

## **Siding With Love**

Where is our holy church? We're on the side of love.

Many Unitarian Universalists suffer from a chronic identity crisis. People ask us, what do Unitarian Universalists believe? And—we freeze! We don't know what to say, because Unitarian Unitarians believe so many things, so many different things. We are priests of paradox, apostles of ambiguity, nattering nabobs of nuance.

And so the Unitarian Universalist Association produces seven principles and six sources and countless pamphlets and little wallet cards all to remind us what we kindasorta believe. We are exhorted to compose elevator speeches, summations of Unitarian Universalism so pithy they might be recited on an elevator in its fleeting passage between floors.

Do we believe in God? Question—simple. Answer—impossible.

Define “God.”

Define “believe.”

Define “we.”

Define “in.”

Whatever God is or is not, I don't think God cares what we believe. I don't think Jesus cares what we believe. And I know the Buddha doesn't care what we believe.

The important question is not what we believe, it's where we stand.

I want to side with love.

Of course when I say “standing” I’m not talking about a physical posture. Rosa Parks stood on the side of love by remaining seated.

I’m talking about a moral stance not just assumed privately in our hearts but witnessed boldly in our families and schools and workplaces and communities, at the State House, in the halls of Congress. I’m talking about faith in action.

I’m not talking about sanctimony. I’m talking about intentionality. Understanding that our practice will be imperfect as each of us is imperfect, what is our purpose? What is our aspiration? What is our commitment?

To side with love.

When Unitarian Lydia Maria Child defied the prohibition of her time against women speaking in public and demanded freedom for enslaved African-Americans and the vote for women, when she protested the Trail of Tears, the brutal removal of the Cherokee, she was siding with love.

When Unitarian Universalist minister Jim Reeb heeded the call of Martin Luther King Jr. to Selma, AL, and was bludgeoned to death by racists, he was siding with love.

Siding with love doesn’t require power. It requires courage. Because courage is power.

When a child on a playground sticks up for another who is teased or bullied or left out because they’re different, that child is siding with love.

Siding with love affirms the full humanity of all people. It honors the inherent worth and dignity, the spark of the divine in each and every person.

Siding with love means treating each other well, whether ally or adversary. “Love is patient;” wrote the Apostle Paul, “love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude.”

Siding with love means being more committed to being reconciled than to being right. Love “does not insist on its own way.... It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.”

A religious person, Rabbi Abraham Heschel taught us, is one “whose greatest passion is compassion, whose greatest strength is love and defiance of despair.”

His friend Martin Luther King Jr. added, “I have decided to stick with love. Hate is too great a burden to bear.”

So when someone asks us what Unitarian Universalists believe, or why we’re speaking out on gay rights or immigrant rights or disability rights or human rights, or why we bother to go to church on a Sunday morning, let’s tell ‘em: We are siding with love.

By Fred Small, January 21, 2015