

I am pleased that the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Durango is enthusiastically moving forward in the process of seeking the right minister to work with them to become something even more than they are today. Let me share my observations of the Fellowship from the perspective of a Unitarian Universalist minister who lives in Durango ten to twelve weeks a year because our son and his family are here. I have been attending the Durango Fellowship with some frequency for more than ten years and am an occasional guest minister. I offer this letter of support aware that my knowledge is partial and my affection for the Fellowship is strong.

Both my husband and I grew up Unitarian in Rockford, Illinois. Since our marriage Al and I have belonged to UU Fellowships for 29 years and belonged to UU churches for 15 years, in congregations that ranged from 25 members to 700 members. We belonged to the Fox Valley Unitarian Universalist Fellowship from 1969-1985. We have belonged to the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Door County, Wisconsin, since 2000, since I retired from fulltime ministry in 2000, having been minister of First Unitarian Church of Oklahoma City 1995-2000. We were members of First Unitarian Church of Dallas from 1985-1995, a period during which I was on the Ministerial Search Committee; four years later received my M. Div. from Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University; received UUA training in growth and development which involved working with all nine UU congregations in the Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex; and served First Unitarian Church of Dallas as interim minister for both the senior minister and the Minister of Religious Education (at different times) and specialized in pastoral care, membership, and young adult ministry.

The Durango Fellowship has many strengths. A variety of Sunday services. Effective Service Leaders. Children's RE. Social justice as a core value. Ability to plan and execute projects, including ambitious ones like the handsome building and grounds. Strong lay leadership and wide participation by members and friends. Nurturing and integrating groups with different interests. Good sense of community within the Fellowship and strong connections to Durango. Excellent pianist. A culture and core ethic of welcoming everyone. Strong traditions, like the summer camping weekend with a visiting UU minister in attendance, the Service Auction fundraiser, Greeting Your Neighbor, and discussion following the Coffee Hour.

Like other fellowships I have known, UUFD would be well served by a stronger adult religious education program to encourage individual spiritual growth. Unitarian Universalist history and culture are not only interesting but also relevant to our historical moment. It appears that more intentional pastoral care -- lay and ministerial in partnership -- would be a positive change.

I am impressed by the dedication of the Ministerial Task Force and the Board of Directors to keep everyone informed throughout the ministerial process. Leaders exemplify excellence in sustaining and growing and supporting UUFD with their resources of time and money and considerable skills. I remember being told that the hardest job in ministry is to be the first minister for a Fellowship because congregations don't know what they want/need/might benefit from at the beginning. While I detect wariness or fear of change by some people, I believe a good match with a minister who wants to explore openly the possibilities of becoming even better at doing what the Fellowship is already doing well is an exciting, worthy, and achievable goal. I look forward to participating in the Fellowship when we are in Durango can and reading the newsletter and website in between. Thank you for the opportunity to share my observations of and enthusiasm for the long-term health and well-being of the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Durango.

In hope and trust,

Cynthia Barnes Johnson  
7455 State Highway 57  
Baileys Harbor, WI 54202  
[cbjohnson@itol.com](mailto:cbjohnson@itol.com)

(920) 839-9298 home (Wisconsin)      (920) 288-7757 cell