

SIMPLE GIFTS

ALL SOULS UNITARIAN CHURCH OF TULSA, OKLAHOMA

MARCH
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Redemption

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REDEEMING GOD

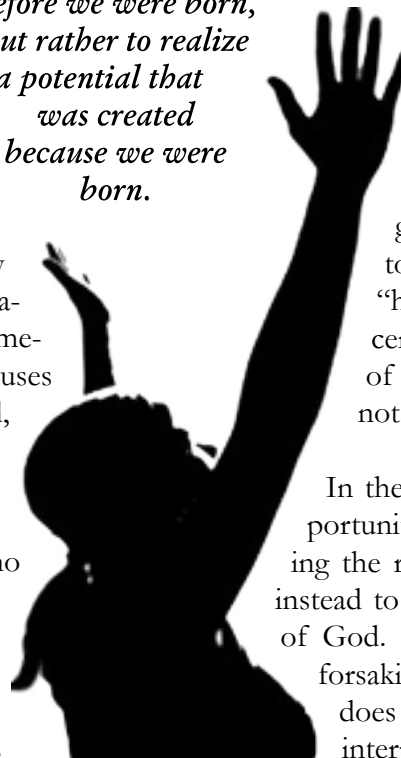


The central idea in traditional Christian theology is that the murder of Jesus was a blood sacrifice necessary to redeem the human family from its sinfulness. Has this belief become so normalized that people cannot see that the idea of a

God who would require a blood sacrifice in order to save people from divine judgment and eternal torture is exceedingly violent and fear-based? It should be one of our goals to try to redeem God from such a cruel reputation and sadistic theology. If people can believe that God uses violence (e.g. crucifixion and hellfire) as part of His plan for human salvation, then they can believe violence is sometimes sanctioned, sacred, and saving. One definition of evil is that something bad is made to seem good. A God who uses violence as the central means to redeem the world, is not a God worth believing in. In fact, such notions of the Holy are the roots of much evil.

Think about the rationale of the terrorists who flew planes into the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001. They believed that God wanted them to do it as a part of a divine plan to move the world toward goodness and Godliness. In fact, the Hebrew and Christian scriptures

The goal is not to redeem an innocence that was supposedly lost before we were born, but rather to realize a potential that was created because we were born.



-by Rev. Marlin Lavanbar, Senior Minister

are filled with stories of God ordering and ordaining the killing of men, women, and children as part of “the divine plan.” Someone might argue that, “... the victims of terrorism are innocent.” Wasn’t

Jesus innocent? Weren’t the children who

died at God’s command throughout the Bible innocent? The question before us

is: “Does God use the death of innocents as a way of saving people?” I say

no! Classical Christian, and some other fundamentalist theologies

say God does. Terrorists say God does. Terrorists strike fear

into society in an attempt to gain power and create change. Theologies

that tell people that they will go to an eternal torture chamber called

“hell” unless they act and believe a certain way also use fear as a means

of control and power. The ends do not justify the means in either case.

In the 21st century, people have an opportunity and responsibility to stop seeking

the redemption of a violent God and instead to start working for the redemption

of God. To redeem God does not require forsaking religion or even scripture, but it

does require the abandonment of literal interpretations of scripture and exclu

THE
All Souls
JOURNAL

*Lenten Practices
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sive claims of truth.

At All Souls in Tulsa, we begin with the premise that each person has come into this life with unique qualities that can be developed and shared for the good of all. Of course, we recognize that we also have the potential to do great harm. Therefore, at All Souls, our religious focus is to help people of all ages discover their unique gifts and support and encourage them to share those gifts for the common good. Ours could be called a theology of “original blessing” rather than “original sin.” In such a religion the role of redemption can be likened to redemption of a store coupon. The idea is that a coupon has value only when it is used for its intended purpose. If we bring a coupon into a store and use it for its intended purpose, it is redeemed for its full value. If we put a coupon in the trash or let it expire, its value is never redeemed. In the same way, when a person uses and shares his or her gifts to support the progress and evolution of human goodness, wisdom, and kindness,

the person’s life is redeemed for its full value.

