

JUNE 2016

SOUNDINGS



Unitarian Universalist
Church of Charlotte

DISCOVER DEEPER SPIRITUAL MEANING

Depth through reflection

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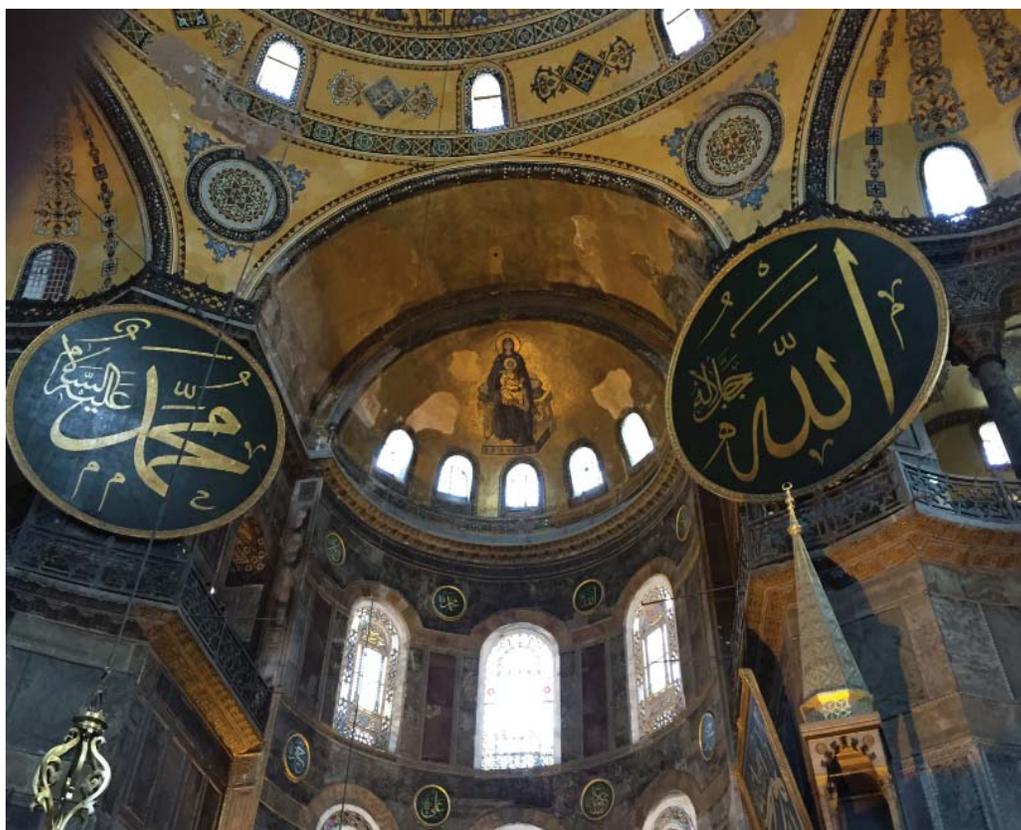
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The Hagia Sophia, originally a Greek Orthodox Christian basilica built 532-537, later an imperial mosque, and now a museum in Istanbul, Turkey, photo by Doug Swaim

Religion's task, closely allied to that of art, [i]s to help us to live creatively, peacefully, and even joyously with realities for which there were no easy explanations and problems that we could not solve: mortality, pain, grief, despair, and outrage at the injustice and cruelty of life. . . .

— KAREN ARMSTRONG IN *THE CASE FOR GOD*



The Mission of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Charlotte is to inspire children, youth and adults to discover and articulate deeper spiritual meaning evidenced in lives of integrity, compassion and stewardship of the earth.

La mision de la iglesia Unitaria Universalista de Charlotte es inspirar a los niños, jóvenes y adultos para que descubran y articulen un significado espiritual profundo, evidente en una vida de integridad, compasión y en el manejo de los recursos de la tierra

A JOURNEY INTO RELIGION

by Cathy Canepa



Cathy Canepa

My attitude toward religion has changed drastically over time.

When I was five, our baby sitter sat my brother and me on her knee and told us the story of the crucifixion and resurrection. It was pretty gory and imaginative, so we liked it. The next day she told it to us again. When we said she'd already told us that one and we wanted a new story, she solemnly said this one is true and important. On telling our parents that she insisted we believe "this crazy stuff," they reassured us that it wasn't all true, but that she was a good person and this was very important to her and to be respectful. They also said not to tell people that we were not religious, because some people can get frightened by ideas they don't understand and become dangerous.

