

## AFFIRMATION

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I have been a member of Countryside for 4 years. I have found here the spiritual community I was seeking.

I had been an Episcopalian all my life. My mother loved the church and was the most faithful person I have ever known. I kept trying to find or develop the same faith she had, but could not do it. In later years, when I would attend, I would stand there saying the Nicene Creed outloud, *"I believe in one God, the Father, almighty,..and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotton son of God..., and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary...."*

but to myself, I would say "I don't believe this." I actually don't believe in the Trinity. In fact I think the Trinity was invented in the third Century AD by Constantine and the guys at the Council of Nicea, to compete with the multiple gods of Rome at the time. I think the Roman Catholic practice of praying to multiple saints is very close to the Greek and Roman practices of having a God for everything-I don't see a lot of difference I see between praying to St Joseph to help you sell your house from praying to the Roman god Bacchus for a better grape harvest for your wine this year.

I recently asked Rem Stokes in his History of Christianity class if he had ever come across such a perspective on the need for the trinity and he said no. So I don't think Reinhold Neibuhr has to be concerned by competition from the Simonsen theology.

My husband was a scientist and an atheist, and would probably have agreed with Carl Sagan, in the reading this morning. I tried to raise my 2 sons in the church, and they both made it thru confirmation, then rebelled. **I had mostly stopped attending any church**, when my husband died, and 6 months later I retired from a very demanding career. I needed a sense of community. When my brother was

visiting from Minnesota, who has been a UU for a number of years, he went online and said, "Peggy you have a Unitarian Universalist church in Palatine!" I responded that I knew that, as I had driven by it and admired the architecture.

So that prompted me to come to visit Countryside. I remember walking in and being disappointed that there was no pipe organ. The one thing I really liked about the Episcopal Church I went to was the organ music, especially the prologue before the service, music such as Bach fugues. But then I heard Jeffrey play his spectacular piano and I was enthralled. I still am so awestruck by all the amazingly talented musicians here.

Bill Metzger was the interim minister when I first visited, and his sermon was on the Gnostic Gospels. Wow! I learned something in church for the first time in years! He had quoted from the Gospel according to St Thomas, and I was so intrigued I went away and read Elaine Pagel's scholarly book, *The Gnostic Gospels*. The quote that had particular meaning for me from St Thomas is this:

*"Jesus said...."The Kingdom is inside of you and it is outside of you. When you come to know yourselves then you will become known, and you will realize it is you who are the sons of the living Father."* As Rev Julie said, when the editors of the Bible decided which books would be allowed in the new testament, the Gospel of St Thomas didn't make the cut.

I think I could have been a Jesusite-they call themselves that because the word Christian is already taken. I think Jesus was hugely influential, but unfortunately the Christian church over the centuries has often done exactly the opposite of what he taught. And it has made me a skeptic.

### **Liberal socially and socially concerned**

I stayed an Episcopalian as long as I did because the church is liberal socially and socially concerned. They don't tell people what to do in the bedroom, or how many kids to have, or expect you to blindly follow unreasonable rules, like the Catholic church still refusing to allow condoms in Africa to help prevent the spread of AIDS. But the Epis Church does have a creed and dogma I couldn't believe in. I remember once saying to a friend about virgin birth, "*It doesn't*

*happen that way” and she replied, “well not usually”. Of course my analytical mind said, “no, not ever”*

I had never heard of LIBERAL RELIGION until I came here.

### **All my adult life I have had three driving causes and commitments.**

What also influenced me to join Countryside once I visited was learning of the SEVEN PRINCIPLES. Actually there are 3 that coincide with my own driving forces. One is the **“Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.”** I am a very committed environmentalist. In fact I had for a long time believed that if there is a God, she is visible in nature, like the Einstein quote in the reading.

I find inspiration

- In a dense boreal forest,
- or in ephemeral wildflowers that come up and bloom in the spring when nothing else is growing
- or on a mountaintop with the sun sparkling on deep snow
- or in the waving prairie grasses in summer.
- or on the sea, at once both powerful and soothing.

In fact before my husband died we had planned a sailing trip to Belize with three other couples. After Bill’s death the others encouraged me to go anyway, even tho I was no longer a couple. And I remember sitting on the bow of the sailboat with the wind blowing away my tears.

And I knew Countryside was the right place for me was when I learned there is an Environmental Action committee, and have found that its not just words on the

wall, but committed to leading in so many ways, and operating the church with environmentally friendly practices.

**My second driving force** that is so strong in UU is the **commitment to Social Action**, or as the principle says, **“The ethical application of religion**. Now I can't be the person who volunteers in a Hospice, or even a soup kitchen—I would be crying all the time, but I do support the UUA's and Countryside's Social Action Committee, and am so pleased that there are others who do roll up their sleeves to make a difference. And that here it's not a case of people living one way all week and then eschewing social action at church- I find UU is **about the ethical application of religion**.

And third, all my adult life I have worked for women's equality. The principle: the **inherent worth and dignity of every person** is not only a UU principle, but demonstrated every day in our service and actions. The first year I was here, I had planned to go to Washington DC to march for reproductive rights, (something I had never done before) and lo and behold, Countryside had a whole contingent who went.

I belong to many environmental groups, I support many social action groups, and in fact still contribute to the Episcopal Cathedral Shelter which helps some of the most destitute in Chicago, and I am active in Planned Parenthood, and other women's rights organizations. **But Countryside is the only place that actively supports and leads in all three of these areas of importance to me.**

So Liberal Religion and Liberal Socially and actively living these principles, makes it very synergistic for me to align MY commitments with Countryside Unitarian Universalism. It has become my spiritual community.