

## Jim and Linda Porter

In 1970 Linda and I purchased our first house in Southland. We moved to Lexington from Berea where we had been loosely affiliated with Union Church. We frequently passed by the UU Church on Clays Mill Road which we likened to a “space ship” up on the hillside; and we often wondered “what went on up there.” As it turned out my boss and his wife were members of the church. We talked to her at one of our work related gatherings and discussed theological issues.

“You and Linda are UU’s,” she said; “you just don’t know it yet!” So with that push or stimulus we attended a couple of services. We found that the membership was made up largely of university professors and staff as well as scientists, public school teachers, and people in the social advocacy fields. The congregation was (and is) an intellectually sophisticated and eclectic group of individuals and couples.

During that time there was no minister so most the services were lay-lead. The Sunday services normally consisted of programs put on by people who were recognized experts in their fields. A large percentage of the members had PhD’s. And at the conclusion of each Sunday’s program there was usually opportunity for Q & A and talkback, which was often wide-ranging and intellectually stimulating.

But as the church grew we felt the need for more professional leadership and so in the mid 1970’s we called Roger Fritts to be our minister. Since that time the church has had a series of ministers and has become known as a bastion of liberal religious thought and action in central Kentucky. Linda and I joined the UU Church of Lexington in 1975 and, except for the 18 years we spent in Chicago, we’ve been members ever since. The UU theology and the seven UU Principles have become our touchstone and our lodestar and we try to live our lives in accordance with that philosophy.

We have supported the church with both our time and financially as well. I was church President for one year and treasurer for four years. Linda was interim RE Director and served on one of the ministerial search committee. We now confine our involvement mainly to the Membership Committee. Linda is also involved with the Pastoral Care Committee.

We feel that it is both important and indeed essential that liberal religious thought and traditions be actively advocated and represented in Central Kentucky. Although some other faiths and denominations espouse elements of UU philosophy and customs none come close to the seven principles and the traditions of Unitarian Universalism. So for us the UU Church community is vital to our lives as religious liberals/progressives and we expect to joyfully support it with our time and our treasure now and in the future.

The logo features a stylized sun with rays in shades of orange and yellow, partially obscured by a blue silhouette of a person's arms raised in a gesture of praise or joy. Below the sun is a blue silhouette of a chalice or a similar vessel.

Unitarian Universalist  
Church of Lexington

**ACTION. LOVE. JUSTICE.**

## Charlie Lutz

“Open my heart to be a sanctuary, All made holy loved and true, With thanksgiving, I’ll be a living, Sanctuary for you.” We often sing this little hymn at the UUCL. It is more than a nice sentiment for me. The UUCL congregation, staff, and minister, made me feel welcome from the very beginning. More than that, I literally felt that they became my living sanctuary. I am very grateful for their personal support.

I did not know exactly what to expect when I first attended the UUCL in January 2017. I was hoping to find a community of good people. I was hoping to find moral and ethical guidance. I did find those things, although to a depth that was much greater than I had expected. I go to services almost every Sunday that I am in Lexington, because it means a great deal to me personally. I have met scores of friends at the UUCL. I very much appreciate the sermons and religious perspective offered by guest ministers, our lay Worship Associates, and especially by our wonderful minister, Brian Chenowith.

Unitarian Universalism is a creedless religion that does not dictate what you believe. Many religious perspectives are celebrated and used as a basis for understanding our places in the world and for guiding our personal decisions. I was thrilled and honored to be asked to be a Worship Associate after having been a member for only 18 months.

The UUCL has given me gifts that I did not even anticipate. As with many organizations, there are many volunteer opportunities. For example, I help cook breakfast for homeless people once per month, along with other UUCL members. The first week was an act of kindness and generosity on my part. Since then, there has been no sacrifice at all. I feel good cooking for needy men and women, while in the company of some extraordinarily good people. I have planned my travel so that I would not miss the breakfast.

The UUCL has opened me to religious perspectives, which I had not guessed was possible. When I joined the UUCL, I was a militant atheist who did not tolerate religious perspectives, especially Christianity. Since then, I have absorbed the seven Unitarian Universalist Principles. I embrace the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Principles: “Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations.” and “A free and responsible search for truth and meaning.” This has allowed me to not only tolerate, but to appreciate and celebrate, various religious perspectives as paths to understanding my role in the world and as guides to becoming a better human. I am still an atheist, but I now am much more accepting and curious about the beliefs of others. This amazing transformation has allowed me and a devout Christian to develop an intense romantic relationship—something that would have been impossible before I joined the UUCL.

