



## Transforming Lives

**Michael Alcott**

(Member since March 1, 1998)



When my wife, Sara, and I got married in 1990, we knew we wanted to give our children a religious identity and raise them with many of the religious stories we both had learned as children. What we did not want was for that to happen in the church where Sara was raised or in a synagogue where I was raised. I heard about the Unitarian Church, we decided to check it out, and made the decision to give it a try after meeting with then interim minister Scottie Meeks.

Our first child, Allegra, was dedicated here and we began regular attendance soon after and became members of the congregation in the mid-90's. Both our children were raised in this congregation, which fulfilled our commitment we made to each other at marriage. On a personal level, I found a community and I enjoyed the sermons. But I have to admit that I struggled with a search for something more. We were in a religious building, but it didn't feel like a religion.

When friends, colleagues, and especially family would ask what do the Unitarians believe anyway, I would respond with something like "a rational interpretation of the bible" or "deeds not creed". Mostly I would just say it's the "I'm Ok, You're Ok" church. None of those responses satisfied my interrogators. Nor did they satisfy me.

In 2011, I had the honor of serving on the senior minister search committee. While on that committee, I heard a radical sermon from one of the candidates, who is now our senior minister, called "The Religious Counterculture." Hearing the sermon gave me a new perspective on Unitarianism and was the beginning of a transformation of my relationship with it. In that, and in subsequent sermons, I heard the message that we are a religion with clear ethos embodied in our seven principles that guide us in personal choices and in our collective work to make the world a more just place. Also, in 2011, Jude Geiger, our then Minister of Religious Education, announced to the congregation that there would be a march that afternoon from Judson Memorial Church to Zuccoti Park where Occupy Wall Street had set up camp. Sara and I decided to check it out. That afternoon, we joined about 50 others preparing to march behind the Judson ministers. By the time we arrived at Zuccoti, there were more than 200 of us. I had been in marches before but marching for economic justice behind men and women of the cloth, and in the cloth, felt very different. It felt like the religious counterculture in action.

Well, these days, I am proud to say I strive to be a religious Unitarian Universalist. And, you know what? That's really okay with me.

February 11, 2018