



Sue Owen: Peace Corps/Parenting Class/ Gun Violence Prevention Ministry

Tell us a little about how you and your family found our church and why you have chosen to make it a home for your faith.

Lance and the kids and I had attended All Souls UU in DC, but were looking for a church closer to where we could get involved in more than just Sunday services. We found real friendliness here from the very first visit. And one Sunday when our 13 year old daughter

Kat said, 'I like that 7:02 service a lot' – well, the deal was sealed.

Can you tell us about any particularly formative faith experiences for you growing up?

I grew up in a Methodist church in CT and the people there were my 'extended family'. Our pastor was single for many years, so he'd come over for dinner and hang out with my parents debating issues of the day – civil rights, racism, women's rights etc. (This was the mid and late 60's). I did work camps and youth group projects– and basically loved getting my hands dirty and helping someone in the process.

I'm sure those experiences had something to do with my decision to join the Peace Corps. I served for 3 years in Honduras and have happily stayed connected with the village where I lived and worked. A group of us started an organization 24 years ago, where we provide 'loans' so students have the means to go to school after 6th grade and learn a trade or professional skill. The kids 'pay back' their loans with a group service project – a new school roof, stair case for the community center, or something of the sort. The kids love sweating together and helping their community in the process. Life really is a circle.

You recently concluded working with the Peace Corps. What was your role in that organization and how did your faith impact your decision to pursue this career choice?

My PC service started me on a career in International Development. After years working in Honduras, Nicaragua and Mexico – I moved back to the US and eventually took a position with PC's Office of the CFO. I loved working with the smart, local staff in each country and ensuring that tax-payers' dollars were being used effectively.

You are also part of a team of teachers leading our new parenting class here at BUMC. Tell us a little about the class, some of the topics the class has covered and what your role is as a leader.

We're a group of 6 facilitators parenting kids from 4 – 34 years of age. We take turns leading topics such as helping our kids develop resilience and how to forgive ourselves for our mistakes. The class members have been honest and open about their parenting struggles and successes – so we all learn from each other. Lance and I have loved getting to know the other facilitators. We hadn't known a single one of them by name before the class and now they're real friends.

Another topic that you are passionate about is gun violence prevention. BUMC's GVP ministry has really ramped up in recent months in response to the continuing tragedies in our country. What are your thoughts on how we as a church can move from lament into also effecting change in our laws? What are some of the ways that BUMC-ers can become actively involved in this ministry?

Yes, this issue has been on my heart for years. My dad was a hunter - Lance, Kat and Andrew are all hunters – so I have a respect for guns and those that use them for sport. But, I want to see many more controls in place to protect us all. To see nearly 100 people from BUMC participate in the March for Our Lives this past weekend felt great! I certainly don't have all the answers, but one idea for our church would be to coordinate more boldly and consistently with other Old Georgetown Rd churches and schools. We could put out similar banners with linked messages and information on gun statistics and legislative solutions – forming a 'corridor' of information to commuters and neighbors.

How do you see faith communities playing a role in helping people navigate the uncertainties and hopes of the world today?

I sometimes do feel overwhelmed by the problems of the world. But, just about every Sunday, listening to Jenny or Kara's sermon and being with everyone, leaves me with a new perspective and a 'lighter' load. Lance and the kids feel it too. Folks at BUMC have been great friends and mentors to Kat and Andrew – taking an interest in their lives and challenges and giving them opportunities to give back. It's a true gift to have a place that leaves me and my family feeling more connected and hopeful.

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