

Pauli Juneau - A2U2 Testimonial April 14, 2019

My name is Pauli Juneau. I was raised in Manchester NH, I grew up in a Franco-American neighborhood and went to a bi-lingual Catholic Elementary School. Up until I was about 13, I thought just about everyone was bi-lingual and Catholic.

So my early years were spent with my Catholic neighborhood friends, going to school, church was a big part of the education, and I received all the official Catholic sacraments. Baptism, First Communion, Confirmation. I kind of always liked the ceremony and rituals of church, I studied them but I never understood them. Does that make sense?

In high school I slowly pulled away from the church, and by the time I graduated from HS, I was really on my way out. I joined the Air Force and met a whole lot of people “unlike me” but I was intrigued by them.

At age 21 I was accepted into a “Catholic” nursing school, which was OK, until we had our mandatory “ethics” course taught by the “Catholic priest”. I remember asking him after he told us that we must baptize any baby if they died, I asked “but what if the parents are Jehovah Witness, guess what his response was. That was my true turning point. I still felt very “spiritual” but not Catholic.

Time marched on I met Tim in 1974, when we were both VISTA volunteers in Chicago. Ironically, I was assigned to an organization called Christian Action Ministry. This was made up of 13 different churches who had come together after the 1968 riots on the West Side of Chicago. This is where I learned about religion and spiritualness. This was eye opening. But nothing seemed to fit for me.

Tim and I moved to Michigan and decided to get married so we started looking for a person to marry us. We found a woman UU minister and she presided over our marriage. So in 1974, we stood in a circle, in a Union Hall in Lansing Michigan and said our vows. Both of our parents had never quite been to a wedding like this before.

Life just went on for another 10 years, we were both very unchurched. Our daughter Selena was born in 1981, we moved to Maine in 83. We both felt like we were missing something in our hectic lives but couldn't quite figure out what that was.

In September of 1989 my daughter Selena and I left Tim alone for a weekend and went to NH to visit my parents. If Tim was up here telling the story, which he's not he'd say things like I just opened my law office, was working 7 days a week, needed something more in my life, and remembered reading in the paper and through some friends, that A2U2 was the MOST liberal congregation in town, so he went to a service while we were away. When we got home and he told us about how cool his experience was, we were quite shocked that he did something other than work, so we agreed to join him the following week for a service.

I agreed to go to the service thinking I'd just sit quietly and observe and then leave without much interaction with anyone. Then I heard the person doing announcements invite newcomers to stand and introduce themselves. So, Tim started tugging on me to stand and introduce myself. I'm thinking "really, introduce myself in a church, what will be next?"

Our daughter Selena, age 9 at the time, went off to the RE program with Tirrell Kimball. We saw them again at coffee hour. Tirrell told us in her years of RE she had never had a child interview her about how the program works. She smiled at us and said I think I passed her interview, and Selena will do fine here.

So, we kept coming and feeling a growing sense of community and spiritual awakening.

It's hard for me to think that we been active members of this church for 30 years. The list of committees, groups, events, services, is long. I found a place, a home where I can be creative, spiritual, feel supported through personal rough times, and appreciated. These experiences make all the work that goes into making A2U2 unique worthwhile. But, one of my favorite things is to sit in this sanctuary, feeling the energy of our church family, and hold hands with Tim knowing I am truly blessed to be part of our A2U2 community.