

## Candidate Liaison Report – September 2017 MFC – Rev. Eileen Wiviott

This was an enriching and de-mystifying experience that has helped me better understand our movement and professional ministry. I was anxious about the amount of preparation required for this weekend, honored to be asked, and yet unsure of what I had to bring. It was heart-filling to be greeted so warmly by the committee members who interviewed me last year and treated as a valued colleague by each person. “Pulling back the curtain” is a fitting metaphor, but instead of discovering a small, balding man operating levers where Oz might have been, I find behind this curtain, a complex, beautiful, and interconnected web of thoughtful humans doing their best to embody and promote the highest aspirations of Unitarian Universalist ministry.

If I could give one piece of advice to those who are preparing to see the MFC, I would suggest they approach the experience knowing that this group is profoundly dedicated and kind. They are looking to see your authentic selves, wanting to launch you into joyful and life-giving ministry. It may have already been suggested that you think of your MFC panel as your congregation and minister to them. I would echo that. I was pleased to experience the level of intention, care and reverence with which each person held the process, each other and the candidates.

I noticed, with the transition to the new competencies, there was a fair amount of wrestling with how to review the materials and to ask questions that would best enable the candidates to accurately demonstrate integrated knowledge. I saw that with all the effort to standardize the process, to examine our biases and make it fair and objective, there is still a significant amount of subjectivity that may not be possible to eliminate. I wondered if one panel was tougher or easier than the others. I wondered if one candidate's performance unfairly influenced what we asked subsequent candidates. I wondered about the arbitrariness of the current numbering system and how effective it is in facilitating ongoing formation. These are concerns that the MFC is actively and thoroughly engaged in, seeking to make the process more equitable and indicative of the formation of healthy ministry.

As you prepare, know that Rev. David Pettee is ready to look through your packet with you, and beyond that, to minister to you in your preparation. In my years leading up to seeing the MFC, I never passed up an opportunity to talk with him – at General Assembly, when he visited my seminary, over the phone. If you haven't already, contact him. He will respond and help you greatly. If you don't have a collegial group and a mentor as you prepare, consider getting both soon. Find those who are willing to be with you compassionately as you prepare, keeping you accountable, grounded, and attuned to your growth.

Overall, I found the processes of the MFC to be holistic, mindful and evolving with deep care. I believe that if a candidate is prepared and enters with basic competence, integrity, and a clear call, they will be seen and encouraged to continue growing toward life-giving ministries. We prayed, before each person entered the room, that each would bring their full selves and that we would see them with love and compassion. I believe

we did that to the best of our abilities. I think you will find the same when you enter the room. Blessings on your journey.