

Note: This summary from Interim Minister Rev. Hurt about the Search Process that was accompanied by a longer conversation with the Board and ET before she left.

WHAT HAPPENED: Notes on a Systemic Failure

Rev. Kathy Hurt

Preliminary

- Decision to do a single year added to the stresses already present
- Congregation was just beginning to emerge from church being closed for 18 months

Candidates

- Low number in ministerial pool – fewer applicants to choose from
- Shifting ministerial expectations (large congregations less appealing)
- Perception of Unity as an “outlier” (because of a single year interim)
- Hannah as “unexpected choice”

Ministerial Search Team

- Insufficient prep time and lack of understanding of search rules
- Work launched as congregation returned to church
- Discernment difficulties
- Rob’s news
- Fracturing with candidate choice
- Continued work through fracturing, communication gaps
- Unawareness/unwillingness to halt despite rising difficulties
- Betrayal and covenant
- Competing narratives

Congregation

- Pandemic grief and the need for familiarity
- Anxiety of transition
- Search team selection within previous ministry/grief at losing beloved ministers
- Rob’s news and deepening grief/grief dynamics and capacity for change
- Limited understanding of the senior minister job/challenges of re-imagining from co-ministers/spouses to single minister

Process

- Search teams and ministers in search sign a covenant agreeing to follow rules of search
- Shared leadership expectations vs. search boundaries
- Historic suspicion of the UUA and “exceptionalism”
- Insufficient preparation before starting the search of how it would work
- Contradiction in messages: “trust the MST” vs. “do your own discernment”
- Trust and total agreement
- Competing narratives: disrespect/respect, failure/good work, right decision/wrong decision