The UUCL means different things to its members. We each come with our personal history and our needs.

UUs view the world from Christian, Buddhist, Pagan, Jewish, Atheist, and other perspectives. Some join the church in adulthood, some are life-long members. Some attend and soon discover a spiritual home, as I did. Some attend once or twice and conclude that the UUCL does not offer what they are looking for. All of that is OK and there is absolutely no expectation of adopting our religious experience. If it helps you, that is wonderful. If it isn’t what you need, that also is fine—in that case, we wish you good luck on your journey. Go in peace.

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## Mary Miller

UUCL was a haven for me as a single mother when I originally joined about 25 years ago. I discovered a place in which my children were nurtured and where I could explore my own spirituality. In our sometimes frantic and fractured world, I found an environment which still both comforts and challenges me. The UU commitment to ethical principles and philosophical exploration is the perfect match for me. I am so lucky to be part of a community of likeminded individuals in an environment in which questioning spirits are honored and social justice is a priority. We are also a community of individuals who care for one another, and we share our joys and sorrows, providing emotional sustenance.

Our UUCL community is a gift that continually enriches my life. I value the mix of ages, beliefs, and backgrounds at UUCL. I have found a place where my ideas and talents are respected and where I have the opportunity to appreciate others who give of their time and energy to support the mission of UUCL. At this moment, I am looking forward to marching with the UUCL group in the Martin Luther King, Jr. Freedom March next week in Lexington. I will be with a group of friends who support the ideals of Dr. King – there will be happy greetings, smiling faces, and a commitment to social justice as we march together, displaying our banner as part of this important occasion.

Shared commitment and fellowship are among the many reasons that I value UUCL as a vital part of my life.



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## Linda Richardson

I was brought up in a strict Catholic family that observed all the rules - no meat on Friday, Mass every Sunday; confession once a month, catechism lessons; even occasional family rosaries. It was the mental gymnastics that were the most difficult, however - the requirement to suspend reason, and to accept, among many other things, that Catholics had the monopoly on God and salvation; all other faiths were locked out.

I became a UU as a teenager without realizing it. My desire to visit each different church in my town was considered scandalous by my family. I focused on the reality of one's actions and the values it reflected, rather than one's professed religious belief. My free and responsible search for truth and meaning had begun.

It was not until I married that I discovered that UUs existed. Neither I or my fiancé, of Jewish background and Buddhist philosophy, had set foot in a house of worship except for an occasional wedding. A Unitarian minister was recommended, and was the logical choice.

He and his wife sent us anniversary cards every year, but I thought no more about it. It was having a child that caused me to think about religion again. Not for me, but for him - to have a religious identity. The short version of the story is that this son ended up years later joining a youth group that provided the acceptance and shelter that he needed in adolescence. This was such a positive influence in his life that while in college, he formed a UU Fellowship on his campus.

The UU church we joined, in NJ, gradually became an important part of my life. It was a slow process for me; as a recovering catholic I was very hesitant to get more involved. I helped with RE for many years, but only slowly started to realize that I could benefit from this community too. My long story short was that the birth of my second son got me connected with other recent moms, and I became progressively more involved from that point on. The UU community was a place where I felt connected, safe but challenged to grow; it was fun and it was work and it was all worth it.

Fast forward to moving to Lexington - the first thing I googled about Lexington was UUCL RE program - check. My first concern was to help my sons adjust. I knew that joining volunteer activities would help me connect and adjust.

My sons did fine; my older one connected by helping with RE and youth con activities, the younger through the glue that is generated by sleepover lock-ins.

In some ways, it is similar for me; I feel that UUCL is the "glue" that connects me to Lexington and enables me to live in this city in the south in a red state.

I have found like minded people who hold similar values. In this city where the second question a stranger asks you is what church you go to, I can comfortably answer and usually then hear, "oh yes, I've been there for this or that event".

I have also taken on a number of other volunteer roles in Lexington. Some did not feel like a good fit, like I had nothing in common with the others, or even uncomfortable with them due to their values or attitudes.

I have dropped the ones that don't fit. At UUCL, that does not happen.

We are all different, but we are grounded in respect for our differences.

UUCL is something of a sanctuary for me, but at the same time having a sanctuary does not mean being complacent about all the challenges we face at this time. It is a place to be supported and recharge to face those challenges.

