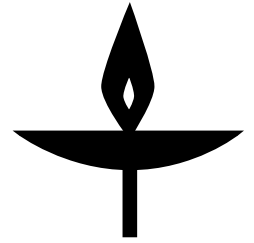


# Simple Gifts



October 2009  
Vol. VII, Issue II

*The All Souls Journal*

## Jungle Gym Theology

-by Rev. Marlin Lavanhar, Senior Minister



Our children are often confronted with theological questions on the playground. “Are you saved?” other children ask while hanging upside down on the jungle gym. “Have you accepted Jesus Christ into your heart?” is a conversation that happens in the sandbox in elementary school.

When you’re growing up in a church that’s as inclusive as ours, it can be hard to explain, especially while dangling upside down on the playground. In our new *Parent Resource Network* newsletter is a section titled Playground Ready: Little Answers to Big Questions. Here, these predicaments are addressed so moms and dads can help their children know how to respond. It suggests that when asked, “What does your church believe?” our children may reply, “We believe *there is one God, and all are saved.*” Nine times out of ten the response is, “Okay,” and they move on to more important topics like, “Could you pass me the plastic shovel?”

However, the *Parent Resource Network* knows that some parents who bring their children to All Souls will have more complicated questions of their own, like: “What do we mean by *one God?*” To keep things simple, we could say, “One God refers to the belief that there is one source of all existence. It is known by many names, but for our young children in these situations, the most useful name is God.” Adults can stay up all night discussing the nature and name of that one source, but whether you are a scientific agnostic or a God-fearing theist, we all agree life was created by a single, universal source.

The next question a parent of All Souls is likely to ask is, “When you say, *all are saved*, what do you mean by *saved?*” The newsletter’s UU Translator explains, “Saved is to be *good with God.*” And since we believe

all children are born *good with God* the answer to the question, “Are you saved?” is “Yes!” So, that is the answer All Souls children have been giving on Tulsa playgrounds for generations.

The theological roots of All Souls are in *Unitarianism*, which claims that there is one source, one God, one ultimate reality, and in *Universalism*, which says that there is only one destiny. One source, for all of humanity. It is the idea that God is love and salvation are shared by all, rather than being the exclusive property of a few. It is the idea that a loving God does not divide humanity into sheep and goats, the saved and the damned. It is the idea that at the core and essence of all life and existence there is a sacred unity.

In my travels around the world, I have seen what I would call the “spirit of God” and the “power of love and compassion” in people of every religion, and even among people who have little or no religion. That is not to say that every religion and religious leader is valid. I do believe that we can learn from all religions and cultures of the world, but the test of a religion’s validity must be determined by the lives of the adherents. It says in the Bible, “by their fruits, you shall know them.” When it comes to religions, the test is not what people say they believe, it is how they live and act.

May All Souls strive to be a model of unity and love for all humanity. †



# Dissolving into Qi

-by Rev. Tamara Lebak, Associate Minister



*We are already one.  
But we imagine that we are not.  
And what we have to recover  
is our original unity.  
What we have to be is what we  
are.*

~ Thomas Merton

When we are feeling isolated or dismissed, or not valued for the gifts we bring into the world, it can be easy to forget that we are “already one.” Sometimes we separate ourselves from others with very good reason – when we encounter behavior that is persistently hurtful. Or maybe we separate ourselves by bringing our experiences with people from our histories into the relationships of our present.

Unity, when reflected upon as a value, elicits ideas of harmony and solidarity. We break down the walls that keep us from encountering another when we can step into their shoes and hear their story, not as a story in opposition to our own, but as an additional way of piecing together their experiences.

In my Qigong practice, I go through a series of movements that represent moving to that feeling of unity with the world and everything in it. Surprisingly, the way to unity in the series, is by first claiming one’s uniqueness, one’s diversity. We begin by feeling our being in our own body rooted to the ground and suspended



by the heavens.

My mentor, Dr. Roger Jahnke, taught me that in Qigong, humanity is where energy of the earth and energy of the sky interconnect. Another movement clears space in the world for our specific gifts: pushing our history behind us where it belongs, lifting the weight from our shoulders, pushing away the energy that feels as though it is closing in on us from all sides. The series ends with something called “Dissolving into Qi.” During this movement, I focus on dissolving the boundaries where my body meets the world.

I have done this practice on beaches and hills, on sand, and even in the Memorial Garden, and every time I do, there is a sense of serenity that reminds me that I am made up of the same stuff as the world.

Even scientifically, the boundaries are illusions. At the microscopic level we are swirling atoms just like everything else in the world. Yet this kind of serenity is impossible without knowing exactly where our own boundaries are. We must first know ourselves before we can know the world.

