

Timeline of Departure

Rev. Marian actively served at First UU of Columbus from August 2017–August 2022. During her time at First UU, there were several ministers that were hired and left service prior to the conclusion of their contracts.

2018–2019

Rev. Elizabeth Mount started a two-year contract as interim DRE in August 2018. Rev. Mount's contract was terminated in May 2019, 15 months before their contract was finished. Elizabeth filed a complaint with the Unitarian Universalist Ministers' Association (UUMA) about their supervision by Rev. Marian.

2020–2021

In the summer of 2020, Rev. Eric Meter left the congregation for his new called pulpit in Canada. Rev. Isabel Call was selected by the search committee as the part-time Pastoral Care Director to the congregation. Rev. Isabel started at First UU in September 2020, ordained by the congregation in spring of 2021. In May 2021, a letter from the Ministerial Fellowship Committee (MFC) notified Lisa Brandt, the July '20–June '21 Board chairperson, of Elizabeth's formal complaint of abusive supervision. This letter was marked as confidential and only to be shared on a 'Need to Know' basis.

In September of 2021, Rev. Isabel left First UU to take a called minister position out of state. You can listen to Rev. Isabel Call's reasons that she gave during the [Hope 4 Us Staff Sharing Circle](#).

In December of 2021, the MFC shifted Rev. Marian's Fellowship status from "full" to "probationary" status, with a list of actions for Rev. Marian to complete in order to regain full Fellowship, and sent a letter notifying Don Jones, the July '21–June '22 Board chairperson, of Rev. Marian's status change. Rev. Marian's probationary status was not shared with the rest of the Board at that time.

2022

At the beginning of 2022, an additional staff complaint was made to the UUMA and Good Officers were engaged to support mediation and began attending meetings between Rev. Marian and a staff member. In the spring, Don Jones moved out of state and informed the incoming Board chairs, Jan Phillips and Billy Davidson of Rev. Marian's probation status. Shortly after learning of the UUMA complaints and probation status, Board members Carolee Noonan and Lisa Brandt interviewed the staff.

In July of 2022, the Board co-chairs and Personnel chair had an initial meeting with Rev. Marian, outlined concerns, and asked Rev. Marian for reflection on the issues. In subsequent communications and a second meeting in July, the Board members and Personnel chair found Rev. Marian unwilling to engage in resolving the workplace issues via conversations with her (as her employer) regarding the complaints outlined by the MFC. You can listen to the Board's experience as expressed during the [Hope 4 Us Board Sharing Circle](#).

In July & Aug 2022, the Board decided to facilitate the upcoming two staff planning meetings due to tensions between Rev. Marian and staff.

In August of 2022, the Board chairs, on advice of the Good Officers, asked Rev. Marian not to attend Rev. Kelli's ordination. This request was not announced to the congregation.

Following this request for Rev. Marian not to attend the ordination, Rev. Kelli and the Board received a number of emails critical of this decision, including congregants informing Rev. Kelli that they would no longer be attending the ordination in response to the Board's request. Rev. Kelli was also receiving texts and phone calls criticizing the decision.

Within that same week, the Board was made directly aware of ministers being invited to protest the ordination service by escorting Rev. Marian inside or standing alongside Rev. Marian outside the church.

In addition, a congregant submitted a document of a conversation with Rev. Marian describing her intention to stand in the gallery during the ordination.

Based on Rev. Marian's initial response at being asked to not attend the ordination (without the Board making a public statement), her escalating behavior toward staff, the letters, texts, and phone calls of protest, and the probability of disruption, the Board felt it was necessary to put Rev. Marian on Administrative Leave.

On August 26, 2022, the Board put Rev. Marian on Administrative Leave and announced the leave to the congregation via email, the night before Rev. Kelli's ordination.

The initial hope of the Administrative Leave was to allow the Board some time to figure out how to handle the dynamics and tensions happening between Rev. Marian and staff, however, at a meeting with the Board co-chairs and Personnel chair on September 1, 2022, Rev. Marian submitted her intent to retire in 2025.

The Board then entered retirement negotiations that lasted until the end of October. Because of ongoing negotiations, the Board was not allowed to explain the "outcome" of the administrative leave.

During the same time of Rev. Kelli's ordination, the Board and Rev. Marian were informed that two additional letters of concern were filed with the MFC. The Board was advised not to say anything about her retirement request until it was signed, which was almost two months later.

After September 1, 2022, the Board continued to receive statements submitted from prior staff, congregants, former Board members, and the MFC.

In December of 2022, the Board received a report from the MFC regarding Rev. Marian's progress in her professional development and repair work regarding a complaint filed in 2021. The MFC's review is summarized as follows:

"The Executive Committee of the MFC reviewed extensive documentation for their first annual review of Rev. Stewart's two-year probation period regarding her supervision practices. Based on this review, they did not accept that this was a successful first year of probation and have made additional requirements for her going forward. Rev. Stewart is under a hold from ministerial positions for a minimum of one year while she works to integrate healthy boundaries and direct communication practices."

Rev. Marian's retirement agreement was completed in May 2023, prior to any resolution by the MFC regarding her Fellowship status.