

Personal Reflections on the Interim Process So Far
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In addition to the factual account of our activities this year, we (Melody Lee and I) thought it might be useful as co-chairs to offer some personal observations for your consideration. Here are my own thoughts, focused mostly on the experience of “coming to terms with our history” – the goal we tackled this year.

- Five years after Rev. Barz-Snell’s resignation, many in the church are still coming to terms with his departure. My sense is that, to truly move forward, we need, somehow, to “let go of Jeff” – really let go, so that we are not judging the performance of future ministers by whether they perform their duties “the way that Jeff did”. It may be worth considering how to facilitate that.
- There is a great deal of anxiety and actual fear within the congregation around sharing our thoughts honestly. People are afraid of being judged, criticized, shunned, or otherwise being on the receiving end of negative reaction. This isn’t a healthy dynamic – can we address and resolve this? How can we make it safe for people to be candid?
- Perhaps related to the above – we seem to find it difficult to acknowledge and own our mistakes – personal and corporate. This is a common human dynamic, but it is also an impediment to improving as a community. How can we make it safe for us – individually and as a congregation – to own our mistakes?
- There is a lack of accurate information about the basic factual events of the last few years. People have questions about simple things like: how was the decision to have a one-year interim taken? How did the search team settle on Rev. Ide? While recognizing the need for confidentiality in some areas, it may be helpful to recover a basic factual narrative of events and make that available to the congregation. At a minimum, it would be useful to have when we begin considering structural or procedural changes we might want to make at FCIS.
- When the time comes to begin a new search, we need to take a hard look at what we expect from a prospective candidate. And, perhaps, a hard look at what we are willing to offer by way of compensation etc. My sense is that, among many other issues, Rev. Ide suffered from unrealistic expectations on our part of the minister’s role and responsibilities.
- Related to the above, it might be useful to provide teaching to the congregation about some core issues of church polity and governance – shared ministry, relational covenants, the norms and responsibilities of membership (possibly including stewardship and volunteer activities). What are *our* jobs, as members of a congregation?

In general, I've been pleased with the congregation's response to our work this year – we've been able to get as many as 40 people in a room, together, talking with each other about difficult things, respectfully and without rancor. That is a huge win, and a great first step.

There are still a lot of people that haven't really engaged with the interim process. They may be afraid to join in, they may be waiting to see how it all plays out – it's hard to say what folks' motivations are. Going forward, we need to consider how to cast a wider net and bring more folks into the process.