



## UNIVERSALIST UNITARIAN CHURCH OF HAVERHILL

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Testimonial given by Di Kinsman  
on National Coming Out Day,  
October 11, 2015

This congregation has many wonderful committees, and one I'm proud to be on is the Welcoming Congregation Committee. The WCC as it's called, has a primary mission of welcoming Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning people to explore our church as a faith community. We also hope to be helpful in serving our church by speaking of issues concerning the LGBT community.

I felt called to speak today as we celebrate National Coming Out Week. National Coming Out Day is celebrated October 11, marking the anniversary of the 1987 March on Washington in recognition of LGBT civil rights. "Coming Out" means disclosure of sexual orientation or identity.

I'd like to share my "coming out" story.. My story is one of "letting go and letting God".

I was raised in a Fundamental Baptist church and household. We weren't allowed to drink, smoke, dance, play cards, or God forbid, be Gay.. I adhered to my church's wishes until I became an adult, when I embraced many of these things..mostly in secret. I was a sinner according to my religion's doctrine. This did not bode well with me.

I carried a particularly big secret that troubled me greatly, and it was about my sexuality. It was surely a secret I intended to keep.. But according to the Buddha, three things cannot be kept hidden ..the sun, the moon, and secrets. And like the sun and the moon, my truth would not be kept hidden.

Fearing a shunning of sorts, I remained deceitful about my sexual preference. However, I still felt accepted and connected to a Spirit of Love..the One I've always known as having the name God. I felt deeply inside that I was cherished by God, no matter what my loving preferences were. But it was people I felt the need of love from as well, so I kept silent for many years. In trying to keep my secret, I relied on a regimen of wine to cope. There came a time when I no longer found this anesthesia helpful; in fact it was doing much harm. In order to be well in mind, body, and spirit, I knew I had to face the truth because I felt my heart was dying, and perhaps I was being called.

Though my childhood religion failed me in many ways, I'm forever grateful to have been introduced to a sense of spirituality. In that, my church succeeded. Now I cannot really name my belief, and I still question my ability to share it. But it doesn't matter to me anymore, as I rely on a

sure and certain communion I feel with a Spirit of Love. It is this Power I called on when my secret needed to be broken open. I had to tell the truth.

In the Spring of 2003, with a husband and two kids in college, I could no longer hold onto my burden. Emotionally broken, I began calling on God for direction. A stirring inside told me it was what I needed to do. I began with a morning prayer ritual. Every morning I ventured out on my back deck, sat on the steps, and began to petition God. I held my arms open, and said..”take this, I don't know how to do it”. And I didn't. It was too big. I was moved to seek therapy and scour books on coming out before talking to my husband and children. Feelings of uniqueness in regard to “my problem” were lessened when I read that coming out occurs quite often in middle aged women. My generation didn't have as much education and acceptance that this current one does, and in reading those books I didn't feel so alone. I felt others suffered great anguish before me. As I prayed each morning, I felt answers lay in the foundation of my faith...love, truth and acceptance. Planning on telling the truth with love, and accepting reactions was going to test my faith.

Feeling somewhat prepared, but terrified, I told my husband and then my children. It was my leap of faith. Understandably, it was a serious blow to them. We walked around for days--weeks in a haze of confusion, and sorrow. Revealing the truth resulted in what seemed like endless, turbulent times, sifting through pain and anger. During that time, I called on God to help us, as did my husband. It challenged us in many ways, forcing us to search for the strength in all we had learned as a family. I felt fortunate and grateful that my husband and I shared in a religious tradition during our children's upbringing. We rarely missed a Sunday's attendance in our interdenominational church, and our kids were involved in Youth Group. We had the benefit of a spiritual foundation which I fully credit to our ability to heal.

I believe because we owned a semblance of faith, my family was eventually able to move forward with love. My ex-husband is happily remarried, and along with his wife, we share a friendship beyond what I'd expected. Our children have embraced truth as a wonderful gift, and have a wider understanding and acceptance of diversity. I'm gratefully secure in my children's love and they say they are stronger in Spirit because of the grace given in letting go with love.

To me, faith seems a mystery in how it is formed..and tested.. and lived. Faith seems to reveal itself in unusual and sometimes unwelcome ways, but the decision to be present for it helped me make one of the biggest changes in my life.

I end by saying that this congregation means a lot to me.. It's a great blessing for me.. to be able to share this story with you and feel accepted. This church has so very much to be proud of. Thank you.