

Sage Pagnozzi

Sermon

June 27, 2010

Hi, my name is Sage Pagnozzi and I have been coming to this church about three years. I would like to tell you a little about myself and why I love coming here. It is my grandmother Skyler and her partner Allanya who have been bringing me, because they like it so much and think it's a good spiritual education for me.

I have a 2 year old brother and we live with my Mom in Portland. My brother's name is Jibril, which means Gabriel in Arabic. My mom's name is Darien, and she has been involved in the Sufi community off and on since before I was born. Sufism is a branch of Islam, and worship is based on study, group singing and Sufi dancing. My mom has taken me to summer Sufi camp a couple of times.

I remember that Sufi camp was fun, but not much else about it. I guess it is important to me, though, because it's the only experience I had of religion until I came to Atkinson. I have a stepfather from Morocco named Mohamed, and he is Muslim, but he hasn't talked with me very much about his religion.

I spend a lot of time with my grandma Skyler, and with Allanya, who is like my step-grandma. Grandma has spent her whole life being spiritual, She is mostly a Hindu, Taoist ("dowist") and Buddhist, and since I was little she has talked with me about things like God being in everything and everyone, and about reincarnation and being kind.

I have my own room in their house and spend at least a couple of nights a week there. When I am there we always start meals by talking about a kindness we have given to someone that day, and about something kind or good that has happened to us. Then we say a thank you prayer and sing Shanti Shanti Shanti, which means Peace, Peace, Peace. When we sing that, we are praying for everyone in the world to have peace and be happy.

In the morning we light a candle on the fireplace where it burns all day. I always light the candle myself when I am there, and say the prayer: "May all beings be happy, may they be peaceful, may they

be filled with loving kindness, may they be free from suffering.” When we light the candle, we are praying for healing light to fill and surround the world.

If I had three wishes, I would wish for world peace, world peace, world peace. I wouldn't wish to change anything because I don't know what's best. Only God knows that. And if I could have a fourth wish, I would wish for all the ice cream I can eat.

I really like coming here. I like my class and teachers, being with my friends every week, playing games and drawing. I like that it's something I can count on doing every week with my grandma and Allanya. And I like learning about all the different religions from different cultures, and about famous teachers like Jesus, Mohamed and Buddha.

I believe in God and love, but not heaven and hell, like some other religions. I think that God is in everything and everyone. God is the energy that makes things alive. But God is also much more than I will probably ever be able to understand. I don't know what God looks like or where heaven is, or stuff like that. But even though I believe in God, when hard things happen to me in life, I don't think about God. I just get over it.

Some of the things I believe in, I have figured out here in church. Like to me, reincarnation seems right. Grandma says that when I was really little, I used to tell her about what it was like before I was born. She says I would say things about people or pets that were far beyond my age, as if I were already a wise old woman. Grandma has taught me a lot about life in worlds we cannot see, like sometimes I just know that I have known someone before.

I believe that a person can either be born again soon after dying, or be in the spirit world as a soul forever. Some teachers say that it is the soul's choice to come back to earth or not. I probably will want to reincarnate, because I find being here on earth really exciting.

I also believe that our spirit is neither a boy or girl, but on earth our bodies are just different. And I know that every person is good in their own way, and we're here for a reason.

When I have kids I would send them to Atkinson so they can learn to think for themselves. Then later they could choose another church if they want, and I would drop them off there.

I like the people here. They are nice to me and they make me feel comfortable. They can feel what I feel, and then I know I'm not the only one who has the kinds of feelings I do. When I tell other people about my church, I say I like it. Atkinson teaches us to love everyone, respect all religions, be kind to everyone, help others when we can, and take care of the earth. And I really like that they teach us to think for ourselves.