

“In Dialogue: Voices, Images, Stories”

Rev. Dr. Jan Carlsson-Bull and Dorothy Farkas
In Dialogue
Unitarian Universalist Church in Meriden
Meriden, CT
May 29, 2016

NOTE: While Dorothy’s responses are available only as a recording, you are invited to fill in the blanks with what you remember if you were there, with what you know of Dorothy if you know her, or to hold gratitude that Dorothy is who she is, suggested by the introduction and questions that follow.

Dorothy, what a gift it is to have you here for the second Sunday in a row. This Sunday, we welcome you as a participant in this worship experience. What can be more central to Unitarian Universalist worship than questions that invite stories about the unfolding of life richly lived?

Memorial Day needn’t be solely about remembering those we have lost, but about remembering the stories that have comprised *our* lives thus far. May my dialogue with Dorothy and the stories and reflections that she shares be an inspiration and invitation for all of us to do surface our stories and reflect on where we have come thus far.

For those of you who don’t know Dorothy Farkas, she/you, Dorothy, have been a member of this congregation for many years. Just five years ago, you were interviewed by Helene Figueroa, another longtime member of this congregation, on what it means to you to be a Unitarian Universalist. Did you know that we still include the text of that interview in our New Member packets? You’re published, Dorothy!

This morning I’d like to focus more on the stories and reflections and wisdom that you’ve gathered over these past 93 years—I believe it will be 94 come July 7th. How does that sound?

Response

You were born into an Orthodox Jewish family in the Bronx in 1922. You grew up in the Bronx in a Jewish household. What is your earliest memory of your family?

Response

How about your neighborhood?

Response

I’ve always known you to speak your mind. You have a reputation for doing so, yes? How was this nurtured or resisted by your family? Your schooling?

Response

What did religion mean to you in your growing up years? How observant were you as a Jewish family? What moved you as an individual? What turned you off?

Response

What are your recollections of national and world events during your coming of age years? Just four years before you were born, the Great War ended. Just two years earlier, women in this country finally won the right to vote. When you were a mere seven years old the stock market crashed. How did these and other milestones in history impact you personally, Dorothy?

Response

James Luther Adams, the great 20th century Unitarian theologian and scholar, observed that humans can be “creative in history” and that the “prophetic liberal church is the church in which all members share the common responsibility to attempt to foresee the consequences of human behavior with the intention of making history in place of merely being pushed around by it.” Long before you “found” Unitarian Universalism, you were a woman of strong will, who likely shared your opinions with a passion that foresaw this as a lifelong tendency. How do you feel your strong will and keen intelligence led you to be proactive in the slice of history that you occupy?

Response

On a different note, romance! Andy was your and husband soul mate of 58 years. You lost him just last year. What a pair you were! How did you meet? What was your attraction to this equally opinionated and intelligent young man with whom you truly “grew old” with?

Response

Might you share a story that describes your time together?

Response

Dorothy, you have so many identities. One of them is being a mother. Your daughter, Rhea, I know lives in California. What has been the greatest gift of being a mother? The greatest challenge?

Response

You found Unitarian Universalism a bit later in life—actually, in your 40’s, not so late in your life. What was its appeal for you?

Response

We haven’t touched on a factor that has certainly impacted your life—that is, your blindness. Dorothy, what would you want those of us here this morning to know about what it’s like to be blind? In other words, what should those of us who have vision know that we are probably quite ignorant or clueless about?

Response

You are gifted in so many ways—keenly intelligent, vibrantly eloquent, and strikingly beautiful—yes, and grateful, as you expressed to me the other day. You just keep blossoming, which means that you change. I trust that all this infuses your understanding of the world we inhabit. What is the most pronounced change in your perspective of this world as you have ripened and are living well into the first part of the 21st century?

Response

Let's return to the statement you made to me a few days ago and which I quoted earlier this morning: "There is something extraordinary in the ordinary." Say more.

Response

Could we go on for hours more? Yes and yes. For the gift of you, for the gift of all that is your life Dorothy Farkas, we are forever grateful.