

“What led me and leads me still to seek out religious community when many choose not to?”

Good morning my name is Carly Baker and I am a worship associate in this church. I have been a Unitarian Universalist for 30 years; I was raised in a Unitarian church in Newton and completed the Coming of Age program at that church. Little did I know then as I was going through that process of Coming of Age that 20 years later I would be in the position to choose a church community for myself and my daughter. I have always felt a deep connection to being a UU, but it's really only since coming to First Parish that I believe I have really connected to my spiritual self and to something much greater than me. Since coming here, I have had the most amazing ah ha moments, deep abiding emotional, often overwhelming moments. I usually sit in the same general spot somewhere in the middle towards the right...not quite sure why, probably just my creature of habit nature, but it might have to do with the few times now that I have had the experience of closing my eyes, transcending time and space, for just a few short moments, seconds probably, I was able to visualize a physical radiating amber colored light that extended from myself towards the far left windows above where the piano sits and connected to something beyond, something greater. These are the few times in my life when I can recount having such an intense all over sensory spiritual experience and I attribute it to not only my willingness to allow for it, but the environment that this church and its community provides to me.

I, like many of the people I have spoken to here, knew almost instantly when they first came to our church they were in the right place, it was the right fit, for me it felt like home. My best friend asked my daughter Emma over the summer “do you like church Emma?” and Emma replied “I love church”...my heart swelled...for my six year old to have affirmed her shared love of this church was a treasure. Similarly, when Emma began RE classes here I asked her what she has been doing in class and if she was learning about what it meant to be Unitarian? She replied and gestured with “Yes, Unitarians are minds that

think, hearts that love and hands that are ready to serve”...I thought yes, she gets it already!!

For me, what leads me to seek out religious community when others may choose not to? Well...spaghetti and meatballs, tomalley, meatloaf, lasagna, homemade ginger bread, tinky bread, chicken soup, vegetarian casserole, chicken teriyaki, pumpkin bread...those are just to name a few of the incredible meals that were made and delivered to our home, as most of you know I broke my ankle this past winter and this congregation not only stepped up but jumped up to help my daughter and I in ways I am still humbled by. At one of the most challenging times in my life I had the love and support of a church community backing us all the way. We had members of this congregation driving us places, bringing us groceries, social visits, taking me to the doctor, and offering words of encouragement, I will never forget all the ways in which this congregation helped create an enormous safety net for us during a really difficult time.

This church has offered me the chance to engage in service opportunities, an incredibly important tenant of my family and spiritual values. I strongly believe that the world around me only gets better and healthier if I am an active participant and contribute to more solutions rather than more problems; First parish gives me real time opportunities to live out my service values.

I have also had the privilege of joining a covenant group, an amazing group of talented, smart, thoughtful, inspiring women who do amazing things with their lives and with this church, I feel so honored to meet with this group to support one another, to hear each other’s stories, and to discuss meaningful topics.

I am certain my life is fuller and much more rich as result of this church community. I am confident that this is a safe and nurturing place for my daughter to grow up in and that we are supported and loved here.