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Experience & Preparation

Preliminary Fellowship: 2008**Full Fellowship:** 2012**Ordination:** 2009**Seminary:** 2004 MDiv, United Theological Seminary**Congregational Ministries Served:**

2021- Now	Interim Senior Minister	Unity Temple UU Congregation	Oak Park, IL
2009- 2016	Settled Minister	First Unitarian Church	Louisville, KY
2008- 2009	Contract Minister	UU Fellowship of Northfield	Northfield, MN
2007- 2008	Consulting Minister	UU Fellowship of Northfield	Northfield, MN

Other Ministries and Work Experience:

2019- 2021	Executive Director	Kentucky Interfaith Power & Light	Louisville, KY
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2020-2021	Founder/Coordinator	Kentucky UU Justice Action Network	Louisville, KY
2020-2021	Justice Center Coordinator	All Peoples, A UU Congregation	Louisville, KY
2016-2020	Congregational Life Staff	Southern Region of the UUA	Louisville, KY
2007-2008	CPE Chaplain Resident	Fairview Health Services	Minneapolis, MN
2006-2007	Ministerial Intern	UU Fellowship of Ames, IA	Ames, IA
2001-2002	Field Placement Student & Summer Minister	First Unitarian Society	Minneapolis, MN

Other Education:

Professional Development

2023: Became an Accredited Interim Minister in Training (AIMIT)

2023: Field work (Interim Ministry Network)

2022: The Work of the Congregation (Interim Ministry Network)

2021: The Work of the Leader (Interim Ministry Network)

2019: Serving Congregations With a History of Misconduct (Deborah Pope Lance Course, Online)

2018: Entrepreneurial Ministry (UUMA Institute, Palm Harbor, FL)

2015: Leading From Within (Circles Of Trust, UUMA Institute, Asilomar, CA)

2014: Carver Policy Governance Training (Atlanta, GA)

2014: Feet For Dreams: Fundraising In A New Age (Meadville Lombard)

2014: Clergy Family Systems Training (Lombard, IL)

2012: Racial Healing History Academy (Anne Braden Institute, Louisville, KY)

2011: Adaptive Leadership (UUMA Institute, Asilomar, CA)

Other Degrees

2019 - Masters in Public Administration, Focus in Nonprofit Management. O'Neill School of Public & Environmental Affairs, Indiana University

1993 - Bachelors of Science, Computer Science. James Madison University

Other noteworthy work experience outside of UU ministry:

1993 - 2001: Various positions as Network Administrator, Systems Engineer, Web Programmer/Developer, and Database Engineer/Administration in technology companies in the Washington, DC and Twin Cities regions.

Denominational and Community Activities:

2020 - 2021: Justice, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (JEDI) Team for US Climate Action Network

2020 - 2021: Louisville Showing Up for Racial Justice (LSURJ) Faith Coordinating Team

2016 - 2017: Co-Founder of Indivisible Kentucky

2016: General Assembly Worship Leader for Opening Worship

2015 - 2016: MidAmerica Regional Board Member

2015: Midwest Leadership School Chaplain

2014 - 2016: Lead Mentor in the UUMA Mentoring program

2013: General Assembly Public Witness Rally Coordinator & Leader

2013 - 2015: Heartland UUMA Chapter Treasurer

2011 - 2018: Ohio River Study Group Archivist

2007 - 2009: Prairie Star District Nominating Committee

2005 - 2009: Director of Stonetree Congregational Resources in the Prairie Star District

2001 - 2004: United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities UU Student Group Coordinator

2001 - 2003: Prairie Star District Young Adult Network Coordinator

Background

Give a story that embodies your ministry:

This story is an embodiment of my ministry because it encapsulates so much of who I am as a minister: how I can be creative and innovative; how I listen, reflect and discern; how I helped a congregation strategize what they wanted to do and supported them in the process; how collaboratively, in shared ministry, we followed the guidelines for not just changing an organization but on changing it's culture.

