

# Daniel J. Van Sickle

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To Whom It May Concern:

I am delighted to write this letter of reference for the Rev. Roger Bertschausen. Roger's ministry changed the course of my spiritual life, and I feel honored and humbled to speak on his behalf. I have known Roger for nearly 20 years, first as the paid pianist of the Fox Valley Unitarian Universalist Fellowship in Appleton, Wisconsin, and subsequently as a member and lay worship leader of the same congregation. As a spiritual leader, a boss, and a friend, Roger's mentorship and guidance have played a central role in forming the person I have become, and his wisdom continues to guide me on the path to becoming a better inhabitant of our world.

Exceptional ministry extends well beyond the pulpit, but Sunday mornings in Appleton unfailingly gave Roger a chance to shine! His sermons were always carefully scripted, thoughtfully composed, and spiritually engaging. Worship was shaped by his ministerial persona: calm, unpretentious, and genuine. I remember the services to be both holy and humble. Intellectual exploration was balanced with story and myth, and as such, the services enriched both head and heart. Most impressively, he masterfully navigated the sometimes tumultuous waters of the weekly congregational response, replying in real time to the congregants' comments about his sermon. If ministry is an art (and, it surely is!), then Roger is a master designer, skillfully crafting a tapestry of worship woven with care, compassion, and grace.

When Roger invited me to join the lay ministerial team at the Fellowship, I was intrigued by the opportunity to help craft the structure of the services. With his guidance, those on this team were given a "behind the scenes" look at the art of worship creation, and the experience was one of direct collaboration. Roger met individually with each worship leader to discuss service ideas, and the worship was crafted in tandem. Indeed, Roger's sermons were invariably shaped and influenced by the reflections written by the lay leaders. Roger's approach to lay ministry allowed each member of our team to feel honored, important, and essential to the process. For me, the experience was one of great spiritual fulfillment, and Roger's mentorship helped me grow as a leader, a speaker, and a teacher.

About ten years ago, Roger and I were roommates for a week in Puerto Rico when we chaperoned a high school choir trip together. What a wonderful experience! Not everyone would be happy with the idea of spending a full week with their minister (and boss!), but I was thrilled. The trip allowed me to witness Roger in his role as a father, and I was delighted to see that he is genuinely the same person as the one who stands behind the pulpit on Sunday mornings. It is this authenticity of character that makes him stand out in my mind. Roger is Roger, whether you're joking with him on a beach in Puerto Rico or witnessing him deliver a sermon on Sunday morning.

Roger's commitment to crafting truly meaningful and collaborative worship makes him a fantastic minister. His genuine and unassuming character makes him a fantastic person. We miss Roger a great deal in Appleton! Those who have the opportunity to experience Roger's ministry will undoubtedly be changed in significant and profound ways.

With sincere gratitude,

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