

Unitarian Universalists of Clearwater: New Member Profile

Meet Mike Freedman (he/him)

How long have you lived in the area?

I've lived in the Clearwater area for about one and a half years, and before that I was in New Port Richey for 11 years.

When did you join UUC and why did you decide to join?

I joined last Easter (April 9, 2023).

I had previously lived in Miami, within walking distance of a UU church, and would sometimes go there to hear jazz music, but I didn't know what they were about.

When I met the love of my life, Aryna Ryan, she told me about Unitarian Universalism and our second date was walking the labyrinth at UUC.

Everyone in the congregation is so smart and kind and loving and nice, how could I not want to join? We have great religious and lay leaders, so what's not to like?

What is your religious background?

I was raised Jewish. My mother was from a conservative Jewish family. My father was not religious at all.

In the 1970's, I was religion columnist for the Miami News and learned a lot about interesting religions but not Unitarian Universalism.

What is your professional background?

I've been in a few industries and done a bunch of things, never long enough to get bored.

I started in journalism, which was what my father did. He was the political editor of the Tampa Bay Times. I wrote for The Miami News and I was an assignment editor at two TV stations.

I went into public relations for the American Heart Association and an agency. At the agency I worked for Humana Inc. and was in charge of 19 hospitals and their Gold Plus (Medicare) plan.

I started two national healthcare trade associations. One was the American Subacute Care Association, which had the first trade magazine for subacute care, which was a \$5 billion industry prior to changes in Medicare reimbursement.

Then I worked with podiatric physicians who were starting the American Academy of Wound Management, a certifying body for doctors, nurses and therapists involved in wound care. We set up the first test to measure competency in wound care. That's the thing I'm proudest of.

I also published Journal of Life insurance Medicine, which no longer exists. It was replaced by software.

In the mid-90's, the Life Extension Foundation, a vitamin company, was looking to explore online marketing and it was a rare opportunity to figure out what works online. That began my online ad career. I worked with ad agencies, software companies and did wholesale advertising. I managed more than 22,000 search advertising campaigns.

More recently I spent seven years working for Ultimate Medical Academy, and then I went to a local agency that I helped start.

I am currently executive director of the Paid Search Association.

What UUC activities or groups are you involved with or interested in?

I love the Exhale Meditation group and Spiritual Potpourri.

I would like to do more with the UUC communications committee.

I want to ramp up carefully so I can sustain my involvement and don't burn out.

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

I live with Aryna Ryan. We are engaged and plan to get married at UUC on March 2.

We have a roommate, Bill Freeman, who is very involved with the Zen Center.

I have three kids. My daughter is a medical coder for United HealthCare and was living with us until she moved to own apartment near Tampa. My next-youngest son lives in Los Angeles where he is a film and video editor, and has worked on a number of movies, including Old Dad coming out in a couple of months. My oldest son struggles with mental illness. I don't know where he is now and hope he is doing well.

I have a wonderful dog named Hank and a cat named Otter.