When I arrived at First Unitarian, like many congregations there was an upstairs church and a downstairs church. And they did not mingle very often. Some families came to the DRE and me to talk about how this troubled them. The DRE and I did a lot of research - we talked to our colleagues, we looked at retention numbers for children staying UUs as adults, we read blogs about what was working in other faith traditions. Once we felt like we had an idea of where we wanted to go, we enlisted the RE Committee and talked to them about it. And then we enlisted the Worship Committee. We encouraged each of these committees to give their feedback - what were the areas that they were excited about and what were the areas they had concerns about.

Then we called together a task team made up of representatives from the congregation - families, worship committee representatives, RE committee representatives, and other stakeholders. We talked a lot, including about what our long term goals were for how children and families would relate to the faith beyond their time at First Unitarian. I told them I would be available as a resource to them as much as they wanted, but this was about the congregation and needed the congregation to be behind it, not the new-ish minister. In the end, they started the first phase as a 2-year trial and it evolved organically from there. Before I left, there was a separate hour for Adult, Children and Youth Religious Education. Children were encouraged to stay in the service for as long as they felt comfortable - the youngest would often leave for a supervised playtime during the sermon but were otherwise present. The children learned the rituals of the church in the multigenerational community. They shared their joys and sorrows and knew the songs we sang, and could recite our covenant by heart.

Worship had to shift - it became more embodied. The rituals got longer and the sermon got a bit shorter. We brought the Music Director into the shared ministry that the DRE and I had created, and then started incorporating more contemporary music, and utilized a lot of videos. The whole congregation got to know the DRE - not just the

children and parents. Her portions of the service, whether it was the Moment for All Ages or the Sermon were always cherished. The Music Director thrived, too. (I'll note that 1 of them is now an ordained UU minister and the other is in seminary). Of course, there were some difficulties. In particular, some of the adults with hearing difficulties needed a special part of the sanctuary designated for them without the normal noises children make. But all in all, we adjusted and it made a difference.

Why are you seeking ministry now?

My current interim ministry is ending and I am ready for the next one!

What ministry do you hope is ahead for you?

Whether it is the retirement of a beloved minister who has been in a congregation for decades, or the resignation of a settled minister whose tenure was short and bumpy, I want to minister to a congregation who may be nervous about what lies ahead but who also understands intellectually (even if not emotionally - that's a whole 'nother beastie) that there is also hope in this moment.

I had a successful ministry of 7 years in a congregation that had gone through a negotiated resignation with the settled minister before me, and then a failed search with 3 years of interim. I know what is possible and how important the interim period can be.

I enjoy being with congregations in transition; with congregations who are having to change, who are saying goodbye to one era and are nervous about what it means to say hello to the next. I enjoy taking all I've learned about change theory, about ministry, about management, about transitions, about succession planning, about countering oppression and so much more, and bringing it all to interim ministry. Because as scary as these transitions can be, they can also be amazingly transformative. I enjoy working with congregations to help that transformation happen.

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

Sometimes, when I tell the story of my call, I talk about loving church when I was a child - riding my bike on my own when I was 8 so that I could attend children's choir and Sunday School; making sure that I had notes from every Sunday; and checking out the sermon tapes for the Sundays that I missed. I tell how, in that same church, I was told I could not be a pastor since I was a girl and "God doesn't call girls to be pastors."

Other times, I start the story with walking into a UU church for the first time, the UU Church in Reston, VA, in 1995, having come in through the CUUPs group and figuring I might as well check the church out. I talk about seeing a lesbian minister and my mind and heart exploding.

There are too many moments since then to name. What it comes right down to, though, is that I love church. I love gathering in community to seek truth and meaning together. To try to figure out this weird "life" thing for which there is no handbook but there is a lot of wisdom out there (and inside) if we look. I love singing together, crying together, searching together. I love learning together, putting our faith into action, and collectively making the world a better of a place than it was before. I know that a church can make a difference in people's lives and in a community and my call is to provide the spiritual leadership to help make that happen.

Ministerial Roles & Functions

Share your ministerial presence and leadership style:

I am a collaborative leader who loves our UU congregations, is curious, thrives in a team/shared ministry environment, is quick to laugh, and also knows when to sit back and reflect. I bring an analytical mind that has experience seeing both the trees and the forest. People experience my ministerial presence as authentic and compassionate.

