



UNIVERSALIST UNITARIAN CHURCH OF HAVERHILL

Testimonial Given by Yolanda Negron
on March 15, 2015

As a child growing up in Haverhill I attended the Catholic church every Sunday. When I graduated high school I moved away from Haverhill and went to Mass Art. There I surrounded myself with artists, free thinkers, feelers, experimenters and people of all sorts of beliefs and backgrounds. For many years I was against 'organized religion' and never imagined I'd seek out a faith community.

Years later when I started coming to this church, I visited on an 'as needed' basis. It was a difficult time in my life and I found strength and hope here. I remember one day that I came to church. I had a profound need for community. When I walked up to the door --- I couldn't open it. I moved to the other door--- it too was closed. I remember feeling very confused. How could this be? Did the time change? Was I at church an hour too early or an hour too late? I even doubted, was it really even Sunday? How could a church be closed on Sunday?! I needed the church --- that's why I had come.

The day I found the doors closed --- was a summer Sunday and there were no scheduled services until the following Fall. Thankfully, we no longer have this practice. Today we have services throughout the summer months.

But imagine what it would be like to be unable to open our doors?

Did you know it cost approximately \$1300 per Sunday to open our doors? And to keep the church functional for the week it's about \$5,000? I remember being very surprised by these numbers and even a little shocked. But it seems to me, we all need to know this!

I'd like to paraphrase our former minister who said, "When we meet a newcomer at our door, we know they are looking for some place to call home, a place where they will no longer feel isolated or cut off... a place where they can be given permission to grow (to) enrich their lives and the life of their community."

When I found the doors closed I felt 'cut off' and 'isolated' and it took me a very long time to come back, but I'm very glad that I did.

Here, I found myself 'at home' --- in a WELCOMING, CARING, FAITH, COMMUNITY--- once again surrounded by artists, free thinkers, feelers, experimenters and people of all sorts of beliefs and backgrounds.

It has been a revelation for me to learn that church can be a warm and welcoming experience. I have felt comforted and challenge. I've been learning what it means to be human. I sincerely believe UUCH has helped me become a better person. My battery gets re-charged each and every time I step through those doors. This enables me to do the work that I am meant to do. There are so many benefits to supporting this church. We provide fellowship and opportunities to share and learn and grow; we put our faith in action to help those in need --- providing community meals and a safe shelter for a drop-in center, AA meetings and other community groups.

When I approached those doors and found them closed, I felt hurt and abandoned. Imagine how the people we help would feel. Consider how you would feel if this church were not here to support you?

Unfortunately, there is a real and substantial cost to keeping those doors open and that is why I pledge to support the work of this church. It's our church, and it's up to each one of us to do our part in making it strong and healthy.

Will you please join me in giving generously to support this church that enriches our lives and that of the wider community?

Thank you.