

Barbara Credo Statement

I am a spiritual Unitarian.

I was raised a Catholic. When I first left the Catholic Church, I abandoned spirituality for several years. It has only been in the last few years that I have come to embrace the spirituality that was part of my Catholic upbringing, but now I have the freedom to shape it around a more realistic, welcoming, non-dogmatic view of life.

I believe in God. There is a paradigm in the Catholic Church called the Holy Trinity. It is a look at God as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. With “tweaking”, I have expanded this as my construct of God.

“The Father” is my belief in God as the Creator, the power behind the Universe. The human gifts we were given are our bodies, our minds, our striving towards goodness. The other gift is nature. I experience God physically through nature. I spend a lot of time in my garden, outdoors, and walking in the woods and mountains of the Adirondack Mountains of New York State. I feel God’s presence in the beauty and power of nature.

“The Son” is the Word of God. Many great men and women have lived among us. They are our teachers and models. I experience God intellectually through the words and teachings of these prophets. I spent

my childhood hearing the stories in the Bible, especially the New Testament over and over again. The words of Jesus, especially the Sermon on the Mount, advocate love, involvement in the world, and social justice. Modern prophets help us reflect and express our thoughts about God. I read the psalms as rewritten for our world today by a Unitarian minister. Before going to bed, I read a few poems, often those by Mary Oliver. These “words” come close to expressing my feelings about God.

My last concept of God “The Holy Spirit” is community, the power of people to work together for the good of all. When a person or a group of people works together to accomplish a project or a mission for the benefit of others, the Spirit of Life is at work. I have been privileged to work with a group of people who truly care about immigrant students. Their time, thought, and commitment have shown me the Spirit of Life. At times, I have experienced a truly transformative experience while involved in my work at Union County College.

God is present in every day life. I talk to God several times a day, and give him/her different names, such as Spirit, Lord, Lord, and God. I don’t like any of these names, but I’ve never come up with one that I like any better.

Religion has always been a part of my life. Growing up, it was part of the rhythm of the week and the year. It was part of celebrations and partings. Religion has shaped many of my decisions about the direction I wanted my

life to take in life in both work and family. Now, as a Unitarian, I am not bound by a set of beliefs dictated by a church. In a way, this places a lot more responsibility on me to reflect on what I truly believe and what is important. As a Unitarian, religion helps me look at my life in a deeper way, how I act, and how I interact with people. The Unitarian Church supports a personal spiritual search, urges me to become involved in social action, and introduces me to new ideas and issues. A spiritual view of the world helps me to live my life more reflectively and purposely, and, hopefully, to become a better person than I would be without it.

Yesterday was my mother's funeral Mass. Mom was 92 and had lived in a nursing home for the past six years. Mom was a special person, not because of any specific accomplishment, but because she was filled with love. She listened to you, she smiled at you, she thanked you, she made you feel special. I am one of seven children, and we came together to help her enjoy her life and to leave this world peacefully. We had a schedule, and for the last six years, one family member visited her every day. After each visit, we e-mailed one another, providing updates on her condition. Mom's legacy is a large, close family and the special model she had been to us all as a loving mother. Death is part of life and she will live on in each one of us.

I have difficulty believing that our spirit simply ceases. Maybe it does, but maybe it passes into another state of being. Some of our questions cannot

be answered. I do know this: as the years continue, my view of God, religion, and death will continue to evolve.