This was in a rural community during the anti-communist witch hunts of the 50s, and everything about my family was suspect: we consisted of an atheist ex-Catholic, secular Jewish union organizers, artists and show people. Many spoke Yiddish or Spanish, and most had progressive ideas about justice and caring for others.

To a child during the witch hunts, we were the hunted and those people who thought we non-religious ones were evil incarnate, they were the hunters. In school you had to pretend to pray and say you believed it. I knew some people went to jail, and I saw these religion-insistent people as un-compassionate, vindictive, racist and dangerous.



Image from the Kingdom of Bhutan
photo by Kate Weaver

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UNDERSTANDING SPIRITUALITY WITHIN MYSELF

by Sam Visco



Sam Visco

My faith and spirituality have been strongly impacted by my time on the Mecklenburg Ministries interfaith youth council, by both the diversity and the open-mindedness of the group. The experiences I have had and the people I have met have dramatically changed my view and understanding of spirituality within myself, my house of faith, and the larger religious community.

One of the most obvious traits of the interfaith youth council is its religious diversity. High school youth from many different houses of faith in Charlotte are invited to participate in the youth council, as well as its summer camp, In Our Own Backyards (IOOBY). In IOOBY, we visited many houses of faith to learn about various religions. Among the many places we visited, the one that had the most impact on me was the Hindu temple. While there we took part in a guided meditation. During the meditation I had a vision, which one of the chaperones helped

me interpret. For the next few days I felt as if I was floating above the ground when I walked. Before that, I had never had such a profound spiritual experience.

The main focus of Mecklenburg Ministries is to break down barriers between faith traditions to help build a better community in Charlotte. As a part of this

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Jay Leach

The flickering light of a chalice. Bach's *Mass in B minor*. Jalāl ad-Dīn Muhammad Rūmī's mystical poetry. The eightfold path of Buddhism. Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel as he "prayed with my feet" alongside Martin Luther King, Jr. on the march from Selma to Montgomery. *Día de Muertos*

altars. A roaring fire at the center of a Yule/Winter Solstice gathering. Religious Humanism's summons to the truths of science. Abstract, geometric patterns in Australian aboriginal art.

Marc Chagall's stained glass windows in Zurich's Fraumünster Church. The late Pakistani Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan intoning the ecstasy of Qawwali, the Sufi devotional music. "Ours is the church of "the church of open minds, loving hearts and helping hands." Row upon row of alabaster headstones in Arlington National Cemetery, each bearing one of 61 approved religious symbols. African American spirituals. A child asking ancient questions at a *Seder* meal. The radicalism of Dorothy Day's Catholic Worker Movement.

Candles lit as a meditative Offertory is played. Birmingham, Alabama's 16th Street Baptist Church. Istanbul's Hagia Sophia. Rev. Troy D. Perry's courage in the founding of the Metropolitan Community Church. *A Love Supreme* by John Coltrane. The writings of the 16th century Indian woman poet-saint Mirabai whose songs are sung by Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs. *Semana Santa pasos* borne aloft by devotional *costaleros* through the narrow streets of Seville. *Mahabodhi* Temple in Bodh Gaya, India.

The Hebrew prophets' challenge to political power and condemnation of piety without compassion. Theodore Parker's faith: "I do not pretend to understand the moral universe; the arc is a long one . . . I am sure it bends towards justice." The womanist writings of Alice Walker. El Mansourah mosque, Tlemcen, Algeria. Mahayana Buddhism's,

Prajñāpāramitāhḍaya, "The Heart of the Perfection of Understanding" Sutra. Families engaged in Freeman Hall's "Operation Sandwich." John Dietrich's inspiring "Religion Without God" sermons.

Paul Winter's *Missa Gaia*. The majestic dome of Filippo Brunelleschi atop Florence's Duomo. Pagans calling the quarters as a circle is cast. Poet's Corner in the South Transept of London's Westminster Abbey. Avalokiteshvara (Kuan Shih Yin) Buddhism's beloved Goddess/Bodhisattva of compassion. The 23rd Psalm. The blessings of the late John O'Donohue.

Thorncrown Chapel in the hills of the Ozarks in Arkansas. A muezzin calling the faithful to prayer from a minaret. The Giant Amida Buddha of Kamakura, Japan.

A warm meal with neighbors on an evening at Room in the Inn. Mahalia Jackson singing *In the Upper Room*. The colorful mosaics in Paris' Grand Mosque. The Beatitudes of Jesus. A sacred pilgrimage shrine on the southern shores of Lake Titicaca, in Copacabana, Bolivia where first Incas and then Christians have worshipped for centuries. A choir of children singing *Somos El Barco*. The Sun Dance ceremony practiced by indigenous people of America and Canada.

