

# Simple Gifts

September 2009

Vol. VII, Issue I

*The All Souls Journal*

## The Story of My Call

-by Rev. Marlin Lavanhar, Senior Minister



There I was, living on the banks of the Ganges River in India. In a flash of insight, I suddenly knew what I was meant to do with my life. Three years earlier, I had set off for Japan, leaving behind everything and everyone I had ever known. I had no arrangements or contacts

in Japan, only a plane ticket and the knowledge that there were jobs for native English speakers. I would spend the next 22 months teaching, traveling, learning the ways of Japan and Buddhism, and building a bicycle that would eventually carry me more than 25,000 miles around this planet.

I had set off on this odyssey with the intention of discovering the world and finding my place in it. Before long, I found myself sitting at the feet of monks and gurus, cave dwelling ascetics, nomadic peoples, tribal elders, swamis, priests, mullahs, and more. My journey took me from the advanced base camp 20,000 feet up Mt. Everest in Tibet to the Dead Sea in the Judean desert of Israel 1,300 feet below sea level. More important, it brought me face to face with families of many colors, cultures, creeds, and conditions. Despite all of our vast differences, there seemed to be certain transcendent truths that united me with all of the people I encountered. I became fascinated with discovering the essential unity beneath our blessed diversity.

By the time I arrived on the banks of the Ganges, I had cycled over the Himalayas and two of the other tallest mountain ranges in the world. I was in the best physical condition of my life when I arrived at a

Hindu ashram where I lived and studied yoga and the sacred texts and techniques of Hinduism. One day in the midst of meditation, I felt my call to become a Unitarian Universalist minister. I had grown up in this faith, and I had been taught since childhood that Unitarian refers to the belief that all life originates from a single source and that Universalists believe that we are all heading toward a single destiny. The underlying sense of life's unity and the church's openness to learning from all faiths and cultures made it the right place for me to dedicate my efforts and share my knowledge and passion.



India - with Ascetics in the Himalayas

During the next two years I sought out Unitarian and Universalist teachers and communities as I circumnavigated the globe. In India I discovered Unitarianism among matrilineal tribes in the Khasi Hills where they worship five or more times each Sunday. In the Philippines I came across a long tradition of Unitarian Universalist faith healers. In Pakistan, I saw how Unitarianism formed within a distinctly Muslim culture, and in Sri Lanka it was born out of a Bud

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dhist background. By the time I made it to the European Unitarian churches in Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Romania, my idea of how the guiding principles of this faith can be interpreted and lived out in different ways had been forged.



Jordan - with Bedouins in the desert

Upon returning to the United States five years later, I was asked by the President of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) to lead a bicycle trek across North America during which I spoke at dozens of UU churches from Massachusetts to Canada and Washington state, about the need to find ways to make UU faith and values accessible to a new generation. Next, I was accepted to Harvard Divinity School and offered a position at the UUA national headquarters in Boston as the International Aide. The following year, while continuing my studies, I became a ministerial intern at Boston's oldest church (known today as First Church in Boston) where both Ralph Waldo Emerson and his father had served as Unitarian ministers. During the internship, I developed a new type of worship experience called *Soulful Sundown* as a way of reaching young people who were otherwise uninterested or even offended by church. My master's thesis was about how to re-imagine UU worship in ways that appeal to a new generation. It was later turned into a guidebook and published by the UUA.

On October 31, 1999, I was ordained as a UU minister in Boston. The ordination service was a ritual embodiment of the ministry I sought to create. I intentionally assembled participants including people of many races, ethnicities, cultures, and sexual orientations. The service included a trans-

gender person, a Buddhist from Japan, and people of many theologies and generations.

Six weeks later, I received a call asking me if I would consider applying for the Senior Minister position at All Souls in Tulsa. It made absolutely no sense! I was relatively inexperienced in ministry, I was a much younger minister than the congregation in Tulsa was looking for, I was already employed, and after living and traveling in some of the most exotic places on the planet, could residing in Oklahoma really be my destiny? Then, over the next few months, it became clear to me, to the search committee, and ultimately to the congregation, that my calling to ministry and the call and mission of All Souls Unitarian Church in Tulsa were compatible and congruent. All Souls in Tulsa was a flagship UU church that had grown to be one of the largest in the country with its quality of worship, its work for racial justice, and its pioneering efforts in television ministry and small group (Branches) programming. At the dawn of the 21st Century, both the church and I were prepared to carry this proud legacy into a new era.