In other words, we are seeking to redeem our lives for their full value by developing and using the skills, talents, and resources we have been given. With such a theology, there is no need for blood sacrifices, violence, punishment, or fear. The goal is not to redeem an innocence that was supposedly lost before we were born, but rather to realize a potential that was created because we were born. Therefore, the social justice that we at All Souls engage in, such as tutoring children in Tulsa schools, starting micro-credit banks in Central America, supporting the LGBT community in Uganda, and giving away our offering each week, is done in hope of creating a world in which each person has the opportunity to realize and share his or her unique gifts. In doing so, we often redeem our own life’s purpose and, we hope, help to redeem the human family as one. Who knows, someday we may even succeed in redeeming God. †

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LENTEN PRACTICES FOR ALL SOULS

-by Rev. Tamara Lebak, Associate Minister



On Wednesday, March 9, 2011, we will enter into the 40 days of Lent. The word *Lent* comes from the Anglo-Saxon word *lenten*, or spring, the time of year when the days begin to lengthen. Lent itself is always the same length of time, but its starting date is tied to the movable feast of Easter and can be as early as Feb. 4 or as late as March 10.

Lent is one of the most important seasons of the Christian liturgical calendar because it is an introspective period during which we take stock of our lives and our relationships. It is a time when we can celebrate our abundance by sacrificing for a period in order to make us more mindful and attentive to our blessings. Lent is a time to discover more about ourselves, and have an opportunity to make changes as we prepare for Easter and the spring. How do we Unitarians make ourselves ready?

Lent recalls Jesus' 40 days in the wilderness, and through them, the discipline of self-denial reflecting the sacrifice of our own will to a purpose greater than ourselves. It was during this time that Jesus went away into the desert for 40 days and 40 nights to pray and fast. It was during this time that Jesus was tempted by Satan to stray. During Lent, we are encouraged to honor the life of Jesus by *withholding from ourselves something that we believe sustains us*. Often we are fooled into believing that certain things in our lives are necessary. The idea is to withhold something that distracts us – prevents us from being fully present – or a pleasure that we may be taking for granted.

If you are not quite sure how to practice the Christian tradition of Lent, please consider using this Lenten Practice Guide. It might benefit you during this time of reflection and awareness before Easter. You may try one each day or skim them all now to gather ideas of what you might give up for the entire 40 days of Lent. I recommend giving up one thing for the entire time and trying the daily practices in addition. The remainder of the daily practices will be in next month's *Simple Gifts*. Enjoy!



Pre-Lent, Mardi Gras, Fat Tuesday, March 8

Our bodies allow us the opportunities of experiencing both pleasure and pain. Imagine life without one of the senses. We touch, taste, feel, and smell our way to beauty and joy. If you had but one day left to indulge in the pleasures of the flesh, to what would you turn your attention? Eating or drinking? Taking a walk out of doors? Spending time with a pet or a loved one? Practicing an art or enjoying another's? Spend time today indulging in some of the pleasures of life. Try to be really present with yourself for the entire experience. Lent helps us recognize what it means to deny the very pleasures that we can indulge in this day.

Day 1, Ash Wednesday, March 9

Remember that you are dust, and unto dust you shall return.

(Genesis 3:19)

All pleasures and pain of the flesh shall cease to be when *we* cease to be. **Join us in chapel at All Souls at 6:30 pm for an Ash Wednesday Service.** The minister will mark each willing participant with black ashes, in the shape of a cross, which the worshipper traditionally retains until washing it off after sundown. The symbolism echoes the ancient Near Eastern tradition of throwing ash over one's head signifying repentance before God, and it honors the mortality of each of us.

Day 2, Thursday, March 10

Give something away.

Think of giving not as a duty but as a privilege.

