



New member profile: Cibby Orozco (she/her)

Cibby joined UUC in October 2023.

How long have you lived in this area? Where did you live before?

I have lived in Florida for the last 10 1/2 years and in Clearwater for the last 10 years. For most of my life, I lived in California. And I was born in Guatemala.

What was your religious background?

I was born in a very strict religious Christian background because my parents were pastors. My dad died in an accident when I was 14 years old. When I got out of high school, I started to work but I wanted to go to college. My mom didn't have the money to pay for it. When my aunt came to Guatemala for a visit from Los Angeles, California, I asked her if I could live with her and go to college. That's how I ended up going to a community college in Santa Monica, California, and then transferring to UC Berkeley. Going to Berkeley was one of the most exhilarating experiences of my life. I not only learned about math, science, and English, but I also learned about social issues, women's studies, and human rights. This is the place where I also learned and got involved with Wicca, New Age, and Shamanism.

When my school ended, I went back to Los Angeles. I didn't think about religion until I faced divorce and felt that I needed a spiritual community. I went back to the religion of my parents and for a while, I helped as a volunteer pastor in this charismatic Christian community. After a while, I felt like I hit the ceiling and needed to expand my horizons because I did not agree with the way certain groups were treated or with the stripping of the rights of women to choose what to do with their bodies.

I again left the Christian church and became involved with a Buddhist group. Here, I learned about meditation, gratitude, and peace. Then I wanted to learn about my



ancestry from my mother's side and the Vasque Jewish community that came to Latin America a long time ago. I started to go to the Kabbalah Center because the mysticism they had was in tune with my heritage. I attended the Kabbalah Center for a few years and felt a strong spiritual connection with the traditions of Judaism.

I didn't think I was going to stop going but then 10 1/2 years ago, my sister and brother-in-law who live in Florida had an accident. I felt compelled to leave my job and move to Florida to stay closer to my family.

The first few years in Florida I tried to continue to be in the Kabbalah center but I had to travel to Miami. I was also getting my master's degree at USF and my time became too short to be driving so I stopped going.

In the last few years, I have had a group of women as my spiritual group. A group of women from different backgrounds and different faiths — still we felt connected.

What is (or was) your profession/professional background?

Most of my career has been in the entertainment industry. I was lucky/blessed to be able to continue to work in the TV industry here in Florida.

Why did you decide to join UUC?

I came across UUC by chance. I was looking for a community garden near my house and I was told about the Beacon Food Forest. I came to the 4th Friday of the month last

July and got intrigued about this church I knew nothing about. Out of curiosity, I started to come to Sunday Service and enjoyed learning about the Social Justice programs that the church had.

One Sunday after the service, I sat outside the sanctuary and Reverend Amy passed by me. I was in total thinking mode and she said, "Hi Cibby. what are you doing?" Before I could answer she said: "I'm going to the new members class. Do you want to come with me?" And again before I could answer, I was following Rev. Amy because who can say no to her?

The most important thing I learned that day was that if the garden and the social issues spoke to me, I could compromise with the rest. I became willing to look like a "nut" when talking about my spirits and divinities in a group of people who were agnostic and atheist. To my biggest surprise, people welcomed me with open arms. And this is the truth, I came for the garden and stayed for the community.

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So far I am involved with the garden/food forest. I have attended the Exhale group. Awesome group, I wish I had the time to continue going.



What hobbies and interests do you have?

One of my hobbies is photography. I have been lucky to have my photos in galleries and museums all over the world.

[Editor's note: The amazing photo of the Octagon that often is featured in the video worship welcome was taken by Cibby.]

What would you like us to know about your family and/or pets?

I think this is the only question that I have no answer for. But I could talk about my flowers and plants that are like children to me. I believe seeing life come out of a seed is the miracle of life. Seeing your plants grow is like a spiritual moment, it gives you hope, love, peace, and gratitude the only things that have no price in life.

Welcome Cibby!