Since I arrived in the summer of 2000, my call to the ministry and to this congregation has been reaffirmed again and again. As I look around and see the growing diversity of people and worship styles, the range of music, the multitude of classes on spiritual practices and social and intellectual pursuits, and the varied ways in which members of All Souls live their values through outreach in the world, I see the UU ideal of being "one church with many expressions." My ordination ceremony was a ritual embodiment of my calling, and serving All Souls in Tulsa is a living, congregational embodiment of that same ministry and calling. I can honestly say, there is no other church like it in the world!

My hope and prayer is that each person who is a part of All Souls will find their unique calling and the way that their gifts can serve the world's needs. What remains to be seen is whether together, we can offer humanity a strong enough witness to the possibility of life's unity - not to save souls, but to save the planet and the human spirit in love and peace and fellowship. †

# Calling

-by Kathleen Pahl

Wake up!  
God is calling!  
The Earth, the people, the animals  
are calling.  
The blades of grass, the rocks, the soil  
are calling.  
The air, the now, the moment  
is calling.  
God, the universe, the world  
is calling.  
LIFE is calling!  
Did you know that.....  
Your smile is the rising sun?  
Your hug is a cradle?  
Your kind words are medicine?  
Your labor is a seed?  
Your visit is a song?  
You have a calling!  
It's not being sugary fake.  
It's as real as  
the blood in your veins.



*Soul's Awakening*, by Keith Mallett

You may not know  
what your calling is,  
but love will lead you to it.  
Your calling may appear  
to be small,  
but it's actually huge!  
It may vary  
from year to year  
moment to moment.  
It could be to:  
learn, help, feel,  
be, act, sing,  
write, work, clean,  
hug, hold, march,  
watch, give, receive,  
bless, dress, cook,  
hear, text, call,  
dance, run, draw,  
stop, start, move,  
plant, sculpt, stretch,  
teach, lift, rest,  
mend, lend, make,  
teach, follow, or lead.

You may never see  
the end result,  
but, do it anyway!  
You are needed.  
Find your calling.  
Find yourself.  
You are needed,  
Now and always.  
Wake up!  
God is calling! †

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- 2) Include your name and daytime number.
- 3) Not all submissions will be published. Submissions may be edited.

Questions? Call  
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# Spiritual Practices: Find Your Calling

-by Randy Lewis, Phillips Field Education Student



Some have remarked that they received their heavenly calling to service from the sounding of a thunderous trumpet, or from an inner voice, which they have claimed to be that of God. Some have gone further, saying that they had a “road to Damascus” experience, similar to that of the apostle Paul. Others have stated that their passion for service and servanthood has nothing at all to do with a religious commission by a higher power, but is a result of an inner desire to serve the needs of humanity.

How am I called? During a recent All Souls staff retreat, I was asked to write a response to the question about what made me the right person for my current position in this church. I replied by stating that I was not sure of my calling but I felt an internal pull to service, and with that pull, there was also a sense of apprehension. I had no doubt I was in the right place in my philosophical and religious standing. But, I had to examine myself and answer some important questions.

I wrote about five components that I feel are essential to the process of determining one’s calling: **desire, need, ability, competency, and commitment.** These components are not extensive; but for me, they are a practical starting point. Since I am serving as your Field Education Student this year, please allow me to share my process. In an

effort to gauge my sense of duty, concern, and awareness, I take the time to perform a spiritual exercise which combines intense self-analysis with calming, quieting outside influences and immersing myself in a meditative and deeply reflective state.

Try this: ask yourself, is there a sincere **desire** to serve? What are the sources of my calling? Am I truly empathetic, concerned, or passionate about the area of the possible need? Second, identify the **need.** If there is no obvious need, then make an inquiry to determine what the community desires. Make certain that your **ability** meets the need. Another area that is closely associated with ability is **competency.** Write down personal experiences and/or education that qualify you to serve. It may be that you are called to serve in a primary role or in an indirect supportive capacity. Finally, ask yourself about your level of **commitment:** am I willing to devote the time, effort, and finances to fulfill the commitment? Realize that any commitment we make also involves our families and others to whom we are responsible.

My name is Randy Lewis. I am your new Field Education Student. I look forward to answering the call to serve All Souls by sharing my desire, abilities, competency, and commitment. It is my prayer that as I listen to, and learn about the needs of this community, my gifts will match your needs for ministry. In this way, we will all be blessed in our mutual calling. †

## Resources for Further Reading

*Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation*, by Parker J. Palmer, Jossey-Bass, 1999. Fireside wisdom from an elder sharing his mistakes and stories as he learned to live a life worth speaking about.