My blessing for you this month is that you will spend some time meditating, praying, reflecting on those places where your boundaries touch the world.

When you know where they are, try temporarily letting them go.

Namaste. †

# Wake-Up Call

-by Kate Starr, Youth Director



Do you have someone in your life who you are sure wakes up every morning thinking of new ways to irritate you? Or, do you wake up some mornings afraid that maybe there is someone who thinks that person is you?

In either case, the chances are that's not really what's happening. It's more likely that person is just very different from you. Their primary focus, their pace, what motivates them, their likes and dislikes are probably not the same as yours. It doesn't make them (or you) wrong, but it certainly can result in some serious conflict.

In my training as a corporate team-builder, I found an effective tool to help executives (now I help church youth, advisors, and staff) understand behavior and its impact on others. This assessment helps us learn our – and other's – behavioral strengths and weaknesses in an effort to minimize conflict and capitalize on differences. The assessment tool uses the letters DiSC to categorize four behavior styles based on preferred pace – slow or fast-paced – and primary focus – people or tasks. There are, of course, combinations and exceptions, but for general discussion on preferences, it's a great start.

The D in DiSC stands for Directive, fast-paced, task-focused people. Their motto is Just Do It! The fast-paced, people-focused folks are the influencers – talkative, enthusiastic, and persuasive. (The i is lower-cased because they say a little i can go a long way, not that i would know.) The letter S is assigned to the slower-paced, people-focused individuals who are the Supportive ones on a team – cooperative and patient, they are the most reliable team-players. The C stands for Cautious. These people are slower-paced in their task-focus because they need time for complete accuracy. Think accountant,

architect, engineer.

Each of these styles has its strengths – the D is decisive, independent, and confident; the i is positive and fun to be around. The S is agreeable and easy-going; the C is persistent in pursuit of the all the facts. But each style has a shadow side as well. If overused, our very strengths become our weaknesses. The directive approach of the D can seem overbearing; the influencer's enthusiasm can be interpreted as manipulative. The agreeability of the Supportives can look like indecisiveness, and the perfectionism of our Cautious ones can come across as picky and judgmental or result in analysis paralysis.



The profile finds that similar styles tend to be compatible socially – we don't have to explain ourselves to each other. We have similar communication styles, time-management techniques, and decision-making processes. Work effectiveness, however, is strengthened by mixing different styles. We will see different problems to be solved and address different needs to be met. But mixing different styles definitely

can result in tension and disagreements if misunderstood.

An awareness of our behavioral strengths and deficits and an appreciation of styles that are different from our own increases our capacity for discomfort and make us much more effective team players.

Our goal, then, is to work toward mutual respect, even if we disagree. In addition, we need to spend enough time together to develop mutual trust so we can truly believe we're working toward the same goal, even though our paths to get there may be very different. We must also be willing to get out of our comfort zones and adapt to new circumstances and approaches from time to time.

This just may make it easier for all of us to get up in the morning. †

## Are You In?

-by Steve Caldwell, Stewardship Chair



For those of you who know me, I am a “numbers guy.” Yes, I genuinely think math is fun. I am *that nerdy*. So, as a consequence, I have to reference numbers to make any points whatsoever.

At All Souls, membership is now bumping close to 1800. Both attendance at Sunday Worship and building usage are up more than 25%

Pledge dollars (2009) are only up 5.2%. You don't have to be a numbers person to see that that does not add up.

Now, being *that nerdy*, I also read economic reports distributed by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, state operated Statistic Teams, OSU, and Economics Research Institute. In 2008, Tulsa's median household income was just over \$50K. The average household income posted on VisitTulsa.com is \$59,776.

We have more than 800 committed pledge units so far in 2009. Assuming our congregation is a true sample of the Tulsa population, then 800 households at 5% of \$50,000 is \$2M, cut the rate to 4% we get \$1.6M. Dial the household income down to \$40,000 and 5% is again \$1.6M. 2009 pledges are just over \$1.476M. (Coincidentally, 3% of \$59,776 times 812 pledge units is \$1.456M). I celebrate that our average giving has reached the minimum pledge we ask for of 3%. But – as you may know from the budget cuts we've had to make – it is not enough to fund operations at the level they are needed.

I work as a Compensation Professional, and have for more than a decade. In that role I dissect organizations, teams, and jobs to the most basic levels looking at every opportunity to optimize processes and eliminate efforts that do not add value to the business. I search for ways to influence the most efficient output against the competition. And I have done this in a multitude of environments – professional services offices, media sales teams, and manufacturing and production floors.

As your Stewardship Chair last year, I noted that

we spent more than 1,500 person hours making phone calls, signing letters, and communicating the needs of this church. Well-designed campaigns go on for months. Pledge drives do not allow a volunteer labor force the time to contact 850+ households. And though we did well, 4% of historical pledge units still did not pledge.

