

Ministerial Transition Update November 2018

This is an update for the congregation on how the Unity Church Board of Trustees is planning for ministerial transition. This is the same summary that was shared during the Annual Meeting of the Congregation on November 17, 2018.

Senior Co-Ministers Janne and Rob Eller-Isaacs have generously given our church significant [notice of their plans for retirement on June 30, 2020](#). Thankfully that date is more than 18 months away. But the advanced notice they've given us has allowed the board to consider the topic with great care.

The board's work on this issue has advanced in consultation with all four members of the Executive Team — Executive Director Barbara Hubbard, Minister of Congregational and Community Engagement Lisa Friedman, and Senior Co-Ministers Janne and Rob. (For those of you less familiar with Unity's governance, this team of four leads the church and reports to the board.) In 2018, the board's Transition Subteam dug into our options and consulted with Jen Crow, Senior Co-Minister at First Universalist Church of Minneapolis, who knows our church well. **This past summer, the full board reached the decision that Unity Church will have a one-year interim period before a new called minister starts**, or when two new co-ministers start.

What this means is that an interim minister will be with us from July 2020 until June 2021, before a new senior minister's tenure. The interim minister will be a member of the Executive Team, along with Barbara and Lisa.

BACKGROUND

There are several reasons the board chose to have a one-year interim period.

- The presence of an interim minister is widely expected within Unitarian Universalism and the absence of this step could raise significant concerns among some ministerial candidates. As Jen Crow noted, a congregation that skipped interim work with a significant change of long-serving ministers could trigger some reservations from potential applicants.
- A period with an interim minister can help the congregation adapt to and accept change. It will create time for the congregation to reflect on what is next. Keith Kron, the Unitarian Universalist Association's (UUA) director for transitions, suggested that an interim can prepare the congregation for the transition to a new called minister.
- In addition to helping a congregation accept change, an interim period will help the congregation grieve Janne's and Rob's departure, allowing us to focus on sending them off with a "good good-bye."
- We will keep the interim period to one year, rather than the two-year period that the UUA recommends. A sizable piece of why a two-year interim is recommended is to discern where the church is heading, and Unity has already done this work with great care during our Ends process. This means that we can reap the benefits of an interim period in one year, but avoid a longer gap between senior ministers. Other UUA churches have also taken this step and found it helpful.

A ministerial search committee will be formed to conduct the search for a new called minister. An April 2020 congregational meeting will be held to finalize the search committee. The board imagines we will be searching for one senior minister, but we express openness to having two co-ministers apply as well.

TIMELINE

Here are some key steps the board expects in the transition process. The congregation will be kept informed along the way through the use of Unity's monthly newsletter and email updates. All communications will be available online at our newly established [ministerial transition webpage](#).

November 2018

- Janne and Rob formally announce at the November 17, 2018, Annual Meeting that they are retiring on June 30, 2020

January 2019-September 2019

- Board finalizes plans for ministerial search committee process

October-December 2019

- Board starts process for forming ministerial search committee
- Board finalizes plans for arrangements in interim period and how ministerial needs will be met
- Board drafts interim search materials

January-March 2020

- Board-led search for interim begins, with request for posting to go up in April 2020

April-June 2020

- Board holds April congregational meeting where ministerial search committee is formed. Search committee begins its work, independent of the board
- Board concludes search for interim
- Janne's and Rob's service ends, effective July 1, 2020

July-September 2020

- Interim minister begins; plans proceed for meeting all ministerial needs during the one-year period
- Search committee work underway

January-March 2021

- Search committee work underway

April-June 2021

- Search committee brings in a minister/co-ministers for Candidate Week; congregational vote held
- Interim minister's service ends June 30, 2021

July-September 2021

- New called minister starts July 1, 2021
- If one senior minister is called — not two co-ministers — then it remains to be determined when a second minister will be selected; this process would be led by the senior minister

If you have questions about the transition, please do not hesitate to contact a member of the Board Transition Subteam:

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