*The Three Marriages: Reimagining Work, Self and Relationship* by David Whyte, Penguin Group, 2009. Whyte brings compelling insights to our three most important commitments - to another, to our work, and to ourselves - framing a complete picture of a satisfying life.

*The Call*, by Oriah Mountain Dreamer, HarperSanFrancisco, 2003. A sincere, humble, eloquent, and grounded exploration of a woman’s struggle to walk the walk of spiritually honest living.

*Living a Call: Ministers and Congregations Together* by Michael Durall, Jenkin LLOYD Jones Press, 2006. A collection of essays by young ministers whose views offer promise for the future.

# Using Our Gifts

-by Rev. Tamara Lebak, Associate Minister



Sometimes our natural talent and our real passion go untapped. Mark Twain described a man who died, and upon meeting St. Peter at the pearly Gates, took the opportunity to ask St. Peter something he had been curious about his whole life.

The man said, “St. Peter, I have been interested in military history my whole life. Who was the greatest general of all time?”

St. Peter answered the man without much of a pause, “Oh that’s simple. It would be that man right over there.”

The man was very perplexed, for he had studied generals from all throughout history and around the world. “St. Peter, you must be mistaken,” the man said. “I knew that man on earth and he was just a common laborer.”

Saint Peter smiled a smile that was both sad and knowing. “That’s right my friend,” St. Peter said. “He would have been the greatest general of all time, *if* he had been a general.”

In this church, we believe that all children (and therefore all adults) are born with unique gifts. Sadly, those gifts and passions are often set aside as we are fooled into letting other people’s wants and desires masquerade as our own. Parents, teachers, and society all push values that may or may not fit our identity. It is up to us to sort through influences, both positive and negative, and follow our own path.

This is why we need to spend time discovering our own strengths and building on them as early as possible. When someone goes through life with talents untapped, I believe the community as a whole suffers.

If you have made it to adulthood and have trouble naming your strengths, you may find it helpful to read a wonderful little book called *Strengths Finder 2.0* written by New York Times best-selling author Tom Rath. He lays out a comprehensive strengths assessment that helps people begin to identify and name for themselves what their strengths are.

If you already know what your strengths and passions are, and are trying to find a good fit to express those in our community, then please come see me. I would love to help plug you in!

Blessings. †



# You Are Called

-by Rev. Debra Garfinkel, Minister of Pastoral Care



Dear Friends, and Friends I have yet to meet:

Welcome back to school and to church and to the excitement of practicing what it means to be a community of all souls. If you are reading this, you are making a connection with a worshipping community that responds to the call to serve. We serve in many ways and as we are able: we care for each other (human beings) and for the green, growing things, and for our fellow creatures, and for the earth, the water, and the air that keep us alive. We care, and because we care, we practice being in right relationship with ourselves and each other. We respond to the call to serve.

Many people seek out a worshipping community because they want to answer a question that underlies their desire to serve the Greater Good. The question may be worded differently, but essentially it is this: *What is my special purpose?* Another way of putting it is: *Why am I here?* A more theological or spiritual way to express it is: Who am I called to be?

These questions have been asked by people of all ages, throughout the ages, sometimes musically. Many years ago, a singer by the name of Doris Day sang a popular song that went like this:

*When I was just a little girl, I asked my mother,  
What will I be?...  
Here's what she said, to me:  
Qué será, será. Whatever will be, will be...*

It was a sweet, simple, lilting tune – very singable – (and a great teaching tool my Spanish teacher used to help us remember the future tense.) The point, however, goes to a deep need within us to feel that it matters that we exist. It does matter that we exist. And, as the song says, there is no way to know what will be. There is no secret book or special teacher – not even a loving parent can tell us specifically who we are called to be. That is our own work and ours alone. Becoming who we fully, wholly are is, in fact, our calling.

When I was just a little girl, I asked my mother and

my father, what will I be? They wisely encouraged me to read about many subjects and to explore my world and to use my imagination. I did. As you might imagine, I was very interested in religion. Since I was a Methodist (I joined the church at age 11) I was curious about the Bible and its stories. I learned about other religions and religious practice. I wanted to help people. I also was interested in science: archeology, paleontology, oceanography, biology, the study of the brain, and mathematics. Singing and playing the piano gave me great joy. I thought I would be a teacher.