It was Basil Maturin who said, “Discontent is the first step to progress.” Well, I am not content.

We employed inefficient efforts. Not the kind that kept us from doing well, but the kind that distracted us from the markets and times in which we compete for charitable resources. The three Ts, as I am frequently reminded by the office staff, Time, Talent, and Treasure, are in demand by every non-profit. The current economic environment has increased the needs of many charities in Tulsa.

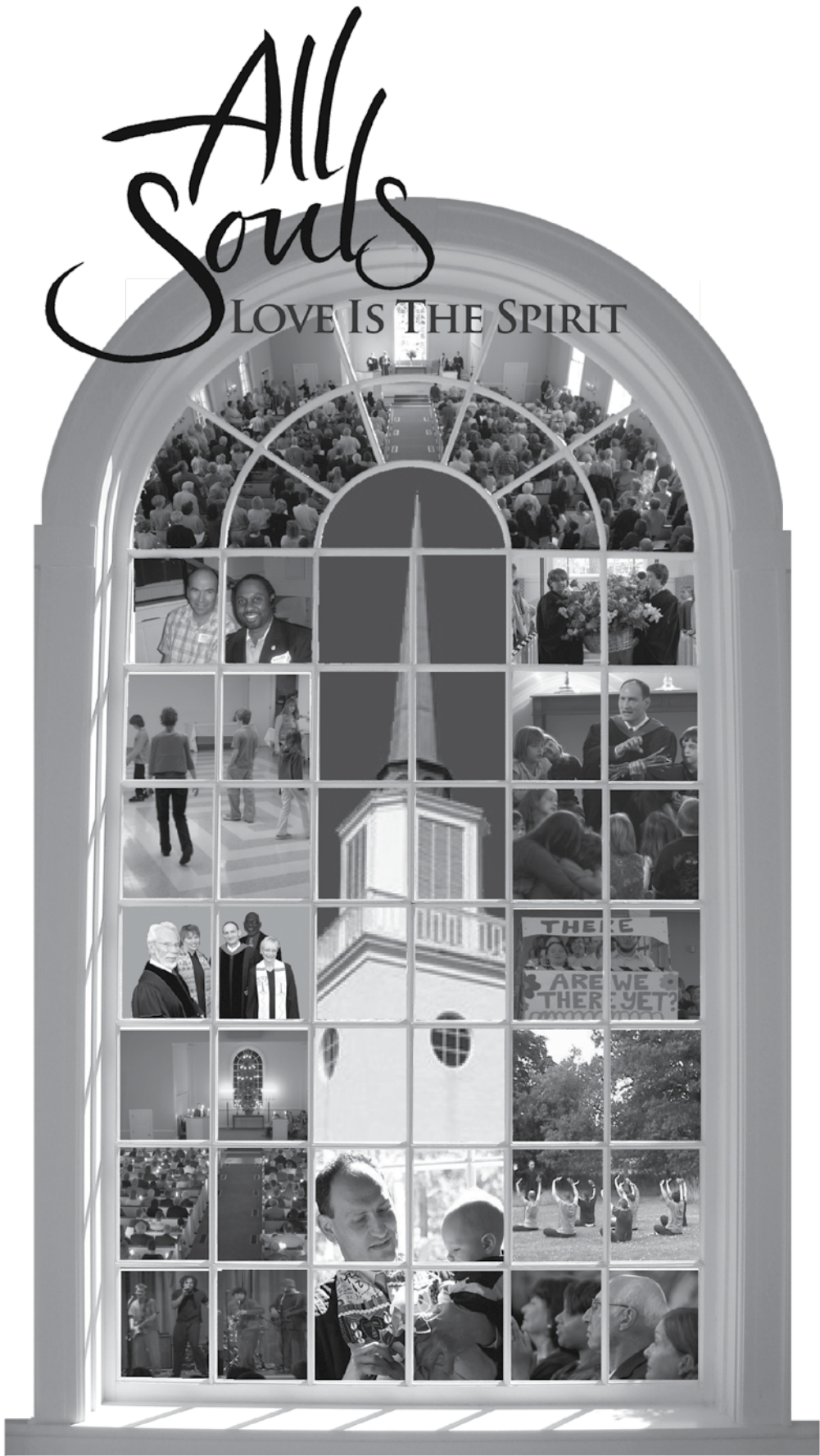
So, we are deploying a new development model, based on the successful tactics and strategies used by other non-profits. We will continue to use a team of people to make well-timed and targeted contacts, to deepen connections within the congregation, and to allow us to better tap the three Ts.

