



UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH OF ARLINGTON VIRGINIA

A Place to Connect, Grow and Serve

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What I Love About Our Faith

By Walter Clark, Ministerial Assistant

I grew up in church. From first grade until I left for college I was a part of the Lutheran Memorial Church of Erie, Penn. My mother joined the church because members paid reduced tuition to the attached elementary school. She made sure the theology didn't clash with what she believed of course, but the tuition reduction was a big draw.

She worked in the school's before and after school programs to supplement her income. This meant I was in that building from 6:30 a.m. until 6:30 p.m. The church secretary, the pastor, and the youth director all knew who I was and, being a talkative kid, let me invade their office space. It was my second home and the entire staff were my adopted parents. I became an alter boy, a member of the youth group, a youth delegate for the Lutheran national synod meeting and a member of the clown ministry team. I loved being a part of the church. It was literally my home.

The church didn't shy away from tough questions. As a teenager, I brought a pop song to the youth pastor that asked the question, "Why does God allow bad things to happen to good people?" Instead of giving me a boiler-plate answer of "God works in mysterious ways," she asked me to bring the song to our next youth group meeting and we would discuss it. She encouraged me to ask questions about my faith, telling me that (paraphrasing Socrates) the unexamined faith was not worth having. This was the theology I grew up with, one that asks tough questions and is comfortable not having all of the answers.

That is what I love about our faith, the idea that questions are not only permitted, not only encouraged, but nearly mandatory! The fourth principle speaks of "The free and responsible search for truth and meaning." Ours is a faith of constant examination of our beliefs. How does it connect us to something larger than ourselves? How do we act upon that faith in the world? If our faith does not push us to be our best selves, why have a faith at all?

Over the past four years I have tried to put my faith into action. I have worked with Black Lives Matter and was a part of the Richmond congregations work to create their *Living the Pledge* program. I marched in Charlottesville. I helped the UU congregation in Newport News hang their Black Lives Matter flag and worked with a humanist group in the Coffeewood correctional facility in Culpepper, Va. I am excited to take this next step on my faith journey with you. I hope we can live into our faith together.

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