Over the years, I worked in various fields – health care, oil and gas, printing, and finally storytelling. That's when I thought I'd found my calling. It was through teaching and facilitating storytelling in community settings that I felt truly at home; I felt that I was contributing something positive and worthwhile. However, my spiritual searching led me to Unitarian Universalism. That's when my heart and soul opened up; that's when I was finally able to hear the call to ministry.

So, you've heard the short story of my calling. However, you may still be asking, *Who am I called to be?* There are many opportunities in our community of All Souls Church to help you find your way toward living with a more open heart and soul. Our worship, our education classes, our music program, our shared meals, our service programs, our interest groups, they all provide ways to build new relationships and to learn through the eyes of others, and through varied experience, your unique contribution to the fabric of Community.

Yes, You are the only You there is. You are important. Only You can share your Self – your experience, your time, your talent, and your gifts. All Souls needs You. Our community needs You. And, because everything on this planet is interdependent and interconnected, the entire world needs You. This is why we thank you for the blessing of your presence in our community.

Welcome, welcome to All Souls! Thank you for joining us as together we practice answering our call. In humble gratitude... †

# Your Staff is Called To Serve



*I feel called to use all of my life's training and experience to create sanctuary with and for our children. This is my life's calling.*  
Shannon Boston, Children's Religious Education Administrator



*I am called to build a caring Unitarian Universalist community encompassing all ages and stages; where everyone is valued for their contribution.*  
Rev. Debra Garfinkel  
Minister of Pastoral Care



*I am called to use my financial management experience to help a group of souls I love and respect.*  
Mory Harsh, Business Manager



*What brought me to work at All Souls are the people, especially the kids. I think we turn out some of the best youth in the world.*  
Aubrey Johnson, Lead Sexton



*I have always been called to inspire others through the arts, and I get to use creative design to present the beauty and diversity of All Souls to the community and the world!*  
Laurel Williamson, Publications & Assistant to Associate Minister



*I am tremendously grateful for the opportunity to serve such a religiously, culturally and ethnically diverse congregation, so rich in history, and so noble in deeds, as All Souls.*  
Randy Lewis, Student Minister



*I have been given the opportunity to engage, to inspire, and to express spirituality in an eclectic array of musical offerings.*  
Rick Fortner, Music Director



*I feel called to All Souls because it is a place that includes ALL God's people. I've been summoned by the waves of change to serve as Executive Assistant to Marlin Lavanbar and the Administrative Team.*  
Nicole Ogundare, Assistant to the Senior Minister



*I feel called to serve All Souls by recruiting and supporting a talented staff and creating the infrastructure to support the work of this congregation – in the meantime finding myself rewarded with tremendous personal and spiritual growth.*  
Kathy Keith, Executive Director



*I am committed to All Souls because of the vital role it plays in my life, and the lives of so many others, by creating a spiritual community of support and understanding for many who would otherwise remain homeless and isolated.*  
Brian Cross, Adult Religious Education Coordinator

## Vocation Personified

-by Kate Starr, Youth Director, & Rev. Tamara Lebak, Associate Minister

In every office where Vocation ever worked,  
his desk faced the window.  
So he could be outside  
even while he was trapped inside.  
He felt like that gorilla who learned sign language  
or those bears who ride bicycles in the circus –  
he could analyze data  
and prepare financial documents,  
better than average,  
but he really didn't like it.

When Vocation was a little boy,  
he didn't dream of becoming an investment banker.  
He just thought  
he was supposed to make a lot of money.  
Not scrimp, and save, and sacrifice,  
like his immigrant mother who washed the clothes  
and his father who mended them.

Vocation wished he knew how to make a good living  
studying the patch of woods near his house:  
naming trees – *Quercus stellata*, *Cercis canadensis* –  
cataloging insects and angel-winged butterflies,  
and understanding the evolution  
of birds and mammals.

Vocation worked long hours in every time zone.  
And wherever he was on the globe  
he would always find a way  
to follow some new trail into a nearby wood,  
returning to the path  
through the innermost core of his soul.  
It gave him the patience and calm  
and self-reliance he needed  
to negotiate mergers and acquisitions  
long into the night.

In the woods there was no schedule,  
no sense of time.  
It was where he had a keen awareness  
of the true fabric of life,  
of living and dying  
and the basic elements of survival.  
There, he had a knowledge beyond economics,  
fine wines, and the next must-have gadget.  
Trees could not care less about such things.

Animals knew what they were supposed to do  
and be.

Even flowers naturally turn to face the sun.

