

Brian Gill, FUSN testimonial, 2015.02.08

Good morning. My name is Brian Gill.

In the coming weeks you're going to hear a series of testimonials in support of the annual pledge drive. I suspect that the pledge drive chairs picked me to go first only because they wanted someone from the finance committee who could communicate how much pledging matters.

I'll spare you the Powerpoint charts that I wanted to bring, but I will say this: two-thirds of FUSN's budget comes from pledges. So my testimony is not just about why I come to FUSN, but also why I am a pledging member.

In fact it is surprising that I am here. I never would have predicted it.

I was raised Catholic, and abandoned Catholicism in college, when I discovered philosophy and found it a lot more satisfying and plausible. I've been an atheist ever since. I didn't see any point in being part of a church (or even a "society").

And now fast-forward 25 years and look at what has happened. I'm still an atheist, but I'm here every Sunday—and often other days of the week as well.

I've served on three FUSN committees. I've taught RE. I'm a coming of age mentor.

I've got a UU bumper sticker on my car, and I wear this chalice necklace not just on Sundays, but seven days a week.

My wife, Jenny Lerner—who grew up UU in this congregation—teases me for having become one of the world's only UU zealots.

How did I get from there to here? I'd have to say it involved a change in worldview—a recognition of being part of "the interdependent web." I had suffered from the classic delusion of the 20-something straight white male: I believed I was the sole author of my destiny. It took a long time for me to see the folly of that view.

I'm not so much a recovering Catholic as a recovering individualist.

My conversion from being an individualist to a UU “social capitalist” was partly attributable to becoming a spouse and a father. Jenny introduced me to UUism and eventually persuaded me to start attending church. (Like her mother, who some of you know, she can be *very* persuasive.)

I grew to recognize the importance of commitments to spouse and family, and to recognize that those commitments and relationships need the support of larger ones in which they are embedded.

Even as an atheist, I learned that I could appreciate in this community a power greater than myself.

Just last week, Erin told all of us that the Latin root of the word “religion” means “to bind fast.” As I see it, we *create* the power greater than ourselves through our commitment to bind fast to each other.

That power is evident in a hundred ways in which we at FUSN are greater together than we could be alone.

I can see it in our social action: in the fight for equal marriage and in the march for black lives.

I can hear it in our music: in the voices of the choir and in Bill Dusett's “Rockin Religion” listening sessions at Sandy Island.

I can taste it in the food that Ron and his team made for us at the community breakfast this morning.

I can touch it in the sand of Ferry Beach when I’m playing football with FUSN kids aged 5 to 75.

I can feel it in the support my family has received through the challenges of Jenny's chronic disease, and in the loving web of shared values in which our daughter Siena is growing up.

None of these things would be possible without this community. That's why I'm a member, and that's why I pledge.

Thank you for lifting me up with your higher power.