

The Rev. Dr. Barbara Coeyman

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Experience & Preparation

Preliminary Fellowship: 2002

Full Fellowship: 2007

Ordination: 2005

Seminary: M. Div. Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Austin, TX 2001

Congregational Ministries Served:

2020- Now	Interim Minister	UU Church of Muncie	Muncie, IN
2016- 2020	Developmental Minister	UU Church of Lancaster PA	Lancaster, PA
2013- 2016	Interim Minister	UU Church in Reston	Reston, VA
2012- 2013	Interim Minister	UUs of the Cumberland Valley	Boiling Springs, PA
2008- 2010	Consulting Minister	Columbine Unitarian Universalist Church	Littleton, CO
2007- 2008	Interim Minister	UU Fellowship at Stony Brook	East Setauket, NY
2006- 2007	Interim Minister	First Parish Church Unitarian- Universalist	Bridgewater, MA
2005- 2006	Interim Assist. Minister	South Church	Portsmouth, NH

Other Ministries and Work Experience:

2017- Now	Facilitator	Center for Courage and Renewal	National / online www.couragereneal.org
2004- 2005	Chaplain	Planned Parenthood of Austin	Austin, Texas

Other Education:

- Credentialed Facilitator, Center for Courage and Renewal, 2017.
- Master of Public Management, Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh, PA, 1995
- Ph.D. in Musicology, City University of New York, 1987.
- M.A. in Musicology, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA, 1977.
- B.S. in Music Education, Susquehanna University.

Other noteworthy work experience outside of UU ministry:

- Facilitator for "Circles of Trust" workshops, for clergy and laity; participant in facilitator cohorts, 2010 to present.

- Musician and Musicologist:

- Associate Professor West Virginia University. Division of Music, 1985-1996: music history, women's studies, early music performance

- Performer in and director/teacher/coach of many early music ensembles: Philadelphia, New York City, Austin, Pittsburgh: 1980-2000.

- Varied experience as piano accompanist for choirs and other ensembles: college, graduate school, etc: Philadelphia, New York City.

- Higher education administration: West Virginia University, 1993-1996; Master of Public Management study at Carnegie Mellon University

Denominational and Community Activities:

- Denominational:

- UU Ministers Association: membership since 2000; various volunteering at chapter and national meetings, in-person and online, to include participation and workshop leadership in the Southwest UU Conference, and the chapters Pacific Northwest, New Hampshire/Vermont, Ballou-Channing, Mountain Desert, Joseph Priestley, P-K, Chesapeake, Heartland, and Transition Ministers.

- Facilitator of Circles of Trust retreat series for national UUMA, 2022.

- UUMA Berry Street Essay Committee, 2014-17

- UUMA Guidelines Revisions, brief service on editing team 2019

- Mentorship of UU ministers in formation: with UUMA Ministerial Formation Network, Lancaster Seminary, other retreats

- Facilitator for Southern Region summer conference at The Point, on Circles of Trust, 2019

- Service as volunteer musician (keyboard, viols, vocal) in wide range of UUA and UUMA events

- UU History and Studies activities:

- UU Studies Network: Interim Board, 2020 to present

- UU History and Heritage Society (formerly included UU History Society and UU Women's Heritage Society): Board, 2005-2019.

- UU Collegium (study group for UU scholars): attendance, paper presentations, leadership teams, 2000-2019

- UU History and Heritage Convocation: coordinator and planning team, 2010, 2013; 2022; papers presented 2010, 2013, 2019

- Wesley Seminary, Washington, DC: visiting professor of UU History and Polity, 2015, 2018.

- Writing biography of first ordained Universalist Woman: Lydia Ann Jenkins (1824-1874): New York Woman's Rights Reformers, Doctor, Universalist Minister, under contract with publisher.

Wider Community Service:

- Interfaith groups and activities: in most cities where I've served interim ministry: Portsmouth, Stony Brook, Salt Lake City, Reston, Carlisle, Lancaster, Austin

- Advocacy in most cities of interim ministries: such as "Lancaster Stands Up," public witness at DC Supreme Court and Texas State Capitol for reproductive rights justice
- Outdoor activities and physical fitness: community groups such as Lancaster Hiking Club, Sierra Club
- Social Dancing volunteering: in most areas of country where I've served ministry: in particular, Philadelphia, Washington DC, Boston, Amherst MA, Denver, Portland OR; Austin; active in English Country Dance, contradance, Scottish dance
- Re-building connections with Lancaster Theological Seminary during developmental ministry 2016-2020
- Mentoring for congregation of Muncie Afghan Refugee Resettlement Committee: "MARRC," Muncie, IN 2021.

Background

Give a story that embodies your ministry:

As a Facilitator with the Center for Courage and Renewal, I lead a spiritual practice called Circles of Trust (COT). COT retreats embody the many facets of who I am as a minister: pastor, facilitator, preacher, teacher. Based on ideas from Quaker writer Parker Palmer, this program of spiritual deepening is grounded on a call to live into our authentic selves, into the self born in each of us, practiced within the safe spaces and covenants of trust which this work creates. When I facilitate COT, all parts of me which originally responded to my call to UU ministry have a chance to emerge: I share myself as leader, teacher, manager and organizer, spiritual guide, sometimes musician, sometimes very amateur artist. In this practice all parts of me are present, free to trust the expression of my authentic self. Most important, the COT method makes room for my heart and emotion --- my gentle self --- to be fully present. Another quality which embodies my ministry realized through COT is the building of networks of people who share common values, in atmospheres of trust and safety. It is remarkable how quickly this method builds common ground among participants. Courage and Renewal work also is deeply connected to the environment, an important source of spiritual inspiration and renewal for me.

A description of planning a COT illustrates the various embodied aspects of ministry which I value. A retreat requires much advance planning --- Courage leaders call it the "work before the work." I invest many hours in reading, planning the schedule, preparing materials, thinking through room set-up for in-person and tech need for online retreats, the methods I will use to explain this method to participants, and more. Examples of themes for retreats include spiritual topics such as "paradox" or "community." Grounded in trust, it is gratifying to see how open participants are to deep exploration of what might be tough topics, which they pursue in small-group conversations carefully guided by a process called Open and Honest Questions. Any COT closes with expressions of appreciation among participants. I welcome everyone to COT session: each person moves forward in this work at their own pace.

This is what embodied ministry means to me: the privilege of interacting with others as we all deepen the experience of being alive on this journey called life.

Why are you seeking ministry now?

I respond to this question by explaining why am I seeking a TRANSITIONING ministry now? I seek a new interim appointment because my current position will end in August 2022 and I need the practical benefits of full-time employment. More important, I seek another interim ministry because I have skills and experiences for this important work which I know I can bring to a congregation after the departure of their previous minister. I own this credentialing as a UU Accredited Interim Minister.

To date I have served seven transitioning ministries and one contract ministry. I love transitioning work for its capacity to realize real change in congregations as they change professional leadership. I have professional training as an interim specialist. I know myself, my skills, my capacity for transitioning ministry, and I also know the challenges of this work, especially in congregations which have experienced trauma and disruption in past ministries. Transitioning ministry also suits my nature. I tend to see ministry --- and perhaps life --- through systemic organization: often congregation in transition need the newcomer's eye to discern new methods of organization they do well to consider. Interim ministry calls on my primary professional identity, that of minister of teacher: helping congregants grow together in loving, compassionate, authentic relationships and covenants is rewarding for me.

What ministry do you hope is ahead for you?

I hope for an interim congregation committed to doing the work of intentional transitioning. That is, a congregation which understands that, regardless of the circumstances of the departure of the previous minister, successful transitioning takes time, participation from the entire congregation, and an intentional mindset of change and considering new ways of being together as religious communities. I hope for a congregation which respects the professional authority of the clergy to spearhead this transitioning process, and a congregation eager to work with clergy in shared ministry.

