

FIRST UNITARIAN  
CONGREGATIONAL SOCIETY  
**BROOKLYN**  
A UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATION

**Transforming Lives**

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(Member since November 11, 2018)



Though I grew up extremely religious, by adulthood I was actively against Christianity. It wasn't just that religion has so often been used to codify and spread misogyny, homophobia, racism, and other forms of hate. It was also that I felt religion, even the good kind, encouraged us to focus on heaven when we should be tackling oppression here. If my core identity was as an activist, then church was diametrically opposed to it.

So I was skeptical when I first walked through First U's doors. I didn't plan to stay. I certainly didn't expect to ever join the congregation, like I did last week.

But First U surprised me. In my first months here I discovered that, instead of looking away from the issues I cared about, the sermons and meditations meaningfully engaged with them. And unlike when I discussed these issues in other circles, I usually walked away feeling hopeful about the possibility of change.

It was here that, when Reverend Ana encouraged everyone to commit to deepening our activism, I decided to take a step beyond volunteering and actually lead an effort. So when a coworker asked me if I'd help to organize a union, I said yes.

I had no idea what I was getting into. That organizing was truly one of the greatest and most inspiring things I've ever done, but easily the hardest as well. After every work week, First U was where I came to take a break and quite literally cry on friends' shoulders before heading back into the fray. When management defeated the union, and I and everyone who stood up with me were fired, this is where I came to find meaning in that loss.

First U is also where I began to heal. Friends here helped me remember that what I'd been fighting for was a community like this one. The example of First U activists I admire showed me how to let go of the anger and fear I felt and focus on empowering others. The sermons and songs reminded me that the fights are worth fighting—and even losing—if they inspire others to step up. And all of it's helped me get back to doing the work, with the certainty that in the long run, we'll win.

November 18, 2018