The appearance of the campaign this fall will not greatly differ as we must once again touch all of the people who have committed. **But this time I ask you for your ongoing support.** In 2010, our goal is 100% commitment – not just for 2010, but 2010 and beyond. If you need to change that commitment at any time, due to increased or decreased resources, you can by calling the business office just as you always could. We have the chance to change the giving culture for the better. We need to be impassioned about our gifts and expect that each of us will hold ourselves accountable. So, you will find the opportunity to declare yourself a Leadership Donor on your pledge card. Leadership Donors are those who give 5% or more of their annual income to All Souls Operations.

From hereon, my premise for leadership is to produce more leaders, not followers. **Are you in?**

Thank you.

Please pick up your pledge card on Sunday, Oct. 4, or go online to [www.AllSoulsChurch.org](http://www.AllSoulsChurch.org) to make your pledge.



**ONE CHURCH, MANY EXPRESSIONS**

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# Love, Loyalty, and Holy Unity

-by Debra Garfinkel, Pastoral Care Minister



There are many powerful stories about discovering deep connections where there should seemingly be none, or at least none that would inspire a lasting commitment. Frequently, such bonds are forged on the anvil of agony. Instead of feeling separated

and isolated, some people feel a kinship with fellow survivors of trauma. It has been my experience that even complete strangers are capable of developing a certain love and loyalty that is rooted in a life-changing event. And, sometimes, this love and loyalty develops into a commitment to relationship that is truly sacred; it is a holy unity.

Wait one minute! A holy unity? You might protest that I am pushing this concept a bit too far. However, I invite you to consider your most important and precious relationships. I'm talking about a person who doesn't ask for recognition of any sort, who offers her/his whole heart and self to validate your experience, and who offers to walk through it with you. I'm talking about someone who accepts you as you are and doesn't judge you; someone who won't leave you no matter what. Without taking any vows, without a written contract, this type of relationship exemplifies a covenant that is special, extraordinary, and exemplary – a true blessing.

If you still have difficulty identifying even the possibility for one such relationship, think about your life-changing experiences. I've seen amazing bonds forged between people who become acquainted as they sit in Intensive Care waiting rooms day after day. There are stories of folks who come to know each other through sharing similar losses. Perhaps most amazingly, the

events of both marriage and death have the capacity to draw people together who might not ever have even spoken to one another.



*Unity* by Monica Stewart

There is a beautiful example of marriage and death forging a deep, sacred bond between two people. It is the familiar story of Naomi and her daughter-in-law, Ruth. As recounted in the Hebrew Scriptures in the book of Ruth, it starts with Naomi and her husband and their two sons leaving their home in Bethlehem because of famine. They travel to Moab to make a new home.

Sadly, Naomi's husband dies. However, her future and her status in the community is secure because she has her two sons. Naomi's sons each marry Moabite women: one named Orpah and one named Ruth. Ten years later, both of Naomi's sons die.

This is a catastrophe, because in those days, a woman had status and protection only as long as she had a husband or a son. So, not only does Naomi suffer the devastation and incredible heartbreak of

the deaths of her two sons, she is thrown into a future of poverty and extreme vulnerability. Under the circumstances, the only thing that Naomi can think to do is to return to Bethlehem. Orpah and Ruth wish to accompany her, but Naomi reasons with them that it makes logical sense for each to go back to her mother's house. After weeping and talking and probably much hugging, Orpah kisses Naomi goodbye and leaves with Naomi's blessing.

Naomi then tries to make Ruth see the sense of leaving her to her own fate. "See," she says, "your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law." But Ruth says, "Do not press me to leave you or to turn back from following you! Where you go, I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God. Where you die, I will die – there will I be buried. May the Lord do thus and so to me and more as well, if even death parts me from you!" (Ruth 1: 15-17 NRSV)

This is where the story turns – blessing and connection come from tragedy and uncertainty. A loyalty built upon relationship (marriage) is made stronger through the trauma of death and loss. It turns back to trust in the foundation for a life worth living – a life of compassion and love and sharing. Ruth commits her life and her future to that of her mother-in-law. In those days, the idea of a religious conversion didn't exist; people simply worshipped the god(s) of their land, of their ethnic identity. A person was born into a religion and that was that. Ruth's declaration of loyalty, love, and commitment was radical and inclusive when such a thing was unheard of.



Ruth & Naomi, Orpah Leaving

During this month, as you consider the theme of unity through diversity, I invite you to think on the story of Naomi and Ruth. If you can relate in some way to the impossible choice of an uncertain future in a land with different expressions, may you gain insight and inspiration to help you on the Way. May you recognize the possibilities for discovering and deepening connections where perhaps before you could see none. Let this be our covenant as we join together, all souls building a beloved, sacred community.

