

FIRST UNITARIAN
CONGREGATIONAL SOCIETY
BROOKLYN
A UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATION

Transforming Lives

Cara Haft

(Member since April 28, 2002)



When we first arrived here at First Unitarian, I was a mom of a toddler and an infant. Ethan and Charlie are now aged 19 and 16, and they've grown up in this beloved community. Many of our best memories from those early years took place in the nursery and classrooms of our Religious Education programs. That's where we found the "village" that would help us raise our sons with a strong sense of belonging and compassion. But my sons aren't the only ones who developed their identities and bonds of fellowship here. First U members' warm welcome kept me from feeling isolated as a young parent. I realized I had something to offer in return, so I began volunteering as an RE teacher. At the same time, I was thinking about taking a step towards a more fulfilling career than what I had done before my children came into my life.

When the Coming of Age program was first introduced to our congregation, our RE minister was trying to recruit teachers. It was a big commitment, and with my own kids still years away from their teens, the prospect of working with the "big kids" kind of terrified me! Despite that, I wanted to find out whether teaching might be my calling. Here was an opportunity to work with a group of UU kids for a whole program year, using a rich curriculum of deep discussions and transformative experiences, to lead them on a journey of self-discovery. I found out that teaching can be as challenging as herding cats, but it can also be a chance to facilitate and nurture profound growth in young people.

The experience was as transformative for me as it was for them, and I was hooked. When Charlie started kindergarten the next fall, I took the plunge and entered graduate school. I'm now in my 10th year as a public middle school English teacher. So far, I've taught about 900 students to read more deeply, write more clearly, and, most importantly, to share, to listen and to question. First Unitarian has helped me to become the teacher I want to be, and continues to support me as I become the person I want to be. First Unitarian has changed my life. Working together, we can change the world.

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