

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Gun Sense Talks

Gun Sense Ministry Team

A series of interviews with Unity Church members.

Gun Sense: We understand that in your family, as you grew up, guns were a part of your family's life. How were guns used in your family?

Church member: Our dad loved nature, being outside in the elements, and feeling connection with the earth. He had learned about hunting and fishing as a youth and passed on to us his knowledge and appreciation, including gun safety. To him hunting was natural, basic, and led to camaraderie that he enjoyed. We appreciated eating venison, quail, and rabbit after successful hunts. He accumulated a gun collection which he kept in a locked cabinet. Sometimes we helped him fill shotgun shells before going to the skeet range to practice shooting.

Gun Sense: We also understand that at one point, after the family had grown, there was a tragedy involving a gun.

Church member: Years later, my sibling's spouse had mental health issues aggravated by threats from a former spouse. Threats and acts of violence lead my sibling to keep a handgun in the house for their safety. However, in a moment of anger, my sibling's spouse used the handgun to commit suicide.

Gun Sense: Could you say something about the impact of that event on the family?

Church member: I believe the horror of that suicide was a major contributing factor in my sibling's later self-destructive behavior.

Gun Sense: Thank you for sharing your story with the congregation. This sort of tragedy is one that is so very hard for people to share. As we work to try to change the relationship of our society with guns, we think it important to know what people have experienced in their real lives.

Amazing Grace

Dale Howey, on behalf of the Sustainable Living Team

I love our church. You all have made me a better person, a more considerate parent, more thoughtful as a husband, and a better listener. I still have much to do, but we are all works in progress. As we contemplate another approaching Earth Day, I have pondered a deeper meaning to the "save the planet" message that is permeating the air waves. The planet will be fine without us, and my cynical side would say it would be better off. We have made a real mess of things.

The song, "Amazing Grace," was written by John Newton in 1779. I was fascinated by his story of being a slave ship captain, known for his wild behavior and antics. After surviving a severe storm in his slave ship, he had a revelation and began to reshape his life. His testimony and leadership helped abolish slavery in England. It didn't happen overnight, but he began the process. We should too, with urgency. We are treating the Earth, a living breathing entity, no better than the slaves on that ship, whipping her to our will, and taking whatever we want, with no thought of the anguish we inflict on her, ourselves, and all creation.

I used to be a truck driving gas guzzling fossil fool, thinking that was normal, that there were no choices, a lucrative business, no money for alternatives. My storm was the presidential election in 2000, and then Gore vs. Bush supreme court decision. I researched the issues and saw the trajectory for the planet. My awakening came and I began to change, keeping my eye on how I was treating the Earth. I began to follow the six "R's" — reduce, reuse, refuse, repurpose, repair, recycle.

Let us right this ship, our "Blue Boat Home." Let us look at our children and see a bright future for them. I am hopeful we can turn things around. We have to. I commit acts of exploitation of the earth every day, however I believe I am on the humble journey of recovery to a right relationship with the world around me. Seeing and admitting we have a problem is a start. We are not separate from the natural world; we cannot fill our voids with stuff. With purpose, vision, love, and much joyful hard work, we can join the world and our Mother Earth on our journey together. We do this together. Amen.

Please watch for information about upcoming Sustainable Living Team meetings, events, and opportunities to engage online.

Invitation to Serve at Obama Elementary

Obama School Ministry Team

Members and friends of Unity Church have a unique opportunity to make a positive difference in our community. The students and staff of Barack and Michelle Obama Elementary School (across the street) need our help and support. As a classroom volunteer you can make a difference in two ways: creating a positive relationship with a child helps build the child's confidence and feelings of self-worth, and tutoring helps build the child's academic achievement. In addition, there are other ways to be involved. The teachers and children are enthusiastic about our volunteers and we'd like you to consider joining us.

Get started in April, for beginning your service in September! Email Nancy Heege at nancyheege@cs.com to request a volunteer preference form and a Saint Paul schools background investigation form. Forms that are returned by April 30 will be processed by the school district this spring; forms returned after April 30 will be delayed. Note: each volunteer will be asked to pay \$12 for the background check this year.

Obama Elementary also has a receipt box at Kowalski's on Grand Avenue. If you happen to shop there, please put your grocery receipts in the donation box at the checkout area. Each receipt adds up to money for Obama Elementary!