~John D. Rockefeller Jr.

Buy coffee for the person behind you, over-tip, give someone something of yours that you know they have wanted, or donate your excess belongings to charity.

Day 3, Friday, March 11

Fridays during Lent are a time of commemorating the death of Jesus and a time of self-reflection. Set a timer (the microwave, your watch) and sit still. Focus on your breathing and your heartbeat for 10 minutes. Let the waves of your thoughts flow in and out but try to return your attention to your heartbeat or your breath.

Day 4, Saturday, March 12

Give up... your pride.

If you were going to die soon and had only one phone call you could make, who would you call and what would you say? And why are you waiting?

~Stephen Levine

Think of a person with whom you have a strained relationship and make some gesture toward improving that relationship.

First Sunday of Lent, March 13

Sundays are days of celebration during Lent and do not count in the forty days. Try coming to church during both services today or attend one worship service and drop in on a class or morning forum. After the second service, introduce yourself to someone you don't know and invite them to join you for lunch. (You can tell them that I suggested it.) Ask them how they came to attend All Souls and why they keep coming back.

Day 5, Monday, March 14

Give up... complaining.

Instead of complaining that the rosebush is full of thorns, be happy that the thorn bush has roses.

~German Proverb

Abstain from complaining all day; focus on gratitude.

Day 6, Tuesday, March 15

Give up... 30 minutes.

The word "lent" means "lengthen" and stands for that time in spring when the days grow longer. If you do

not already have a spiritual practice, try journaling for 30 minutes a day for the remainder of Lent. Set your alarm clock for 30 minutes earlier than usual and write freehand. Try not to get in your own way. Allow your thoughts to flow onto the page. This is not writing a book, it is emptying the clutter in your mind. Do not show these pages to anyone; they are only for you.

Day 7, Wednesday, March 16

Give up... driving.

The average American consumes six times more energy than the world average per person. Eighteen percent of every dollar spent by the average American family is devoted to transportation. Find alternative means to keep your normal schedule: bike, walk, carpool, try public transportation. Journal about your experience. (Or tell me about it.) Come to 6:30 pm chapel.

Day 8, Thursday, March 17

Give love away.

We are surrounded by people who love us and yet we may not know it. Tell someone who you think may not know that you love them. If that feels too risky, tell someone who may not know it how much you appreciate that they are in your life.

Day 9, Friday, March 18

Give up... judgment.

If you love those who love you, what merit is there in that?

(Matthew 5:46)

Just for the day, give up judgment and try to put curiosity in its place. Focus on finding the inner light, inner child, or the hidden Buddha in someone you find difficult to like. Spend some time today releasing your judgment of that person. What is the lesson they have to teach you? You are seeing them through your lens; you can do nothing else. How is this person a reflection of who you are?

Day 10, Saturday, March 19

Give up... the television.

Read a book. Go outside. Spend time with people you care about. If you are already giving up television for Lent, try giving up the internet, video games, or NPR. I know it will be tough but you can do it.

Second Sunday of Lent, March 20 (Spring Equinox)

Remember, Sundays are days of celebration during Lent and do not count in the 40 days. Try attending both services this Sunday, or attend one worship service and spend the other in the Memorial Garden honoring the coming of spring, or attend one service and a new class. Ask someone you do not know what they think about this month's theological theme, or ask if they have read Simple Gifts. Discuss.

Day 11, Monday, March 21

Give up... music.

A painter paints pictures on canvas. But musicians paint their pictures on silence. ~Leopold Stokowski

In Bach's time, often the organ and choirs were silent during Lent. Try moving through the day with no music in the car or at work. Leave your iPods charging and your radio off. Pay attention to what it is like to be with the silence. Pay attention to your own process and what music does for you by noticing when it is gone.

Day 12, Tuesday, March 22

Give up... sugar.

