

What I Believe — by Vonnie Hicks — Sunday, March 28, 2010 Unitarian Universalist PEACE Fellowship, Raleigh, NC

I believe that to really appreciate Unitarian Universalism, one must start as something else.

I grew up wanting very much to be a good person in a Fundamentalist Episcopalian family. I was generally affirmed and loved, but much of humanity was not.

Lurking beneath the goodness of Christianity was the curse of original sin, and I knew that I could never actually be good, and would be forever fighting some inherent evil within that would utilize the pressures of adolescent impulses to undo the best that I could achieve. Further, I could see the world divided into people who still strive to be good, and those who had just given up and embraced 'bad'.

Actually reading the Bible in the context of required religion courses in college, I was struck by what appeared to be two value sets: how to live a good life, and how to establish an institution (the Church). Original sin belonged to the latter category. I began to feel betrayed by the religion of my youth.

I discovered Unitarian Universalism my senior year and have been following that journey ever since. Here is some of what I believe now:

I believe that humanity is basically good.

I believe that 'evil' is a manifestation of fear and survival instinct overcoming a human's selfless and altruistic leanings.

I believe that institutions suffer from the collective fears of their members and staff, leading ultimately to the need for institutional survival supplanting the needs for which the institution was created. I recognize that the Unitarian Universalist Association is not immune to this disease.

I believe that sin does indeed exist: it is the use of fear to control others, especially when the control produces behavior counter to the best interest of the ones controlled.

I believe that the most good I can do is to work to empower people with the knowledge that can supplant fear, both fears of the unknown and fears of their own inadequacy. So I teach.

I believe that there is nothing more awe-inspiring than an appreciation of the sizes and origin of the Universe, the atom, and all things in between, and the incalculable unlikelihood of our existing and being self-aware within that realm. No personification of deity can do justice to that miracle.

I believe the privilege of existence bestows sacredness on us all, rendering absurd the arguments that impulses to procreate and to nurture each other in loving relationships are inherently evil.

I believe that the privilege of existence requires that we respect and conserve the resources that make our existence possible, and work to maintain ourselves within the limitations of those resources, minimizing suffering.

I believe that being human trumps all variations within that category as to value and promise in life, and that the success of a life is measured in terms of happiness and connectedness rather than power and wealth.

I believe that the noise of children in a church is far more worshipful than the deafening silence of its absence.

I believe that, if there is a God with whom one might have a personal relationship, it must be the whole of humanity. Thus, all that we do that connects ourselves and any other part of Humanity, is worship. This includes the practice of ANY religion, whatever the metaphor.

I believe that singing and dancing is worship because it connects us with Humanity, and, as much as we may wish to do it better, how we do it now is good enough.

I believe that the exchange of ideas, pursuit of knowledge, and sharing if poetry, prose, and meditations is worship, but the most worshipful thing we do in our services is the sharing of Joys and Concerns.

I believe that I am incredibly wealthy, both from my salary as a teacher and from the wealth of relationships, family and friends bestowed upon me during the privilege of my existence. I cannot imagine wanting more now, or in any subsequent existence.

— end —