

But Still I Am One

I was in a van driving back to the church with a group of UU friends after having attended a Martin Luther King rally where we heard many eloquent speakers speak out against racism. After the speeches we marched holding signs and saying chants against racism all the way to the capital where we then disbanded. "What an incredible day!" the lady beside me in the car enthused. "Doesn't it just make you want to get out there and fight all the injustices of the world?"

"Actually, I just want to go home." I answered- a little too truthfully. In the silence that ensued I hurried to agree that it *had* been a good experience though and I hoped we did some good - although it seemed to me that the speakers were all preaching to the choir. In contrast to my friends euphoria I felt drained, discouraged and far more defeated at the enormity of the problem than rejuvenated by our display.

Although I knew in my heart I had found my church family at last when I walked through the doors of a UU church it took me a while to learn my *place* in that family. Coming from a very inward turned faith the first thing that impressed me about members of my new church is how UUs are so world aware. Since UUs aren't consumed by the demands of their theology and the heavy admonition to spread their religion throughout the world to the very ends of the earth -they tend to be outward looking and involve themselves in local, state, country and world problems. Since no UU believes that in the end God will come down and take care of every last problem there seemed no worthy cause that someone wasn't ready to rally others and go into battle for. Climate change, hunger in Africa, immigration, prison reform, responsible consumption, corruption in local and state and world politics were just the tip of the iceberg. All the focuses of my new church left me with a feeling of despair.

I met one avid warrior of justice in particular that I will never forget. Mary Ann (name changed) is an intelligent, well- informed, and very angry lady on any given day due to the state of the world. Being new to the church I was her fresh sounding board and though I could certainly commiserate with her pain I also felt that if I took all the issues that she did to heart I would turn out to be the same bitter person that she was-- which did *not* appeal. Her life seemed to me a human sacrifice for all injustice but what difference would her misery make in the end?

So I had to face it-- as much as I wanted to fit into my new circles I am not a warrior at heart-- even for justice. My husband and grown sons seem to have the capacity to wade neck deep through any topic in corruption and politics (is there a difference

anymore?) and still show up for dinner in good spirits. I am not made of the same stuff and it was my new faith that brought this into the light. Of course I can write letters to my congressmen and attend any number of meetings and marches just like the next person but I feel in my heart that that's not what I'm here for.

So *what are you here for* I asked myself - and I didn't have to think long. I know myself to be a nurturer. As a child my highest aspiration was to be a mother and I wasn't wrong. That the role would hold sublime satisfaction for me. Getting to be a full time mom to five kids and raising them alongside my husband will always be the greatest blessing of my life. "Mom" is the role I most identify with. Creating love, security and home is where my gladness and the world's need has always met.

I did have a few breaks. While struggling with the issue of truly fitting into my new church Rev. Nancy Bowen came to Pocatello to preach a sermon and said words to the effect of, "You don't have to be a particular thing to belong to this church because this church is made up of everyone who knows in their heart that they are UU. This church is partly whatever you bring to it because it is made up of its people and what its people care about."

In those early years I also had the opportunity to attend a week long Russel Lockwood leadership school. The leader in charge of our covenant group was one of the most loving people I have ever crossed paths with. She gave off warmth like a hot iron stove and the first words out of her mouth were that it took some time for her to find her place in UUism because she isn't at all politically minded but here she was. Her shining example was the highlight of the leadership school for me. I wanted to be just like her.

I came to know that if I wanted to make a difference in the short time I had on this earth I had to free myself of not-warrior material guilt to do what I was made to do. I love the quote from Edward Everett:

"I am only one; but still I am one. I cannot do everything; but still I can do something; and because I cannot do everything, I will not refuse to do the something that I can do."

This became my mantra. I would do what I could do- give what I had to give and not waste time wishing I was somehow different. Ironically as soon as I accepted myself for what I am, a nurturer, ways to be more world minded opened up to me and I wasn't repelled by them. I decided I couldn't be about every just cause but I could decide what was really important to me and faithfully contribute financially to that. I decided to

give my aerobic instructor earnings to a good world hunger organization - a cause that speaks to my heart as a maker and lover of food. I loved working out hard and knowing all our sweat would not only make us healthier but also serve those who didn't have enough to eat.

The very week I decided I didn't have to be a justice warrior I volunteered to create a children's program and recruited my husband to teach a world religion class to the teenagers in our congregation- two of whom were mine. By the time I was asked to be Board president I had no qualms about accepting and no doubt of how I would best serve in that capacity. Yes I made an agenda and lead the meetings but I also brought homemade soup and bread so we could meet at 5:00 and be finished at an early hour. And I worked at focusing our leadership on being a congregation of appreciation to all the lay people who volunteered so much in order to boost morale. There were better business people than me on our board but I think the soup served as a tangible reminder that everyone has something to contribute to the whole. I loved mothering my board.

I also made it a point to look out for newcomers that might not fit the typical UU mold. I wanted them to know we needed whatever it is that they are too. What if they came and left before realizing that UUism could also be a fit for them? Somebody has to tend to the homefront, keep the fires burning and care for the weary brave when they return from their battles. There has to be a safe shelter to come home to. That is where you'll find me.