Americans consume on average 133 pounds of sugar per person per year making up somewhere between 20-25 percent of the calories in a person's diet. What would a day be like without sugar, substitutes, and corn syrup (which replaces sugar in many refined foods)? Reading the labels for a day will certainly heighten your awareness of what you are consuming. Pay attention to your weaknesses, your resistances, and your attention span.

Day 13, Wednesday, March 23

Give up... the night to the day.

Watch the sunrise. When was the last time you rose to see this glorious act of beauty that happens every day? Wake up early enough for the first glimmer and stay until it is all the way up. If this is not possible, plan for a sunset to have your full attention. You can find the exact times on the internet. Come to 6:30 pm chapel.

Day 14, Thursday, March 24

Give up... the news.

See what it is like to narrow your focus away from the global. Do you use the news as a means to escape the

here and now? Do newsworthy issues serve as fodder for conversation with others? You may have to find something else to talk about. Take interest in those within your immediate contact. Or, if you avoid the news at all costs anyway, pay attention to the news all day. What are you avoiding by not observing the news?

Day 15, Friday, March 25

Give... thanks.

Gratitude is the memory of the heart. ~Jean Baptiste Massieu
Send a hand-written thank-you note to someone who has touched your life sometime in the past two weeks.

Day 16, Saturday, March 26

Give up... speaking.

We need to find God, and he cannot be found in noise and restlessness. God is the friend of silence. See how nature – trees, flowers, grass – grows in silence; see the stars, the moon and the sun, how they move in silence... We need silence to be able to touch souls.

~Mother Teresa

Silent retreats have fed my spirit in ways I never imagined. Try a silent mini-retreat today. Don't answer the phone. Let those around you know that you will be silent during the daylight hours today. Begin with the sunrise and end at sunset. Journal about your process, your resistance, the resistance of your friends and family, your temptations, your success, and your failure.



Third Sunday of Lent, March 27

Again, Sundays are days of celebration during Lent and do not count in the 40 days. Attend one service and spend the other in Emerson Hall introducing yourself to those you don't know. Tell them why you love this church. Show them a *Simple Gifts* article. When you attend worship, sit in a different place than usual. Introduce yourself to people sitting around you. Wear your nametag. Come through the line after the service and let the ministers know about your Lenten practices.

Day 17, Monday, March 28

Give up... smoking.

For what is it to die but to stand naked in the wind and to melt into the sun? And what is it to cease breathing but to free the breath from its restless tides, that it may rise and expand and seek God unencumbered?

~Kahlil Gibran

If you smoke, there are a million reasons that you already know why you should quit. Now is the time. If you have not been a smoker or have quit, celebrate your clean air choices. Let your meditation today focus on filling and emptying your lungs, completely. Try remembering to breathe deeply all day.

Day 18, Tuesday, March 29

Give up... giving up.

'How does one become a butterfly?' she asked. 'You must want to fly so much that you are willing to give up being a caterpillar.'

~Trina Paulus

What is there in your life that you regret not finishing or working on? Take one step toward that goal today. If it is learning to play an instrument, find a class or teacher. Always wanted to skydive? Find out the costs and what is involved. Want to learn French? Learn three French

words today. Take a tiny step today toward your goal.

Day 19, Wednesday, March 30

Give up... resentment.

Lord, when my brother wrongs me, how often must I forgive him?
(Matthew 18:21)

Seven times seven times seven times may indeed be the answer, not because he will wrong you that many times more, but because it may take that many attempts to actually forgive him. Make a conscious effort to let go of a resentment that you hold. Write a letter that you intend never to send. Tell the person your understanding of what happened, how it hurt you, how you have been holding onto this pain. Write the words *I forgive you* seven times (or seven times seven times) at the end of the page. Rip the letter to shreds and burn it, safely. This may not be enough, but it is a good beginning or the beginning of a good ending. Come to chapel tonight at 6:30 pm.

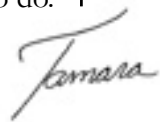
Day 20, Thursday, March 31

Give up... caffeine.