**O**ur 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!

*September - Vocation & Calling*

*October - Unity*

*November - Gratitude*

*December - Peace*

*January - Grace*

*February - Prayer & Spiritual Practice*

*March - Letting Go*

*April - Salvation*

*May - Truth*

**Thursday, October 1**

*I now understand that my welfare is only possible if I acknowledge my unity with all the people of the world without exception.*  
-Leo Tolstoy

**Friday, October 2**

*There is nowhere you can go and only be with people who are like you. Give it up.* -Bernice Johnson Reagon

**Saturday, October 3**

*Unity without verity is no better than conspiracy.* -John Trapp

**Sunday, October 4**

*Why not let people differ about their answers to the great mysteries of the Universe? Let each seek one's own way to the highest, to one's own sense of supreme loyalty in life, one's ideal of life. Let each philosophy, each world-view, bring forth its truth and beauty to a larger perspective, that people may grow in vision, stature and dedication.*  
-Algernon Black

**Monday, October 5**

*The strongest bond of human sympathy outside the family relation should be one uniting working people of all nations and tongues and kindreds.* -Abraham Lincoln

**Tuesday, October 6**

*We do not grow absolutely, chronologically. We grow sometimes in one dimension, and not in another; unevenly. We grow partially. We are relative. We are mature in one realm, childish in another. The past, present, and future mingle and pull us backward, forward, or fix us in the present. We are made up of layers, cells, constellations.*  
-Anais Nin

**Wednesday, October 7**

*Solidarity is not a matter of sentiment but a fact, cold and impassive as the granite foundations of a skyscraper. If the basic elements, identity of interest, clarity of vision, honesty of intent, and oneness of purpose, or any of these is lacking, all sentimental pleas for solidarity, and all other efforts to achieve it will be barren of results.*  
-Eugene V. Debs

**Thursday, October 8**

*We all live with the objective of being happy; our lives are all different and yet the same.* -Anne Frank

**Friday, October 9**

*When Jesus asked little children to come to him, he didn't say only rich children, or white children, or children with two-parent families, or children who didn't have a mental or physical handicap. He said, "Let all children come unto me."*  
-Marian Wright Edelman

**Saturday, October 10**

*To safeguard democracy the people must have a keen sense of independence, self-respect, and their oneness.*  
-Mohandas K. Gandhi

**Sunday, October 11**

*For those who have seen the Earth from space, and for the hundreds and perhaps thousands more who will, the experience most certainly changes your perspective. The things that we share in our world are far more valuable than those which divide us.*  
-Donald Williams

**Monday, October 12**

*We don't accomplish anything in this world alone ... and whatever happens is the result of the whole tapestry of one's life and all the weavings of individual threads from one to another that creates something.* -Sandra Day O'Connor

**Tuesday, October 13**

*Religions are many and diverse, but reason and goodness are one.* -Elbert Hubbard

**Wednesday, October 14**

*The Stoics also teach that God is unity, and that he is called Mind and Fate and Jupiter, and by many other names besides.* -Diogenes Laërtius

**Thursday, October 15**

*[People] may be said to resemble not the bricks of which a house is built, but the pieces of a picture puzzle, each differing in shape, but matching the rest, and thus bringing out the picture.* -Felix Adler

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**Friday, October 16**

*United we stand; divided we fall*

-Aesop

**Saturday, October 17**

*One day our descendants will think it incredible that we paid so much attention to things like the amount of melanin in our skin or the shape of our eyes or our gender instead of the unique identities of each of us as complex human beings.*

-Franklin Thomas

**Sunday, October 18**

*So powerful is the light of unity that it can illuminate the whole earth.*

-Baha'u'llah

**Monday, October 19**

*It is a great shock at the age of five or six to find that in a world of Gary Coopers you are the Indian.*

-James Baldwin

**Tuesday, October 20**

*Unity to be real must stand the severest strain without breaking.*

-Mahatma Ghandi

**Wednesday, October 21**

*The price of the democratic way of life is a growing appreciation of people's differences, not merely as tolerable, but as the essence of a rich and rewarding human experience.*

-Jerome Nathanson

**Thursday, October 22**

*I know that my unity with all people cannot be destroyed by national boundaries and government orders.*

-Leo Tolstoy

**Friday, October 23**

*We have become not a melting pot but a beautiful mosaic. Different people, different beliefs, different yearnings, different hopes, different dreams.*

-Jimmy Carter

**Saturday, October 24**

*I dream of the realization of the unity of Africa, whereby its leaders combine in their efforts to solve the problems of this continent. I dream of our vast deserts, of our forests, of all our great wildernesses.*

-Nelson Mandela

**Sunday, October 25**

*In the matter of religion, people eagerly fasten their eyes on the difference between their own creed and yours; whilst the charm of the study is in finding the agreements and identities in all the religions of humanity.*