He tried to sooth his heart's desire  
volunteering as a naturalist,  
taking eco-vacations to tag birds and count turtles.  
He felt like the half-wolf dog  
who lived on the farm near his childhood home  
torn between domestication  
and howling into the dawn during every full moon.

Finally, he took the greatest risk of his life,  
a merger of his gifts with the needs  
of what he believed was a dying planet.

Vocation stopped trying to balance a ball on his nose,  
got off the bicycle,  
and dared to speak the language  
of his true nature.

He quit his power job  
and became the director  
of an environmental education center.  
Now he has an office without a window.  
His inside and outside are the same.  
Vocation answered the call  
of the wild. †



# All Souls at General Assembly

-by Kathy Keith, Executive Director



“What’s going on in Tulsa?” was the question on everyone’s lips at the annual gathering of Unitarian Universalists from across the country, General Assembly, in Salt Lake City this past June.

The answer could only be “A lot!”

Marlin and Carlton Pearson presented *Guess Who’s Coming to Worship?*, the story of how New Dimensions came to worship at All Souls and why many decided to stay and join All Souls after their church disbanded.

Marlin, Tamara, and I led a workshop on *The Entrepreneurial Church* in which we had the opportunity to share some of the church’s successes (Jenkin Lloyd Jones Press, Workshop Rotation in the church school) as well as failures (Waldo’s book and gift store, the cappuccino bar) and what we have learned from them, by way of encouraging other congregations to attempt and accomplish more.

The Jenkin Lloyd Jones/ All Souls Booth, staffed by Rain Johnson and Nicole Ogundare, offered re-

sources for congregations of all sizes, including books *The Almost Church*, *Living a Call* and *Reverend X*, the *Simple Gifts, Too* posters and note cards, and the video curriculum now in use by hundreds of UU churches, *Our American Roots*.



Rhonda Holt, JoAnn Howse & Julie Skye

The booth also promoted our new website, [www.ThemeBasedMinistry.org](http://www.ThemeBasedMinistry.org), funded by the UU Funding Panel to serve as a clearinghouse of information and resources for churches across the country who are now adopting the model.

George Davenport, chairman of the ASUC Partner Church Committee, and Rev. Mark Kiyimba, minister of our Partner Church in Uganda, were usually to be found at the Partner Church Booth, which was buzzing with excitement over the addition of partner churches in Africa.

Members Maggie Connolly



Kathy Keith, Nicole Ogundare, Rain Johnson, Marlin Lavanhar, Julie Skye, Carlton Pearson & Mona Betz

## All Souls at General Assembly *(continued)*

(hand crafted chalice jewelry) and Mona Betz (clothing and accessories) also had booths displaying their wares. Maggie has donated a portion of her proceeds to our Youth Department.

Also attending GA were All Souls members Rhonda Holt, JoAnne Howse, and Julie Skye, who serve on the UUA Investment Committee. In the opening ceremonies, the three carried the All Souls banner made by Kate Kline.



Many All Souls alumni were spotted around GA, including former senior minister Brent Smith, now serving All Souls Community Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan, who reports his children Liz and Josh are doing well. Liz is married and back from

the Peace Corps, and working at a Grand Rapids college. Josh is playing football for Columbia.

Former Youth Director Bill Gupton pastors a congregation in Cincinnati. He and his wife, Jenni have one son, Patrick, now of youth-group age. Catherine Torpey, former Youth Minister is the minister of The South Nassau Unitarian Universalist Congregation in Freeport, Long Island.

Former Campus and Young Adult Minister Justin Schroeder has been called to serve First Universalist Church in Minneapolis where he will be ordained October 25. He and his wife, Juliana Keen, are proud parents of baby Tucker. Former interns looking on with interest were Zakir Larry Henson (Colorado), Alison Miller and her husband, David Snedden (Montclair, New Jersey) and Mark Christian (Oklahoma City). All Souls alumnus Kent Doss (son of Rick and Susan Doss) is serving in Laguna Beach, California. Former Liberal Religious Youth member Rev. Nancy Bowen serves as District Executive for the Mountain Desert District, and former intern Ron Robinson was hosting the Unitarian Universalist Christian Fellowship booth. Also, Bill Hamilton-Holway and his wife and co-minister, Barbara attended from Berkeley, California, as did Bobbie Sonen, whose father, Bob, served All Souls as minister during the 40s and 50s.