My transitioning ministries to date have addressed a wide range of congregational settings and goals. For some, my role has been primarily administrative, that is, "head" focused. For others, transitioning time has focused on pastoral care and spiritual development: the "heart" of ministry. In some, mentoring congregants in best practices in worship has been the goal. I have learned much during the transitioning ministries I have served to date and will bring those experiences to my next position. In particular, for the past nine years I have served congregations which clearly exhibit "afterpastor" culture, which develops on the heels of misconduct by clergy, other professional staff, congregants, or a combination. Support from the UUA has afforded me several opportunities for training and mentoring in how to help congregations move past habits created by violation of boundaries. Whatever the context of my next transitioning ministry, I look forward to a relationship with a congregation filled with positive, life-giving, creative relationships.

I am flexible as to location of my next ministry. I have served in many sections of the country and am comfortable in settings from large cities to small communities. I do appreciate ministry in locations with access to colleges and universities and perhaps to a seminary. I am open to serving a range of theological orientations. I do hope for a congregation which understands the importance of a minister's on-going professional development, now a requirement of the UU Minister's Association. I also hope for a ministry which is expansive enough to provide opportunities for spiritual development and renewal, which I experience through outdoor activities such as hiking, music and dance, and attending "Circles of Trust."

Describe your call to ministry. What life events have led you to this moment?

I understand a "call" as something that I cannot "not" do, something core to my being that I must respond to. My call to ministry is grounded in my life-long persona of "teacher," a role which overlaps with ministry in many ways. For me, ministry first and foremost is grounded in relationships. My hopes for relationships in congregations I serve is to be a partner, guide and support as congregants explore experiences and activities which constitute the religious life. I am clear about how my call to help make life better for others originates in part from my own experiences early in my own life when I lacked guidance and direction from my family of origin in some areas of social development. To fill some of those gaps, I found focus from many of my teachers and through my devotion to schoolwork, as well as from dedicated involvement in music through during my entire public school years, leading to major in music in college. Fortunately, my family were also people of faith: I was conditioned to regular church attendance from an early age. Still, I have experienced how life can be derailed in the face of insufficient family guidance and know the importance of nurturing inner wisdom and strength in myself and in others. I hope my ministerial leadership nurtures and inspires the individuals I serve in their own spiritual searching and growth. Some specific life events which directly influenced my call to ministry and the actual steps I took to become a minister included:

- Finding ways of overcoming family of origin habits, patterns, and dynamics which interfered with my living a productive life
- Realizing early in life that I had a gift for being an effective teacher, in actual jobs identified as teacher as well as in my overall relationships with others
- Experiencing stress with a less-than-compatible marriage partner and the effects of that relationship on family life
- Hearing a call to preach when I was a lay leader in Pittsburgh and Austin, but not taking steps to pursue ministry until several doors in my former career as a professor of music closed because I gave up a position as a tenured professor to support my former partner and children on our relocation from the Northeast to Texas
- Adding "Circles of Trust" credentialing and practice to my ministry toolkit, which has expanded my own personal spiritual practice and also broadened the spiritual mentoring I bring to congregations by facilitating workshops and retreats

Ministerial Roles & Functions

Share your ministerial presence and leadership style:

My ministerial presence is usually defined by having a clear eye on "big-picture" organization and functioning of a congregation, in order to assess recommendations for change and growth during a transitioning ministry. I have a good memory for individuals in any given congregational system and a sense of how to best advise their roles and contributions within that system. I feel satisfaction when my ministry helps congregations find better ways of fitting together various pieces of congregational life to create a more unified, connected, well-functioning whole. My extrovert self is fed by direct in-person interactions with others in a congregation. In these two years of ministry during pandemic, I have sorely missed embodied contact with the members of my current congregation, even as I have grown tremendously in methods and approaches for online ministry.

No matter the size of a congregation, my leadership style is collaborative and relational. I emphasize shared ministry and see my ministerial role as helping others do their jobs well, for the good of the congregation, as well as for the personal deepening of each congregant. Central to my leadership is the quality of trust to speak our truths in love, transparency, and grace with one another. I welcome and encourage shared leadership to the extent possible, the particulars defined by the size of a congregation and the responsibilities of the clergy in any particular setting. I hope that a congregation understands that professional leaders work WITH with a congregation, not FOR a congregation.

Lay leaders probably hear me promote "intentionality" and "trust" more than any other leadership qualities. That is, church life happens not casually but through thoughtful commitment and purpose, in settings in which trust of one another is paramount. These qualities are especially important during transitional periods, when a congregation is experiencing a fair amount of change. Intentionality also matters in worship preparation, financial planning, membership development, and strategic planning for growth. "Circles of Trust" helps build trusting relationships, so to expand intentional habits of open and honest communication among congregants and between congregants and staff.

I am aware that my dominant left-brain, managerial style may override my softer qualities, especially when I am in congregational settings requiring a great deal of coordinating and overseeing or in settings which require restoration of trust, as in congregations recovering from conflict. I am aware of the importance of

intentionally demonstrating my softer sides. I hope that my next transitioning position will be a setting in which my head-oriented managerial persona and experiences are less required so that there is sufficient time and space for activities of the heart. In challenging settings, such as afterpastor congregations, my modeling heart and warmth for the congregation is especially important.

How do you function with church staff? What are your thoughts on staff relations and supervision?

In keeping with ministerial persona as "teacher," as well as my preference for shared leadership, I see my role with church staff as mentor and guide, working together in service to a congregation even as I have responsibility for supervision of staff. In most congregations the minister represents two different relationships with staff: in co-equal leadership roles, as well as supervisor of staff "operations." I realize there can be a tension between these two functions, especially when situations of staff discipline arise. I believe I interact with my staff colleagues in an effective and professional balance of being both a collaborative partner with them and supervisor of them. I aim to honor the humanity of each staff member while also building effective work habits to get the job done.

I encourage staff to work as a team, so to have each other's back and to be in covenant together. I strongly insist on regular staff meetings to build connections: ideally once a week, depending on the size of staff and scope of their positions. Each staff meeting includes a check-in and chalice-lighting, so to encourage staff to take these best practices into their own programs with congregants. Depending on the transitioning needs of the interim setting, I usually encourage staff to be risk-takers, to think outside the box to expand their visions for their programs. I also endorse social time with staff, so to connect outside of workplace habits in gatherings which also include family members. That is, I want staff to know one another as whole people, not only as professional roles at church. Except in unusual circumstances, I do not advise that members serve on staff, even if bylaws allow it.

My supervision includes a process of regular staff assessment, which transitioning ministers often need to introduce or refine in congregations which have had irregular or less professional supervision habits. I usually advise a three-part assessment method in any given church year: to include goal-setting at the beginning of the year, mid-year progress reports, and end-of-the-church-year

evaluations and recommendations for pay increases if available. The goal of assessment is best realized when the process results in staff members living more fully into their professional roles in service to the congregation.

A word about music staff: I strive to build trusting relationships with professional musicians where I serve. Having been in the field of music before ministry as a professor of music history, I can demonstrate first-hand awareness of both challenges and joys in leading music programs. I hope music staff in my congregations accept my contributions of music performance from time to time. Together, ministry of the word and ministry of music serve the greater good of any congregation.

Regarding shared ministry what do you see as your work as minister? What do you see doing in partnership with the congregation? What do you see as the work of the congregation?

In my view my most important responsibility as minister --- in any type of ministry -- is to explain, model, and promote shared ministry. For me, shared ministry has been one of the most important habits Unitarian Universalists have developed in the past decades. I admit surprise when I experience individuals and congregations as a whole not familiar with the concept of shared ministry, or resistant to practicing shared ministry. Shared ministry seems innate UU's governance method of congregational polity. While shared ministry is a way of life, a style of being together, its actual implementation depends on the size of a congregation and its governance structure

More specifically, a culture of shared ministry, I understand the minister's primary roles to be as 1) coordinator and leader of worship, to be the ultimate responsibility for the primary focus of the week in most congregations; 2) staff supervision; and 3) oversight of pastoral care. If I lead effectively in shared ministry, I nurture important partnership in each of these areas in which I have the primary responsibility.