-Ralph Waldo Emerson

**Monday, October 26**

*I still believe America's destiny is to become a living testament to what free human beings can accomplish by acting in unity.*

-John Kerry

**Tuesday, October 27**

*If we are to achieve a richer culture, rich in contrasting values, we must recognize the whole gamut of human potentialities, and so weave a less arbitrary social fabric, one in which each diverse human gift will find a fitting place.*

-Margaret Mead

**Wednesday, October 28**

*The multitude which is not brought to act as a unity, is confusion. That unity which does not have its origin in the multitude is tyranny.*

-Blaise Pascal

**Thursday, October 29**

*Insight, I believe, refers to the depth of understanding that comes by setting experiences, yours and mine, familiar and exotic, new and old, side by side, learning by letting them speak to one another.*

-Mary Catherine Bateson

**Friday, October 30**

*What we have to do, is to find a way to celebrate our diversity and debate our differences without fracturing our communities.*

-Hillary Rodham Clinton

**Saturday, October 31**

*Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!*

-Psalms 133:1

# Partner Church Pursues Unity Through Diversity

-by George Davenport, Partner Church Chair

*You EAT your cows in Oklahoma?*

~ A farmer from Enlaka during the banquet that the entire town of Enlaka prepared for the All Souls Children & Youth Choirs, June 2003

*We thought you Americans were so wealthy that you bought your houses and cars with cash. We buy everything with cash so we assumed that you did too. You aren't as rich as we thought. You still are very wealthy but now I understand that you have worries too. You make lots of money but you owe lots of money. No wonder we are a happier people than you are.*

~ Reverend Mark Kiyimba, and two other African Ministers, UUA General Assembly, June 2009

*What have you learned so far?*

*That everybody is the same, everywhere.*

~ A choir dad and his daughter on the All Souls choir bus somewhere southeast of Enlaka, Transylvania, June 2003

Reverend Marlin preached September 20, 2009, about the basic tenant of Unitarian and Universalist faith: there is one God, and God exists (in various forms and constructs) for all people and all religions. Partner Church is an expression of this doctrine: There is one God, and there is one people. The people of the earth are one. We are different nations and different cultures, but fundamentally "...everybody is the same, everywhere."

Partner Church exists to bring different people and communities together so that they can discover their "oneness." The UUA Partner Church Council supports and facilitates more than 180 partnerships between North American UU congregations and Unitarian or Unitarian Universalist communi-



ties overseas. These partnerships are based on the mutual desire of both partners to form a long-term, mutually beneficial and mutually supportive relationship between communities and cultures that would otherwise not intersect.

Partner Church is not about tourism. It is about becoming family with people who speak a different language, think in a different historical context, and live with different priorities and daily needs. Partnership stretches the soul and increases understanding. It emboldens dreams and aspirations and creates a powerful synergy of unity, respect, and love.

Almost 200 UU churches in North America have



Partners overseas; only three have two Partners. All Souls Tulsa is very fortunate to be one of these three, and we have the distinct honor of being the first North American UU church to be partnered with a UU community in an African country.

Having two Partners is a challenge that greatly expands the benefits of pursuing

unity through diversity. Our two Partners differ from one another in many ways. Enlaka, Transylvania, is a small Unitarian village nestled in a gentle valley in the midst of the Carpathian Mountains of northwestern Romania. Almost all of Enlaka's 220 residents are relatively old (55 to 80+). Most families own one dairy cow and perhaps one or two hogs. A few families own two or three dairy cows, and that is high living in Enlaka.

The Kampala (Uganda) Central Unitarian Church is located within the city limits of Uganda's capital. The 80 members of Reverend Mark Kiyimba's church support an orphanage and school in Masaka, Uganda, and the school alone is twice the size of the entire population



of Enlaka.

Such diversity means that there are many ways that you can become involved in the lives of our two Partners. If you are interested in youth and education, our Ugandan partnership is a great fit. Work with us as the Kampala church and All Souls jointly provide support to the Masaka School and Juja Orphanage. If agrarian economics or geriatric support fuels your passion, then Enlaka calls.

If community expansion excites you, talk to George Davenport about the Partner Church Council's Community Capacity program, which is coming to Tulsa in November. Are you interested in how European's lived 100 years ago? Help organize an All Souls trip to Enlaka in 2010 to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Partner Church program.

Regardless of whether you are called by Enlaka or Kampala or both, the All Souls Partner Church program has much work and excitement for you. Contact George Davenport for more details at [gldavenport@belpport.net](mailto:gldavenport@belpport.net).

