

First Church in Salem Unitarian Universalist
Community Conversation 4/23/2023
Welcoming Elizabeth Ide and Dealing with Covid
Themes

Thoughts about Elizabeth

- We felt a sense of hope and optimism when Elizabeth first arrived. She was greeted warmly, had a lovely ordination, her office space was refurbished, and the Committee on Shared Ministry was formed to provide feedback.
- In retrospect, we expected her to hit the ground running and perhaps more structure and more consideration of her style and her needs would have been helpful.
- More informal opportunities for people to get to know the minister would have been helpful. When she offered to meet over coffee, few people showed up.
- Elizabeth was helpful with pastoral care and good at connecting to people one on one.
- Elizabeth introduced Soul Matters, a small group ministry, which was positive.
- Some of us appreciated the call to introspection rather than political action in Elizabeth's sermons.
- Many felt she was not a strong speaker and did not like her sermons.
- Some people were disappointed that Elizabeth was not more outgoing.
- Unarticulated expectations came to the surface, many of which had not been named before. There was a mismatch between these expectations and Rev. Ide's approach to the pulpit and interpersonal connections.
- Deb D's abrupt departure was difficult for the congregation. We could have managed her leaving in a more thoughtful way. The process of hiring a new RE director did not go well.
- There was a lack of communication within the church about leadership roles and structure.
- Elizabeth was slow to respond to emails.
- People began to gossip. Some jarring, discordant conversation began to take place that shocked and concerned people and raised fear.
- There was a lack of willingness to work with Elizabeth. People took matters into their own hands.

Thoughts about Covid

- We protected our most vulnerable members with the use of masks and Zoom during Covid.
- We adapted quickly to Zoom. People connected through Breakout sessions on Zoom to replace coffee hour.
- The pastoral care team stayed active.
- Soul Matters and Soulful Home programs helped people stay connected.
- Services on Zoom could have been more creative.
- There was a lack of engagement by children and teens on Zoom.
- Some members were ready to meet outside or return sooner than others.
- Some people felt isolated and unheard.

- Attendance dropped as Zoom continued.
- Some people engaged in triangulated conversations voicing complaints to others instead of the person with whom they were upset.
- Elizabeth made an effort to listen to and support the anxieties of people in the congregation.
- There were not enough opportunities to express loss and grief.
- It took people some time to reattach and come back to church consistently after Covid.