

Testimonial Regarding RE Participation at A2U2

When I was 10, I demanded to go to church. My Dad brought me to the Belmont, MA UU Church.

My first day, we studied Moses. I remember that. I also remember studying world religions, and having docent led expeditions to Boston's Museum of Fine Arts to understand Buddhism, Hinduism, and maybe other religions, through their art. I was 12.

20 years later, I began volunteering in RE, pretty much when I joined A2U2, in 1985.

The experience connects me, as it always has, to my first spiritual beliefs, and my ongoing search for insight into what I call God, others call mystery, or just straight up knowledge of the world.

The treasures of insight are too numerous to recount, but I will recount 2 of them.

Back to Moses, my favorite Prophet. The man whose mother left him in a basket in the rushes, for Pharaoh's daughter to find. That was safer than keeping him in her home. The man who led his people out of slavery, with some help from God, who personally gave him the 10 Commandments, many of which are very good advice. When recently returning to this story with one of our RE classes, we reflected on what it must be like to have a baby in a dangerous situation, and just pray the baby makes it out alive.

Then there is our denomination's continued commitment to teaching what was called World Religions when I was 12. The names of the curricula have changed, but the idea is the same. We expose our kids to lots of ideas, and they can choose their own faith. Now, middle school classes visit other churches. I've been to Williams Temple, Temple Bet Ha'am, Sacred Heart, Quaker Meeting, and Green Memorial AME. These visits are arranged by our minister and DRE, with the other churches' leaders. I have a much greater sense of the community in which we exist thanks to these visits. The students' reflections are always incisive and interesting.

I missed the trip to the Mormon Temple. The students reported that they were very welcomed, but were concerned that the message—that they should change their beliefs—was not in keeping with our faith's commitment to free thought.

The Mormon example presented one of my bigger growth moments. When my youngest was 11, I volunteered to teach the Neighboring Faiths curriculum in March. I was told I would be teaching Mormonism. My answer was No, I would not do it. I shocked myself. Was I really that closed-minded? I remembered that one of my Physician Assistant students was a Mormon from Utah. My student came in to talk to the kids about her faith, and the terrible history of prejudice and abuse her ancestors had experienced. I still disagree with much of what they stand for, but with some knowledge of who they are, what they believe, and that they are not an entirely homogenous group. I am less quick to judge now.

Last, but not least, I get to know the kids, and their parents, and see the families grow up. When I was younger, and my kids were in RE, it wasn't as big a deal. But now, when we desire intergenerational church experiences, it's the best way I know of to get to know the parents, who are my kids' age, and their children, who admittedly can be challenging at times, but really fun to be around as well.

There is a need for preparation, which can be time-consuming in an otherwise busy week, but the DRE helps.

I've never regretted my commitment to RE. I will continue to support the church by working with our kids and young families.