

Mike Williams – Testimonial March 31, 2019

I'm the son of an altar boy and a conservative Jew. I... grew up unchurched because my parents thoroughly tossed aside any commitment to organized religion well before my sister and I came along. I never considered that church would be a part of my life. In fact, for quite a while, going to religious services or even just going in to a house of worship made me uneasy. (Even those times when my terrible high school rock band played in the basement of my friend's church in the NYC suburbs to fellow awkward teenagers.)

Sometime in my early adulthood I became intrigued by the idea of spirituality, and then I was convinced to try out a Unitarian Universalist service by Tara when we lived down in DC. We spent a number of years at that church—which I loved—but I often felt like an onlooker. It wasn't until a few months after we arrived in Maine, almost five years ago, that we found A2U2 and we found a place that felt like home.

It's these last few years that cemented that feeling for me. *These last few years...* they've had their share of challenges, and it's here that I've found solace, strength and community. As a straight, white man, these last few years have opened my privileged eyes to racism, islamophobia, homophobia, sexism, and bigotry that I had not truly understood before. It's been here that I found a place where I could grapple with reality, and people with whom I could comfortably grapple alongside of.

It's been here that I can face the fear of sending my kids in to a world wracked by climate change, but with hope that both the people here and this institution will do everything they can to make it not so. And regardless of the present outside world, it has been here that my children have been given the riches of a beautiful community. A community that shows them the wealth of caring for others, and makes each one of our seven principles tangible.

It's here that I became comfortable in church, because this church isn't some dusty dogma or imposing building. This church is its people. It's the living embodiment of our seven principles. I have so much gratitude for A2U2—its people and its spirit—from Family Promise to permaculture to spiritual enrichment. In addition to serving as a board member and wherever else I can, I

am proud to show my gratitude through our family's pledge. I hope you'll join me and show how you are grateful for A2U2 and pledge this year.