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

I love leading a team and this is one of my greatest strengths. Connected to this, I enjoy supervising staff because I appreciate being able to watch them grow in their positions. I believe that as supervisor, it is my job to assist in creating the conditions in which the staff can thrive. I do this in three key ways.

1. I treat them like human beings with lives and loved ones, interests and passions. This shouldn't be radical, but apparently it is. I have been repeatedly told by staff I supervise how refreshing it is to be treated as a person, not as a commodity. This means, in part, that I urge them to take their time off, to not overwork, to have good boundaries so that work does not bleed over into their personal lives.
2. We hire people because we think they would be great, and so part of my job as staff supervisor is to work to remove barriers that are preventing the staff from succeeding. The barriers could be communication issues, or misplaced expectations, or an unclear chain-of-command, or not the right computer software - and a host of other things.
3. Lastly, I schedule formal goal check-ins with those I directly supervise - quarterly at a minimum, usually monthly, though this depends on the size of the staff. When it comes time for their

annual performance review, there should be no surprises because we have been talking about how things are going all along the way.

All that being said, the staff need to do their jobs. I try to make the environment an excellent place to work and in return I expect excellent results. If a staff person is not performing well, I will work with them to develop a personalized improvement plan and take other actions that are (hopefully) outlined in a congregation's Personnel Policy/Handbook.

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?

Even if a congregation were to find a minister who could do everything really, really well, it would still be important for there to be shared ministry because the mission of the congregation belongs to the congregation, not to the minister. Ministers will come and go but the congregation, and its ministry, endures.

Shared ministry is a foundation that our congregations are built on, with the work of the church being done by both lay people and religious professionals. But what this looks like varies in congregations. As an interim minister, I see my role as assisting the congregation in shoring up their work so that they are in a strong, healthy place when their new minister arrives.

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

My focus during interim ministry is on the congregation and how they can show up in the larger community. Because of this, I see myself more as a coach for the congregation and less as a presence myself. I can help a congregation evaluate their efforts and social justice programs. I also able to assist the congregation in long and short term responses to what is happening in their community.

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

There are two types of change: short-term change, and long-term change. I have seen both happen in congregations. Much of the work of interim ministry involves creating short-term changes that build the foundation for longer-term changes that the congregation will work on with their new minister.

As a minister and in my nonprofit work, I have worked with many organizations to create both types of change. As congregational life staff, I taught change management and theories of organizational change to lay and professional religious leaders. One piece that often gets left out of standard/business change management theories is that change always involves loss - losing the old ways of being/doing things. Somethings this loss is celebrated, but often it is received with mixed emotions. This makes it particularly important to attend to the grieving process when a change is happening.

My role is to help the congregation think strategically about change and then to help midwife them through it.

Describe how you handle being in a conflicted situation:

This is a particularly difficult question to address without writing an entire essay because it depends what the conflict is about, the power dynamics at play in the conflict, and whether there are policies in place that may need to be activated.

Generally, however, I will share that, though I don't seek it out, I am not afraid of conflict because conflict can be very creative! Particularly when addressing an adaptive challenge, conflict means we are engaging fully. Conflict is evidence of our struggle to emerge into a new way of thinking and doing.

But when conflict becomes harmful, this is where it is important that a congregation have policies and procedures (such as disruptive behavior policies) which can allow them to call one another back into covenant and right relationship.

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

Not long after starting a settled ministry, I was called upon to do the memorial service for a young man who, after years of struggling with addiction, had completed suicide. As I sat with the family and heard them tell the story of Kevin's life, I was struck by the intersection of pastoral care with issues of justice, by the intersection of worship and grief, by how our fourth principle (the search for truth and meaning) is something that we engage in individually and collectively as a community and that you can't really do one without the other.

It was a moment that brought home to me the difference between leadership and *spiritual* leadership. We often talk about the worship, pastoral, administrative, education and prophetic aspects of ministry but these are artificial labels because each aspect of ministry intersects with the others - it is all Ministry, and it is all complex and connected because *we* are all complex and connected.

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

One of the key volunteers at church began bullying members and staff - in person and online. I tried talking pastorally with this person several times, but they would then twist my words and use them to rally others against me.