In my current interim congregation, I enjoy informative and supportive partnership with lay worship leaders. While I am ultimate responsibility for planning the worship schedule, the mode of worship, and production of printed materials, the presentation of worship is clearly a shared ministry between me and worship associates I help to mentor. I also regard collaboration with staff as a shared ministry, even as I take the lead on developing policy and procedure for staffing matters, including assessment and supervision. I know the benefits of

collaborative and mutually respected partnership with staff. I know the benefits of adult education programs to support transitioning ministry and really need partnership with staff and adult education committees to help me present programs and classes for the congregation. While pastoral care is also ultimately the minister's responsibility, in my current interim I am less involved because pastoral care is under the supervision of the congregation's community minister, who oversees a group of lay pastoral associates, parallel to my oversight of worship associates. Finally, shared ministry in governance is also vital to effective transitioning. In my current interim, I enjoy one of the most trusting and productive partnerships with the Board I have known in ministry. Having clarified the distinction between Governance and Ministry (Hotchkiss), we have clear understanding of our respective responsibilities and when we need to be in partnership, especially this past year as we together defined covid protocol.

Again, size of a congregation often influences assignment of leadership responsibilities. Generally, in interim positions, I leave leadership of social justice to congregants, not because of disinterest on my part, instead from lack of time for hands-on involvement. In the past several congregations I've served, skilled lay leadership in financial areas has meant that I am mostly hands-off. It is also the work of the congregation to plan social events such as dinners and fundraisers, as well as the organization and operations of committees. Of course, in any areas which are the congregation's responsibility, I am available for mentoring, consulting, and more direct involvement as needed.

What role would you see yourself playing in the larger community?

I interpret this question to mean the civic community in which the congregation is located. As a transitioning minister, invariably I am less engaged in the community outside the congregation than I would be if I were in a settled ministry. This is in part because most of the focus of transitioning work is internal to the running of the congregation. Also, because I am a transitioning minister willing and able to move for my next ministry, generally I become less attached to the surrounding community because of my relatively short time in any given location. I am always available to represent and serve as spokesperson for the congregation in community events.

Even as my focus is inward rather than outward during transitioning periods, I encourage congregants to connect with community activities to the extent their personal lives allow. Going into the community, particularly for justice-making,

offers both outer and inner benefits: going out, we always come back in with new perspective, a little or a lot changed. Engagement in the community also increases the visibility of the congregation and growth of membership. Admittedly outward engagement during this time of pandemic has been more challenging. Still in my current ministry the congregation has collaborated with a community organization in support of Afghan refugees, by contributing financial support, food, and help with housing. Even though even though my congregation did not participate, I personally volunteered for our UU the Vote program for the 2020 presidential election.

One community role which I try to attend faithfully in any transitioning assignment is interfaith activities. The wider community benefits from UU input and I always grow in my ministry to UUs by engaging with colleagues from other faith traditions. In any location, I also attempt to connect with any reproductive justice groups or projects such as Planned Parenthood. Support for reproductive rights is especially critical as the country anticipates the overturn of "Roe."

How have you seen change happen in a congregation or community? What role would you see yourself playing in congregational change?

Change is central to the work of a transitioning minister. It is my role and responsibility to lead conversations about change, with several goals in mind: 1) to diagnose the state of the congregation on the departure of the previous minister; 2) to proposed ideas and conversations for the congregation to consider, especially with an intention of moving toward their next settled ministry; 3) to mentor methods and processes for implementing new ways of being together as a religious community; and 4) to instill in congregants responsibility for any change, to understand that it is not the role of the interim minister to do the work of change. Actual change must come from the congregation.

Especially for congregations with trauma or abuse in their history, the experience of change can produce anxiety, reactivity, and resistance, as congregants seek ways to maintain established habits and activities which they developed to protect their own safety and security. My role as transitioning minister includes providing resources to help folks through the anxiety. One way of doing this is to offer positive affirmations where appropriate and to provide activities which create new, positive ways of being together with one another.

I have an intentional method of instituting systems change, such as in worship practice. I first work with the membership most directly involved in the area of change, such as the Worship Associates, to clarify the nature of changes and my reasons for making change. I then tell the congregation many times over through various media such as weekly emails that a change will be implemented. After the change, I review the new habits or procedure. Having on board the group or committee most closely connected to the area of change, they can help address congregants' questions and concerns. I trust that my methods support changes which congregations will experience during a period of transitioning ministry.

Describe how you handle being in a conflicted situation:

I understand "conflict" to mean different views or opinions or understanding among two or more parties, with a range of consequences, from productive conversation and reparation, to disintegrating opposition and possible dissolution. Conflict is not by definition unhealthy unless it ends in negative outcomes for congregational life. Conflict has been part of the immediate history of nearly every transitioning ministry I have served. It is unfortunate that many Unitarian Universalists demur from effective habits to address conflict, perhaps because if they define conflict as negative, they may believe that they should be learned enough and wise enough to avoid the conflict in the first place. Most congregations I have served to date would benefit from having better tools for managing conflict, especially to address differences at lower levels of disagreement before they escalate and explode into intense confrontation.

Currently my approach to conflict --- whether between others or in settings in which I am one of the conflicted parties --- is based primarily on the principles of Parker Palmer's "Circles of Trust." As a first response to conflict, I encourage communication. If a congregation is connected by covenant, covenants can offer a base of safety and trust for individuals to communicate their truths openly and honestly. In conflict between congregants or between congregants and staff, I offer to serve as listening ear as parties talk to each other. Often conflict arises and deepens because we have different interpretations of the nature of the question or issue at hand. Talking together in settings in which all parties feel secure--- without "power over" one another--- can do much to work through conflict. From my "Circles of Trust" work I know the power in asking questions rather than asserting declarative conclusions as an effective method of opening people up to safe and authentic communication. "Circles of Trust" also offers instruction in the power of paradox: that two apparent opposites can both be true and not perpetuate conflict.

During transitioning ministry, conflict may arise because of changes which usually mark this ministry. Change can destabilize a system and move people into protective corners to preserve safe "status quo." Particularly in congregations with a history of trauma and abuse (afterpastor) the capacity to engage in effective conflict resolution is challenging. Habits of keeping secrets and building silos which emerge in abused systems can lead to sweeping conflict under the rug or transferring the subject of the conflict to surrogate issues rather than the true cause of conflict.

If I am a party in conflict, I call on others --- colleagues, coaches, spiritual directors --- for help in discerning the nature of the conflict and clarifying any blind spots I might have about the situation. In the same way I mentor conflict in a congregation, I invite direct conversation, often in the presence of a third party as a listening ear for perspective on misinterpretations of things I have said. My goal in participating in conflict resolution is to rebuild or build anew covenants for how to move forward effectively with the other party. I am grateful for new professional guidelines from the UUMA for ministerial covenants: as we ministers develop more compassionate habits of covenant with one another, I fully expect that they will pass on this culture to the congregations we serve.

Tell a story that deepened your understanding of what ministry is:

A few years ago a congregant's relatively quick end of life from cancer brought home to me a greater awareness of the many ways in which a minister is in relationship with any given congregant as well as with an entire congregation. During his fast decline I realized the depth of my respect and appreciation for him and his support of my ministry: he had often served as a positive counter to the many congregants who were less than supportive of transitioning ministry. I was acutely aware of how much of my own processing of grief I had to do, while also supporting the congregation in their grief. I had new realizations of the importance of our ministries to serve a congregant's final days and to help a congregation say goodbye through a memorial service.

This congregant was a long-time UU, for many years a member of the congregation, and well-experienced as a UU from membership in several other congregations. He was amazingly well read, mentored by Huston Smith, whom he loved to preach about. Through the years, he held virtually every lay leadership role. When my ministry began, he stepped up to be chair of the Committee on Ministry. He was a willing volunteer. He had my back, even if he didn't always

agree with my ideas or suggestions: he understood what it means to live together in covenant. He was a faithful worship associate and he also participated in "Circles of Trust" workshops I facilitated.

