

# A Separated Family

A sermon by Beverly Tamanini as part of the "Families of Choice" service  
UU Fellowship of Bainbridge Island & North Kitsap  
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Mike and I have been separated for over a year and will soon be legally divorced. In the process of dissolving our marital union, we have wanted to keep our parenting union. We have tried as best we can to keep our children's welfare as our priority. For us, this has meant to honor, value, and respect each other as much as possible. And while there are a lot of legal, social and cultural practices to support married couples in staying married, there is a lot less out there to help divorcing couples stay civil. We have felt, at times, that we were winging it in the dark and making it up as we went along, but the temptation to get ugly was always tempered, if not quashed outright, by the undesirability of the consequences of hostility and the pain that we would inflict on our children.

When our children were much younger, they wanted to start going with me to Catholic Mass, which I attended while Mike stayed home. This would have lead to them receiving baptism and eventually going to Sunday school to prepare for their First Holy Communion. While I viewed this as religious growth and development, Mike saw this as a long, slippery slope. So because of our children's desire to be part of a spiritual community, a miracle happened – Mike brought his family to church.

We started attending here at UUFBINK when we moved to Bainbridge Island 4 ½ years ago. It was here that we joined a community as a family. When Mike and I separated, it seemed only fitting that this continue to be our family's community. Dominic made the first public announcement of our separation to Doug Elliott who was teaching in his RE class, the morning after we told our children the news.

We asked that people not take sides. Not only were we supported in this but supported whole-heartedly. Members of this fellowship offered to help care for our children, offered sympathy and support and offered dinner; only now on separate nights.

There was some discomfort as Mike and I proceeded in unexpected ways. We supported each other in the process of separating. We tried to keep the parts of our relationship with each other that were not husband and wife; the part that is about being parents, the part that is about being friends. We have grown more comfortable with our roles over time as we have gotten used to them and worked the bugs out. We have appreciated this congregation that has been with us through this, tolerating the awkwardness, and navigating a relationship that felt very odd and sometimes confusing at first to many, and which continues to have its awkward moments.

Soon we will no longer be husband and wife but we will always be mother and father to our children and in that respect, we still feel like a family. Only now we are a family that lives in two houses. And here, in this Fellowship, in this house, we come together under one roof and feel the support of this larger family. This Fellowship holds a special place in our lives; because here we could be a different family, even when we didn't know what that would look like, and still don't know what to call ourselves. Thank you, all, for your support in helping us be the best family we can be.