Credos affirmed by Coming of Age youth.

Praying the Mourner's *Kaddish* on the *yahrzeit* of a beloved. The devotion of India's *Adivasi* at a simple devistan in a clearing. William Ellery Channing's foundational sermon "Unitarian Christianity." Flowers in our niche honoring a remembered loved one. *Langar* served in every Sikh Gurdwara to all visitors without distinction. The congregation voicing its intent to be a spiritual support to a young family.

Anne Lamott's outlandish faith expressed in her writings. The close connection of a Discovery Circle. Michelangelo's *David*. The Great Mosque of Córdoba. Karen Armstrong's "Charter for Compassion." Max Bruch's *Kol Nidrei*. Luna Rising bringing women and girls together. The poems of the 16th century St. Teresa of Avila. An oud, a ney and a frame drum invoking devotion in a Sufi *zikr*. "*Spirit of Life, come unto me.*" . . .



Dohány Street Synagogue
photo by John Herrick

Our spiritual journey begins at birth and continues throughout our lives. We invite parents to use the material presented in LET'S DIVE IN! to engage their children in this journey.



Chalice Lighting

Our human family is very diverse. We worship differently and believe different things about God. We light our chalice to remind us that people of faith are more alike than different and that we share much

in common, including our commitment to compassion and justice.

SOME DO. SOME DON'T.

by Belinda Parry

Jody sat in the back corner of the art room. She listened to the kids in her class talking about God, but she didn't join in.

Marc turned to Jody and asked, "What do you think, Jody?"

Jody wasn't sure what to say. Finally, she said, "Umm... about God? I don't know. That's not an easy question for me. I'm not even sure I believe in God." After the words were out, Jody wished she hadn't said anything. The other kids looked confused. Some of them looked shocked or alarmed. Jody felt like she had done something wrong.

Marc said, "What do you mean? Are you Jewish?"

"Actually, I'm Unitarian Universalist. Plus, I learned in C.Y.R.E. that Jews DO believe in God. Lots of different religions do; they just have different ways of worshiping."

"Don't Unitarian Somethingists believe in God?" Marc asked.

"Some do. Some don't. Unitarian Universalists believe that... um..." Jody couldn't think of how to finish her sentence. "Some do. Some don't," she said again.

Everyone was quiet. Jody was pretty sure no one in her class knew what it meant to be Unitarian Universalist. She also didn't know if she could explain it.

Keisha spoke first. "What's C.Y.R.E.?"

Jody was relieved; that was an easier question to answer. "Children and Youth Religious Education. It's like Sunday School," she said. "We learn about all kinds of things in C.Y.R.E."

"Like what?" Keisha asked.

Jody thought for a moment and then said, "Well, last Sunday we talked about Diwali, which is a Hindu festival, and one time last year we took a tour of a

graveyard and learned about how different people... um... commemorate death, like how they deal with when their friends or family die and what they believe happens after you die."

"You go to heaven," Jaden said.

"Not everybody believes that," Jody replied. Several of the kids looked surprised.

"Do you?" Jaden demanded.

"I don't know," Jody answered. "And here's the thing about Unitarian Universalism, it's okay that I don't know. One of our Principles talks about searching for the truth..."

"Wait!" Marc spoke up. "Your church has principals?! Like our school does?!"

"Not that kind of principal," Jody almost laughed, "Not a person. The principles are like ideas that all UUs share about how to be in the world. There are seven of them. 'Everyone is important.' 'Be kind.' 'We should learn together.' 'We should search for the truth.' Um..." In her head, Jody was singing the principles song she knew from C.Y.R.E., but no WAY was she going to sing it out loud. "Everyone should be allowed to vote.' 'Build a fair and peaceful world.' And 'We need to take care of the earth.' That's seven."

Everyone was quiet again. Jody wondered what they would ask next. She hadn't imagined she would be giving a lesson about Unitarian Universalism today, but she felt pretty good about how it was going.

Marc took a breath to say something just as the art teacher came into the room. Marc whispered, "Will you tell us more later?" Several of the other kids nodded to show they were interested too.

Jody whispered, "Sure!"

Wondering Questions:

- Have you ever explained Unitarian Universalism to someone? Was it hard to explain?
- Can you think of some ideas that are important to all major religions, including Unitarian Universalists? How can you learn more about these?

RELIGION

by Todd Willems



Todd Willems

My childhood and youth religious life was filled with a church home -- Sundays of services, songs from the old hymnal, and, being Methodist in the South, a whole lot of potlucks with cream-of-something involved. The calendar and social circles revolved around my family's investment and in

turn it shaped my worldview. My experiences and the people I met along the way shaped my religious being. I was a part of a religious community that transformed me.

