

TOWN HALL Q and A - The Minister's Resignation

1. **QUESTION:** Was the board and the people involved in this process unanimous in the decision to ask for the Minister's resignation? And was it based on just one person or a few or many personal interactions to consider?

ANSWER: The board reached a unanimous decision because of the specific responses received during the Ministerial Assessment. This was not easy for members of the Board, but the decision to dismiss [ask for resignation] was unanimous. *See the President's Presentation for information about the negotiated termination and agreements reached.*

2. **QUESTION:** The six areas of concern in Minister's Performance, what were they?

ANSWER: Two of the categories were very strong, with most people saying these were strength or they were satisfactory. Unfortunately, we don't have the Ministerial Assessment Summary Report in hand. However, two were:

- Pastoral care: Across the board, individuals (even those speaking very favorably of the Minister) who reported coming for comfort or counsel said there was not much empathy or warmth.
- Quality of sermons: The Minister has been getting feedback since going through fellowship. Although some improvement was seen, not as much as needed.

A member of the Ministerial Assessment Team on zoom added that the two areas of strengths were outreach and denominational affairs. The areas of weakness were pastoral care and counseling, organizational ministry (supporting membership and lay leadership), worship, personal and professional growth, and rites of passage.

The President shares this list of primary issues (based on the Ministerial Assessment Summary Report) from her preparatory notes for meeting with the Minister. However, as is her practice, she concentrated on the first (A) as grounds for dismissal. However, (B) was clearly a good backup.

Although the Minister showed areas of strength that are considered valuable to the congregation, the Ministerial Assessment provided specific areas in which the Minister's performance was rated as unsatisfactory:

- A. Improper leadership and management, especially in interactions with member-volunteers and congregational leaders or in areas of interpersonal disagreement (Practical Arts and Personal/Professional Growth)*
- B. Unwillingness to receive constructive criticism and feedback, especially in areas of management or interpersonal conflict (Personal/Professional Growth)*
- C. Inability to model covenantal behavior in many of their interactions with members (Practical Arts)*
- D. Failure to encourage, or nurture lay leadership in committee work or program task work (Organizational Ministry)*
- E. Lack of warmth and empathy to congregants seeking counselling or pastoral care (Counseling and Pastoral Care)*
- F. Sermons often not emotionally fulfilling, or spiritually nurturing in either word and/or presence (Worship)*

3. **QUESTION:** Rev. Charlotte's farewell message implied that she was kind of surprised by this. Did she have fair notice and a decent chance to improve her performance? And if not, had these problems appeared suddenly, and/or was termination the only alternative?

ANSWER: Since witnessing an incident in October, the President had been meeting *on a regular basis* with the Minister regarding reports of poor interactions that were disturbing/*upsetting* to our member-volunteers and witnesses to the events. The Minister was unwilling or unable to understand the power difference between a minister and congregant as something that could not be resolved by Right Relations. Resources and other guidance for some sort of rehabilitation to get this very smart and organized person back on track were not successful.

Additionally, this assessment followed the Ministerial Assessment done in 2022 before the Minister's sabbatical. The scores were very similar, with areas of strength and problems that needed to be addressed. This year's Ministerial Assessment proved to be very similar with no hope in sight for change.

4. **QUESTION:** Were the President and Board direct in their conversations with the Minister with the descriptions of the problem areas and expected resolutions?

ANSWER: The President is not only direct in all communications [but has a process of dismissal that does not disrespect the person being evaluated.] The Ministerial Assessment Team and the Board made every effort to be clear, up to and throughout the final discussion with the Minister. It was not until being faced with another incident reported the night before the April 25th meeting did the Minister relent and agree to leave BRUU's service.

5. **QUESTION:** How often is the Minister's performance assessed?

ANSWER: The assessment can be done yearly or every two to three years. In this case, the last assessment was technically in 2022, so it was only two years since the last assessment. *[Normally, the next assessment might have happened last May but with the former President ending her term and the new President coming on, the Board was laser focused on the strategic plan and reorganization, as well as preparing for applying for a major grant.*

By the end of the holidays, the Board was ready to begin discussing the undertaking of the Ministerial Assessment. Careful not to allow the frustration or anger on the staff departure and other incidents (that had been shared within other congregants) to exploit or derail the Ministerial Assessment process launched in late January, the President and Board worked diligently to ensure that the Ministerial Assessment would be fair and by the book. To do otherwise would call into question both the Board's and the congregation's ethics and adherence to the Covenant.

The Ministerial Assessment this year confirmed some of the incidents reported during the year. It was clear that the issues had become insurmountable, so the Board *was now able to move forward and* needed to act.

6. **QUESTION:** Regarding the severance package described in the President's presentation. Will the minister be paid up [through*] November 2024?

ANSWER: Yes, the severance package specifically says that in a negotiated agreement, the minister is entitled to one month of pay for salary, housing, and insurance, and possibly retirement for each year served, and the minister was six years, so that would be six-month's worth of pay for salary, housing, insurance, and retirement was included.

However, should the minister find a full-time position, then severance would cease, or if they find a position that pays \$100,000 or more, severance would cease. So, it's not six months fixed, it's six months worst case, and that if they are successful in finding another position, then that would end.

**The question posed at Town Hal was "until November" but is edited here so that the answer to the negotiated term of financial obligation is clear and that "through November" is more accurate and fully understood by the reader.*

7. **QUESTION:** Can you share what the congregation felt was lacking in the Minister's performance so that the next search committee can really focus on those areas?

ANSWER: We're hoping to have, in fact, are encouraging, more discussions on what we need to take deep dive into, such as what types of questions to ask in future searches. We have no plans past like the end of this month at this point, but we will be open to all discussions. It's highly unlikely that the board, with the congregation, will be considering a minister, interim or settled, anytime soon.

We have more work ahead before introducing a full-time, part-time, seasonal, interim or settled minister of any type. The board and staff believe that this time also provides opportunities for positive and innovative change that will strengthen and enhance BRUU. That is not to demean the work that has come before it, but rather it's an opportunity for us to do some growing as well.

These may include better defining or clarifying the minister's role, including relations with our member volunteers and leadership, such as committee chairs, team leaders, and the board members' leadership. The board encourages and, frankly, expects your engagement, the congregation's engagement, in these efforts, as this is your church.

8. **QUESTION:** What can we expect about our movement forward?

ANSWER: We're looking for ways in which we can improve our communications, improve process. When it comes to personnel issues, the Board is limited in what we can share with you until some action is taken and assessed for improvement. But there are probably lots of areas to consider for ideas on how to improve the way we work together. One way is Right Relations by developing a good understanding of what it is to be in covenant. We need to have a right relations team so we can work things out when there is a dispute, so it is done in a civil, or covenantal way.

We also need to clarify the professional relationship between the Minister and staff with the member-volunteers who contribute their time and talent to BRUU because *it is the bedrock of BRUU operations. We need to recognize the importance of the power differential between a minister and congregant, in which a congregant most likely will not feel comfortable or empowered to report improper behavior by a minister. Because these situations cannot be resolved as a peer-to-peer relationship which would properly be handled by Right Relations, we need to develop a process.*

9. **QUESTION:** Will a copy of your presentation today be made available, a written copy?

ANSWER: Yes, a summary will be provided to the congregation in Crossroads or some other form of communication; however, if you want to see the whole presentation, a link will be available in Knowledge Base.