Sometime around May of the year of his passing, I noticed how he was suddenly doing "goofy" things in preparing a worship service, not at all in character with his precise engineer mind. I began to notice other personal habits which seemed off-kilter. By mid-June he had surgery for a brain tumor, which brought his death by late August. I was able to visit him twice in hospital, honored to have that time with him. On the second visit he probably wasn't aware of who I was, wasn't realizing our connections, our relationships, but I was: I was already grieving his passing. His fast decline brought home to me the importance of nurturing positive relationships between ministers and congregants. Congregants can bolster ministries, just as ministers aim to support congregants. He provided me with an important balance to other congregants who were less supportive of me or overtly anticlerical in principle.

To lead his memorial service was an honor for me: to eulogize this person about whom it was so easy to "speak well," to affirm how one individual can matter so much, in this world, in our congregation. At the same time as I grieved his passing, I also had new insight into how my grieving might help others grieve, how opening my heart could invite others to open theirs. In the months after the memorial, I helped the congregation redefine their identity as a community without the presence of this important lay leader. His passing widened my realization of how ministry for me is about my deep love for individuals we serve, at the same time in our loving, we create and hold space for others to do the same: to love each other and to grieve together. His passing underlined the dual role of ministers: to minister to others as we also minister to ourselves.

His life and death helped me realize all the more deeply the profound meaning in the words about ministry by Rev. Gordon McKeeman: "Ministry is a quality of relationship between and among human beings that beckons forth hidden possibilities. It is all these and much more than all of them, present in the wordless, the unspoken and the ineffable. It is speaking and living the highest we know and living with the knowledge that it is never as deep, or as wide, or as high as we wish. Whenever there is a meeting that summons us to our better selves, wherever our lostness is found, our fragments are united, our wounds begin healing, our spines stiffen and our muscles grow strong for the task, there is ministry."

Tell about a mistake you've made in ministry and what you've learned from it:

I don't tend to use the vocabulary of "mistake," not because I don't make mistakes; instead because I prefer to identify those times when I might have done things differently using more positive vocabulary, such as the notion of "growth opportunities," of which I have been the grateful recipient of many during my years of ministry to date. A recent "growth opportunity" about five years ago has had consequences for how I handle decision-making ever since. It has influenced my ministry and my service to my congregation. This incident did not seem like a "mistake" at the time it occurred, but since then I have realized that, should this scenario recur in another ministry, I will do things differently.

The event involved the process of selecting members for the Committee on Ministry (COM), the selection process articulated in the congregation's by-laws. In my mentoring of leadership to form this committee, I followed the "rules" --- the by-laws --- rather than trusting my gut. The by-laws state that the first four members for the committee --- two chosen by the minister and two by the Board --- shall choose the fifth and final member. A particular member indicated interest in the committee, a choice I strongly disagreed with. From the first time I met this congregant, I knew how strongly anti-clerical they were. To the end of that ministry, this person rarely demonstrated respect for professional clergy, especially in leading change during transitioning. The four identified members for the COM could not see the qualities I saw in this person, known by most of them for many years. I did not speak up because I wanted to respect the democratic process defined by the by-laws rather than imposing my authority in this congregation which had a history of distrust of ministry. This fifth person ended up on the COM and caused me no end of grief, to the extent that I stopped attending meetings and thus did not serve the rest of the congregation well in matters related to the COM. From this experience I have learned that there is a time to respect democratic process and a time for a minister to invite discussion about options when the stated "rules" are not in the best of the congregation or the minister. More broadly, this situation invited me to examine my leadership style, especially to assess when I might should offer more directional leadership to support this tough work of shifting paradigms in congregational life.

What needs do you have to strengthen your ministry and how might a congregation assist you in this?

First and foremost, in my transitioning work I need a congregation which is committed to the premises and goals of transitioning. If a congregation chooses to hire a minister from our network of UU transitioning ministers, our time together will be productive in relation to the congregation's commitment to the premises of this mode of ministry. Most directly, this ministry will involve some change, and perhaps some challenges to established paradigms of congregational life.

I hope for a congregation which respects the professional leadership I can offer. Some ideas I bring may be new concepts: I do not mean that a congregation categorically accept my changes but that, in the case of new ideas which they do not fully understand, they ask questions, they be willing to give new ideas a try, so that we may work together in shared ministry. No matter how strongly I believe in a habit or activity which is new for them, if they are not on board, my mentoring will have little effect. In the long run, a congregation may choose to NOT implement something I suggest, but I ask that they at least give my suggestions due consideration. One important understanding for any congregation is clarity about distinction between governance and ministry: that is, between the role of the Board, with decision-making authority over the running of the church building and its finances, and the minister and associated staff and programs who lead the shared ministry of faith development and spiritual growth.

I also ask that leadership in the congregation have my back. Usually elected lay leaders in governance as well as professional staff are ahead of the rest of the congregation in accepting and implementing new habits. I ask for support and backing of prominent leaders to demonstrate to the entire congregation any ideas or changes which I bring to the congregation. Again, I am not saying that congregants must follow my suggestions categorically, but even if individuals disagree with a particular initiative I bring, I hope that they stand behind my approaches and methods and speak with common voice in support of my ministry. Clearly being joined together in mutual trust is the most important ingredient to strengthen not only my ministry but also the shared ministry of the whole.

In any ministry I serve, I also need regular time --- even an hour each day --- for my own work, my own reading and writing and research, in UU history, in "Circles of Trust," and more. I usually take this hour for myself first thing in the morning. New ideas and calm grounding set a positive tone for the various challenges which come the way of a minister leading a congregation through transitioning. During that first hour of reflective reading, I often come on stimulating topics for sermons and ideas for other creative activities in the congregation.

Describe briefly your ministerial approach to the following:

- **Worship and preaching:**

Some of my responses to topics in this section of this ministerial record can vary significantly, depending on the particular transitioning setting and the size of the congregation.

Designing and presenting creative worship is one of my greatest passions in ministry. I feel a strong call to serve a congregation's worship program well. For me, worship at core a transformative experience for individuals in the congregation, as well as the single greatest communal activity in the weekly life of the community, the activity of greatest attendance. Sunday morning worship is also the gateway for visitors and newcomers to learn more about a congregation. In worship we bring into common space the wide range of theological positions in Unitarian Universalism. I am quite intentional about my methods of planning and presenting worship, to design services which are creative, energizing, thought-provoking, and spiritually deepening. I keep an eye on the rotation of worship content, to balance the pastoral and the prophetic, and the range of theological paths among UUs. I hope for a minimum of four multi-generational service a year, and also for a variety of approaches to worship style, such as offering artistic experiences from time to time to complement our more common cerebral mode of worship. I hope there is some message of multiculturalism in every service, such as use of language other than English. If my transitioning congregation uses Soul Matters, I coordinate worship planning with the monthly themes of this program.

Mentoring a congregation's worship program and coordinating the many staff and volunteers who contribute to a service is for me one of the most important parts of my ministry. Through the shift to online worship at the start of the pandemic and now in a multi-platform mode, coordination of the players in any given service has become more complicated. I have been on a fast learning curve, along with most other ministers, to learn new methods of worship presentation. Successful worship planning relies on collaborative staff to coordinate content and prepare printed materials in a professional and timely way. In my current ministry I realize the benefit of a dedicated and creative office administrator to support my worship planning.

A shared ministry program of worship also depends on well-informed lay leaders: I include a lay leader in every service, an articulation of our congregational polity. I prefer to define lay worship leaders as "associates:" that is, through my mentoring, they acquire skills sufficient to make their own

decisions about their portions of the service and to be the responsible organizer of services on Sundays when I am out of the pulpit. I see the guiding and mentoring of laity worship leaders of paramount importance. I urge worship associates to meet monthly with me, and I offer a worship workshop twice a year, in which we discuss theory and philosophy of worship, practice public speaking in the sanctuary at the microphone, discuss connections between worship and music leaders, and many more topics.

