



UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST MINISTERS ASSOCIATION

Dear Colleagues:

If you are in search for a warm, creative and vibrant congregation with which you can share in ministry, I encourage you to give serious consideration to the Unitarian Universalist Church of Kent. When I accepted the call to Kent, I had in mind that I was making a commitment for at least five years. I ended up remaining for more than eleven years because I fell in love with the people and found my ministry with them to be deeply fulfilling. Very early on in my ministry, the congregation experienced an intense conflict that could have caused damage and division for years to come. What happened instead was that congregational leaders made a decision to choose health and to act in the best interest of the congregation as a whole. That decision soon became a commitment which characterized the length of my tenure. In Kent, you will find a cadre of experienced, thoughtful and dedicated leaders who have taken the time to learn about how to be a healthy church and who have worked to put their knowledge into practice.

You will also find a congregation full of people who are eager to share in ministry. Several years ago we did a little research and found that a significant percentage of members of the congregation were engaged as volunteers in the ministry of the church in at least one way and many in multiple ways. In addition to the many volunteers involved in the congregation's impressive music programs, there are fabulous volunteers serving in roles across the congregation including in the religious education programs, as Worship Associates, on the Care Team, in governance, in social justice programs, for Hogwarts and Walden and the service auction and the stewardship campaign and even in the office. My experience was one of having ample collaborators who respected my work as the called minister, which gave me lots of room to innovate, experiment and lead. I'm proud of the work we did together in growing the programs, staffing and financial resources of the church, strengthening governance and ministry by moving into policy based governance, establishing the church as a credible partner in the larger community and in working toward a long-awaited capital campaign and expansion. I was sorry not to remain long enough to see that effort through to completion. I hope that my successor will have the joy of crafting the service to dedicate the beautiful new fellowship hall and the privilege of using that space to further the congregation's ministries.

I am aware that the congregation had a disappointing and painful experience with their interim minister. I imagine that there are lessons they can learn about how they

Nurturing Excellence in Ministry

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are as a congregation when they are under stress. Based on my experience, I have every reason to believe that they will learn what they need to learn and move toward health. They aren't perfect, but they are willing to have hard conversations and do hard work in pursuit of their goals. They also realize their minister isn't perfect. I went to Kent right from seminary with lots to learn. They helped me become the minister I am today. They know how to love a minister, they know how to be loved by a minister and they know how to love each other. With a skilled and dedicated staff team, a fabulous Affiliated Community Minister, wonderful Commissioned Lay Ministers, great lay leadership, expanded space and excellent professional ministry, I am confident that the future of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Kent will be bright. I know I sound like a cheerleader and that is because I am. This is a really great place to serve.

Whoever accepts the call to Kent will have the opportunity to live in an awesome college town that has experienced a renaissance in the last decade. My family and I loved living in walking distance of downtown Kent. We took full advantage of community and cultural events in Kent and we loved the music, arts, libraries, parks, museums, restaurants and festivals of Northeast Ohio. Finally, I'll also say that my minister spouse and I found the local chapter of colleagues an important source of support, inspiration and connection in our ministries.

Please don't hesitate to be in touch if you have any questions. I'd be glad to speak with you.

In faith,

Rev. Melissa Carvill Ziemer
Acting Executive Director
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