Before joining this church in 2009, I spent a decade away from organized religion. Feeling the need to reconcile a belief system to its historical creation, I took several years to deconstruct what I understood in a particular religion and opened up barriers I had set through constructed beliefs. This took me away from the religious community of my early life and into a period of self-discovery on what I value. My religious efforts were spent deepening my understanding by tapping self-reliance as the creed, nature its playground, and independence its virtue. Through reading, writing, living, and loving, I was focused on transforming me. And yet, I sensed a gap in my religious experience.

The UUCC has fed my need for a community, even adding in those missing spreads of covered dishes. Engaging, laughing, listening, sharing, and reflecting, I've spent a lot of time taking in this place, people, and our shared experiences. With two young people added

to our house over the past years, I'm now watching my kids build their religious understanding as a part of this community. I've had an experience here that's an ongoing transformation of myself and those around me.

When I think about religion as an activity, it has been, frankly, about transforming me: my experience, my family's experience, and my religious community's experience. Sure, I've participated in outward expressions of my religious values through action, giving, and service; even trading three summers off from college to do home repair work through an outreach organization in rural Tennessee. While all rewarding and of value to those needs that were met, most of my

religious expressions have been inward and reflective experiences, done with the comfort of those in close proximity in mind and spirit, or an outward expression of who I am.

The Board and Vision Steering Team's listening during the visioning process revealed opportunities for growth for this church through how we could better serve the larger community. I was struck with the frequency and depth to which this congregation collectively expressed the desire for this church to transform the larger community. We've boldly come to the conclusion that this religious community has a vision to inspire transformation not just in individuals and this congregation, but the larger community as well. We're not claiming to just be a beacon in Cotswold, but head, heart, and hands of a religious community out transforming the larger community.

With the Congregational Conversation completed and vote taken on the proposed Vision prior to my writing

of this reflection, let us hold with reverence, whatever the outcome, the commitment to step out together. That's a powerful vision of going outward as a religious community, not just as individuals, into the world to inspire spiritual, societal, and environmental transformation. To step out . . . together.



Grace Cathedral in San Francisco
photo by John Herrick

CELEBRATE COMMITMENT 2016 CAMPAIGN REPORT

by Catherine Barnes

When I think about “religion,” as opposed to “belief” or “spiritual practice,” I tend to think of it in the context of an organization. Religion to me is a team sport. People with some shared beliefs join together to build something, and that thing – that institution – in turn provides a framework and “spiritual home” for its members. One



Catherine Barnes

of the fundamental facets of this relationship – whether we’re talking about Unitarian Universalism, Judaism or the Church of England – is that the organization depends on its members for support. As a result, pledge drives, fund drives, stewardship campaigns – whatever you call them – are as central to the world’s religions as breaking bread and singing hymns.

So, in keeping with the practices of all the great – and small – religions, here at the UUCC we are wrapping up our stewardship campaign. Concurrently, the Coordinating Team is building our budget for the coming fiscal year. (In case any of you missed the emails, bulletins and skywriting, we cannot build the budget until we know how much money we’ll have to work with, which means getting in the pledges!)

As Chair of the Stewardship Team, I want to report to you about the stewardship campaign – how it went and where we ended up.

We stayed with the “Celebrate Commitment” theme for the third year in a row. We have received a lot of positive feedback about this upbeat message. There really is so much to celebrate about this community, our commitment to it and its commitment to us. So we decided to stay the course.

And we decided to emphasize our gratitude for your support. For several years the stewardship team had asked you to increase your pledge so that we could fund a second minister position. And each year the

congregation rose to the challenge and we reaped substantial increases in total pledges. Those increases have allowed us to add staff – but we are still engaged in the search for a second minister. So we decided to wait before “beating that drum” again!

Instead, we focused on communicating our gratitude to our givers, sending out thank-you cards at Thanksgiving, and hosting a wonderful generous givers gathering at the Evening Muse. All of our messaging emphasized the gratitude we feel for our members’ generous support for this, our “common enterprise.” This approach was greeted with overwhelmingly positive feedback from you. However, we did not see the same increase in total pledges that we have seen in recent years. We did have increases – about 200 of you, in fact, increased your pledges (a fact we celebrate!) – but we ended up just slightly below where we were when we committed to a budget last year.

The Coordinating Team is in a position to propose a balanced budget for 2016-2017. It will be a lean budget, not an “expansion budget” – and we certainly face challenges ahead. Specifically, we are still searching for a second minister, and beyond the Board’s commitment to cover the first year and a half of the second minister’s costs out of our reserves, we will have to fund that position out of the operating budget. That will require a significantly larger budget from where we are now. In addition, we are about to adopt a new Vision, which in all likelihood will lead to plans and goals with added costs.

