

Birthing: My First Covenant Group Experience
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The first time I participated in a Covenant Group was in St. Louis during the General Assembly of 2006. I went to see Mary Oliver in the flesh and to hear her read her poetry. There were about 5000 people attending - I usually avoid showing up in places with large crowds - but this time, I wanted to feel what it was like to be among other UUs from around the country. Knowing that I needed an anchor, I was delighted to see Covenant Groups on the schedule.

At that time in my life I was tremendously open to new experiences and new perspectives. My career had come to an abrupt end. My daughter and grandchildren had moved away. My husband, also a poet, had died in 1992. I wanted the exquisite poetry of Mary Oliver to wash over me.

Our Covenant Group promised to meet at the same time and in the same room for the entire week of GA. We came from all walks of life and from a variety of educational backgrounds. There was a gay African American executive who was in the closet for fear of losing his career; a woman who had been diagnosed with breast cancer; a mother of a young child who had left the familiar of her native country to come to America; a lawyer working in the corporate world trying hard to navigate the tough business decisions required of him, while maintaining his personal integrity; a woman who had never graduated from high school and who supported herself and an infant daughter as she worked her way through college.

I learned their stories, not so different from my own, and they learned mine. Our individual stories created a collective that belonged to all of us. We treated each other as we were called to do by recognizing and honoring the inherent worth and dignity of each individual.

When GA was coming to an end, and we knew our time together would soon be over, we each agreed to create a piece of work to symbolize our individual expressions of our Covenant Group experience. I made a small three dimensional collage. In it was a newly born baby, swaddled in a blanket, and placed in a cradle. The collage symbolized the birth of me as a UU. Both the birthing and the collage were possible because of the loving kindness I had received from these deeply compassionate people.

Six years ago, I walked into a Covenant Group room not sure that I could be a Unitarian Universalist. On Sunday, March 18, 2012 I'll present my Coming of Age Service at my Beloved Thoreau Congregation. Family members are coming from New York City, Boston, and California. Friends from First Unitarian Universalist in Houston will hop in their cars to make the short drive to Stafford, Texas. I couldn't feel more blessed. Namaste!

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