

December 2017

Kris Rife:



Six years ago, my son wanted to get a tattoo. He was only 16, which is under age to get one in South Carolina so I used one of my best parenting skills, bribery, and offered that if he came to church with me for 52 weeks, I would take him to Florida to get the tattoo. He accepted that offer and we started on our journey to find the appropriate church to call home, at least for 52 weeks.

I knew which churches I didn't want to go to, but I wasn't sure where I wanted to be. Our first stop was here at the Unitarian Church when services were being held over at Charleston Day School in the gymnasium while the sanctuary was getting a facelift. I loved that I didn't have to be here until 11 o'clock, which allowed me a "sleep in" on my only day off. I loved the warmth of community and as a person who believes in one's obligation to volunteer in their community, I sensed this congregation's fire of commitment to that service. I enjoyed this new minister that had recently come. Rev. Danny Reed had a sense of humor refreshing to hear from the pulpit and I was impressed by his skill to connect us with what was challenging the world's happiness and peace that week. When construction was completed and services returned to the sanctuary, the first time I entered, I was awestruck by its elegance and years later continue to enjoy seeking calm while staring at the windows and ceiling.

The paper Order of Service that first year sometimes had a little image scattered throughout of a compass star. I believe in some kind of divine intervention out there and felt that those compass stars were a kind of a sign that this was the right church because the future tattoo choice was to be that of a compass star on my son's shoulder.

After a year or so, I took the membership classes and joined this church. I made some wonderful friendships participating in the Membership Committee and continue to be sensitive to what it is like to be a new member and not know anyone. I was impressed by how our former Director of Religious Education, Janet Watts, made great efforts to include my reluctant son in youth activities. Being an usher helped me learn names and meet people.

I became more aware that I have fewer years ahead of me to change the world. I think I am going to make a greater impact alongside those sitting in front of me in church right now, than I would ever do on my own. I have been a member of the Social Justice Committee since I joined. It has made me grow and work in areas I would never have ventured on my own. I became more politically aware and even outspoken. I have shared trips up to the State House with many of you. Being influenced by some great minds here has given me the spirit to work closer in fighting racism, getting “awakened” about my white privilege, going to protests at meetings at City Halls, helping bail some deserving activists out of jail, and assisting with Rev. William Barber’s moral movement. I attended dozens of meetings trying to figure out how to get one step closer to a fair and just community where Black lives always matter, where guns are only in the hands of safe citizens or in museums, where children always have enough food to eat, where people of various gender identities feel safe and loved and where our Mother Earth is always nurtured.

This wouldn't happen if I didn't have you to work alongside.

It took a year and a half, but my son did get his tattoo. I got a church family.