

September 28, 2021

Dear Colleague,

I am so pleased that you are considering Valley Unitarian Universalist Congregation for your next ministry. I work with the congregation as its primary contact for the UUA's Pacific Western Region and have supported them during their interim ministry as well as their ministry with Rev. Dr. Andy Burnette.

Valley UU is a vibrant community of all ages, with strong worship, music, and programs. During their ministry with Andy, they grew in size and grew in maturity, becoming more outward-looking and interconnected with the surrounding community. They expanded the hours and position of Marci Beaudoin, their excellent director of faith formation, and nurtured a meaningful experience for everyone, from toddlerhood through elderhood.

It was painful for the congregation in 2017 when their beloved minister told them he was leaving to become the Southern Regional Lead for the UUA. While it is true many at VUU began to view the UUA differently after the 2017 hiring fiasco, Andy was welcomed back wholeheartedly. The VUU board president at the time received 90 letters of support for Andy's return, and none opposed.

After the reversed resignation, Andy and the congregation had a productive relationship, experimenting with a second service, expanding homeless ministries, engaging in a visioning process, and running a capital campaign. Once Covid-19 struck, Andy started many initiatives to help keep the VUU connected during lockdown. When an opportunity presented itself for a CPE residency in the fall of 2020, Andy took it.

They have done some healing of the feelings from 2017 and Andy's 2020 resignation during the ministry of Rev. Fred Wooden and my hope is that, as Covid-19 subsides and the community can gather in person again, the healing and the "looking forward" can continue.

They are a good congregation. In his exit interview with me, Andy said "My hope for the congregation is that they become more and



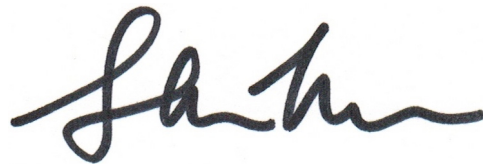
more fully who they are. They really are a fantastic group of people. Whoever comes next is fortunate.”

A word about the broader UU community you’d be joining: It’s very supportive and collegial. Beyond the colleagues in the four UU congregations of greater Phoenix, the Arizona-Las Vegas cluster of UU religious professionals meets together three times per year. The Pacific Southwest UUMA is a warm and inclusive chapter with two to three annual retreats that are well-attended by Arizona colleagues.

The Pacific Western Region (PWR) spans from El Paso to Alaska, from Hawaii to Montana, and include 180+ congregations served by a dynamic team of eight program staff headed by Rev. Carlton Elliott Smith. Each staff person has approximately 30 congregations that they work with as Primary Contact, and each of us has specialties that we share with all the region’s congregations.

Our Pacific Western Region staff team is here to support you as you consider this truly wonderful congregation. I invite you to contact me to learn more about Valley UU. You can reach me at 858-215-2650 or smillspaugh@uua.org. (I am based in San Diego.) I look forward to connecting with you.

In faith, hope, and love,



Rev. Sarah Gibb Millspaugh
Congregational Life Staff
Pacific Western Region