I made several mistakes during this time. First, I allowed it to go on for far too long, hoping it would get better even as it got worse. Second, I made a mistake in meeting with this person alone even after they had

lied about the content of our conversations. Finally, I tried to handle it myself and took too long before I involved the lay leadership in the issue.

On the plus side, this experience taught me the importance of having a disruptive behavior policy that defines out of covenant behavior, clearly outlines steps to take (and who takes them) as a situation escalates, and also identifies that the goal is to get back into covenant and how that might happen. A phrase I learned early in ministry is to "Feed health and starve dysfunction" - this experience taught me to add "interrupt harm" to this list because sometimes, starving dysfunction is not enough.

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

I look forward to growing and deepening my understanding and experience of interim ministry - it truly is different for each congregation.

I look forward to the unknown challenges that each congregation has that will strengthen my ministry in ways I can't predict!

Describe briefly your ministerial approach to the following:

- **Worship and preaching:**

There are few things that are as sacred as a community coming together to find meaning together. This is what we are doing when we worship. It is not a performance, and it is not a meditation (though it may incorporate either of those as elements). Instead, it is a communal act of meaning seeking. As such, the community should participate - it should not be the "Rev. Dawn Show". It is important to me to have other voices heard during the service, and so I often train Worship Associates who learn how to hold the space for worship, to facilitate the meaning seeking/making.

Additionally, worship includes rites of passage, like Memorial Services and Child Dedications. These are times for the community to come together to care for each other, to affirm their values and to recommit themselves to the difficult work of creating community together.

Worship has been difficult for faith communities since the pandemic hit. Many congregations struggled to put their services online. Though I was not serving a congregation during this time, when I was serving First Unitarian Church, we started offering our services online via Zoom in 2015 for those who could not (for whatever reason) make it to church. In my subsequent position with the Southern Region, I became even more familiar with online worship, and I facilitate regular online gatherings, worship, meetings and more in both my current positions. With my background in technology, this is an area that I am adapted to and in which I thrive.

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

Conventional wisdom is that interim ministers provide pastoral care to the congregation as a system more than to individuals within that system. However, I have found that providing pastoral care to individuals within the system/congregation is an essential way of building trust. And trust is essential in interim ministry. In this way, pastoral care is an essential part of a healthy ministry to both individuals and a congregation. My focus in regards to pastoral care as an interim will be on

(a) caring for the spiritual health of the congregation as a system and for individuals within that system; and

(b) working with (or growing) a pastoral care team care so that the people in the community are better able to support one another.

Sometimes people just need their minister to be present. I am able to meet people where they are and be with them in this way, both in person and online.

- **Children's religious education:**

While teaching children's religious education classes is not a strength of mine, I do think that it is important that children know and develop a relationship with their minister. This is harder to do in an interim ministry due to the shorter amount of time, and so this is a conversation for a congregation and me to have together.

I will say that I believe that children's religious education doesn't just happen on Sunday morning. Part of it is equipping their parents with the tools they need to deepen their own faith. I look forward to working with the RE professional and committee in ways to work together in this area of shared ministry.

- **Youth work:**

One of my first roles in a UU congregation was as a youth advisor. I love teenagers - how they are trying to figure out who they are as individuals and in community. As I said above, it is important that children know their minister and this is doubly true of youth. I love participating in coming of age programs and finding other ways to interact regularly with the youth. What this looks like in an interim ministry will be a topic of conversation between a congregation and me.

- **Adult religious education:**

I have found that adult religious education classes are great for participants and their spiritual growth AND also a great way for me as their minister to get to know people! I have taught/facilitated most of the standard UU curriculum, as well as developed my own. Most recently, I have developed curricula that have been used in several congregations and non-congregational settings to discuss the books “White Fragility”, “So You Want to Talk About Race” and “How to be an AntiRacist” as well as a shortened introductory approach to “Widening the Circle of Concern” that takes only 4-5 weeks instead of 12.

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

I believe it is essential to incorporate these aspects into congregational life - within and outside of worship. Many people experience the divine in these ways. Because I know this is not a strong skill of mine, I happily ask for help and ideas/suggestions in this area. This is one the beauties of shared ministry - that it is not all on the shoulders of only one person.

