

FIRST UNITARIAN
CONGREGATIONAL SOCIETY
BROOKLYN
A UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATION

Transforming Lives

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"I'm Unitarian Universalist which basically means I'm an atheist." [GASP!] This is how I used to introduce my religion to people. Because I grew up in a staunchly humanist UU congregation, I equated Unitarian Universalism *with* atheism. When I say it out loud now, it feels like a sucker punch to the gut. It just *totally* dismisses what I have come to feel about being a Unitarian Universalist today. Through this congregation, I have come to understand that I am not "basically an atheist" but actually someone who believes in God.

This is a conversion story folks, but before I go on there are two points I need to make. First, there's nothing wrong with atheism. Unitarian Universalism is a big tent and it includes *religious atheists* and *religious humanists*. Second, I use the word "God" in the shorthand way Rev. Ana uses it--as a word no single word can cover. Now, let me continue...

Before coming to this congregation, I could *never fully accept* that I will *never* understand how we got here and why. As an atheist, everything had to be rational, scientific. If we didn't have an answer, it's because we just haven't discovered it. I also had what I would describe as a "**deficit model**" way of thinking. My problem was I felt I had a "lack of" human brain power, mental adroitness, education, or that I never finished Stephen Hawking's Brief History of Time. It was on me. *Bad Dave. Bad. You should know all about the Big Bang, particle physics, or at the very least be able to solve the Pythagorean theorem.*

With a belief in God – and again the word God is just **shorthand** – I feel **greater energy** to do good. It's like I took off a heavy, wet wool coat that was weighing me down. I let go of my "deficit" mentality and I became I'm more *loving* and less *judgmental person*. I feel a more fluid relationship with the world; a greater sense of give and take and of *possibility* and *abundance*. Okay, so get this: combine greater energy and a sense of possibility, abundance and love – well that's my God. And this combo gives me *hope*. And hope is so essential in these times. We have big problems. We all need hope! Climate change being #1.

I believe God is a benevolent force in the universe that loves me. It doesn't say it loves me. I don't hear it. Just like my cat, Chicken, doesn't say "I love you" but I know it. Although I'm

curious what the universe would sound like if it could say, I love you. Would it be a big, BOOMING voice, "I LOOOOVE YOUUUU." Or maybe it's a whisper, "*I love you.*"

I know this is very Jedi, very Luke Skywalker. But what's wrong with believing the universe loves you and is on your side?

I think that that's one reason why our church pews have been getting fuller and fuller every Sunday. Almost every Sunday, Reverend Ana is gives us a consistent message that the universe loves us and on our side. It's a message that makes you wanna come to church! The synergy of Ana's preaching with Adams music, all the little laughing, sometimes crying children in our RE programs under Meagan's leadership, and all of you, beautiful people, lighting candles of joys and sorrows -- it opens up a tap. It floods me with love, even in my darkest days.

First U has immeasurably changed my life. Together we can change the world.

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