

# The Tipping Point...

## Reflection by Reverend Rebecca M. Bryan

June 4, 2023

Was it the lead up to this weekend's Pride activities, the growing sense that something remarkable was underway, that this city was blooming in Pride?

Maybe it was Friday morning's ceremony marking National Gun Violence Awareness Day in front of City Hall that stood up to hate and senseless, unnecessary violence. Surely this was a precursor to a weekend full of events celebrating Pride and honoring the LGBTQ+ community.

Perhaps it was the flag-raising Friday afternoon with Massachusetts Governor Maura Healey as keynote, speaking of her deep and generational ties to Newburyport. She talked about how she would walk to the waterfront with her grandfather, got her first library card at our library, and frequented establishments that only "true Newburyporters" remember.

Were you there? Did your eyes fill with tears too as our Governor talked about how never in 1,000 years could she have imagined serving in the capacity she does now, as the first openly gay governor elected in the state of Massachusetts and the first lesbian governor elected in the history of our country. Did your heart swell when she thanked the countless brave members of the LGBTQ community who stood up to injustice, who 53 years ago stood up at the Stonewall uprising and said, "No more. We're here to stay. We are who we are, and we are proud."

Our Governor said, "I would not be standing where I am, if it were not for those people . . . We don't know all their names and we won't know them." But they paved the way. Governor Healey went on to promise the young people that our state sees you, hears you, respects you, and will protect your civil liberties and rights.

Perhaps the turning point came when, thanks to Ghlee Woodworth, I had the privilege of meeting Governor Healey's parents and brother. They all looked over to our steeple from Brown's Square and told me how much they admired and appreciated Unitarians and their work. "I always have," said the Governor.

All of these moments were wonderful and are emblazoned on my heart. They are interwoven with the gun violence awareness gathering and also with the book-launch party here in this sanctuary Friday night for Nancy Crochiere's newly published book, *Graceland*.

It was such a joy witnessing and supporting Nancy in following her dream and being her true self. It warmed my heart to see Elvis singing down this aisle and the smiles beaming from Nancy's FRS friends who had come out in droves to support her.

Perhaps the turning point came while I was leaning over my kitchen table Saturday morning frantically coloring in the words "Clergy for Pride" on my poster board for the Pride parade. I wanted to add "I marry and bury anybody no matter who they love. All babies christened. All people honored." But I ran out of room and simply wrote, "Love is Love."

Because that's the truth. Some people get tired of me talking about love, but when I hear LGBTQ+ youth read their poems proclaiming the power of love, I know it is true. When I see the way you all show up to show gun violence awareness, to celebrate friendships, and to honor Pride, I have to say that love is amazing: it is bold and brave and shows up. Love, in fact, is really a ship in action, deed, and thought.

Oh, and the tipping point? The Pride Parade yesterday at noon when at least sixty of us showed up in our FRS and other brightly colored tee shirts:

Us, of all ages, sizes, genders, and identities

Us as UUs, FRS UUs

Us, where love is the doctrine of this church.

Being an ally is not about one moment, one event, or even one person. Being an ally is all the moments, all the people, all the times you put your liberal religious values into action and say, "You are welcome here."

Amen and blessed be.