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

These are important aspects of church life - it is where we build community and get to know each other. We have a shared experience of worship, and then we come together to reflect, to talk to our friends, to get to know new people.

I am an extrovert, and so one of the things that I missed most about not having in-person worship was standing at the back of the sanctuary and greeting people as they were leaving - this is one of the best ways to quickly touch base with folks and get to know them and what was going on with them. I could easily say “email me, let’s talk about this more!” if a conversation needed more time. At the same time, I am aware that coffee hour can be pretty harmful to visitors and guests, particularly those with marginalized identities. I have worked with congregations, both in person and online, on helping make these social times less fraught.

- **Committee / Task force work:**

A congregation never let me forget it when, at candidating week, I declared “I love committee meetings!” And I mostly do - the synergy that can come out of a group of people working toward a shared goal is deeply inspiring to me. At the same time, however, the nature of church work has changed in the last few decades. It used to be that committees did everything. But most people don’t want to meet regularly anymore - they just want to get the job done. This is what the nonprofit world describes as the shift from key volunteers to episodic volunteers. Congregations benefit when they look at restructuring how the church operates. This is an area I can help a congregation explore more deeply.

- **Leadership development:**

One of my favorite things about being on the Southern Region Congregational Life staff was helping to develop the capacity of congregation leaders through mentoring and through the various leadership experiences the Region provided. It was such a pleasure! I deeply enjoy to this aspect of interim ministry. My goal is to leave a congregation with stronger volunteer leadership and a deeper bench to pull from than they had before my arrival. Towards

these ends, I recently developed a one-time book-group style curriculum based on the book "Serving with Grace: Lay Leadership as a Spiritual Practice" by Erik Walker Wikstrom that I was able to use at Unity Temple UU Congregation to great effect.

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

Lol. This is in the wrong order. First, you start with identifying your values. Out of that can come your covenant and mission. Then, the vision is the change you would like to see in the world as a result of your congregation existing, and then the long range plan is the roadmap to make this change. I have led congregations and nonprofits through this process many times!

But the days of the 5 & 10 year strategic plan are long gone - plans now rarely go past 3 years. This means that it can't take a congregation 2 years to complete a strategic plan, and that therefore there is tension between getting it done before it is obsolete and doing it "at the speed of church."

In some congregations, it will be appropriate to engage in his work during the interim time, and in other congregations it will be best to wait until the next settled minister arrives. This is a conversation for a congregation and me to have together.

These are just a few factors to consider when embarking upon this process!

- **Membership and membership growth:**

Both in congregations and in nonprofits, "membership" doesn't mean as much to people as it did even 10 years ago. This means we need to consider new ways of keeping track of people who participate in the life of a congregation. One way to address this question is through asking who participates in the life of the congregation but *doesn't* show up at Sunday services?

Additionally, not too long ago we held up *numerical* membership growth as the marker for success in a congregation. With most denominations experiencing an increasing number of churches closing due to lack of participation, it is unrealistic and harmful to hold numerical membership growth up as the *only* way a congregation can grow.

Instead of focusing on numerical growth, I like to ask congregations about what other are ways they are growing. How are they meeting the religious/spiritual needs of newcomers? And long-term members? And folks in between? How are they growing in embodying their mission? Where is the intersection between their gifts and passions and the needs of the community in which they are situated? What organizations do they regularly partner with and how has that changed in the past few years?

- **Anti-oppression work:**

To truly live our values as Unitarian Universalists, I believe we need to bring an anti-oppression lens to everything we do. And we never “finish” this work - the journey towards doing anti-oppression work never ends. It requires that we work in three arenas:

First, we need to be working on this in our own individual lives. We need to be educating ourselves as to the evolving nature of this work, and we need to work on countering ingrained, cultural biases that we have inherited and act out unconsciously.

Second, we should look at every aspect of congregational life and ask “What barriers are there here that make it difficult for someone to participate?” We know there are many people who would resonate with the life saving and life giving message that we provide - what might we be doing that is preventing them from participating in our congregations?

