

FIRST UNITARIAN
CONGREGATIONAL SOCIETY
BROOKLYN
A UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATION

Transforming Lives

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(Member since November 6, 2014)



First U has always felt like a *perfect* spiritual home for me. But through Beloved Conversations, I learned that we don't have to be perfect as a congregation, or as individuals, to be worthy of love, as long as we keep growing.

Beloved Conversations is a program that provides an opportunity to, as a group, explore racism and white supremacy inside and outside our congregation - not easy stuff.

We developed timelines related to race in America and First Us sometimes surprisingly conservative history compared with other churches in Brooklyn Heights. We shared how privilege or oppression have impacted each of our own lives. We talked about how microaggressions and white supremacy play out in the sanctuary, in the undercroft, and in the office.

I learned that some of things that happen here *every* Sunday, make some people of color uncomfortable. I learned about not so distant fissures in this community that almost tore it apart. I learned that *I* have a lot of anxiety about making white congregants uneasy or embarrassed. And that I'm often more paralyzed by that anxiety, than I am moved to create safe spaces for people of color at First U.

So were these conversation, in fact, beloved? They were enlightening, scary, difficult, rewarding...Feelings that people often shared were "hopeful" and "frustrated." It was difficult. In fact, as I thanked one of my fellow conversationalist for their candor on our last night, they said, "I was always thinking 'ugh, I pissed Sam off again....'" And they were right! I was often challenged.

But it *was* beloved by me. I loved these conversations because looking at the bad stuff was hard but talking about the potential, the ways First U can get better was aspirational and transformative. A huge part of this group was creating a shared vision of what our congregation's embodied practice of multiculturalism and racial justice could be.

I was faced with the fact First U isn't perfect. But I learned that despite a blemished history and despite a flawed present, it can still be a beloved spiritual home to me, if I do the work to keep us moving forward. You are all a beloved family that inspires the full spectrum of human emotions within me, not just the "easy" ones, and that's what makes you a *real* family.

Beloved Conversations brought to the surface the ways I participate in systems of white supremacy, which was hard. But if First U is beloved to me, while still having room for growth, maybe I can still love myself fiercely, while acknowledging my own room for growth in anti-racist work and as a friend, sister, colleague, and a daughter.

We don't have to be perfect as a congregation or as individuals to be worthy of love, but we need to keep growing. This knowledge frees us to look at the bad stuff without fear. Because when we're not scared to look at flaws, at the things that are going to be hard to change, that's when the real transformation can begin.

May 6, 2018