successfully meet, as we maintain a vital sense of community during this pandemic. To hold onto that connectivity during these times, Unity Albany established several ongoing opportunities for congregants to safely continue to worship together, gather for fellowship and share spiritual life:

- Sunday services are live streamed from the sanctuary. The sanctuary was reconfigured to ensure social distancing for the minister, music team, platform assistant, and audio/video/IT technician while the building has remained closed for any attendees.
- Following the live streamed Sunday service, a Zoom fellowship hour is open for all to virtually gather and share.
- A mid-week heart-to-heart Zoom conversation hour was initiated as an opportunity to gather virtually and share.
- A weekly Zoom prayer meeting is held by the chaplains to hear prayer, offer prayer, and to support the prayer life of the church. The chaplains also reached out via telephone to connect with those folks who did not have computer connection.
- Several Wednesday evening teachings and book studies are ongoing, offered via Zoom for congregants to learn and grow their Unity faith.
- Book studies are also continuing around the week in small group settings via Zoom on most days of the week.
- On several occasions when the weather has cooperated, the Unity community has gathered outside in public settings, masked and following social distancing, to be together to enjoy each other and our shared faith. This has included outside church services and community picnics.

The Unity community remains alive, well, and active during these times of COVID and will return post-COVID with great promise and an expanded spiritual life.

Goals from HOPCOF (Honoring Our Past, Creating Our Future) Process:

Board and staff effectiveness and communication action plans:

1. (Board) Consider “Agreeing & Disagreeing in Love” policy
2. Continue to conduct regular interactive town hall meetings and Q & A (ongoing)
3. Conduct “I of the Storm” classes on a regular basis; consider making participation in this or other class(es) a requirement for membership
4. Review and update leadership development program for the Board, Staff and Congregation to increase consistency
5. Develop clear policies and procedures

- Finish the Safety Policy and disseminate to the congregation
- Develop/update job descriptions for all staff positions
- Develop a performance/feedback system for Board, Minister, Staff and Congregation to be implemented on a regular basis

Sunday service programming:

1. Provide more opportunities for participation in Sunday service (Platform Assistant, guest speakers)
2. Provide more opportunities for choir participation

Membership/Attendance:

1. Develop new programs to increase attendance and attract more members
2. Increase Sunday service and other programs attendance
3. Create programs to encourage diversity
4. Rebuild the youth program
5. Provide activities to attract youth in the community
6. Connect with regional youth coordinator for ideas of how to build remote youth program
7. Increase UCIA's visibility through social media, tabling at events (e.g. Pride Festival), etc
8. Encourage members/congregants to add information to Servant Keeper; provide training
9. Develop "Church buddy" ("Unity buddy"?) program for new congregants, new member

Education/Small group ministries:

1. Consider making participating in "I of the Storm" class a requirement for membership
2. Plan an organized, ongoing, annual schedule/rotation of classes and retreats; semi-annual membership classes
3. Conduct annual Spirit Groups (small group ministries program)

Sacred service/volunteerism:

1. Implement Sacred Service (volunteer) program
2. Reinvigorate the Social Committee and strengthen relationships with neighbors

Spiritual social action:

1. Develop/reinvigorate a Spiritual Social Action committee (e.g. Black Lives Matter)
2. Revamp/rename 5/5 group (Beloved Community)
3. Recruit volunteers for social action and diversity, equity and inclusion committees
4. Invite black and indigenous persons of color: Speakers/musicians/soloists