Third, we need to be acting in our communities. In the next section, I talk about what a robust social justice program at a congregation might look like.

- **Social justice / social action:**

Congregations often confuse justice making with compassion. This is why I use the five pillars of social justice approach to creating a balanced social justice/social action program in a congregation.

The five types of social justice are:

- 1) Service (meeting needs immediately, ie food drives, sheltering the houseless)
- 2) Education (ie, religious education classes that connect our values to a social issue, workshops, sermons)
- 3) Witness (showing up publicly, ie marches, demonstrations, letters to the editor)
- 4) Advocacy (impacting public policy, ie visiting/contacting elected officials)
- 5) Community Organizing (working in coalitions, “nothing about us without us”, learning how to listen & follow the lead of impacted people)

When a congregation’s social justice program includes these pillars, it is more fully able to live our UU principles, including the 8th.

- **Interfaith / community work:**

Love it! Did it all the time with my job with Kentucky Interfaith Power & Light. Interfaith work can be so grounding and enrich one's own faith. I take the Interfaith 2.0 approach, which is to celebrate each faith for what it is, as opposed to an Interfaith 1.0 approach that finds the lowest common denominator between the faiths. This 2.0 approach still finds connections, but it also understands and honors the differences rather than glossing over them.

- **Denominational activities:**

We are better together! We are stronger, smarter, braver, and more resilient together. There are resources that the UUA has access to and can share that congregations can't easily do on their own (ie, health insurance, retirement accounts, mass social justice mobilization, programs like OWL). Having worked in Congregational Life for the Southern Region of the UUA, I am also partial to the trainings, leadership development, resources and connections that being in an Association together provides our congregations.

- **Stewardship:**

Norms around stewardship have changed. We now talk about stewardship as more than just the congregation's financial situation - we include how the congregation takes care of all its resources, including its building, its staff, and its volunteers. But that does not mean we can ignore the financial aspect of stewardship. Norms there, have changed too. People don't give as much as they used to when church was the center of most people's social lives. And they don't give the same way - newer participants who did not grow up in a faith community don't have much of a concept of making a pledge, but instead give when they want to. This can complicate things for congregations that are not keeping their

methodologies up and making it as easy as possible for people to give. I am happy to work with congregations to help them update and upgrade their stewardship model, including the financial and other resources. I have worked with stewardship consultants and have experience conducting a successful capital campaign and many successful annual stewardship drives. While serving at First Unitarian Church in Louisville, we worked together to raise the average annual pledge from \$1000 to \$2100.

- **Finances:**

Sound financial policies are extremely important and the financial health of a congregation is a passion of mine. I can help congregational leaders know what financial reports are important to look at and why (as well as learn how to read them!), utilize financial ratios to help assess the health of a congregation, assist people in understanding technical terms used in finances (such as what a reserve is and is not), and support a congregation in knowing what best practices in the nonprofit world may be useful for them to adapt. Additionally, I believe that congregations should be working to diversify their revenue streams and can assist them with that.

- **Other areas not covered above:**

There are a few areas that we may want to discuss in more depth when we talk, such as about congregational size dynamics and different styles of governance. These are not one-size-fits-all solutions and they are somewhat difficult to address in this limited space.

Another area that will be important to discuss is how the congregation handled the pandemic and how it has impacted their congregational life, participation and structure. I look forward to

working with a congregation to take what they have learned over the past few years and work with them to create a sustainable new normal.

Finally, there are particular challenges that congregations experience when they have experienced professional misconduct. When I was on the Southern Region Congregational Life staff, this was a speciality area of mine and I was the SR representative on the Safer Congregations team and I have experience after-pastoring with misconducted congregations.

How do you build trust with a congregation and individuals?

Trust is like a savings account, except that you start out at a different opening balance with each person and each congregation. People/Congregations who have never been hurt by a minister will have a higher opening balance than people/congregations who have been hurt. And some people/congregations start with a negative balance.

I build trust through the little and the big things: I am authentically me; I am as transparent as I can be with healthy boundaries; I am clear about what my expectations are and what a person/congregation can expect from me. And, perhaps most importantly, when I **do** make a mistake, I own it and seek to make amends.

