

Good morning. I am honored to have been asked to witness before you today on why MUUS is important to me.

For me, spiritual practice is about gaining freedom... freedom from suffering, anger, hatred, selfishness, greed, fear, anxiety, ignorance and delusion and also freedom to be happy, loving, compassionate, equanimous and unbound from all that keeps me alienated, conditioned and small. The process of gaining this spiritual liberation is that of my own personal spiritual journey, an exodus, if you will, from the land of bondage to suffering and confusion to a promised land of happiness, peace and liberation. I am grateful that MUUS has been a part of that journey.

One of the ministries at MUUS that I have found particularly helpful has been the Creativity Small Group Ministry. This remarkable group has kept me in touch with that spark within that speaks from the ultimate when it is not obscured or confounded. I know for myself, I can not be a whole person without exercising my creativity regularly and the MUUS creativity group has facilitated that. It is a forum where we explore possibilities and gain a deeper understanding of our own unique, spiritual, creative essence and where we hold one another accountable to living a creative life with tangible results. It is a nurturing, refreshing environment that helps me take care of myself so that I can be more complete and available for others. It has also been a privilege for me to have had the opportunity at MUUS to share a bit of the Buddhist practice, which has been such a transformative force in my own life, with others, both from this pulpit a couple of times and for a few months now within the Friends of the Buddha Small Group Ministry. It is a great help to have others around who are interested in the teachings that have been so important to me and the insight of others, as they explore these teachings, continues to challenge and strengthen my own practice every time we gather.

Another aspect of MUUS that has perhaps been the greatest support of all to me on this liberation journey has been simply being a part of a community that genuinely welcomes and embraces me as a gay man . Jim and I thoroughly enjoy sitting together in this congregation on a Sunday morning as a married couple without feeling marginalized or called to explain ourselves in order to educate others. As simple and mundane as that sounds, it is very empowering. And our wedding here a few months back demonstrated just how generous and welcoming this community really is at heart. So, these are three aspects of MUUS that have been outstanding in their influence on my personal journey toward happiness. There are many others as well. For instance, listening to diverse points of view and insights as Reverend Jeanne, fellow MUUS members and friends lead services, the insightful reflections and responses by members of our congregation on sermons and Sunday service topics, the fellowship at social events like the service auction and the summer and winter picnics and parties, and, not least of all, doing music with the choir at our services and planning our services with the Sunday Services Committee. All of these activities, and probably many more, have made MUUS a great blessing in my life.

And so it is with a real sense of gratitude that I offer my financial support to MUUS each month and it is with a real sense of gratitude that I willingly participate in some of the many ministries of MUUS. I am confident that if MUUS continues to set a high standard, planning wisely, giving generously, receiving gratefully, practicing diligently and reaching out compassionately, that the journey for all of us will continue to be joyful and the promised land will manifest even as we journey. Thank you.