

## **Passages**

**June 24, 2018**

**Randa Todd**

- We are the church, not minister, not the building, us, each other.
  - We feed each other, and thereby create the church, and what we do for church, feeds us.
- We become ONE when we become actively engaged. People are structure of church, many doors to come thru to find your comfort level to become the church.

## **My Unitarian story**

### Beginning

- Growing up Unitarian my first memories, as child attending Berkeley Unitarian RE, Religious Education, on the path to the seven principles we walked through doors exploring other religious practices: Buddhist, Jewish, Christian Science, Baptist.
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We saw atoms being split at UC Berkeley, grew plants, exploring nature.

My parents volunteered for the summer day camp, dedicated to studying the culture of Japan, just a few years after WW2 was over.

They designed & built a Japanese teahouse complete with shoji doors in the common room.

RE is where I first learned to be part of the church. My parents volunteering taught me about sharing my skills with the congregation.

As a teenager we moved to a small beach community.

The next Unitarian door opened to a small fellowship in Santa Cruz California where my biggest thrill was being engaged to the board president's son.

As a young adult I moved back to SF and attended the Unitarian Cathedral. In the beautiful sanctuary, I listened to Joan Baez singing Amazing Grace. We went on protest marches. I tutored children in the neighborhood ghetto. Volunteerism is a strong foundation of our denomination.

Moved to PA

I visited UCH in the 1970s with my Catholic husband. At the end of the service he'd run out the door never to return to the church. When asked why he said "they don't have a cross, there's no cross there".

In 1979 I came alone and became a member of UCH. I enjoyed the Winter Solstices that Jean Mac Laughlin produced and chaired with Jim's help.

In 1982 I became pregnant and contacted Lee Barker, our minister, about baptism/ dedication. I said that the father's family was Catholic, and he said that's fine, we'll make it comfortable for all. I didn't realize that was impossible for the deeply Catholic family that I married into.

The doors of the Unitarian church were ones they were never going to walk through.

In 1990 I walked through the doors of UCH again openheartedly; needing support from my recent divorce, end of my job, and loss of my mother. I found the support and comfort I needed.

In 1993 I went back to college as a single Mom, having 2 jobs, and volunteering, and I had little time for steady church visits.

In college, I did discover my Unitarian teaching were a perfect match for being a Social Worker.

I took jobs in Human Services and loved the work.

Our church was going through a long, hard transition. The congregation broke in two and created a new UU church in Boiling Springs. It was a rough time for UCH.

In 1999, Jackie Zeigler became our interim minister, Pam Desch begged me to come back to church and check Jackie out. I came through the doors of UCH and have never looked back. Jackie introduced us to Cakes for the Queen of Heaven. Queen Spirit was created. That was the connection that has kept me here, engaged and contributing, rather than just taking and being cared for. I volunteered for all the wonderful activities UCH had. Auction, Yard Sale, Membership Committee, RE, and babysitting. The Craft Group, where not only did we do crafts, but fund raisers that supplied the kitchens with major appliances, etc. We went to Jackson Lick and shared crafts with the residents.

When we were still a small congregation that is how everything got done at UCH. Anywhere there was a need there was someone to volunteer.

We were the church, volunteers kept it vibrant, and beautiful.

Queen Spirit: Hard to define as it is constantly evolving. We started from a UU curriculum called "Cakes for the Queen of Heaven". We bonded and based our circle on our new found knowledge of Women's spirituality. We met monthly and with the help of Sandy Eckert and others we offered workshops for the women of the church. We offer the "Gender Knot" to everyone in the church. We danced, we sang, we shared and supported each other.

We had a Croning ceremony in New Jersey at the Murray Grove the UU Retreat Center, supported by Kay Cox. It was a wonderful experience. Sandy worked with Sue Monk Kidd, author of the "Secret life of Bees" to create a 9 month workshop called the "Mid-wife project" to Queen Spirit.

We all gained a better understanding of self. Cordell Affeldt took the opportunity to create what became the Cordell Collection, to raise fund for the Oliver LaGrone Scholarship fund.

We support Maidens, Mothers, and Crones, thru collaboration, a circle form of governance, rather than from above. We are a co-created women's spirituality practice.

JPD Women & Religion. Before my time in 1972, Women and Religion changed the language the UUA used to be inclusive to women. We had events, both big and small, all over the JPD district for women.

Contributing to and creating the church that you want:

I started volunteering for things that interested me, Yard sale, auction, crafts, small group ministry, and the new members committee.

When Howard Dana was our minister, I'd make suggestions and he'd say, "Go ahead, you do it." And I did. I started an "Artist's Way" group, movie night, and a "Build-A-Better Church" monthly events, where after dinner, divided into small groups, we each addressed the question, What Can I do to make UCH better? Then back in large group, we shared the ideas with each other.

My COUCH Group has been together for many years. These small group meetings are a wonderful was to create long term close bonds with other UU's.

I am grateful to find a community of diverse people with a wealth of knowledge, wisdom, and perspectives different than mine. Yet we share the same values of inherent worth, dignity of self, others, and the planet.

I believe in everything and in nothing, I don't believe in God or in science, I believe in magic, elusive definition, electrical charge, energy. We, all of us, are ONE, connected.