It takes time to build trust. Though being intentional about the process can sometimes speed it along a bit, it is not something that can be rushed.

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

My theology has evolved over my tenure as a UU - this is one of the beauties of our faith! These days, I suppose one might call me a mystic, agnostic humanist. Hindu guru Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj wrote "Wisdom is knowing I am nothing, Love is knowing I am everything, and between the two my life moves." That quote, more than any other, encapsulates my theology.

As to the role of ministry in a congregation that has multiple theologies: ALL our UU congregations have multiple theologies, whether they realize it or not! Part of my understanding of my role as minister is to acknowledge that, name it, and create an environment where all feel supported in their searches for truth and meaning.

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

What does it mean to be a faith community in these times? Are we a 1950s church trying to operate in the 2020s? Are we a place that people come for relief from the grind of the world, or where we encourage them to engage more with the world around them?

Why do we exist? If our message is one of salvation, not in some other world but in this one, how do we embody that? What do we do well and how can we share that with more people?

How does white supremacy culture show up in our congregation? And what can we do to address that, knowing that people are on a spectrum in their journeys to be antiracist? What other ways do we enact oppression without even realizing it and then what do we do about it?

With the changing religious landscape and fewer people attending church and people generally giving less to church, how will we adapt? What models do we need to change? Have we diversified how we financially support our congregation or are we still relying on old models?

Specifically for interim congregation, I hope they are asking questions like: How do we make the most out of this interim time? How do we hold space to grieve our loss and to also look forward to the future? What are the priorities we want to address during this liminal time?

How do you give and receive feedback?

I love feedback that is given out of genuine care and concern. Anything that helps me to be a better minister, I want to know! Feedback that is not given out of genuine care and concern I am able to evaluate and then either incorporate or shrug off.

How I give feedback depends on the situation. After an event or trying something new, I like to schedule a debrief where we can all share our feedback. I covered staff feedback in the section above on supervision. I have found that giving volunteers feedback is much more hit-or-miss, so I usually ask someone “Could I give you some feedback?” and see what they think. I also am intentional about always including positive reinforcement so feedback isn’t always critical.

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

I am extremely goal-oriented. This is one of the reasons I enjoy interim ministry. Part of the interim ministry process is establishing goals that the congregation wants to accomplish prior to settling a new minister. I suggest that our ministry, together, is evaluated as to how well we achieve those goals.

What do you hope for the future of Unitarian Universalism?

I was blessed to work with Paula Cole Jones as a part of my work with the Kentucky UU Justice Action Network. One of the things she talks about is the paradigm shift from the dominant paradigm to the multicultural paradigm.

In the dominant paradigm, Unitarian Universalism is liberal. Possibly even progressive. We are on the left of the spectrum.

But in the multicultural paradigm, we are not even on the map. We unintentionally replicate the “the imperialist white supremacist capitalist patriarchy” (as bell hooks calls it) in our congregations.

My deepest hope for our faith is that we are able to leave the dominant paradigm behind and thrive in the multicultural paradigm where everyone can bring their whole selves without fear and we become the force for good in the world that we truly want to be.

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

I bring a wealth of experience to ministry: from small church to large church, from contract to settled ministry, from working with a nearly 200 year old congregation to working with a 30 year old fellowship; from nonprofit management to community activism, from starting organizations to working in established institutions. I knew I needed to get back into ministry when the pandemic hit and I was jealous of my colleagues who were having to adapt on a dime - I wanted to be ministering to a congregation, working with them as we adapted to the changes together. My combination of skills, experience and personality enable me to effectively minister to a congregation during one of its most tenuous, scary, unsettling times - the transition of ministry - because I also see this as a time with great potential and hope.

Personal

What should a congregation know about your family situation?

There is nothing a congregation needs to know about my family situation.

What should a congregation know about your health?

There is nothing about my health that impacts my ability to do ministry.

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

My self-care regimen is very well established and very disciplined. I have friends and family spread around the country who meet my emotional needs, as well as a beloved spouse of nearly 30 years, and will not rely on the congregation to take care of me.

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

I am looking for a 2 year interim ministry.