

Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of the Rappahannock
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How Much Diversity?

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There was a catalog in my chair when I got back from lunch one day this past week. We get lots of mail from all over the place in a church, as you can imagine, and I like to look through it before I throw it away, since you never know when you might find something interesting in an unexpected place, especially a catalog. This particular one was for craft projects for Christian education programs. As I looked through it briefly, to make sure I didn't miss something captivating, I saw a photo of a beautiful child dressed in his red plaid Sunday school shirt, his eyes and his smile bright and serene. In his hand he was holding a sample of the new Soldier of God Photo Craft Kit, number CFT170. His own photo, that same sweet smile, was in the cardboard frame, which was made in the shape of a shield. A cartoon kid face in a medieval armor helmet, and a hand holding up a sword, were on one side of the frame, and a cross was on the other side, this little boy's wonderful face in the middle. The caption above the child's photo said Soldier of God.

That cardboard Soldier of God Photo Kit, number CFT170, really bothered me, on so many levels. I don't want that young boy with the beautiful smile to think that the church believes he should be a soldier for any reason, which is not to say that he should not be a

soldier if *he* wants to be. But I don't want the church to teach him that he should be. I don't want children to think about their Christian identity, their religious identity in the larger world in military images. I don't want swords and armor to be components of any Christian education; this is not how Christianity ought to be taught. What, I wondered, is the matter with these people?

These people? Who? said myself to me. What does "these people" mean? Now, because the Universe knows what it's doing, I was working on another service with diversity as its theme before I left for lunch that day. I got back, looked at the catalog, threw it in the recycle box, and opened my notes. If it's comfortable, said the title of the sermon I was writing, it's not diversity.

Wait a minute, said my self again, I understand about diversity, but this isn't what I mean. Christian soldier pictures, Christian soldier religious education, that's not what I mean by diversity. Who said justice, equity, and compassion had to apply to that? Who said supporting each others' search for truth and meaning meant even when the truth and meaning are not what I believe? Of course we need to be open and accepting to the good kinds of Christians, the ones who are like us, liberal, well-educated, that kind of diversity makes sense.

But that's not diversity, said me to myself.

I do not like for my self to disagree with me, but I love it when the Universe displays its sense of humor, so I had to give the Universe credit. It is so easy to embrace diversity when we're talking about

diverse people who're like us; the challenge comes with the diverse people who are not like us.

Or, in other words, all of them.

If they're like us, it's not diversity.

One of the challenges of our denomination, it seems to me, is that for all the attention we pay to diversity, we're a pretty homogenized group over all. There is a UU organization called **DRUMM: Diverse and Revolutionary UU Multicultural Ministries**, which is for people of color, specifically Latino/a, Chicano/a, Asian, Pacific Islander, African, American Indian, indigenous Native, Arab, biracial, or multiracial people of color. So, we have white people, and then this one organization for everybody held in common by the fact that they aren't white.