- **Pastoral Care / spiritual guidance / counseling / home and hospital visitation:**

While pastoral care is a central responsibility of a minister, my particular approach to leadership depends on the size of the congregation, support from laity, and other ministerial responsibilities. Connecting with others through pastoral care keeps me grounded in those core values which defined my call to ministry.

I take the same approach to pastoral care as to worship: I believe strongly in shared ministry, led by both minister and laity. I prefer to consider laity who work with me in the ministry of caring as "Associates," that is, individuals who can function relatively independently in all but the most acute caring situations. With skilled lay Pastoral Associates, I can focus on the most acute health situations and of course end-of-life visits and conducting of memorial services. I also support regular --- ideally monthly --- meetings of Pastoral Associates, as well as in-depth workshops and other training, which are often available in neighboring congregations and from a variety of caring institutions.

In my current congregation, I have been less directly involved in pastoral care because on staff we have an ordained community minister, whose long-time knowledge of the congregation has been particularly important during these two years of pandemic closures. Clearly, the pandemic has limited the in-person care. One activity we have not engaged in at all these past two years is in-person healing circles. Deeper listening is especially important around times of stress such as holidays and periods of intense national concerns such as elections. Our community minister has offered excellent online individual pastoral care.

- **Children's religious education:**

In both children and youth religious education, I support the professional staff who are responsible for these areas of congregational life, to be a resource, mentor, coach and supervisor. I trust that all religious education programs will be in keeping with the broader goals and purpose of the congregation. To contribute to everyone's faith development, I support a multi-generational mindset toward worship: it is important that children and youth come together with the entire community for at least some portion of each Sunday service, especially to include a "Time for All Ages." I also hope any congregation I serve can also offer full multi-generational services at least quarterly throughout the year.

It is important for children and youth to build active, personal relationships with the minister. To the extent I can as a transitioning minister, I try to meet children and youth by visiting classes and attending social functions, often a challenge when their activities are scheduled at the same time as worship. Successful faith development also requires good teachers: I encourage the highest quality from volunteer teachers and I collaborate with the religious education professional staff on an annual teacher recognition ceremony during worship.

- **Youth work:**

My comments about the minister's relationship to children also apply to the youth of a congregation. Additionally, I also encourage youth to participate in what are often thought of as adult activities such as serving as a Worship Associate and serving on the governing Board. In my current congregation the youth annually organize and lead a Sunday morning worship service, a project which I fully endorse. This service brings exposure of their activities and demonstrate their talents to the wider congregation and in turn they receive appreciation for their energy and creativity in constructing worship.

- **Adult religious education:**

While I am fairly hands-off with children and youth faith development, I engage directly in adult religious education to the extent possible. As a former university instructor, I love to teach. More important, teaching in an adult program gives me an opportunity to get to know congregants outside of my more usual role with them as minister. Through classes and workshops, I can also convey

transitioning habits and training through various "back doors," rather than through the more direct approach of transitioning forums and workshops. The closing to in-person activities during the pandemic has honed my skills in on-line teaching and workshop facilitation. In my next ministry I am available to offer adult education in-person, online, and in multi-platform if the congregation is equipped technically.

I work collaboratively with relevant staff members to offer my own classes and to mentor a lay adult education committee, if present. I hope congregations cast a wide net for subject matter addressed in adult programming. During transitioning it seems especially important to offer classes in UU identity such as UU theology and UU history. It is my experience that the more congregants understand UU identity, the more effectively they can articulate the type of ministry they seek in their next settlement. As a credentialed Facilitator with the Center for Courage and Renewal, I also regularly offer "Circles of Trust" workshops as part of adult faith development. Locating "Circles of Trust" in the adult RE program conveys the message that this practice is an important part of the congregation's growth toward new ministry. An effective adult faith development program also contributes to membership growth and retention.

Going beyond activities officially labeled as "religious education," I trust that there is ongoing learning about UU identity as well as nurturing of compassionate communications with one another in all we do together as a religious community. Religious education occurs in many contexts, including worship, social action, pastoral care, and social activities.

- **Incorporating music, the arts, and creativity into congregational life:**

Coming from a career in music before entering ministry, I know the power of the performing arts to enhance congregational life. Live performance of music, dance, and theater, exhibitions of visual arts, and more: all these art forms represent a spiritual harmony which can inspire congregants to come together in personal harmony. In worship, the arts can be as important as the spoken word, reaching congregations deeply on many levels, perhaps in ways that the spoken word never touches. Robust congregational singing adds to the spirit of worship. The arts also enhance religious education and social activities. Group activities such as concerts and dance build a congregation's internal community and also invite in the public. The arts are an important area of shared ministry.

I encourage diversity in artistic repertoire. Most congregations know the power of music, but many under-utilize other arts such as theater, liturgical dance, and visuals. Artistic diversity also means a range of repertoire within any given art form, to parallel the theological diversity that this free faith represents. In music, for example, the wide range of style in world music is certainly appropriate fare for worship in UU services.

I am available and willing to contribute music performances in any congregation I serve, in collaboration with music staff and lay music leaders. My performing in congregational activities from time to time helps congregants get to know me in roles other than that of the minister

- **Community building / facilitation skills / coffee hour and social times:**

In my view community building to happen well by supporting social connections --- such as during weekly social hour after worship, monthly fellowship dinners, online small-group gatherings, and more. I also hope that such internal community building is the responsibility of the congregation. I am available to mentor leadership in new ideas for enhancing congregants' participation and building of connections. If the core meaning of "religion" means "connected together," the social component of congregational life is no less "religious" than is the study of theology or church history. I also stress the importance of building community between congregants and professional staff. It is also important to honor staff in recognition ceremonies during worship and in scheduling some social events to which staff are invited. Strong community is vital to church growth: visitors can sense when a congregation's community connections are weak or when there is internal conflict within the community.

- **Committee / Task force work:**

My response is similar to that of community building: particularly during transitioning ministry, I see the work of committees and task forces as the work of the congregation. I also see it as my responsibility as minister to advise and mentor best practices in committee organization and participation, especially through building a leadership development program. In my current congregation, the committee chairs meet bi-monthly as a Leadership Council to nurture their own leadership and offer training tools for others who want to get involved in leadership.

- **Leadership development:**

Effective leadership from UU laity does not just happen: most people do not have opportunities in their daily lives to acquire skills in mentoring and organizing other people and activities. Invariably leadership skills need to be cultivated. I encourage laity to be intentional about the organization and leadership of their committees, the core of programming in most congregations and the most direct way most congregants engage in the life of the community.

To this, I strongly urge congregations I serve to utilize materials on leadership development offered by the UUA: hands-on workshops, online webinars, leadership courses such as Leadership 101 from the Central East Region, workshop as Regional and General Assemblies, and more. If a congregation is not already done so, I also encourage changing from the practice of a nominating committee to identify the next round of elected leadership to a Leadership Development method, which involves more long-time growth in necessary skills in leadership and governance. In the congregation I currently serve, after a year of coaching from me, the former Program Council finally changed its name and function to Leadership Council, the positive effects of which are already evident in leadership of committees represented on the Council. In my experience, no matter the type of governance in any given congregation, most of our congregations would do well to better prepare members to serve on the Board.

In a spirit of transparency, I am not expert in "pure" Carver-style policy governance, a method of leadership used in many larger congregations, and a method which has passed its heyday as many congregations find it to be less applicable to religious organizations. I am experienced in working with congregations in "Hotchkiss-style" policy governance. If the next transitioning congregation I serve chose to be organized by "pure" policy governance, I would not be able to offer more than minimal counsel of their governance style and methods.