Former All Souls member David Stewart was drafted to help with workshop logistics. He and his wife,



Barbara, are members of Jefferson UU in Golden, Colorado, home church of Peter Morales, the new President of the UUA. ✦

# Which All Souls Service Should I Attend?

**All Souls offers four regular worship services to choose from.**

The themes and theology of each of the services are the same, but the liturgy and style of the services differ.

Sunday mornings, the **10:00 am Traditional Service** is rooted in the liturgical form of traditional American mainline Protestant worship (hymnals, pipe organ, choir in the loft, etc.).

The **11:30 am Contemporary Service** is rooted in the liturgical style of a contemporary American Protestant worship service (songs projected on a screen, choir, drums and amplified music in front, animated unison singing at the beginning of the service, etc.).

The **first Friday** of each month October through May at **7:00 pm**, our alternative service, **Soulful Sundown**, uses mostly secular forms of expression (video, popular music, dance, etc.) to illustrate the themes, principles, and theology of All Souls.

**Wednesday night chapels** at **6:30 pm** are short, intimate, informal mid-week services that include a wide range of musical styles including folk, bluegrass, classical, jazz, popular, and more.

Some people come to one of them and some come to all of them. 16th century Unitarian Francis David said, "We need not think alike to love alike," and in the 21st century, at All Souls Unitarian Church, we need not worship alike to love alike.

**Why does All Souls offer different styles of worship?**

Worship at All Souls Liberal Church began in 1921 with a traditional mainline Protes-



tant style of worship with a liberal religious message. We still offer that service each week.

In the 1990s, All Souls began an informal, mid-week service (Wednesday night Chapel or Worship on Wednesdays – WOW) in conjunction with education programming.

In 2001, All Souls started the Soulful Sundown service, based in secular forms of expression, as a way of offering our message to the growing group of unchurched people in our community.

In 2008, All Souls had the opportunity to begin a contemporary service with the participation of David Smith and the New Dimensions Chorale, which has allowed us to offer our message to a new generation of people who have grown up in contemporary Christian worship, but are looking for a liberal, progressive theological message and community.



**We need not worship alike to love alike.**

Today, All Souls offers the same themes and theology in different liturgical forms in order to share our message and mission as widely as possible.

We believe our message and mission is so important in the present and for the future that we continually seek additional ways to offer it. What we have learned since 2008 is that there are a lot of religious refugees fleeing the non-denominational, Pentecostal, and Charismatic churches in Tulsa looking for the relevant and progressive message we offer, but who are accustomed to a more contemporary Protestant style of worship. The growth and popularity of all four of our services has shown us what other churches discovered years ago, that we need not worship alike to love alike. †

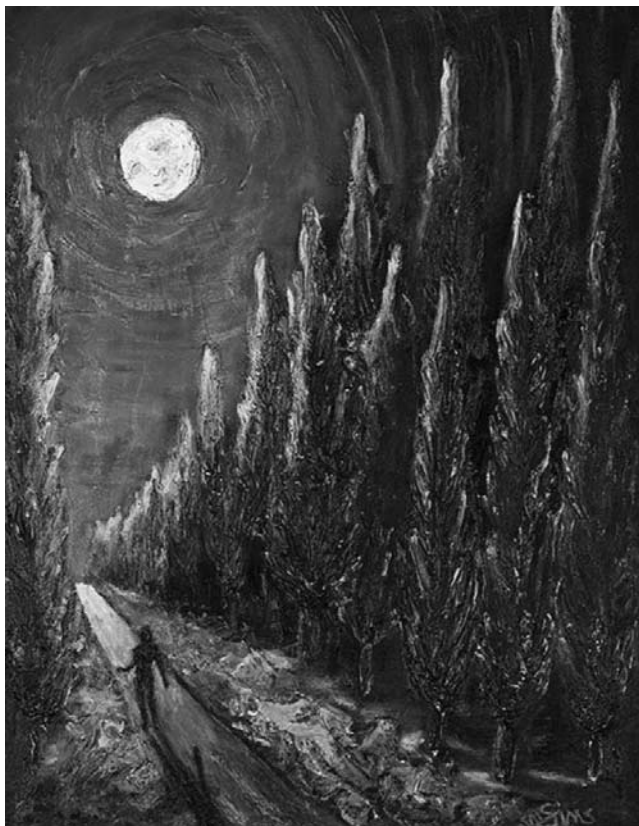


# The Journey Home



The transformation of my personal worldview and beliefs has been a rewarding process that has spanned my entire life. Surrounded by mainstream Christian denominations and desperately searching for a deeper understanding of the spiritual,

I initially adhered to the prevalent Baptist and Pentecostal expressions. I served as an associate minister at Community Temple Baptist church in Oklahoma City, and spent four years as the senior pastor of the City of Praise Family Worship Center. In addition, I was a full-time student at American Christian College and Seminary. During this time, I continued my religious inquiry and critical examination of my faith. Since I was trapped between the traditions of the Pentecostals and Baptists, I was known by my fellow students as the “devil’s advocate,” who would frequently start in-class discussions that questioned the



*The Journey*, by GypsyHeart

-by Randy Lewis, Phillips Field Education Student

traditional doctrines and dogmas of Christian fundamentalism.

