



## UNIVERSALIST UNITARIAN CHURCH OF HAVERHILL

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Testimonial given by Robert Mohns  
on March 1, 2015

Hello. I'm Robert Mohns. You may have seen me in the RE classrooms, or at coffee hour chasing children, or hiding behind a laptop in the foyer.

I would like to say a few words about choices, and pain and brokenness, about caring and love, and of debt and thankfulness.

I think we all look for meaning in life. Some people hope for reincarnation or afterlife. I don't. Some see a guiding hand in the universe. I don't. I see one world that is what we make of it. No more and no less.

Meaning is *here*.

Meaning is *now*.

I am standing in a church. I never expected to be here.

As a teenager, I was angry at all the wrongs I saw in the world in general, and in organized religion in particular. Like many teens, I wasn't very discerning in this; I simply decided that churches and religion were, at best, useless. And I stayed that way.

I'm that bitter kind of cynic that's actually a disappointed idealist. "The world should be better. It's not. Let it burn."

I dropped out of college, because reasons. I moved to Boston, found a job, found an apartment. I went clubbing, I partied, I got married, and then divorced, I made friends, lost friends, made mistakes, learned and failed and grew. I did cars and motorcycles and computers. I did nightclubs, ill-advised relationships, weekend-long parties. I did all those things that you do when you are young, and invulnerable, and vulnerable.

I was lonely.

I don't think I knew it, then.

Eventually, I was rescued. By the person who eventually became my spouse, who loved me for everything I was and was not. I was also rescued by selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors. (It was a joint taskforce.)

And by my daughter, and by my son. They are the light of my life. (Although my spouse may say my car gives them a run for their money.)

My spouse, Zan, started coming to UUCH before I did. I hear that's common. I came, initially, to help with our daughter. I think that was three or four years ago.

At some point I realized that this community had quietly taken me in. That people knew me, and I knew them. That when I was away, they noticed. That when I returned, they smiled. That I liked being here. That I cared.

Without realizing it, I had become part of this community. An angry, nihilistic, atheist, had found a home.

I did not expect that.

UUCH helped heal a wound I didn't know was there.

In life, sometimes you receive, sometimes you give. There's nothing wrong with receiving, and sometimes, we desperately need it, even if we don't know it.

There is a debt, but it's not a debt you repay. Not directly. The debt is to those yet to come. We live in a world with no meaning but what we make of it, and that makes this world and that meaning the most precious thing in our lives. To make it a better place, pay your debts--forward.

This year I "signed the book"; I made myself a formal member of this community. And with that act, I also took on a responsibility to this community.

I will pay back that debt, by supporting this community, and thus I pay that debt forward, so that this community can help others.

I pledge to support this community. Both in effort and in money. I can't give as much as I want, but my family is giving what we can.

Today I ask you to join me. Pledge as generously as you feel able. Join me in supporting this community of so many faiths finding their ways together. This community that helps and heals, that struggles and falls and fails, that learns and grows. Pay it forward. Help the future.

Because meaning is *here*. Meaning is *now*.