

25 Old Jackson Tribute

By Cara Gross

Growing up coming to FUSW, it was the site of so many profound life lessons and formative memories. Most fundamentally, it was the place where ideals like “Everyone should be allowed to believe what they do and be who they are so long as we respect each other” became woven into my worldview, seeming so ordinary, so obvious, that I had no idea how radical, powerful, dangerous, and threatened those ideas really are.

In childhood, this was the place where Bonnie Hart taught us “We are UU,” with accompanying hand gestures; where Gil Hart played the recorder; where adults watched us dance to Britney Spears' music and did the electric slide with us during Friday night parenting co-ops; where I binge ate cookies after each Sunday service; where we painted the holiday windows every year and looked forward to each winter’s musical-theater-number-filled talent show. When I was thirteen, this was where I was allowed to pour my heart and guts into my Coming of Age sermon, and adults really listened--it was space where I was seen and held during one of the hardest years of my life. During my teens, I had a group of kind, funny, supportive, thoughtful, radiant peers here to grow up with. During my twenties, I was able to come back and speak openly at a couple of services about my fears of not growing up fast enough, and of climate change.

I know that more than anything it is the community—the people, our values, our hearts—that made FUSW what it was, and that that spirit endures wherever we

go, even when we are not all together. But for decades, 25 Old Jackson Avenue was the perfect little container for all this growth, hardship, light, and love. Hearing David Bryce and Arlin Roy deliver the most beautiful comments to wrap up candles of joy and concern, and the choir harmonizing on “I thank you god for most this amazing day” as we looked out at the trees and the deer behind the window and stained-glass chalice under the Sunday morning sun is a sacred memory we all made and that I will not forget. Thank you FUSW and 25 Old Jackson for holding so much life-affirming space together, and here is to so, so much more!