

Celebrating our Ministry, Paul Stewart, Treasurer of the Congregation

In the beginning, there was Reverend Seth Freeman Swift, who served 24 years as the Minister of this Second Congregational Meeting House Society.

Then there followed 30 other Ministers, who served an average of 4½ years each.

Then in 1972 came Edward B. Anderson, who served 26 years.

Then there were:

Emily Palmer

Robert Thayer

Tim Jensen

Jennifer Brooks

Jennifer Brooks was our third longest serving Minister **so far**, at 11 years.

Then in mid-2011 David Horst was called as Interim Minister, which is a fixed 2 year term. The idea is that an Interim Minister holds the fort while the congregation searches for and Calls a new settled Minister.

I recall in 2012, David's second year, there was talk of asking David to continue on; we had not prepared to search for or Call a Minister, and it just seemed easier to keep going with David for a while more.

David, to his credit, and true to his original understanding with us, directed us to 'get with the program' and do our search; he was not going to let us take the easy way out.

So, a group was selected to search for possible settled Ministers.

Now during this time there was a parallel discussion about whether it would be best for us to look for a part-time Minister or a full-time Minister. We had agreed, also at that time, to balance our budget, and we had had pretty much a complete turnover of our staff as a result. It wasn't clear if we could afford a full time Minister. Although Ministers are one of this world's great bargains, still it's a significant expense for a congregation such as ours.

After much thought, the congregation committed to calling a full time Minister.

Now let's look at this issue from another point of view.

Who do you know who, just in this past month:

- Officiated at 3 weddings
- And 2 memorial services
- Is bringing the Kindness Project to the island,
- Is Working with Sunny Daily on a support group for Transgender young adults and parents
- Was a co-organizer of the Lights for Liberty event
- Is working to become the island Fire Chaplain
- Continues to guide the Immigration Resource Center
- Organizes weekly events for J-1 Visa visitors,
- Is an active member of the Interfaith Council,
- Provides assistance at the Cottage Hospital, the Community Foundation, the Housing Authority, and the Cape and Islands Migrant and Refugee Committee,

And that was just working outside our Meeting House, all that while handling multitudinous inside things like

- Running 4 or 5 Sunday services,
- Caring for our elders and those in need,
- Working in several ways to keep us safe,
- Promoting our congregation to the wider community
- Keeping our staff running smoothly
- Being a member of the Board of Trustees, and meeting with most of our other committees and task forces,
- And so much more I cannot list it all ...

This is, **clearly, more** than just a full-time job.

So, to summarize,

In 2012 this congregation made the decision to call a full-time Minister; knowing it was a financial stretch but trusting that it was worth it for our congregation and for our community,

A search committee braved wind and waves to travel to the continent to interview numerous candidates, and finally our congregation called Reverend Linda A. Simmons in 2013 as our new full time settled Minister.

The intervening years have clearly demonstrated and proved what a good fit Rev. Linda is for our congregation and our community.

So, today, I say to you that this congregation is **privileged** to have Reverend Linda Simmons as our Minister. I feel that we should plan in the months ahead to recommit to our decision some years ago to call Rev. Linda as our full-time settled Minister, and we should all appreciate what she has brought to us and to our Island.

[shuffle papers together]

Oh, Oh, my ostensible purpose for speaking to you at this time was to call for the weekly offering. I used my time for a different purpose, but still the offering will now be gratefully received.