So, in short: 1) the UUCC remains on a solid financial footing thanks to the generous commitments of our members; 2) we’re delighted you enjoyed the Year Of The Soft Ask; and 3) buckle your seatbelts, because the next few years – and stewardship campaigns – should prove interesting!

Over the Edge

Words and music by Tim Lemmond

Copyright 2012

It's a long way, that I'm goin'
And I won't come, back the same.
It might be cold there, where I'm goin'
There might be fire, there might be rain

And it just might be the place,
Where the planets learn to spin and whirl.
It's a long way from anywhere
Off the edge of the known world.

There ain't no roadmaps, where I'm goin'
Some may claim to, but they don't know.
They talk about heaven, they talk about hell.
But I ain't buying, the big hard sell.

'Cause they've never been to the place,
Where the planets learn to spin and whirl.
They've never been off the edge,
Off the edge of the known world

If you love me, if you cry.
I hope the joy comes, to dry your eyes.
Wrap up your heartache, send it with me.
I'll take your burden, set yourself free.

And I'll take it to the place,
Where the planets learn to spin and whirl.
Ah, nothing hurts me now, off the edge of the known world.
Oh. nothing hurts me now, off the edge of the known world.

–Tim Lemmond
(1955-2011)

Watch the video at the link below

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C2-hJZmc-mw>



Church near Calgary, Canada
photo by Kathleen Carpenter

Apparently they were outraged by our values.

Actually, I was raised by very spiritual parents, though they didn’t use that word. They revered nature and art, conveyed a sense of wonder and awe of the universe, and a responsibility to help others. When we asked, my parents said God is in the trees and water and the compost heap and us. None of this seemed remotely connected to the “religion” around me: the bearded God in a cloud who was talked about and prayed to in kindergarten. The religion I saw was an authoritarian, “obey or be punished” force, of one piece with government leaders.

My very negative attitude toward religion began to change years later when I saw Liberation Theology in action, espousing my values, and fighting for freedom and equality – not meekly waiting to inherit the earth. I could identify with this, as my relatives also fought against oppression, especially the dictatorship in the Dominican Republic.

I do struggle with religious language. Though I have no problem with others using religious language, I myself cannot emotionally separate the word “God” from my childhood associations. Also, for me to tell a stranger I am religious feels dishonest and cowardly, like I’m trying to “fly under the radar” of McCarthyism. I don’t know others’ definitions, and the possibility of letting people think I believe in their personal God feels like “passing.” Saying “I go to church” to a stranger feels like pretending to be Christian, hiding being Jewish. Luckily, this is not a huge problem – if a word sticks in my throat, I don’t use it.

My journey led me from seeing religion as a threat to my family and our values to my religion being a sustaining force, embodying and encouraging what I feel is meaningful in life. The UUC is my compassionate community, accepting and nurturing my morality and spirituality. It is a source of inspiration and it sustains me. I see people in interfaith gatherings sharing my values and giving me hope, and understand that many other religious communities are not dogmatic or authoritarian or literalist. I continue to feel “blessed” to be part of my UU community.

mission, the youth council takes part in community service, both during In Our Own Backyards and beyond. Viewing religion through the lens of service and vice versa, I learned the importance of living out my beliefs, mainly the seven principles of Unitarian Universalism. This means that I display kindness and altruism in my everyday life. For me it is not enough to simply believe something, but I must make my religion a part of my daily life.

Before Meck Min, religion seemed to me like a way to explain why things happen in the world around us. I thought people used religion and a belief in God as a means of shrugging off their own worldly duties. It never seemed to me that people used it as a motivation to live their life to the fullest. While it may not always be the case, I believe that most religious people use their faith as a way of expressing their values. This allows people who have similar values to come together despite religious differences to

achieve a common goal. Meck Min has allowed me to witness these interfaith relations firsthand. The beauty of a truly interconnected faith community is something that will always be important to me.

Meck Min also helped me discover my belief in a God. Seeing that most religions worship a god or gods, I found it hard to reject the idea, although my view of God varies greatly from other people’s. After learning so much about various faiths, I realized that almost all of them shared one thing:

a focus on peace, justice, and compassion. Those things, plus a little extra, make up exactly what God is to me.

Throughout my almost three-year involvement with the Mecklenburg Ministries interfaith youth council, I have learned many things about myself and the world I live in. This group has influenced my views and opinions more than any other one source ever has. No matter where I go in life or what I end up believing, Meck Min will always hold a special place in my heart.