Sleep is a symptom of caffeine deprivation. ~Author Unknown
Can you go without caffeine for a day? Maybe you have already given up coffee, or tea, or soda for Lent but have you given up all of your caffeine delivery mechanisms? Can you be with yourself without caffeine? Do you even know what you are like without it? (Actually, this might take several days to discover.)

May you learn and grow by leaning into your own discomfort. My advice: The practice that repels you the most is probably the one you most ought to do. †

Blessings on your journey!



<p>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!</p>	<p><i>September</i> - VISION <i>October</i> - EVIL <i>November</i> - DEMOCRACY <i>December</i> - GOD <i>January</i> - CREATION <i>February</i> - RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY <i>March</i> - REDEMPTION <i>April</i> - FREEDOM <i>May</i> - MERCY</p>
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REDEEMING VALUES OF ART EDUCATION

-by Jan Eckhardt-Butler, Religion & Arts Board



I am inspired to mentor kids in the Arts. Young people need desperately to know that they are worthy; that their opinions matter; they need to be heard and seen in ways that speak to their soul.

Encouraging youth to express themselves in the arts goes beyond all the quantifiable reasons that art education is important. It goes to the core of creativity in humans. There is no place humans gather where communication is not sensual. By seeing, hearing, tasting and touching, we interact with the world, and try to understand it. There is no world without communication. There is no world without art.

Many of you who are reading this know why art education is important. It stimulates both sides of the brain. Kids do better in academics when they make art. It develops hand-eye coordination. It stimulates perception. It teaches them to think openly. The list goes on. Just how does it do these things?

In current studies of the brain in labs at Harvard, Stanford, and elsewhere, researchers have found that when the brain develops new and varied pathways between different areas, the number of available solutions to problems expands exponentially.

Kids need quiet time to dream and play. They need unstructured time to learn to think creatively. Why should kids think creatively if they don't plan to be involved in the arts when they grow up? Because they cannot just learn the answers to questions, but must learn what questions to ask. Learning that "sticks" uses the senses to tackle problems. The brain is forced to use all parts together to solve a problem. Learning creatively, using visualization, music, and touch, is essential to brain development.

March is Youth Arts Month at All Souls. With the help of

the Religion and Arts Board, a small group of dedicated youth will exhibit their art in the Gallery, (room 207) and the 1st-5th graders will exhibit "God Images" in the Family Room (room 117.) Both exhibits open Sunday, **March 6**. I know you will be as impressed as I am with their talent. †

SPONSORED BY ALL SOULS RELIGION & ARTS BOARD:

MARCH is YOUTH ARTS MONTH

TWO EXHIBITS OPENING
Sunday, March 6
11:30 - 3:00

<p>Room 117 (Family Room)</p> <p>Over 50 "God Images" by 1st - 4th graders in the church school program</p>	<p>Room 207 (Gallery)</p> <p>Diverse selections by Cameron Alred, Elizabeth McClelland, Joseph Ogundare, Hawken Elves, Caroline Sansford, Maggie Tirrell, & Audrey Williams</p>
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And more to come...

In May, the Religion and Arts Board will show the art of the youth in Tulsa's Phoenix Rising program. Tulsa youth who participate in the program are adjudicated teens who are not attending public school due to suspension and/or truancy. Most have not had the opportunities afforded to their peers to participate in the arts, and they are extraordinarily creative and interested.

Daily Thoughts...

