

Our Stories—Pam Brightman

As a child growing up in the Riverside Section of East Providence, Pam Brightman spent as much time as she could outside. There were always ropes to swing from, woods to explore and clams to dig up at a family member's summer home in Bristol. Nature was, and still is, her sanctuary. Walking in the woods, taking the dog for a walk and fishing at Barber's Pond allow her to experience the daily changes in nature, to notice the new growth, to spy the fallen feather.

Pam attended the Catholic Church as a youth and as an adult she explored many different spiritual paths. Over a period of several years she attended a class led by a shaman, she explored Wicca, she read about and studied the philosophy of Eckankar and she practiced Transcendental Meditation. In the early 1990's she was invited by a friend to participate in a Women's Group that was sponsored by UUCSC. The group, including UUCSC founders Winnie Bennis and Joan Patterson, Linda Whyte Burrell and Kathy Swink, among others, worked through two UUA curriculums— "Cakes for the Queen of Heaven" which examines the possibilities of the female as divine and "Rise Up & Call Her Name", an earth based spirituality journey. These women-centered studies and her time in the Women's Group spoke to Pam as none of her other explorations had and led to her deciding to join the congregation. She felt she could fully embrace her nature centered spirituality within the church. While nature was her sanctuary, church would be her community.

Over the years Pam served on the Board at UUCSC in several different capacities, notably as President from 1998-2001. She led training sessions with former UUCSC member Linda Jackim and John Glasheen leading to the congregation being recognized as a Welcoming Congregation. For the past three years she has helped in the garden and been a member of the Economic Justice Team. She has also led several lay services on topics such as "Growing Up Gay" and the "The Spirituality of Fishing."

For her entire career Pam worked with children, first at Meeting Street School and in group home settings. After receiving a MSW from RIC School of Social Work in 1992 followed by a LICSW she worked as a therapist for various nonprofit agencies.

Girls were forbidden to participate in Little League Baseball when she was a girl and Pam set out to change that. She was the founder of the Girls Little League Softball program in Riverside in the early 1970's and continued as a volunteer coach and occasional umpire for 18 years, also serving on the Board of Directors including as President of the Board.

Pam has been an advocate and activist for most of her life. Her first act was a sit down protest in high school in the late 1960's to demand the expansion of the curriculum to include Black History. Of that event she says, "I thought we'd get arrested and felt a bit worried wondering how my parents would react if I did but we all just sat there refusing to 'move along' when ordered to by the police. Well, no one got arrested and we ended up winning that protest. Black History was to be offered to all students. It was my first taste of what unity and peaceful protest can do to bring about positive changes for humanity and for a better society."

For the last twenty years her biggest passion has been art and craft. She particularly likes working with wood using skills acquired in the woodworking classes of Bill Sweet whom she met at Westminster UU. She turns wood on a lathe to create bowls, vases and cups and creates boxes from the various woods she has collected. She carves and she paints. In recent years she has participated in the UUCSC Holiday Fair, last time selling painted gourd ornaments. Unfortunately her studio has been packed up as she looks for either a bigger space in which to live and create or is able to acquire a separate studio space. She misses her studio and would particularly like to get back to a large red oak burl that she had started to carve. She can see the outline of the dragon surrounded by flames that is encased within the swirls and knots and is just waiting to be released.

Elizabeth Donovan, March 2021