



Rev. Mark Morrison-Reed

CUC President

Being in a religious community helps us value our roots

I recently travelled to Maryland with my twenty-something children Charlotte and Elliot, to visit their 98-year old great, great Aunt Ethel.

Charlotte also wanted her partner Chris to meet Ethel, and they were all solicitous of her needs and interested in her stories. On the third day of our trip we drove to Westmoreland County, Virginia, from where the Reed Family hailed 200 years ago. We stopped in the graveyard of the Siloam Baptist Church to see the new gravestone for my great Uncle Harry (Ethel's husband) who died last February.

My children's great, great grandparents, George and Sara Reed, who died in 1933 and '34 respectively, are also buried there. On the way to the family homestead I pointed out the site where George Reed had built a one-room schoolhouse over 100 years ago.

We talked to my cousin Wendell about the old days, and then picked walnuts and pecans, apples and pears just like my kids' grandfather, who is now 82, would have done when he spent his summers down on the farm.

I'm pleased that my children care about their roots. I believe that growing up in religious community made them this way. The First Universalist Church of Rochester, NY and the First Unitarian Congregation of Toronto were the extended family in which they were cared for and the people they interacted with. When Charlotte was six she insisted on attending her elderly friend's memorial service. Marie died at the age of 99; Charlotte was the youngest in attendance.

In Sunday School they learned about liberal religion's 400-year-old roots. And they learned the values that make them the courteous and curious, hard-working and happy young adults that they have become.

Testimony

by Louise Bunn

From Pentecostal to Pagan – how a witch became UU

I was raised in small town Alberta, by parents who had decided that religion was okay, "for those who needed it." They told my brothers and me that when the time came we could choose a religion if we wanted but they gave us absolutely no religious education of any kind. You could call them non-denominational agnostics.

I felt called to some kind of a spiritual life, and so I went with other neighbourhood kids to their churches. It being Alberta, I tried the Baptist, Nazarene, Pentecostal and United churches. I got to be quite savvy at asking uncomfortable questions in the various Sunday Schools and was usually asked not to come back.

In my late teens (in the 1970s) I discovered Wicca and Paganism. What appealed to me then, and still does today, were the ideas behind it. That humans and the natural world are not separate from the Divine but part of it; that the Divine and humans and nature are one holistic system, and our task is to find our own way through it.

I liked the idea that we can experience the life and sacredness of the Earth, in relationship to our own lives and to the mystery of the Divine. I also liked its anti-authoritarianism. In this I find Paganism most like Unitarianism.

I came to Unitarianism as an adult. My partner and I had children and wanted them to have a religious education. He was a (very) lapsed Anglican and I was, well, a witch. We did a lot of looking but there were not many churches we could stomach together. Then we discovered the Unitarian Church of Vancouver and we knew we had found a home.



I find a lot of similarities between Paganism and Unitarianism. Both honour the material world as something good in and of itself, not as evil or "fallen." Both leave it up to the individual to discover the Divine (or Truth, or meaning, or psychological wholeness or whatever). While encouraging the individual's search for understanding, both stress the importance of searching in community.

As a Unitarian I approach my search with my intellect and my doubts. As a Pagan, I use ritual in my search for meaning, to access my subconscious and even, perhaps, the collective unconscious.

In other words, one feeds my head, and the other feeds the rest of me, except that to

say this is to exaggerate the differences for the sake of a good metaphor. What is truly important is that both feed me and contribute to my feeling and becoming a whole person. ☐

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