MARCH 1

"Hell is yourself and the only redemption is when a person puts himself aside to feel deeply for another person."
~Tennessee Williams

MARCH 2

"Redemptive life stories in America are profoundly shaped by two American peculiarities: (a) that this is one of the most religious industrialized societies in the world and (b) that this society has been torn asunder from its inception, by the issue of race."
~Dan P. McAdams

MARCH 3

"The Logos or reason of science must be balanced with a healthy, life-affirming Mythos, or Story embodying a poetic and spiritual appreciation of the Earth. With their preoccupation with redemption and their neglect of creation, modern religious traditions are unable to offer a spirituality adequate to experience the divine in ordinary life or in the natural world."
~Thomas Berry

MARCH 4

"Seeking to forget makes exile all the longer; the secret of redemption lies in remembrance."
~Richard von Weizsaecker

MARCH 5

"Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion, to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty."
~Albert Einstein

MARCH 6

"I believe in Michelangelo, Velasquez, and Rembrandt; in the might of design, the mystery of color, the redemption of all things by Beauty everlasting, and the message of Art that has made these hands blessed."
~George Bernard Shaw

MARCH 7

"Contemporary atonement ideas have succeeded primarily in turning God into a child-abusing heavenly parent. They have also turned Jesus into being the ultimate, perhaps even the masochistic, victim of a sadistic father God." ~John Shelby Spong

MARCH 8

"Those of us who were brought up as Christians and have lost our faith have retained the sense of sin without the saving belief in redemption. This poisons our thought and so paralyzes us in action."
~Cyril Connolly

MARCH 9

"Do not remember the former things or consider the things of old. I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth: do you not perceive it?"
~Isaiah 43:19

MARCH 10

"Until all students are faced by the tragedies, the contradictions and the stark questions of life, they cannot understand the need for redemption or God's redemptive action."
~Reuel Howe

MARCH 11

"The world's poor cannot be led by people like Mr. Bin Laden who think they can find their redemption in our destruction. But the world's rich cannot be led by people who play to our short-sighted selfishness and pretend that we can forever claim for ourselves what we deny to others."
~Bill Clinton

MARCH 12

"Let Israel hope in the Lord: for with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption."
~Psalms 130:7

MARCH 13

"For my part I believe in the forgiveness of sin and the redemption of ignorance."
~Adlai E. Stevenson

MARCH 14

"It may be – I hope it is – redemption to guess and perhaps perceive that the universe, the hell which we see for all its beauty, vastness, majesty, is only part of a whole which is quite unimaginable."
~William Golding

MARCH 15

"It is his capacity for self-improvement and self-redemption which most distinguishes man from the mere brute."
~Aung San Suu Kyi

MARCH 16

"Redemption comes to those who wait, forgiveness is the key."

~Tom Petty

MARCH 17

"The recognition of pain and fear in others give rise in us to pity, and in our pity is our humanity, our redemption." ~Dean Koontz

MARCH 18

"Now there is a final reason I think that Jesus says, 'Love your enemies.' It is this: that love has within it a redemptive power. And there is a power there that eventually transforms individuals. Just keep being friendly to that person. Just keep loving them, and they can't stand it too long."
~Martin Luther King Jr.

MARCH 19

"No matter what a waste one has made of one's life, it is ever possible to find some path to redemption, however partial."

~Charles Frazier

MARCH 20

"For everything you have missed, you have gained something; and for everything you gain, you lose something."

~Ralph Waldo Emerson

MARCH 21

"Human salvation lies in the hands of the creatively maladjusted."

~Martin Luther King Jr.

MARCH 22

"I believe that divine love, incarnate and indwelling in the world, summons the world always toward wholeness, which ultimately is reconciliation and atonement with God."

~Wendell Berry

MARCH 23

"Most people don't do what they believe in; they just do what's most convenient, then they repent."

~Bob Dylan

MARCH 24

"Men will lie on their backs, talking about the fall of man, and never make an effort to get up."

~Henry David Thoreau

MARCH 25

"The genius of Christian faith is its proclamation that nothing is beyond redemption. The gospel is not about integration of opposites but about their transformation and redemption."

~Romney Moseley

MARCH 26

"If you have behaved badly, repent, make what amends you can and address yourself to the task of behaving better next time. On no account brood over your wrongdoing. Rolling in the muck is not the best way of getting clean."~Aldous Huxley

MARCH 27

"It is rather hard and certainly depressing to admit guilt and to repent."

