



UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH OF KENT
ESTABLISHED 1866

Hello ministerial candidates,

I would like to share that within the UUCK, the extraordinary is possible. My story is but one example of the life-changing transformations that have blessed so many members of our congregations. I, like many who have entered the doors of UUCK, have been transformed by the experience. Our vibrant and accepting church community offers a wellspring of nourishment where one can grow in spirit, relationships, and self-expression for congregants and ministers.

As I was unfamiliar with Unitarian Universalism when I attended my first worship service in 2000, I was overjoyed in realizing that I had found my theological home. But my joy extends well beyond the discovery of Unitarian Universalism. At the UU Church of Kent, I found myself. I quickly learned that UUCK has a culture of recognizing that everyone possesses qualities and talents that have a place of value within the church community. The Kent UU church is a safe environment where one can explore their strengths and talents, including those undeveloped or even unknown.

When I join an organization, I do so with the hope of being a contributing member. This was easy to do as volunteer opportunities abounded and everyone I encountered on a task force or committee seemed warm and approachable. I didn't perceive any sense of cliques and felt my presence and contributions were welcomed. I fairly soon found myself as part of a small team studying new models of leadership for our growing congregation, followed by inclusion on another group revising church bylaws. Within five years of joining the church, I was delighted to be elected to the church Board of Trustees, a leadership role that I certainly never anticipated holding when I became active in the church. For so many like me, volunteer service to the church is so enjoyable and meaningful that, well... one thing just seems leads to another.

Opportunities for personal growth within the UUCK are abundant. I became a Worship Associate and discovered a sense of aliveness that I had not previously encountered. The Worship Associates program has enhanced worship for the congregation and provided growth opportunities for the participants. I believe that the inclusion of additional voices from the pulpit has enriched the experience for the minister as well.

I am one of two Commissioned Lay Leaders (CLL), a program offered through a panel of ministers serving under the former UU district office. Our congregation includes two more members who are in training for Commissioning. In the 17 years that I have been attending UUCK, four of our members have enrolled in seminary and three are now ministers. I believe that this is a testament to the vibrant and inspirational environment that exists at UUCK.

As part of our ongoing evolution, members co-create church life along with the minister. The ideas and talents of individuals are highly recognized and some of our most beloved programs, such as Hogwarts, were initiated at the grassroots level by enthusiastic and dedicated members. One legacy of past UUCK ministers is that the church offers so many ways in which individuals can grow their souls, build relationships and feel a sense of contribution. Some individuals prefer to engage in short-term or one-

time activities. Other people like me, are "committee junkies" and thrive on the energy generated by the minister.

Finding my call to religious service ever growing, I entered an interfaith seminary and was ordained in 2012. This amazing, unexpected chapter of my life is a direct result of my engagement with the UUCK. The church culture provides the safety needed for exploration and taking risks as well as a forgiving acceptance when missteps occur.

I pursued seminary training in community ministry, as I have no interest in parish ministry at this post-career time in my life. However, I have been happy to assist as a back-up to the minister during absences, including extended periods of coverage for maternity leave and between ministers. I am fortunate to have had the time and flexibility to occasionally assist the church in this capacity. I am retired from my long career as the executive director of the county public housing authority and now work part-time as the manager of a hot meal and food pantry. Because of my history of work in the local social services field, my strength lies in helping to build relationships between UUCK groups and the community. The foundation for my profession and my religious efforts is my passion for justice work supporting local low-income and racial minority populations. This passion is in total alignment with the energy and vision of the congregation.

Our church has a very long history of social justice work, and has been particularly engaged with anti-war movements, human rights and environmentalism. The church is now beginning to focus more intensely on racial justice. The growing energy propelling this effort is palpable. This work is also prompting some discomfort, which is a good sign that the efforts extend beyond the superficial. We are enthused about growing our activism under the guidance and inspiration of the new minister.

My journey over the past 17 years has taken me to places I never could have imagined venturing when I entered the doors of the UUCK. I am not exceptional in this regard. Many individuals have experienced the ability to be authentic, curious and stretch boundaries beyond one's comfort zone because of the supportive, non-judgmental, and forgiving nature of our church family. Participation at UUCK can truly blossom into liberation and empowerment!

Although a change in ministry provokes anxiety, I am excited about fresh perspectives and new possibilities and I believe that the congregation is as well. I look forward to offering my energy to the new endeavors and ministries evolving as we journey alongside our next settled minister.

In faith and service,


Christie Anderson