

An Open Door Approach to Spiritual Community

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I loved going into Unity centers throughout the country and seeing the myriad ways Unity expresses as community and through Sunday services. I learned that each center and every minister has a unique expression. I also became keenly aware of how my mind processed elements of the Sunday morning experience as “me” and “not me.”

As I enter a sanctuary, there is a part of me that is on auto-pilot listening and looking for what fits and what doesn't fit for me. The next automatic mind game is imagining how friends might respond to the experience. Would they be comfortable right now? Would this or that turn them off? What parts will resonate? Noticing those voices in myself, I strive to see the Sunday experience through various lenses and expand the compatibility factor to make room for diversity.

I want my language, the music, and the service experience to invite in everyone who would love the depth of Unity. I think sometimes that expression that is too specific or particular limits this invitation to a certain population or personality. That in no way implies a watered-down Unity message. On the contrary, I think it is a strong Unity message that invigorates people.

My theory: Open the door as wide as possible so folks can get that message. In fact, when feasible, take it off the hinges and leave it outside of the sanctuary. Language and image deeply impact initial impressions. I like to think of the open-door approach as spiritual multilingualism. Honoring diversity may mean that no one gets what they want all of the time, but everyone has the opportunity to get what they need. (Thank you, Rev. Jagger.) I think that adds to the strength of a spiritual community and a sacred service.

Over time, my vision for Sunday service has also evolved to include elements of workshop style communication. Realizing that not everyone makes the time to attend workshops and classes, it occurred to me to bring the workshop to the Sunday service. I like to provide opportunities to take the lesson deeper by creating space for reflection and personal processing. I think this shift, though simple and even subtle, assists the Sunday message in becoming a customized experience.

Then there is the one thing that is exactly the same in every Unity service. It is assuredly the most powerful, timeless and transformative aspect of any Unity service. The Silence. Everywhere I went, the Silence held the promise of perfection and universal language. I think that many are craving more time in the Silence. I never underestimate the effect that the harmonizing, healing, magnetizing power of substantial time together in the Silence has on ... well, everything.



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