

Bria's Story:

I started coming to Joyful Gathering Spiritual Center in June of 2019. I was 19 years-old at the time, just completed my freshmen year of college, and had not been part of a religious/spiritual community for about two years, except for the 12-Step Programs that were helping me recover from codependency and the effects of addiction in my family. I was raised as a casual Catholic and then, an Evangelical Christian. While those paths to spirituality work for many people, they never quite resonated with me. As a result of my conflict with the teachings of those religions and church hurt, I was hesitant about being a part of a religious/spiritual community again out of the fear of not feeling included, having "have-to's" forced on me, or coming into conflict with the teachings. It took me 9 months to actually muster up the courage to come to a service, and I could not sleep the night before. From the time I walked in, I felt like I was at home. Kathleen and Karyn greeted me with warm, kind smiles and hugs. Rev. Margaret was away that Sunday, and Rev. Barbara Jakubowski was giving the talk. Ginger Coyle was playing the music, and the first song was "My Soul is Welcome Here". The entire service from the music to the talk, which referred to Universal Truths from several sources such as Brene Brown and Jesus, and included several different names for the Divine, just felt right because of its spirituality that was being strictly sectarian in any way. I immediately bought "Living the Science of Mind" after service and dove into the new comer's packet. It has been almost 2 years, and I have to say there has never been a time where I did not feel included, like I "had to" do or believe something to feel included, or found a talk or ritual that was troubling to me.