



Letter from Our Minister, Reverend Katie Kandarian-Morris

To our Director of Faith Formation candidates:

Thank you for exploring this opportunity. I'm enthusiastic about this congregation. The Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Durango continues to experience numerical growth and a happy energy about our expanding ministry. We have families ready to be engaged in all church events, both Sunday services and community events. We have enthusiastic, participatory children who feel comfortable taking initiative and sharing their ideas. Take a look at our recent **Black Lives Matter play**. This is our children's capstone project after a year of studying anti-racism. We take seriously our mission to be lifespan learners. Recently, adults who completed the class, "Hindsight, Humor and Hope" participated in creating **worship for the community**. There is respect across the generations and a true appreciation for all that each person brings to this faith community. It is a great place to be "becoming."

We offer a monthly family breakfast leading up to the Sunday service as a way for families to connect and build relationships (on hold due to COVID), as well as a number of intergenerational events. Annually, we have hosted a holiday market where donations from members are organized into a shopping area for the children and youth to "buy" gifts for their families and wrap them onsite prior to Christmas. Another favorite event is pairing adult members with our preschool and elementary students as "Val Pals" — the adults mail cards and small gifts to their assigned child and then reveal who they are at a party on the Sunday closest to Valentine's Day. After COVID began, parents connected through the House Party app for a "happy hour" of checking in and playing games virtually together, and Sunday Faith Formation activities began happening on Zoom. One of the most popular intergenerational UUFD events is the annual summer weekend camping retreat near Vallecito Reservoir. Guest ministers speak and offer workshops, children's programming takes advantage of the beautiful surroundings, and large potluck meals and music deepen relationships across the congregation.

Our Programs

You will be walking into a program which, like many congregations during COVID, has experimented with new virtual and distance formats for education. We've had mixed but respectable results.

During the first year of our interim director's tenure, most age levels engaged in in-person, onsite Soul Matters theme-based faith formation. We added a class for preschool and kinder children and enjoyed modest growth in our elementary class – then COVID hit. Beginning with all ages on Zoom, we eventually moved our preschool and kinder classes off-line, using a mail-based program of Travelling Stuffys and Book Boxes focused on anti-racism education. Our elementary school children continued Zoom-based anti-racism learning culminating in a play, "Black Lives Matter: A Talk Show for Kids." In middle school, our Coming-of-Age mentors decided they would prefer to wait for a time in the future when in-person meetings would again be possible. Joining with four other congregations, we offered "Taking Flight," the online alternative to OWL for middle school. Our high school program has suffered most during the pandemic with our youth group advisor leaving and our kids pretty much checked out. We hope to dive into re-engaging our older youth soon.

Adult Faith Formation has seen increased popularity during COVID with six on-line classes and events offered in 2021. Our "parents as primary religious educator" offerings consisted of implementing our at-home Book Boxes and Travelling Stuffys as well as reading and journaling about the book *The Gift of Faith* by Jeanne Nieuwejaar.

Our Hope

We are looking for a new Director of Faith Formation who is passionate about our Unitarian Universalist faith, and who is experienced in sharing it with children, youth and adults. We need an innovator who will invite young families into our faith community while supporting parents as their children's primary religious educators. We want an educator that will help our children develop strong Unitarian Universalist identities, and we want our children to learn how to live their faith shoulder-to-shoulder with adults in service to our communities.

We seek a friendly, approachable, creative Director of Faith Formation who will help us build on our recent growth from a family sized congregation to a program size congregation with expanded, innovative programming.

Is this you? If so, we hope you'll apply, so we can learn more about you and what you can bring to our community.

Thank you for your interest,
Rev. Katie Kandarian-Morris