- **Long range planning / mission / vision / covenant:**

When I begin a transitioning ministry in a congregation I assess the status of their work on covenant, mission, and vision. In most circumstances I coach the congregation to work first on covenant --- how they agree to walk together in upholding the values of liberal religion --- before addressing mission --- their

purpose --- and vision --- how they want to move forward into the future. Depending on the state of these grounding documents, I mentor as many of these three conversations as time allows during a two-year interim. While developing covenant, mission, and vision is the work of the whole congregation, under my guidance and direction, I usually collaborate with the Transition Team for their leadership with the congregation. I also consider it to be the responsibility of the governing Board to incorporate these important statements into the running of the church. Additionally, I urge Boards to have some consistent method of long-range planning, ideally each month on some level at board meetings, perhaps more intentionally through a long-range planning team or committee which reports directly to the Board. In helping a congregation develop five- and ten-year plans, my transitioning ministry will lay groundwork for the settled ministry which follows.

- **Membership and membership growth:**

Periods of transitioning should not deter congregations from activities to encourage visitors to attend the church and sign on as members. Yet, during ministerial transitioning, membership growth often slows, given the “in-between” state of ministry. One guideline I urge congregations to aim for is 10% annual growth in new members, because they can expect on average a 5% withdrawal of current members. Unfortunately during these past two years of pandemic, many congregations, including where I now serve, have experienced a significant decline in membership numbers. As we continue --- hopefully --- to emerge from covid restrictions, intentional and creative nurturing of membership will surely be a priority in many congregations.

As for growing membership numbers, I remind congregations that while a minister and other professional staff can attract newcomers to our congregations, it is they, the congregants, who keep the newcomers coming back, through welcoming, intentional outreach, and transparent relationships. I am happy to mentor leaders in presenting new member classes and I am also happy to participate in those classes as needed, but I do want a team of congregant leaders to be responsible for membership development. Also having a staff member whose portfolio includes membership is an important support for the lay leaders.

Ideally a congregational membership program can address three stages of membership: 1) newcomers, 2) recently joined and trying to integrate, and 3) long-term, perhaps older, members. Most congregations have limited

volunteers: most do a pretty good job of the first stage, welcoming newcomers. We often fall short in the second and third phases. There may be cross-over between the third phase and a congregation's pastoral care program.

As a transitioning minister I often need to work with a congregation to clarify what I refer to as "the meaning of membership:" that is, their criteria for defining who is and who is not a member, and the privileges in congregational life available to members, events such as ceremonies of life passages. While I realize that recently the concept of membership in our denomination has broadened considerably, I take a fairly conservative view to defining the terms of membership, especially in congregations in which there have been vague boundaries in other areas of congregational such as occur during misconduct.

I also remind congregations that growth in congregational life is not only about numbers: that growth is also about maturation in spiritual development, outreach to the community, and understanding of UUA identity. Growth in these various arenas is what stimulates growth in numbers

- **Anti-oppression work:**

Anti-oppression work is a given in all our congregations, no matter their particular type of ministry. In transitioning ministry, an anti-oppression mindset may be core to initiating wider changes which a transitioning minister hopes to bring to a congregation. Particular projects may not be directly part of a transitioning minister's portfolio per se, but I am committed to promoting anti-oppression work myself and supporting lay leaders in this work. I also try to demonstrate an anti-oppression mindset in my own leadership and interactions with congregants, whether or not in justice-seeking projects and activities per se. In my current congregation, we have begun a monthly adult education class following the curriculum of the recent Widening the Circle of Concern report from the Commission on Institutional Change. I recommend that all congregations engage in this curriculum as a support for our broader commitment to dismantle white supremacy and move beyond categorical thinking.

Particularly in afterpastor settings, in my experience many congregants have little or no awareness of the many ways that oppressive habits toward one another and toward professional staff may develop. In congregations with less self-awareness of the extent of their oppressive habits, my sermons and

newsletter articles can help change these habits. As staff supervisor, I also work with staff on how they can promote anti-oppressive principles and practices in the congregation. It is important that staff stand together in this important work of becoming more anti-oppressive.

- **Social justice / social action:**

As a transitioning minister, usually I am not directly involved in most congregational social justice projects, not for lack of interest, instead because the work of transitioning is primarily focused on internal work within the congregation. In my current congregation, during pandemic closure, hands-on social action from anyone all but disappeared. The interfaith community of clergy is usually my greatest connection to the public arena, as explained below. During transitioning ministry, the amount of time available for community work seems to be in inverse proportion to the amount of internal work which a transitioning congregation needs to do.

I support a congregation's social action projects in whatever way I can be useful. To that, through my leadership in worship and articles in eblasts and newsletters, I help advertise outreach and encourage congregants to get involved. I am also eager to collaborate with congregants in worship services devoted to social action: either to share leadership of services or turn services over completely to social justice teams. I also remind congregants that involvement in social justice work can occur at many levels: it is possible to be involved without being out in the public square: participating online in webinars, emailing campaigns, etc. I also remind congregants that when they are out there in the public square that they take their UU identity with them.

The one area of social justice which I do maintain regular involvement in is reproductive justice. I call on my experience as a chaplain of Planned Parenthood in Texas a decade ago to support current reproductive rights initiatives, particular during these months as we wait for the Supreme Court decision regarding Roe v Wade.

- **Interfaith / community work:**

Interfaith work is important to my ministerial identity. In any location where I serve interim ministry, I seek out interfaith clergy groups. These groups help me build connections with the wider community, develop personal relationships outside my congregation, and network with the broader social justice community. Unitarian Universalism is so well suited to the interfaith mindset: UUs offer important voice in the wider community, which is particularly important in geographic areas of more conservative religious bent. Interfaith activities also give me wider perspective and new ideas about my role as a leader of UUs. I am active in the interfaith professional development organization, the Interim Ministry Network, which offers a wide variety of workshops and webinars as well as an annual national conference.

As a transitioning minister with, on average, two years in any given location, I am less involved in community activities other than those related to interfaith activities. I support the congregation's justice and non-profit outreach but interim ministry's internal focus usually leaves little time for hands-on involvement in community organizations. Most congregations I have served include some sort of "share the collection plate" program and I often invite representatives of those organizations to appear in worship services, so to expand the congregation's understanding of the tangible results of their giving. I also offer the pulpit to community groups for worship services on my Sundays off.

- **Denominational activities:**

I hope any ministry I serve allows enough time and energy for denominational connections at regional and national levels. It is high priority for me to be connected to the UU denomination, through attending meetings and conferences, volunteering time, and maintaining interpersonal connections. I want these connections because wide service to the principle of liberal faith is part of my call to ministry. I am particularly grateful to the UU Ministers Association for their outreach to and support of ministers during pandemic isolation: their offerings provided a vital lifeline to colleagues when we couldn't meet in person.

As I engage in this ministry of continual relocation, service to the denomination has also provided stability for my identity as a Unitarian Universalist. Connections to denominational activities also keeps me informed of current projects, agendas, and positions on justice initiatives. It is challenging to serve

congregations which are less connected to denominational affairs: not taking advantage of denominational resources is their loss and they also lose by reducing my focus on them as I work to maintain denominational connections on my own, without the congregation walking with me.

Most of my denominational connections to date have been with the various UUMA chapters I have lived in, UUA regional events and resources such as workshops and retreats, and UUA General Assembly, which I aim to attend at least every other year. I have also volunteered much time during my ministry to organizations for UU History and Heritage, such as service on the Board of the UU History and Heritage Society, UU Collegium, UU History Convocation, and most recently the new UU Studies Network.

- **Stewardship:**

As a transitioning minister I am less hands on with stewardship than with some other areas of congregational life. I rely on the expertise of lay leaders to organize the practical aspects of the annual stewardship campaign and other fund-raising. In most transitioning settings I have served to date, some of my other skills in ministry have taken priority over support of financial areas. My mentoring is better directed to worship, faith and spiritual development, and organizational matters. As the resident minister, of course I give ministerial support and endorsement to the congregation's stewardship programs, as in mentoring lay committees for the annual stewardship campaigns, supporting stewardship through activities in worship services, and promoting stewardship as total giving and receiving, beyond only fund-raising. In my current ministry, many in the congregation were pleased to hear me speak so forthrightly about the importance of financial giving: I believe it is my responsibility to take the topic of "money" into the pulpit.