Although I was an ordained Baptist minister, and had once considered myself a Christian traditionalist, I started veering far from the religious fundamentalist “right.” What brought me to such a drastic change? I called it a crisis of faith. Perhaps it was the tragic and violent deaths of two of my brothers. Or maybe it was my conscience discerning the lack of equity and justice in how my religion treated those who were different or who disagreed. Perhaps it was the realization that certain aspects of my own life would not fit into the mainstream religion. Maybe it was my restless, always-questioning mind, suggesting that, in spite of what I was told, there was more to it.

Whatever the catalyst, I began to view all humanity as creators, co-creating with others. I started recognizing and respecting the God that is in each one of us. I found I no longer believed in the existence of a literal hell. I learned about other world beliefs that enabled me to gain a profound respect and appreciation for the richness of various cultures and ideologies.

Eventually my religious and personal worldview further matured, and expanded to become universal and inclusive of all. I joined Higher Dimensions church, led by Rev. Pearson, at the time when the church’s teachings started transitioning toward the inclusive theological perspective. Then, when New Dimensions united with All Souls, it became a logical and natural progression of my expanding and inclusive spirituality to embrace the teachings of the Unitarian Universalist movement as they were quite in harmony with my personal beliefs.

But even as I have undergone this multitude of changes in religion and philosophy, one thing has remained unchanged – my calling to serve others. I am tremendously grateful for the opportunity to serve within such a religiously, culturally, and ethnically diverse congregation, so rich in history, and so noble in deeds, as All Souls. †

# Heeding the Call



Sometimes we are called by a power greater than ourselves. In my case, that higher power was Kathy Keith, then Director of Lifespan Religious Education for All Souls.

How many of you have received the plea: “Hi, this is Kathy Keith, and I’m calling on behalf of God.” I’ve heard this from many longtime members about their initial invitation to become more involved at All Souls. I met my boss more than six years ago during a corporate team-building event I was co-facilitating. During a short break, we chatted about my previous stint at All Souls after college. I told her I planned to come back to church when my then one-year-old could actively participate in the Sunday school program.

“Actually,” she said, “I want you to come back next Friday to meet the minister. I have a job for you.”

At the time, I was planning to start my own business leading customized retreats for youth, couples, women in transition (what woman isn’t in transition?) and families. I already had business cards printed with my company name – *Dovetail Experiential Retreats: Outdoor Adventure, Interpersonal Relationships and Personal Growth*. I had other plans. But it didn’t take long before I realized that all my experiences, education, training, and interests had led me precisely here.

I was raised by wounded evangelical atheist parents

Our church program-year (September-May) is fashioned around nine theological themes. Each theme plays a part in the development of a well-grounded religious and spiritual life. The church’s offerings each month are by no means limited to the themes. However, these topics provide an axis around which many elements of church life gain more meaning and depth. They provide us with a set of common stories and ideas that become elements of an ongoing community conversation. Be warned: Seriously engaging these themes could transform your life!

-by Kate Starr, Youth Director

in a stable but difficult home life, so I can relate to youth from all kinds of backgrounds and guide them on their personal spiritual quests. My previous careers include newspaper editor and public relations manager, so I have various skills needed to promote the youth department. I’ve earned a master’s degree in Human Relations, a two-track program combining group theory with counseling courses, so I know how to facilitate, negotiate, and participate in groups of youth and adults alike. I’m a graduate of the North Carolina Outward Bound School, a certified ropes course facilitator, and corporate team-builder. These special skills are used to create meaningful and fun activities for the Coming of Age Vision qUest, the graduating Senior SpiritqUest, and every Sunday in between.

I had no idea my true calling was to be the youth director of the largest Unitarian church in the galaxy. But the fit for the job I was being offered was so perfect, my husband thought they made up the job description just to describe me.

