

FIRST UNITARIAN
CONGREGATIONAL SOCIETY
BROOKLYN
A UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATION

Transforming Lives

Lee Pardee

(Member since Nov 8, 1987)



Good morning. I'm Lee Pardee. I currently serve on the Board of Trustees. I've been attending First Unitarian for over 30 years.

When I first came here, I was very unhappy. The worship services and congregation comforted me. I made friends and participated in activities like choir and justice marches. And then, when I was feeling stronger, the congregation started discomfoting me.

One of the most uncomfortable times was about twenty years ago when there was a big division about where we wanted to go as a congregation and what minister should help us get there. Many members behaved poorly during this time, myself included. It may be hard to believe as you sit here and feel the warmth of our congregation's welcome now, but had you visited back then, you might never have returned. We were unhappy and unhealthy. Often, we weren't kind to each other. Many of us were blind to our own failings, but quick to criticize the imperfections of everyone else. Our minister left.

How did we change? Not easily.

For me, the most important change we made during this time was creating our right relations covenant. The covenant, which you agree to when you join the congregation, states how we promise to treat each other. It isn't easy to uphold. We still sometimes say and do hurtful things. But I, and many of you, strive to speak with kindness and respect, assume good intentions, examine our own intentions, and acknowledge and apologize when we have caused unintended pain. Partly because of this covenant, one of my closest friends now is someone who was on the opposite side of the disagreement back then.

Now I am often uncomfortable at First U. But I know that being uncomfortable is a sign that I need to listen and, probably, change.

First Unitarian has changed my life. Working together, we change the world.

October 15, 2017