

Iva King's GA reflections – 7-29-2018

What breaks my heart is the realization that many folks do not know about Unitarian Universalism, or think we are some strange cult! People who were raised in more conservative religions, and are no longer comfortable in those settings, need to know Unitarian Universalism exists! More LGBTQ people need to know Unitarian Universalism exists. People who are concerned about racism and financial inequities in the United States need to know that UU's have been working on these problems for decades. People who are worried about the environment and climate change need to know UU's care deeply for this beautiful planet.

What gives me hope is the UU's I had the opportunity to meet with, to share ideas with, and to worship with at General Assembly. To sing "Loves Calls Us On" with a couple thousand other UU's gave me hope! The energy, the passion, the knowledge of those making presentations, and of other attendees, was remarkable. Rev. Susan Frederick-Gray's emotional description of her experiences in Charlottesville showed clearly how passionate, and compassionate, the president of our Unitarian Universalist Association is. Various committee reports, as well as the resolutions passed, gave me hope that we can make a difference in the world. And, believe it or not – in that huge Kansas City Convention Center, the UUA demonstrated our commitment to the environment by setting up multiple recycling bins. There were even volunteers on hand to help if I wasn't sure which bin my stuff belonged in!

Looking around at all of you gives me hope, too. Those of you who have been active in this fellowship for many years have developed a beautiful space, and worship rituals from a broad range of religious traditions, to nurture our spirits. I need that; in these challenging times we all need that. Seeing new members and families with children gives me hope. Every time I read our weekly Enews or the monthly Tapestry I find opportunities demonstrate my commitment to combat social injustice here in Athens and elsewhere.

Last, but certainly not least, seeing our building expansion take shape gives me hope! I believe our new spaces, for meeting and for fellowship, will help UUFA shine ever brighter as a beacon of liberal religion in northeast Georgia. Here we can balance our needs for spiritual support with society's needs for social justice. It is not an easy balancing act - meeting our internal needs for spiritual growth and support while also opening our doors to the larger community. Sometimes my heart hurts when only a few volunteers come forward. We have an amazing staff – Rev. Alison, Amber, Kelli, and our Administrative Assistant Shaye. (If you are new and haven't met Shaye, you really should stop by her office one day.) Obviously, our staff can't do it all. There are ways each of us can help – teach a kids' class? Help with building maintenance or landscaping here at our fellowship? (We are going to need more of that when the building is finished!) Volunteer for Interfaith Hospitality Network? Donate food? Show up to support social justice initiatives in Athens?

My heart is full of hope - if we each do our part we can accomplish much!!

During Together Time, Salem Curtis, a rising freshman at Cedar Shoals helped Iva King, Lay Minister for Lifespan Development. They introduced the idea of idioms - Raining Cats and Dogs, Feeling Blue, and having a Broken Heart. Then the children and youth had opportunities to respond to "broken heart" situations printed on construction paper hearts. As they left the sanctuary, the kids distributed the halves to adults. Iva encouraged the adults to match halves and talk after the service about what breaks their hearts and gives them hope.

Below are the broken heart situations:

One of your best friends moves away.
You lost your favorite toy – or jewelry.
Someone says something unkind to another person.
Your grandmother is very sick – or you are.
You had a bad day at camp – or school – or work.
You want to go outside to enjoy nature, but it is raining.
You see a hurt animal.
You see a child who is crying.