Sometimes we have a very specific idea of what our life is supposed to look like and who we are supposed to be when we grow up. Creating a vision is a very important step toward setting and attaining those goals. But if we hold too tightly to the details of that vision, we might not see the perfect picture being painted right before our very eyes.

We might not recognize that the voice on the other end of the line is, in fact, God calling, even though she sounds a lot like Kathy Keith. †

**September - Vocation & Calling**

**October - Unity**

**November - Gratitude**

**December - Peace**

**January - Grace**

**February - Prayer & Spiritual Practice**

**March - Letting Go**

**April - Salvation**

**May - Truth**

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**Tuesday, September 1**

I am fierce for work. Without work I am nothing

-Winifred Holtby

**Wednesday, September 2**

To find joy in work is to discover the fountain of youth.

-Pearl S. Buck

**Thursday, September 3**

I believe in hard work. It keeps the wrinkles out of the mind and the spirit

-Helena Rubenstein

**Friday, September 4**

It is not hard work which is dreary; it is superficial work.

-Edith Hamilton

**Saturday, September 5**

What a richly colored strong warm coat / is woven when love is the warp and work is the woof.

-Marge Piercy

**Sunday, September 6**

I believe in my work and the joy of it. You have to be with the work and the work has to be with you. It absorbs you totally and you absorb it totally. Everything must fall by the wayside by comparison.

-Louise Nevelson

**Monday, September 7**

I am so full of my work, I can't stop to eat or sleep, or for anything but a daily run.

-Louisa May Alcott

**Tuesday, September 8**

Work is not, primarily, a thing one does to live, but the thing one lives to do. It is, or it should be, the full expression of the worker's faculties.

-Dorothy L. Sayers

**Wednesday, September 9**

It has been my experience that one cannot, in any shape or form, depend on human relations for lasting reward. It is only work that truly satisfies.

-Bette Davis

**Thursday, September 10**

A human being must have occupation, if he or she is not to become a nuisance in the world.

-Dorothy L. Sayers

**Friday, September 11**

Do what you love, the money will follow.

-Marsha Sinetar

**Saturday, September 12**

The call comes from the person standing in front of you who asks, "Will you honor me? Be kind to me?" Honor the little calls. They prepare you for the big ones.

-David Spangler

**Sunday, September 13**

Here's a test to find whether your mission on earth is finished: if you're alive, it isn't.

-Richard Bach

**Monday, September 14**

Our highest business is our daily life.

-John Cage

**Tuesday, September 15**

A call is a process. It can't be controlled by institutions or organizations. People who are called tend to violate the rules in annoying ways.

-Kathleen Norris

**Wednesday, September 16**

Aslan: You would not have called to me unless I had been calling to you.

-C.S. Lewis

**Thursday, September 17**

I am called back.

-Emily Dickenson's last words

**Friday, September 18**

Vocation: from Latin, "vocare" to call. Who's calling?

-E.B. McNeil

**Saturday, September 19**

If your vocation isn't meaningful, you have two choices: find a way to make it meaningful or get out of it and into something you know you can make meaningful.

-Wayne Dyer

**Sunday, September 20**

Your work is to discover your work and then with all your heart give yourself to it.

-Siddhartha Gautama (Buddha)

**Monday, September 21**

One must not always think so much about what one should do, but rather what one should be. Our works do not ennoble us, but we must ennoble our works.

-Meister Eckhart

**Tuesday, September 22**

I think most of us are looking for a calling, not a job. Most of us have jobs that are too small for our spirit.

-Studs Terkel

**Wednesday, September 23**

There is only one joy greater than the joy of a job well done; the joy of a job well done together.

-Daniel S. Hanson

**Thursday, September 24**

Life is a means for work. Harmony is your outcome.

-Rudolf Steiner

**Friday, September 25**

If you love your work, everyone benefits.

-John Whiteside & Sandra Egli

**Saturday, September 26**

Work steadily, even shyly, in the spirit of those medieval carvers who so fondly sculpted the undersides of choir seats.

-John Updike

**Sunday, September 27**

When Matisse was asked whether he believed in God, his response was, "Yes, when I'm working."

-Marion Woodman

**Monday, September 28**

It is your work in life that is the ultimate seduction... The work one does is a way of keeping a diary.

-Pablo Picasso

**Tuesday, September 29**

The outward work can never be small if the inward one is great, and the outward work can never be great if the inward is small or of little worth.

-Meister Eckhart

**Wednesday, September 30**

Work is love made visible.

-Kahlil Gibran