At pledge time I encourage direct "canvassing" between the stewardship team and members of the congregation, to the extent possible: personal conversation builds community and community enhances giving better than does pledging solicitation through bulk mailing.

- **Finances:**

As with stewardship, financial activities in most transitioning settings I have served to date have been handled primarily by lay leaders. I am grateful for the many skilled lay leaders and staff who manage financial records with accuracy and reliability and contribute well to financial planning. One topic related to finances in which I do speak up --- and which will be more likely as we ease out of pandemic --- is in encouraging the rental of church space as appropriate to groups outside the church --- to bring in revenue, of course, and more important, to raise awareness of the UU church in the community. I also promote some type of "Share the Plate" of the Sunday morning offering with different community organizations: in my current congregation the plate is donated twice a month to an organization chosen by the social justice committee.

- **Other areas not covered above:**

None of the categories above addresses a minister's role in mentoring lay leaders in governance, perhaps a topic of particular importance during a transitioning ministry. My experience to date is that most congregants serving on governing Boards do well to have more training in governance before assuming responsibilities for this important work of leading a congregation and creating collaborative and productive relationships with a minister. A better educated Board also understands the roles and responsibilities of the church staff. In my experience, many congregations underestimate the importance of intentional programs of Leadership Development to prepare members for Board service and miss opportunities to take advantage of helpful resources from the UUA. I encourage Boards to use online resources for leadership development such as Board Basics on the UUA website. I also encourage Boards to read together Hotchkiss' Governance and Ministry, as well as select essays from the collection In the Interim.

How do you build trust with a congregation and individuals?

Trust may be the most important quality in congregational life and in relationships with people more broadly. Trust is critical in a transitioning ministry and repairing trust if it has been broken is essential if the work of transitioning is to go forward well. For me, awareness of the presence of trust is in part intuitive: I sense the presence of trust through nonverbal signals such as eye contact, body language, and choice of spoken and written words. Trust grows through experience: one

trusting interaction with an individual is likely to lay groundwork for recurring trust in the future, and an experience of broken trust engenders a comparable insecurity in future dialogue. I begin new relationships, such as with a new congregation, with the premise that trust is present, between the congregation and the minister, as well as among congregants. I realize that I have had many experiences throughout my life of being too trusting, with consequences which I did not anticipate, but life is too short to approach new situations with distrust and suspicion.

In my interim career to date, I have served several congregations in which there have been serious breaches of trust, including breaches created by violation of boundaries by previous ministers and other professional staff. I use several approaches which have proven successful in restoring trust. I aim to demonstrate to others that I am trustworthy, through my words --- my sermons and writings --- and my actions --- my relationships with the members of the community. In addition to all-congregation events such as worship where I hope I present trustworthy leadership, I also engage in small-group ministry, listening circles, and one-on-one meetings with congregants to create formats for new habits of trust-building. While the busy pace of transitioning ministries may limit the minister's connections with individual congregants and staff, I try to honor every request from congregants and staff for direct meeting with the minister. When I am present with others in conversation about tough topics, I also do all I can to let others know that I am fully present with them. I practice deep listening as authentically as I can. I understand that building trust in congregations with a history of conflict may take time: I hope I convey to congregants that I'm in it for the duration of our interim agreement. In the congregation I currently serve, folks did not trust the concept of "covenant," core to our UU liberal approach. Through conversations with individuals and small groups and review of the meaning and importance of covenant, by the end of the first year the congregation trusted my mentoring, and signed off on a new all-congregation covenant statement which now appears on their printed and online documents.

I currently include in my ministry a highly effective method for trust-building, by far the most effective model I have experienced during my professional career. That method is the spiritual practice of "Circles of Trust," a small-group ministry supported by the Center for Courage and Renewal and based on the writing of Quaker Parker Palmer. "Circles of Trust" has proven very useful in transitioning ministry, especially in congregations where trust was broken because of trauma caused by various factors, especially by disruptive misconduct of clergy, staff, or congregants. With its emphasis on deep listening, the "Circles of Trust" method is

admittedly countercultural, as its goal is the nurturing of the authentic self of each participant, so to open all to more those deep places of risk-taking where trust can begin to take hold. A “Circles of Trust” workshop models deep listening and speaking in relatively safe space, which participants can then apply to the wider congregation as well as in their daily lives.

In addition to offering “Circles of Trust” to congregation, I also lead workshops for my colleagues in ministry and for other UU organizations. The wide range of subject matter which this method supports serves diverse contexts for trust-building.

Describe your theology and the role of the ministry in a congregation that has multiple theologies:

My personal theology is framed by a combination of approaches: process theology, in particular for intersections with the natural world; feminist theology for a lens on life through gender in what is still our largely patriarchal culture; and Universalism, from its historical roots and as re-imagined by modern interpretations beyond the historical Universalist denomination. Additionally, through my work with the Center for Courage and Renewal, I include Quaker practice in my personal theological pallet: I am enriched by Quaker silent worship and habits of compassionate communication based on the premise of the divine in each of us.

My role in ministering to the diverse theologies likely present in any UU congregation I serve is to be the guardian of theological diversity as I oversee worship planning, faith development classes, and more. I promote respect for the different viewpoints engendered by different theologies. I encourage each person to engage in ongoing exploration of new theological insight. Since my primary tool for theological reflection is worship services, I aim to maintain a broad eye on the rotation of service themes and content.

My experience in some congregations I have served, which I expect may be common to many, is that theology is among the least influential factors in congregants' identity, community-building, and overall approach to church life. That is, congregants' drive to build connections with each other is based more on activities and interest groups defined by such social justice advocacy, the arts (especially church choir), activities for children and youth, and more, rather than theological preferences.

What questions do you hope our congregations are asking themselves and discussing?

Within any given congregation, what binds that congregation together. That is, how are the congregants "religious" in the core meaning of the word ("religio" as "bound together.")

How do they understand covenant as the foundation for religious connections? ... Not only how do they understand covenant: how do they live covenant together from day to day? How do they understand how to restore covenant when it has been broken by anyone in the congregation, including the minister(s)?

Does their congregation have a mission --- not a mission statement only, but a mission, a purpose?

Do they truly understand the meaning and role of mission? How do all congregational and ministerial activities relate to and enhance the mission? How do they understand the importance of taking the mission of liberal religion into their communities beyond church walls, especially during these partisan times in American politics?

Do they want to grow as a congregation and what do they understand growth to be? Do they want to grow in numbers only? Do they want to grow in faith development?

How do they understand Unitarian Universalism's recent commitment to anti-racism, anti-oppression, and multi-culturalism (ARAOMC)? How do they understand what it means to dismantle white supremacy? How do they bring their UU identity --- their religious selves --- to advocacy in the public and civic arena?

How well do they know UU history, especially to realize how knowing the past informs the presents and predicts the future of this free religion?

How can each and every person --- of all ages --- find regular and assured ways of spiritual deepening? How do they demonstrate the principle of truly believing in the inherent worth and dignity of each member of the congregation, irrespective of personal identities conditioned by race, class, physical ability, gender, and more?

How does the congregation demonstrate gratitude, to one another and to professional staff? How do individuals in the congregation know they are loved?

How do they cultivate authentic habits of deep listening?

How do you give and receive feedback?

In my role as spiritual leader and staff supervisor, the capacity to both give and receive productive and heart-based feedback is essential. For developing effective feedback, I strive to engender a culture grounded in covenant, a culture in which compassionate communication is paramount, and in which accountability is understood as the responsibility of every person in the congregation. When these and other qualities are present, feedback can be opportunities for inquisitive learning and expansion of perspective, rather than openings for criticism and attack. Regrettably, all too often feedback takes the form of the latter.

Several facets are critical for productive feedback, whether coming from me or to me. One is clarity of understanding the basic facts of any given situation, topic, or issue. Another is clarity about relationships of the people involved in any given situation which warrants feedback. To these ends, I aim to begin any process of feedback by asking questions of the other person or group. Questions are for my clarification, as well as for their opportunity to claim agency in the conversation, particularly in settings such as feedback to staff in which I hold more power by virtue of my role as supervisor. When offering feedback related to performance, as in staff assessments, I also believe strongly in establishing clear, doable goals for improvement in work performance going forward. To that, written documentation is also critical.