Digital Art by Stella Park

Rita Heath Singer

Rita Heath-Singer and her husband John joined the Unitarian Universalist Church of Charlotte in 1988. Happy to have finally found a religious home, she felt that volunteering would be a good way to get connected and make the most of her experience as a member. Before they became parents, Rita started helping in our religious education program for children. After their daughter Sam was born and started attending our nursery, Rita began helping there. She continued volunteering in Sam’s classes until she was a pre-teen. Rita also chaperoned youth on mission trips to build Habitat for Humanity Homes, did overnight patrol at youth conferences, and spent the night in a box for Cardboard Campouts.



Rita Heath Singer

Rita has spread her hard work and dedication throughout our congregation, often volunteering in more than one area at a time. She’s facilitated Getting to Know Us sessions for visitors. She developed and managed our Congregational Care Team for four years, helping ensure members received care and support in difficult times. Of her time on the Ministerial Search Committee that called Jay Leach to our church, Rita said it was a rewarding and powerful experience and she felt like they did a good job. Rita has served on our Worship Team, Board of Trustees, and is now the chair of our Community Building Team where she helped reinstate our congregation’s annual Passover Seder.

If Rita notices an opening where she can help, she steps up. When our hiking group was without a leader, Rita decided that since she wanted the group to continue she should be willing to lead it. When the person who was writing and directing Follies moved away, Rita helped write and produce the show for several years. She organized the reception and rehearsal dinner too, to make sure they happened. Rita says, “everyone was so

loving and supportive” and that it was “fun to come together and create something totally original. It was a great way to meet people and it was very much a commitment.”

Rita thinks it “would be great if we could have more people who say yes” when asked to serve at the UUC. She feels this community has given so much to her and to her family and has supported her through hard times. “How can I not give back?” she said. For her, volunteering is just part of how she honors her commitment to our congregation.

UUC

ENDS Statements

AS A CONGREGATION, WE COURAGEOUSLY NAME THESE ENDS TO WHICH WE ASPIRE:

- We are a joyful, dynamic community of people who care about and are connected to each other. Here people are welcomed, heard, included and respected.
- We are a sanctuary for those on a liberal religious path and a beacon of progressive thought and action in the larger Charlotte community.
- We cultivate lives of generosity and responsibility, sharing our personal abundance.
- We are intentionally growing in our diversity as a congregation, each of us working with others to overcome the barriers that divide the human family.
- We strive for peace, justice and equity in our hearts, our interpersonal relationships, our community and our world.

Above & Beyond

A big thank you to the Vision Steering Team – Gilbert Bailey, Jan McNeely, Jen Neitzel, Rebekah Visco, Megan Van Fleet, and led by Co-Chairs, Fred Dodson and Michael Elder – who, using feedback gathered in 15 small group discussions, 4 congregation-wide meetings, 12 Sundays in Freeman Hall and over 500 touches with members over the past two years, crafted a vision to help guide us for the next 25 years. Needless to say, their tireless efforts and dedication will have a lasting impact on our congregation.

MEET OUR NEW MEMBERS

Earnest Lewis & Dede Madjitey

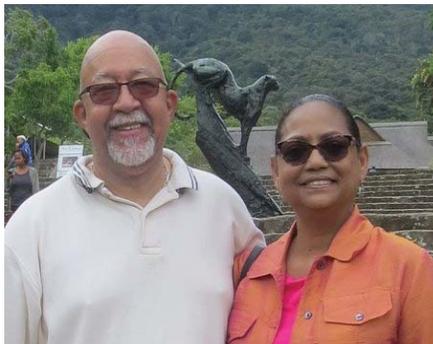
Earnest is a retired veteran of the U.S. Navy and one of twelve children. He is a writer and his interests are fishing and politics. Dede is a transplant from St. Louis, Missouri and is the mother of Brooklynnne and wife of Earnest. She is interested in enlightenment and self realization.



Dede Madjitey, Brooklynnne
and Earnest Lewis

Emmanuel Allen & Tawana Wilson Allen

Emmanuel and Tawana have been married for 38 years in November. Emmanuel retired from IBM after 30 years of service. He later owned a paper and party store for 10 years and currently works part time as a courier for Fed Ex. Tawana is retired after 33 years as a community and political organizer and 21 and a half years as a Congressional liaison for Congressman Mel Watt. They have three adult children – Niki of Raleigh, Tamia of Atlanta and Bruce of Charlotte who passed away on November 19, 2015.