Don't forget to "Go Global" at All Souls on Saturday evening, October 3. Click "Go Global" on the All Souls website for details, reservations, and online bidding. The proceeds of this fundraiser will be allocated between the All Souls General Fund and the All Souls Partner Church program, making this our church's largest Partner Church fundraiser in Tulsa's 15 year Partner Church



The All Souls Board of Trustees invites you, your family & friends to

**GO GLOBAL**

*at the Auction & Dinner*

**Saturday, October 3, 2009  
6:30 pm Emerson Hall**

Proceeds benefit  
All Souls General Fund &  
Partner Church Programs  
in Romania & Uganda.

**Tickets \$20 per person**

**Some new items in:**

\$25 Gift Certificate to Pavilion donated by Julie Kelly

4 Adirondak Chairs handmade by Bill Phillips

7 Box Seats to Tulsa Oilers season opening game  
donated by the Dutton/McElroy/Tanner Families

3 Dozen Cakeballs baked by Laura Butler

4 tickets to the musical Little House On The Prairie  
starring Melissa Gilbert as Ma, donated by the Dut-  
ton/McElroy/Tanner Families

*Get your tickets at the  
Auction Table Sunday!*

or go to

**[www.allsoulschurch.org](http://www.allsoulschurch.org)**

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# Unity & Diversity - Personified

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

When Unity and Diversity were born  
their mother was afraid she'd been cursed.  
Born into poverty in a remote village,  
another two mouths to feed was hardship enough.  
But the fact that they were conjoined twins  
confirmed this notion for her,  
while it would ultimately prove to be a blessing  
for the twins: connected side by side for life  
two arms, two legs, two heads, and a single heart.

One night, they were placed in a basket  
and secured to the back of a bicycle.  
Their mother rode till dawn to abandon them  
on the doorstep of a church in another town.

Many years later, following much schooling  
and a regimented church life,  
Unity and Diversity found themselves  
earning a living in the circus.  
Finding friendship under the big top  
was difficult for both of them:  
They found the clowns too disingenuous,  
the animal trainers too controlling,  
and the other freaks too confused  
about their own identity.  
Their only true friend was Balance,  
a beautiful, long-haired tight rope walker,  
who enjoyed both of their company.



During their free time, these three were inseparable.  
Balance would talk to Unity for hours about religion  
and their childhood church experiences.  
Disinterested, Diversity usually spent this time  
crunching numbers of their savings  
in anticipation of the day  
they would no longer be a spectacle for their income  
and could lead normal lives.  
Balance would spend just as much time  
talking to Diversity  
about each and every book they'd ever read.  
Unity was interested in these conversations, too,  
and would listen intently,  
fascinated by the common threads  
of the hero's journey.

Whenever a revival was in town,  
Unity always wanted to go just for the experience,  
though it resembled nothing  
of their childhood church.  
Diversity usually slept through them,  
finding the mass frenzy over-stimulating.  
Unity enjoyed the one voice  
that rose from the cacophony.

Balance was the only person  
who could ask the questions on everyone's mind  
when they encountered the twins.  
Like, *How do you decide what to wear, what to do,  
where to go?*

Unity described their cooperation;  
Diversity talked about taking turns.  
Unity was grounded in their similarities;  
Diversity seemed to focus on their differences.  
Unity would have loved to dress the same;  
Diversity would have none of that.  
The costume-maker went to great lengths  
to construct distinct outfits  
split right down the middle.

But when Balance asked if they would ever want to  
be separated so they could have their own identities  
they both responded with a resounding, "No."

Despite all the complications  
and their very different personalities,  
they both knew in their single heart  
they were better together. †

# A Rainbow of Families: Different & the Same

-by Gabrielle Ricketts & Shannon Boston, CRE Administrator



My daughter draws people using every color in her crayon box. Families in her world are a rainbow of green, purple, blue, and orange, and everyone can wear bright red high heels. Right now my daughter is almost color blind. It is one of the charming things about her.

Why can't it just stay this way?

By early to middle childhood, children begin forming attitudes toward their own and other ethnic groups. Because parents are children's first teachers, I am working on my vocabulary of diversity. I read diversity training materials, and I discover that many opinions surrounding prejudice are emotional rather than rational. Young children and adults alike often have trouble talking about experiences with prejudice, especially if they involve hurt feelings, anger, or embarrassment.

This month, the Children's Religious Education program is focusing on the curriculum of *Different and the Same* to deepen their understanding of the Unity/Diversity theme.

This curriculum addresses the complexities of human relationships and helps young children identify bias so that it can be prevented. Our goal is to help our children develop positive attitudes toward themselves, as well as to live in harmony with all people – both those who are different from them in some ways and those who are the same.

