

## What we believe matters

by Rev Pam Rumancik

I'm really happy to be invited to share in this service with these wonderful UU kids. It's been great getting to know each of them and watch as they explored what it means to be a Unitarian Universalist. It's really important work – it means they are thinking about their answers to the important questions in life. What do we believe in? What is important in our lives – so important that we base our actions and our decisions on those beliefs?

For a long time there's been a misconception among some in our churches. People would often say – when introducing our faith to newcomers – you can believe whatever you want. I know I said it a few times as I was entering into the faith. “This is a great church because you can believe whatever you want.”

But – you know – that's not true. We may not have any dogma, or doctrine – we may not have a creed or a catechism – but you can't believe *whatever* you want and call yourself a Unitarian Universalist.

For instance, you can't believe that one group of people should be able to own and exploit another group of people.

You can't believe that one sex is inherently smarter, kinder, better than another – any sex!

You can't believe that it's okay to use violence to make people do what you want – especially in church!

I know a church in the city that thought you could believe whatever you wanted and still be part of the church – until a white supremacist skinhead joined the church. They tried to be welcoming and accept him as a person – and he could be quite genial to white people. But every so often he got up at their joys and concerns to invite people to some White Power Rally – which was horribly disrespectful of the people of color in their congregation.

They never did figure out how to say this wasn't okay and ended up getting rid of him through some sort of Robert's Rules legality loophole. But what they really needed to say was that his beliefs were not in accordance with our Unitarian Universalist values. Our very first principle states that we believe in the inherent worth and dignity of every person – or as our kids can tell you – we believe that every person is important and that all people should be treated fairly.

What we believe matters, because whether we realize it or not, we act on those beliefs. We make choices around how we will treat people, what we will or won't buy, how we will use our influence, based on what we believe to be true. And as adults, we must examine our beliefs, look at how they line up with our actions – whether our inner worlds and our outer worlds line up. So we are grateful that our kids are doing this important work – doing it at a time in their lives when they are just discovering the importance that beliefs have in their lives. It can remind us of our own rites of passage – maybe a first communion or confirmation, maybe some other special recognition of your growing up.

Today our second graders have taken a big step toward adulthood by thinking through what they believe in their hearts to be right and true. It is something that will serve them for the rest of their lives as they strive to have the fullest and richest experience of being human possible and we are really proud of them!

It serves each of us to pause, to listen, to find to that still small voice inside, it serves us to find strength in communities of faith which affirm our highest ideals and which walk with us on our journeys to lives of meaning and purpose. We remember our high ideals today as we celebrate this rite of passage with our rainbow kids.

Blessed be and amen.