Emmanuel Allen & Tawana Wilson Allen

FOREVER BEFORE, FOREVER AFTER

During the Time for Aspiration and Meditation,
He bowed his head.
But didn't close his eyes.
He gazed down at his fingers,
Imagining his hand dead,
The bones within
Cold, still lifeless.
The flesh without,
Rotting, falling away.
Isn't this why religions started?
To deal with death?
He imagined not imagining.
Not even being, For eternity.
Incomprehensible.
Terrifying.
And yet
He had been without life forever
Once before.
Before birth.
As he would be without life forever
Once again.
After death.
How had lifeless eternity been the first time?
There had been nothing.
Absolutely nothing. "So I have nothing,"
He said to himself,
"To fear about being dead again forever."
"Nothing. Absolutely nothing."
But that was what he feared the most,
As he sat there in the church pew:
Nothing. Absolutely nothing.

—Loyd Dillon

FOR FURTHER ENGAGEMENT

Below you will find a list of books, reflections, movies, lectures and much more for further engagement on the subject of Religion

BOOKS:

Adult

- African American Religious Thought: An Anthology*, edited by Cornel West and Eddie S. Glaude Jr., 2003
- Becoming More Fully Human: Religious Humanism as a Way of Life*, by William R. Murry, 2011
- The Case for God*, by Karen Armstrong, 2009
- The Culture of Religious Pluralism*, by Richard E. Wentz, 1997
- Deep Religious Pluralism*, edited by David Ray Griffin, 2005
- God Revised: How Religion Must Evolve in a Scientific Age*, by Galen Guengerich, 2013
- Many People, Many Faiths: Women and Men in the World Religions*, by Robert S. Ellwood, 2006
- on being human religiously*, by James Luther Adams, 1976
- The Religious Case Against Belief*, by James P. Carse, 2008
- Religious Pluralism in America: The Contentious History of a Founding ideal*, by William R. Hutchison, 2004
- The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*, by Mircea Eliade, 1968
- Traveling Mercies: Some Thoughts on Faith*, by Anne Lamott, 1999
- Why Religion Matters*, by Huston Smith, 2001
- Women Pray: Voices through the Ages, from Many Faiths, Cultures, and Traditions*, edited by Monica Furlong, 2002
- The World's Religions: Our Great Wisdom Traditions*, by Huston Smith, 1991

4 Years-Grade 4

- Everyone Prays: Celebrating Faith Around the World*, by Alexis York Lumbard, 2014
- In God's Name*, by Rabbi Sandy Eisenberg Sasso, 2004
- Mira and the Big Story*, by Laura Alary, 2012
- People*, by Peter Spier, 1988
- What Do You Believe? (Big Questions)*, DK, 2011

Grades 4-8

- A Faith Like Mine*, by Laura Buller, 2005
- One World, Many Religions: The Way We Worship* by Mary Pope Osborne, 1996
- Sacred Stories: Wisdom from World Religions*, Marilyn McFarlane, 2012

High School

- Acts of Faith: The Story of an American Muslim, in the Struggle for the Soul of a Buddhists Talk about Jesus: Christians Talk About the Buddha*, by Rita M. Gross, 2010
- Daughters of the Desert: Stories of Remarkable Women from Christian, Jewish and Muslim Traditions*, by Claire Rudolf Murphy, 2005
- Generation*, by Eboo Patel, 2010
- God Is Not One: The Eight Rival Religions That Run the World*, by Stephen Prothero, 2011
- World Religions A Voyage of Discovery*, by Jeffrey Brodd, 2015

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MOVIES:

The Burmese Harp, 1956 (Not Rated)
Andrei Rublev, 1966 (Not Rated)
Brother Sun, Sister Moon, 1972 (PG)
The Chosen, 1981 (PG)
Gandhi, 1982 (PG)
The Name of the Rose, 1986 (R)
Where Is the Friend's Home, 1987 (Not Rated)
Babette's Feast, 1987 (G)
The Joy Luck Club, 1993 (R)
The Cup, 1999 (G)
Monsieur Ibrahim, 2003 (R)
Saved!, 2004 (PG-13)

SHORT VIDEOS:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7wumvrjuY3c>,
 "Pluralism & Religion in America," by Diana Eck,
 2011

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=39QoHPFVP2U>,
 "Sacred Ground: Pluralism, Prejudice and the Promise of America," by
 Eboo Patel, 2012

BLOG POSTS:

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/timothy-murphy/interfaith-solidarity_b_9684284.html,
 "Interfaith Solidarity," by Timothy Murphy, 2016

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/craig-considine/pluralism-and-the-najran-christians_b_9235554.html,
 "Pluralism and the Najran Christians: How Prophet Muhammad Went Beyond Tolerance," by
 Craig Considine, 2016

