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Dear Colleague,

I write to share my impressions of Valley Unitarian Universalist Congregation in hopes that you will consider becoming their next settled minister. Like any congregation VUU has its growing edges, but my eight years among these good people were truly a joy for me and my family and I know that their next settled minister will be fortunate to serve with them.

When I was interviewing in 2012, congregants told me that they wanted to be more involved in their community. I was excited, but like most ministers I had been told that before. Turns out, they didn't just want to be more involved, they were doing the work to make it happen. Together we sponsored interfaith conversations and services and advocated for justice for and with migrant peoples, our LGBTQ+ loved ones, our neighbors experiencing homelessness, BIPOC folks, and the earth itself. The congregation put in the elbow grease required to sustain these efforts, not just as a bunch of individuals but as a congregation. It was inspiring to be a part of the work.

VUU's social justice work is fueled by excellent worship services. The congregation values quality music which may come from UU hymnals, other faith traditions, or popular songs which lend themselves to the theme of the service. The congregation is blessed with many great musicians, and with excellent music staff. I never threw anything at them that they couldn't do, and I didn't go easy! The choir is a blessing in their services, and their special music is beloved by the congregation. They love and express appreciation for good preaching too, and they're gracious when a sermon isn't the preacher's best.

VUU is also blessed with an excellent faith formation program. Their Director of Faith Formation, Marci Beaudoin, is second to none. The program is carefully designed and well implemented, and makes a difference in the life of children and youth. I especially loved the times I was able to attend the missions trips to Mexico and speak one on one with young people who were bridging into young adulthood.

The congregation also takes seriously its status as an employer. We worked together to increase the time allotted and the pay for the Faith Formation Director and other positions. I received a review every year, and was always given both accolades for work well done and something to improve my ministry. I improved my own administrative work by learning from the many professionals who give of themselves to serve the congregation.

Of course, VUU has growth areas as well. There are not many attendees from the neighborhood just around the campus, for example, and although we talked about outreach during my tenure it was never undertaken. In other words, there is potential to make VUU even stronger and more effective, a challenge which I know the right minister will relish. That minister will certainly have strong partners in the work.

Leaving VUU was the hardest decision of my professional life. I only left because I was ready to leave congregational work altogether. I am now in training to become a Certified Pastoral Educator. There was no congregation whose grass looked any greener to me than VUU.

If you would like to speak with me, I would welcome the conversation. Congratulations on your decision to consider this amazing congregation.

With love,  
Rev. Andy