~Hannah Arendt

MARCH 28

"The world is in need of redemption, but the redemption must not be expected to happen as an act of sheer grace. Man's task is to make the world worthy of redemption. His faith and his works are preparation for ultimate redemption."

~Abraham Joshua Heschel

MARCH 29

"The story of Milarepa is an amazing one. It teaches us to follow our heart, no matter what happens, and that redemption is available to all, no matter what acts have been committed."

~www.beliefnet.com

MARCH 30

"By some amazing but vastly creative spiritual insight the slave undertook the redemption of a religion that the master had profaned in his midst."

~Howard Thurman

MARCH 31

"The work of redemption is a long and painful work, but it is also the only real way to save anything, and it is in the very ties of bondage to real people and real circumstances that we find the freedom of joy, healing, and happiness of human flourishing."

~Wendell Berry

...on *Redemption*

CONVERSATIONS WITH JOHN

-by Phil Haney

In honor and celebration of John Wolf's 50th year here at All Souls, Phil Haney has monthly conversations with John, then relates to us some stories that beg to be passed on – straight from the pastor's mouth.



The 1960s and early '70s were an unusually turbulent time in our recent history, a period so wrought with despair that it cried out for redemption – individual, social, moral. Dr. John Wolf was the minister at All Souls during that time.

Assassinations of the country's most respected leaders, including President John Kennedy and his brother Robert (Bobby), Martin Luther King, Jr., Medgar Evers, and others, numbed the congregation. Social hostility fueled unabated senseless violence. The Vietnam conflict tore at the heart of every American. No one who lived through it will forget it.

Wolf says the tendency of the congregation was to turn inward – away from accepting the unfolding, cascading gloom. There was no happiness, as it wasn't deserved. Signs and symbols of grief at the church were conspicuous, especially in our sanctuary – with the American flag displayed front and center, the traditional gold cord switched to black. Wolf recalls well how interminably long the black corded flag stayed in place, reminding the congregation – and those at the pulpit – weekly, that this was a time of grief, and a time to redeem. He says the flag was emblematic of numerous signals of despair throughout the country. Trauma gripped the nation, and likewise the church.

Wolf was challenged by the malaise within the membership. The Unitarian concept of redemption, unlike in Christian theology, begins

with individual redemption and requires an assessment of the human predicament. Dr. Wolf says Unitarian redemption is not doctrinal, that it is a human feeling. Sometimes there is no promise of something for nothing. Instead, redemption is daily life. It does not come easy; it takes work. It also takes the church to nurture it.



When grief abounds, individuals become solipsistic. Wolf recognized this; the congregation was reacting by closing ranks without the benefit of fellowship. Spirit was lost; guilt, grief, and destruction set in; doubt prevailed; belief, faith – gone. The church wasn't working for the individual; despair was getting the edge. The scenario Wolf was seeing was like Europe in World War II – a situation dire and without hope, humans concluding no God could permit so much pain and destruction.

It's a lot to expect suffering individuals to maintain a constant battle to be good, and to prevail in daily redemption. At times like these the pursuit of redemption loses priority. But Wolf recognized that redemption was exactly what could make the difference. He would be damned if he would let the congregation slip into shell shock. He was determined to keep his church on a productive, focused path. Eventually, with lots of soul-searching, an inward "awakening" began at All Souls and throughout the country. Wolf describes the process as Robinson Jeffers' "bone bubble" intro



spection, although he prefers the term “contemplating the navel.” Slowly the membership began to find itself, explore needs, and self-assess. Wolf kept a cautious and hopeful eye on the recovery.

The ingenuity of the Unitarian covenants facilitated healing. The individual cry for spiritual reckoning – redemption – compelled an outcome that united the members and changed the path of the fellowship, possibly forever. Wolf believes what happened at the church was a congregation discovering a form of spiritual connection, and practicing it. He also identifies the period as the incubator that gave birth to the “me” generation. Much has been said about how this period changed America; at All Souls, it steeled the resolve of individual redemption through the church. It validated the Unitarian concept of ways and means.

