

This week I traveled unexpectedly to NYC to spend time with my daughter who is reeling from a breakup with her partner of four years. As I kept my daughter company, helping her do laundry, coaxing her to eat, and walking on the shore at Rockaway Beach, I couldn't help but think how similar her situation was to ours as a congregation, a mere year ago when we said good-bye to Elizabeth. Whether we individually felt relief, sadness, or anger, we were a congregation in turmoil. A lot has changed during the past year thanks to the competent and compassionate guidance of Rev. Jenny, and the work the Transition Team has set in motion.

We have helped the congregation shift from finding someone to blame for what went wrong whether it was how we re-opened after Covid or dissatisfaction over Elizabeth's time as minister of First Church, to asking what we ourselves did well and what we could have done better. Slowly we have begun to talk to one another and return to some semblance of a fuller congregational life as we have been able to come together in person, post-Covid, and celebrate some of our cherished traditions once again.

The Transition Team is a microcosm of the larger congregation. At first it was a challenge for team members just to show up for each other. As the TT struggled to come together, we as individuals found it easier to talk about one another than to talk to each other directly. Learning not to triangulate conversations is an ongoing process. We instituted check-ins at the start of each meeting and learned to invite conversation rather than confrontation with conversation starters such as, "can you help me understand why you said or did that? As we practiced doing this our assumptions morphed into a more accurate understanding of what the other person was thinking or feeling, and the team began to focus on structuring safe ways for the congregation to talk to one another.

At times when it felt like we didn't know which way to turn, Jenny offered guidance but always empowered us to work together to mend our grievances, show up for our community, and look at ourselves. We are creating our own interim process and designing activities that help us learn more

about who we were and who we are becoming. What kind of partner have we been to our past few ministers? What kind of ministerial partner do we want to be in the future? As members of the Transition Team, we have learned and shared with the congregation the importance of not blaming others but of listening to them with curiosity. We hope that as we treat others with respect that we are helping to rebuild trust among folks at First Church. Together, we are beginning to realize our potential for renewal and growth. Through our interim process we are doing the work necessary to prepare for a new ministerial partnership that has real hope of success.

Just as I hope my daughter grows and learns more about herself during her interim between relationships, I hope we at First Church do as well.