

FIRST UNITARIAN
CONGREGATIONAL SOCIETY
BROOKLYN
A UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATION

Transforming Lives

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(Member since November 13, 2016)



About two years ago, I had my first conversation with Reverend Ana. In that conversation she encouraged me to find and create as many sources of light in my life as I could to balance out the darkness that I was facing. That has stuck with me throughout my time here with First U. This conversation took place before I'd even stepped through the doors here. I originally discovered First U. while looking for some kind of pastoral care for my mother. I knew I didn't want to reach out to a conventional Christian church, and I remembered hearing from time to time in my life about Unitarian Universalism. It was worth looking into, and my search led me here. I reached out to the pastoral care team. I didn't really know what I was asking for. I'd never been a member of a congregation, I didn't know how things worked and while the pastoral care team we're sympathetic to my situation they weren't in a position to help. My story with First U. could have and probably would have ended there. But Reverend Ana, made a point of reaching out to me, just before her summer sabbatical began. We talked on the phone and I shared with her my mother's situation, the events that had led up to it, and the terrible pain of grief that had become ever present in my life. It was then she encouraged me to seek out any sources of light I could to balance out this grief, this darkness.

Soon after this conversation, I attended a summer service here. As I walked up to the chapel doors and as I found my seat, I also found that I was terrified, and in that terror, I discovered a deep and desperate need I didn't know I had. I discovered that I hadn't just been seeking for my mother but that I had been seeking for myself. Now here I was, feeling so vulnerable and praying this congregation would be what they seemed to be. So many times, I had sought out various religious communities and had the veil stripped away to reveal hypocrisy, exclusivity, a religious doctrine created to make others wrong in order to be right. After each service I attended here, I thought, please, please, please be real.

Eventually the veil did fall, and what was revealed was not that dreaded hypocrisy, but a community of individuals facing their own struggles with the unavoidable darkness that is a part of life. A community of people who were driven by that darkness, not to cast it on others, but to fight it, to share it and overcome it, to create brighter lives not only for each other but for as many as they could.

Sundays at First U. gave me the light I needed to face week after week of my mother's recovery and more painfully her lack of recovery. I began to make connections here, through choir, through Samira, my membership mentor, I think that's what it's called, and other volunteer opportunities. As the year progressed, the anniversary of my mother's injury loomed before me like a giant wave. As each holiday approached and passed it grew taller and darker and I knew it was only a matter of time before it crashed over me. Sure enough New Year's came and so did this wave of darkness. The pain I had been fighting everyday since her injury, descended upon me, I stopped attending services, and I gave myself to it.

My story with First U. could have ended there. But all those connections I had made here, held fast. Samira reached out to me, Adam reached out to me, Anna reached out to me, each sending a shaft of light down into the darkness I thought impenetrable, and I found my way back. Now with an immense gratefulness that the path of my life had lead me here and although my mother's situation worsened, and the pain of my grief never lessened, it was balanced out by the hope and love I found at First U.

The song I chose to sing at Cabaret a few month later, "Tomorrow will Be Kinder" and which I had the opportunity to sing for you in one of our services this year, was a gift I wanted to share with this congregation. Coming here and being surrounded by people who were dedicated to creating positive change politically, socially, and environmentally, made me believe in that "kinder tomorrow." This community of people who choose to use the pain in their lives and the suffering they see around them to fuel their compassion, chasing away the shadows with their love, courage, and conviction, is that "kinder tomorrow."

In one of Reverend Ana's homilies leading up to Christmas Eve, she spoke of the ritual of our coming together to bring light into the darkness of winter, and this light was a promise that we would get through the darkness together and see the brightness of spring once again. Now spring is upon us and my own metaphorical spring has come as well. When I came to First U. I was in the depths of grief, in the middle of my dark winter. First U. became that promise that spring would come again. Now I see so clearly the balance of light and dark in my life and in the greater world around us. In the passing of winter into spring. In the passing of my mother as a new live grows within me. In the struggles we face as a nation and the relentless belief of this congregation that we can create change. Every program here at First U. is a source of light balancing out the dark, in the lives of our religious community and in the lives of the greater community that is Humanity. First Unitarian has changed my life and together we can change the world.

April 1, 2018