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/murali-balaji/for-hindu-americans-long_b_9169966.html,
 "For Hindu Americans, Long-Term Hopes for Pluralism More Than Just About Days Off," by Murali Balaji,
 2016

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/simran-jeet-singh/protesting-interfaith-the-importance-of-advancing-our-dialogues_b_3152136.html,
 "Protesting Interfaith? The Importance of Advancing Our Dialogues," by Simran Jeet Singh, 2013

<http://www.xenos.org/essays/christian-witness-pluralistic-age>,
 "Christian Witness in a Pluralistic Age," by Jim Leffel, 2015

Last Night I Found Jesus

This time he came in a gasp
 like someone sucking air from a secret.
 I unplugged the source, dismantled
 the vacuum hose, and there he was, tangled
 in a wad of cat hair and lint. Little figurine,
 gazing out in blessed resignation —

lost for so many Christmases.
 I held him in my palm like a wafer.
 God or goddess, who could tell,
 his private parts shrouded in a whittled diaper.
 Had he liked his reprieve
 from the barn scene? All those donkeys

and itchy hay, hubbub of angels
 coming out of nowhere
 like a Hallmark commercial?
 For two years, a plastic teddy bear had been
 his stand-in, red-vested, gold-crowned,
 part of my daughter's ornament set.

So why would I find him now, stuck
 in a tunnel with all my grime and clutter,
 when doctrine says
 he'd come in glory and light?
 And who had turned me into savior?
 I was testy —

then softened. Such a burden,
 all my questions for a dusty baby. No wonder
 he'd hidden so long behind the dresser.
 Poor little image. Infant icon.
 Precious, mysterious
 hand-carved nugget of wood.

— Barbara Conrad

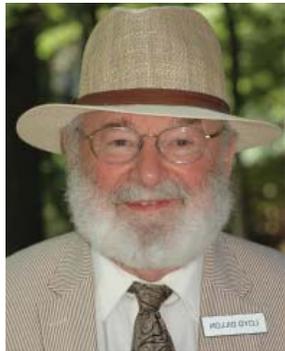
THIS MONTH'S CONTRIBUTORS OF ART, POETRY, AND READINGS:

Barbara Conrad

Barbara Conrad is author of *Wild Plums*, published by FutureCycle Press in 2013 and editor of *Waiting for Soup* (2004), a collection of art and poetry from her weekly workshops with homeless neighbors here in Charlotte. Her poems have appeared in numerous journals and anthologies. Her writing focuses on personal exploration, nature and social justice issues.



Barbara Conrad



Loyd Dillon

Loyd Dillon

Loyd Dillon loves words and wordplay. Over the decades, he has written many articles, limericks, poems, sermons, word puzzles and humorous fiction. He is a retired interior designer, the former national president of the Interior Design Society, a freelance illustrator, an adjunct faculty member in the Interior Design

Department of CPCC and a UU lay minister who in 2008 won this UU district's Distinguished Service Award. Loyd is also Brenda Dillon's husband, the father of their three sons and the grandfather of five grandchildren.

Stella Park

"I am 15 years old and have just finished my freshman year at East Mecklenburg High School. I've been going to the UUC since age four, and I've been doing art since before then. Art is both a calling and a passion of mine. I hope you enjoy my work!"



Stella Park

Tim Lemmond

(1955-2011)

Tim Lemmond loved life: all things natural and wild, his family, working as a psychologist, building, playing sports, and music. When he became ill with cancer in 2003, he redoubled his commitment to living fully,

writing a number of songs about the wonderment of life and death, his love for family and friends, and gratitude for his very rich and full life. Throughout the years, Tim shared his songs and beautiful voice in many Sunday services, in Follies and at coffee houses. This song, "Off the Edge," reflects Tim's musings about his own death, offering no pat answers, of course, but we are gently invited to contemplate journeying to a place "where the planets learn to tilt and whirl!"



Tim Lemmond
painting by Robin Wellner

Kate Weaver

"I was intrigued when I learned that the kingdom of Bhutan is known as the happiest place on earth. I wanted to witness this culture and spend time with the people of Bhutan. This largely isolated kingdom is tucked away in the Himalayan mountains and is famously difficult to visit. After months of planning, I found myself gazing at Mt. Everest as our airplane began the descent into a lush valley in the heart of Bhutan. I spent a week traversing the stunning landscape and getting to know the happy people of Bhutan. I'm thrilled to share one of my favorite images from my adventure."



Kate Weaver

SOUNDINGS

CHURCH OFFICE HOURS:

MONDAY-FRIDAY, 9 AM - 5 PM

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