

A Question of Faith

by Plaeigan Alexander

“I have a friend recovering from cancer who has suddenly become a born-again Christian. I’m happy she has found some comfort, but it has changed the way she relates to non-believers – like me – and I feel cut off. What can I do?”

Answered by the Rev. Margaret Bullitt-Jonas:

Religious conversion is a spiritual about face that completely changes a person’s perspective on the world. No wonder it often creates as much upheaval as it does a sense of peacefulness and joy. Friends who don’t share the person’s newfound faith may feel abandoned as they try to understand what’s going on.

Ask your friend what it is about Christianity that she finds so compelling. Listening carefully as she articulates her faith may help both of you to stay connected with each other, even if you don’t share her convictions. Try to clarify and discuss your own religious commitments. Where do you find your own deepest meaning? What community [and] spiritual practices support your faith-journey?

If she seems self-righteous, help her to be as good a Christian as she can be. Jesus always invited his listeners beyond intolerance and self-righteousness. Christian conversion begins with the pivotal discovery that we are intimately known by God in Christ. We then need to let ourselves be drawn into the all-embracing love of the Creator of our souls, where we discover that God’s love is unconditional for all, not just true believers.

Published in Self Magazine, April 1999, p. 78

