



## HARVARD UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH

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September 27, 2017

Hello Friends,

Sunday, September 9, 2001 was the first day that Didi and I set foot into the Sanctuary. It was Water Sunday and the pews were packed. Having just moved earlier in the summer to Harvard from Cambridge with baby Max in tow, we were a young family excited to try out “this church thing” and learn more about Unitarian Universalism. Two days later, planes would crash and I would find myself back in the pews; this time in the quietest of solitude. After the terrorist attacks, our Sanctuary remained open throughout the week for people to come in to pray, to reflect, to cry. In a matter of days, I had witnessed a joyous reunion of community and a quiet vessel of safety. I knew I had found my true home.

*Sixteen years later, the sentiment has only strengthened. We think of this congregation as family. The shared love is an unimaginable gift that we can't envision our lives without.*

Along the way, treasures of knowledge have settled within. By joining committees, I was introduced to the gratification of volunteerism. There is nothing quite like working together towards a common goal; having a stake, or ownership, in the outcome. Recently I was asked how I maintained a sense of balance in my life (in addition, I am the full-time admin for First Parish in Wayland). I admitted that I haven't quite gotten there yet, BUT to be so immersed in Unitarian Universalism and to be a part of spiritual communities in which love and justice persevere absolutely fills me up!

At HUUC, all are welcomed through our doors and no one is required to give money in exchange for what one receives in return. But over time, one will likely begin to wonder what it takes to make it all work. We have Rev. Jill, our amazing minister, who - from her experiences and knowledge - curates an extraordinary worship service for us on Sunday mornings. Furthermore, she is always at the ready to be there for us with pastoral care. We thank our lucky stars that we have someone as inspiring, talented, and resourceful as Daniel in the role of Director of Religious Education. Music Director Ted Johnson, a Brandeis professor of conflict resolution and coexistence by [week]day, brings us such a beautiful and sorted array of song + music. We have a skillful bookkeeper, Lori Daniells, who goes above and beyond to make sure our financial records are maintained accurately. And our Parish Administrator, Elinor Stapleton, has dedicated nearly twenty years to the congregation and we continue to benefit enormously from her tenure.

We have a tremendous staff and worthwhile programming. We invest in the UUA's Annual Program Fund so that they can further invest in us. We need to heat our buildings and light them up. A handful of hardworking folks mop our floors and clean our bathrooms. The math is simple. We receive no extra funding; no grants; no sponsorships. It is the generosity of our HUUC members and friends that pays the way.

I urge you to *reach in* and consider what it means to be a part of this spiritual community. I appeal to you to reflect on what it might look like if we were no longer able to continue to operate as we currently do. And what would it look like to *reach out* beyond the capacity we now hold? How would you dream big?

For me and Didi, contributing in support of HUUC is a joyful honor. This year, please give generously with a contribution that supports the work of our church and the greater community.

With deep appreciation,

Paige O'Brien, Board President