Videos that feature childlike puppets as they encounter, identify, and struggle with a variety of prejudicial issues will help the children will learn productive ways to effectively handle bias and discrimination as it may arise in their own lives. Caring adults help the puppet children recognize prejudice, share their feelings, and deal with these issues in a positive and productive manner. In addition to watching the videos, the children will participate in role playing, group discussions, and creative writing activities.



Nicholas Ogundare, Circe Boston, and Angel Ogundare

I hope as I become better at identifying and speaking up against prejudice, my kids will too. Thank goodness for Sunday School! †

For more information on *Different and the Same*, contact Shannon Boston, Children's Religious Education Administrator, sboston@allsoulschurch.org or 743-3805, ext. 321.

# The Spiritual Practices of CommUnity

-by Debra Garfinkel, Pastoral Care Minister



There has probably always been a practice of communal worship – a group of people who gather together to listen to sacred stories, to express thanksgiving, to make petitions for favorable weather or a good hunt, and to make offerings. The combined energy and focus seem to help

lift spirits, and at the very least provide the connection that all human beings need; we are social creatures. Of course, worshipping in church is not the only way in which we can engage in this group practice.

Therefore, I would like to invite you to imagine how you might experiment with a new way to gain the benefit of a group spiritual practice. Many of you already participate in daily sitting meditation. Some engage in group mindfulness walks, paying attention to each breath and feeling each slow and purposeful step. Some of you sing or play instruments with others and gain a sense of connection and spiritual well-being in this way. Dancing can also be a wonderful group experience of the Divine (an example of which are the Sufis, who dance in a joyous expression of Islam).

When I was a child, I remember that for awhile we engaged in a family time of reading passages from the Christian Bible. Reading any spiritually uplifting text is a wonderful group practice. If you have heard of the practice of *lectio divina*,

you know that it involves “chewing the words” – reading each word slowly, turning it over in your mouth, and giving yourself and others the opportunity to hear and feel the text in new ways. If you have yet to try this practice, it might sound a bit strange. Yet, hearing the same text read by different voices can provide insight and illumination, as well as create a bond of spiritual community.

Of course, praying in a group can be a spiritually freeing and powerful experience. If you aren’t comfortable with offering words on the spot, you can always write a prayer or read one that speaks to you in the moment in which you find yourself. Your group can offer statements of gratitude and respect for each other. Or, your group can simply chant one or a few words such as “Peace” or “Grant us wisdom.”

This month, I invite you to consider the challenge of moving beyond your comfort zone and embracing new ways of relating to others and to that which you consider holy and sacred. May you risk creating an intentional small group for the purpose of supporting each other in some sort of spiritual practice. May you discover joy and happiness in the process. May you continue to share the benefits of building a commUnity of marvelously diverse human beings. †

## Resources for Further Reading

*The Elusive Dream: The Power of Race in Interracial Churches* by Korie L. Edwards, Oxford University Press: 2008. Edwards presents the surprising results of an in-depth study of interracial churches, and how they help perpetuate the very racial inequality they aim to abolish.

*The World’s Religions*, by Huston Smith, HarperSanFrancisco, 1999. Smith opens new pathways to the sacred and signals the truth that every step on the spiritual journey can be enhanced by the use of resources from the world’s great religions.

*The Essential Mystics*, edited by Andrew Harvey, HarperSanFrancisco, 1997. Harvey brings together a broad range of writings that are designed to spur the soul to contemplation, awe, unity, and reverence.

*Soul Sunday: A Family’s Guide to Exploring Faith and Teaching Tolerance*, by Carrie Brown-Wolf, TEO Summit Press 2007. Winner of five national awards, *Soul Sunday* is a guide for parents who want to educate and sensitize their children to the riches of the world’s religions and the benefits of the spiritual practice of hospitality

## Religion & Arts Presents:



IN THE ALL SOULS GALLERY

OPENING RECEPTION FROM

5:30 - 8:30 P.M.

OCTOBER 22, 2009

Sharon paints in oil, watercolor and acrylic. She worked for many years as a registered nurse before returning to painting. More of her paintings and biography can be seen on her website at [www.allredart.com](http://www.allredart.com).



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

Questions? Call Laurel Williamson at 743-2805, ext 305.

# October Highlights

Oct 2	Soulful Sundown: "One & The Same"
Oct 3	Go Global! Fundraising Dinner & Auction
Oct 8	Day Alliance
Oct 10	Evening Alliance Garage Sale Supper Club
Oct 16	An Evening of Praise Coffeehouse: Jeff & Vida Parents Night Out
Oct. 18	BGLT Potluck
Oct 22	Art Opening: Sharon Allred
Oct 23	Local Foods Dinner
Oct 24	Rocky Stegman Memorial Golf Tournament & Octoberfest
Oct 26	Halloween Party
Oct 27	Evening Alliance
Oct 30	Dine Across the Decades - 7