Regarding feedback to myself, I hope that congregants come to know me as someone open to input, to questions, to dialogue about church life. Feedback is not categorically negative: I hope I find ways to invite feedback which addresses things I do well and ways in which I might do things even better the next time. Further, feedback which is not based on confirmed information --- otherwise known as gossip --- or which is delivered in an attacking way is unproductive. When I receive that type of feedback, I first take a deep breath, then I invite demonstrate curiosity to know more from the speaker, rather than delivering caustic arrows and unfounded attack, as I realize that their need for negative feedback toward me may be coming from their own circumstances rather than from something I have done. In both giving and receiving feedback I realize the power of transference in passing on accountability to persons other than those who should bear responsibility for situations requiring feedback.

How do you suggest your ministry with the congregation is evaluated?

As an accredited interim minister serving a transitioning congregation, any evaluations which include my ministry will use the UUA assessment form designed specifically for transitioning ministry. I work with congregations to understand that this interim assessment is grounded in shared ministry: that is, how are minister and congregants working together for change during periods in between settled ministries. I hope congregations can discern for themselves the nature and extent of their transitioning, how they have grown and changed in relation to professional clergy, and in turn how I as their minister have heard and responded to their questions, their hopes, their goals, their dreams. Of course, I hope that I and the members of any congregation I serve get on well together, but more important, I hope that any congregation I serve respects the office and responsibilities of clergy leadership during their time of transitioning.

Quite apart from the UUA assessment form for transitioning ministry, I will also conduct self-assessment of my ministry through the continuing education program of the UU Ministers Association.

What do you hope for the future of Unitarian Universalism?

I hope Unitarian Universalism can live in practice the theology of equality, goodness, love and diversity which define it theoretically and theologically. Our world of the early 21st century so desperately needs the values of UU-ism: my fondest hope is to multiply our membership many times over so that this hopeful theology can reach more people. I hope we find better ways of reaching out, getting our message out there, being more visible on public media of many sorts, so that this message of the inherent worth and goodness of each person may reach, touch, and influence more people.

To that I also hope that we can truly continue to live all the more earnestly into our commitment to anti-racism, anti-oppression, multi-culturalism. We talk a good talk about our commitment to anti-oppression work. I would wish for more of us to be doing more in the world. This includes myself: I hope that in any future ministry I serve, there is time for me to be involved in more hands-on social action.

I also hope that as our country and our world moves forward after two years of restrictions, shut-downs, serious illness and death, and overall limitations on basic modes of human communication, that Unitarian Universalists also continue to

assess the implications of trauma on congregational life and promote effective approaches to process these extraordinary conditions we have lived through.

I also hope that Unitarian Universalists will continue to get beyond the arch individualism and self-reliance which shaped 20th-century understanding of our history and our identity. I hope we can continue to center previously marginalized people and habits, to move past arrogance and self-righteous assumptions of ourselves as people of privilege who have all the answers, so to live out in practice the diversity identified in principles by our theology and principles.

What else would you like to say about your ministry and ministry skills?

I am well-suited for transitioning ministry. I am good at diagnosing and leading the change process which is at the core of transitioning work. I tend to think "systematically": that is, to consider how to bring about positive structural change in how people of good-will gather together in congregations.

To that, I have particular experience and skill in serving congregations influenced by the effects of misconduct: that is, congregations whose present systems are defined and influenced by violations of boundaries and other interpersonal abuse -- In the case of misconducting clergy, a culture we refer to as "afterpastor." Generally, misconduct in congregations arises from professional staff violating professional boundaries with congregants, but congregants sometimes misconduct against staff as well as against one another. I have served several afterpastor congregations which represented different modes of misconduct, and I have also attended several trainings on this subject led by both UUA staff and other leadership groups.

I have named this earlier, but I want to underline that my credentials as a facilitator with the Center for Courage and Renewal offer important and unique leadership to Unitarian Universalism. (There is one other credentialed UU who is a facilitator with the Center: I am the only credentialed UU minister). From its grounding in Quaker practice, this "Courage" work is particularly compatible with values and practices of Unitarian Universalism and very useful in helping congregations address cultures of misconduct.

Personal

What should a congregation know about your family situation?

I am currently not partnered. My adult children lead quite independent and self-sufficient lives in different sections of the country from where I currently serve ministry. I have many activities and interests outside ministry --- dance and music, hiking, swimming, travel --- which I know help keep me balanced and well-rounded. While my direct household is only myself, I do have a good network of friends and colleagues for communication and support, as illustrated a few years ago when I underwent serious eye surgery and reached out for help. I am able to manage my own time as I serve my congregation: I have much flexibility to respond to congregational needs and activities. For me, the time-management method of "ministerial units" works well for planning my ministry (e.g. a minister's work week consists of twelve ministerial units, a single unit considered as a morning, an afternoon, or an evening of ministry).

What should a congregation know about your health?

I am very healthy: aside from the eye surgery just referred to, which has healed well, I have had no serious illness or operations in my life. I remain very active physically: I do lap swimming several times a week, before the pandemic I attended social dance (such as contradance or English Country Dance) as often as possible, I walk and hike regularly --- currently I participate in the Lancaster Hiking Club's Sunday afternoon 5-mile hike. (This club keeps a tally of members' hiking: in the year prior to pandemic cancellations, I logged 128 miles with the club.). Two years ago, I walked a section of El Camino de Santiago, the ancient pilgrimage route with many trails throughout Spain. In winter I am renewed and enriched by both downhill and cross-country skiing. I am rarely sick --- truly I cannot remember the last time I needed a 'sick day' from ministry. I am not subject to colds, flu, and other respiratory ailments and to date I have not contracted the covid virus.

How do you take care of yourself so that the congregation does not have to?

Part of the answer to this question overlaps with the previous one: staying physically active is a major factor in my self-care. I believe strongly in mind-body connections. The better in tune my body, the more mentally and spiritually fit I am. If I am in a situation of stress from overwork, just ten minutes into an evening of social dance, especially English Country Dance, cures what ails me: you can't help but smile when you are interacting with others in the beautiful artform of social

dance. Another example of my spiritual strengthening through physical engagement is my recent pilgrimage on El Camino de Santiago in Spain: I participated in a trip led by one of my colleagues from the Center for Courage and Renewal. We walked seventy-five miles in seven days. (See my website for photos of El Camino, other hiking locations, and English Dance.)

I also engage in regular appointments with both a professional coach and a spiritual director. I regularly attend UUMA chapter meetings and participate in support groups with minister colleagues. During pandemic shut-down of in-person meetings, online offerings from both UUMA and UUA have been a critical lifeline for my well-being. I also attend community interfaith activities, which keep my view of ministry wider than only Unitarian Universalism. In addition to facilitating Circles of Trust, I also attend Courage retreats as a participant. I also regularly engage with UU History through reading, writing, leadership to UU denominational history organizations, and attending conferences. I define my connections to history as spiritual practice: knowing who came before me, particularly early women in liberal ministry, the subject of my current research, reminds me that I am not alone in this challenging calling of transitioning ministry. I derive much satisfaction from bringing a ten-year research project on Lydia Jenkins, the first Universalist woman minister, to fruition with the publication, in progress, of my biography of her life as a woman's rights and religious reformer.

How long do you hope your next ministry lasts? What's the minimum commitment you would make?

I am ready to serve the usual two years for a UUA interim ministry. I also keep in mind that a recent interim I served was extended to three years: I can be flexible with the eventual duration of my next ministry. I am also willing to consider a developmental ministry of longer duration, usually a three- to five-year commitment.

Additional Information

See my resume, linked to the front page of my website, for more details about my educational background, activities as a Unitarian Universalist including professional connections, a bibliography of my UU history work, and brief information about my previous career in higher education in music.

