

Tuesday, April 20, 2021

To Whom It May Concern:

I am delighted to offer this reference letter for my colleague Rev. Roger Bertschausen. I have worked closely with Roger for many years, and I have treasured him as a spiritually grounded and mature ministerial colleague who is deeply committed to our Unitarian Universalist faith.

Roger and I worked together first on the UUMA's CENTER committee and most recently as members of the International Joint Working Group (JWG). The Joint Working Group is comprised of the UUA's International Office Director, the Executive Director of the International Council of Unitarians/Universalists (ICUU), and the Executive Director of the Unitarian Universalist Partner Church Council (UUPCC).

I began in my position as the Unitarian Universalist Association's International Office Director in 2019 and was immediately impressed with Roger's deep commitment to our international faith partners. As the Executive Director of Unitarian Universalist Partner Church Council, Roger was (and still is!) a thoughtful, visionary leader, firmly grounded in an anti-imperialist perspective. It is this perspective that led him to develop clear and comprehensive resources that address hospitality, power, and mutuality for partner churches in the United States. Roger's cross-cultural savvy allowed him to navigate the complexity of our faith—the historical legacies and politics—with grace and a high degree of pastoral awareness.

Though Roger does not, and will not, force change, his pastoral approach is not to be underestimated. He is an attentive listener grounded in integrity. This means that he is skilled at holding space for disagreements, concerns, fears, and more, all without losing sight of our shared values and the larger vision. In this way, I believe Roger leads change, and does so by meeting people where they are and modeling the journey of transformation with patience and care. Through his presence and commitments, one often has the sense of being affirmed and held while being invited to grow more fully into the expansiveness of our faith.

In our work together, both on CENTER and on the JWG, I've experienced Roger as a wonderful collaborative partner. He opened up his home to host the JWG and UUPCC retreats, co-creating our agendas and ensuring that we had a balance of work and restorative time. Additionally, he was a key member of the collaborative that hosted the e-course *Are We an Imperial Faith*, bringing his humor as well as creativity and intellect to the project. During his time at Eden Seminary, Roger shared his polity class with the JWG, inviting us to serve as presenters and conversation partners with the students. It's rare to encounter a colleague who so fully embodies joyful and generous collaboration!

One of the things I admire most about Roger is his aptitude for systems-thinking and organizational change through developing strong governance structures. While I am less versed in the details of his congregational ministries (all of which have been successful and have benefitted from his skills as a competent systems-thinker), I

 24 Farnsworth Street, Boston MA 02210 | P (617) 742-2100 | F (617) 367-3237

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have witnessed Roger put his skills to good use in helping the UUA, ICUU, and UUPCC cast a vision of international ministry that is grounded in partnership, shared governance, and innovative organizational structure. It is unfortunate that he is no longer a part of that work as I do believe that we could—and would—benefit from his ability to see systems and know what's needed to move an organization into a sustainable and thriving future.

Our two years together as part of the JWG have been a highlight for me. I counted on Roger to be a reflective thinker willing to explore the complexity of the many issues we dealt with and to do so faithfully. He's willing to listen, incorporate new information into his thinking and change his mind, and bring his brilliance and humor to our work. I've treasured his pastoral sensibilities and trust him—without reservation—as a friend and colleague. I am certain that you will benefit from working alongside him as much as I have.

Respectfully,



Rev. Alicia R. Forde
International Office Director, UUA