The challenges of the ‘60s and early ‘70s will recur – in many ways they are. The battle for redemption is indi-

vidual, point-to-point. The character resulting from the individual effort thus gained and proven and held fast is what the Unitarian religion calls redemption. Wolf says that simply the knowledge of good and evil does not redeem us, but that redemption comes when our whole feeling self cries out in affection toward the right or the good. To illustrate how timeless this principle is, how we see it today, Wolf cites how the goodness and truth of Congresswoman Gabrielle “Gabby” Giffords, and the instinctive bravery and selflessness of those who rushed to save her and the other victims of the tragedy in Tucson, were revealed to us. Wolf sees that a national mood changed because of it. It is another illustration of voluntary sacrifice for the greater good of others, and it’s contagious.

Gaining ground on the free-will development of righteousness is a glory of human nature, and the key to the Unitarian life. This is redemption, always has been, always will be. †

TO SEE AND SAY ANEW

-by Doug Fishback



The root of the word redemption, the Latin *redimere* (to redeem) from *emere* (to buy), is found also in the Latin admonition *caveat emptor* or “buyer beware.” To be redeemed is to be bought back. Most of us recognize the concept as traditional Christianity’s core tenet: that fallen man has been ransomed back into

communion with God through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

I prefer to impose my own etymology onto the word redemption – one that is unabashedly wrong in the literal sense but much more useful to me. Instead of seeing myself as cosmic chattel, I place myself in the role of cosmic assessor. I am not “empt-ed;” I am a “deemer.” And not just a deemer, but a re-deemer – equipped and empowered to reexamine, rediscover, and re-declare my

own relation to the universe. This kind of redemption is hardly “one and done.” It demands ongoing engagement with life’s challenges and lessons.

Stepping into this freedom can be unnerving, especially for those of us brought up in evangelical churches that put us in constant fear for our eternal souls. But in my experience, this trek into the re-knowable is essential to mature, responsible spirituality. The honest, loving, and powerful way in which the All Souls family is in covenant around this journey led our family to join the church last fall.

We are not bought and sold into a fixed relation to the universe. Instead, we are free to re-see it, re-think it, and re-deem it for ourselves. Surely this is the essence of salvation: not a single miraculous transaction, but the steady, continual grace of trading old limitations for new possibilities. †

ALL SOUL COFFEEHOUSE CELEBRATES 10 YEARS

-by Denis McGilvray, All Soul Coffeehouse



I first met Anitra Lavanhar in October 2001 while she was handing out homemade fliers for a concert she was putting on at All Souls featuring her good friend from Boston, the musician Peter Mulvey. Being a life-long music lover myself, I talked with her about the show and offered up my

self-taught computer graphics skills to make a poster to help promote the concert. Little did I know then that this brief encounter would lead to 10 years of presenting concerts, or how this series would enhance Tulsa's already rich music scene.

That first concert took place in the wake of the September 11 terrorist attacks, and maybe that's part of what drew me to this music. For me, and so many others, there was a feeling of helplessness during that time, and I think having something positive to contribute to helped in recovering from that horrific experience. Anitra talked about wanting to create a regular coffeehouse-style music series at the church, similar to those hosted by many east coast Unitarian Universalist churches since the 1960s.

Anitra and Marlin were still relatively new to Tulsa and they missed the kind of intimate, contemporary folk concerts that were so much a part of the music scene in Boston. There was little in Tulsa comparable to that, save the occasional shows put on by the Tulsa Folk Music Society. So, she took it upon herself to start a new series here that would feature touring acoustic singer-songwriters in a listener-friendly setting.

Another valuable aspect of the series was that local musicians would be showcased as opening acts for the headliners. Scott Aycock and Richard Higgs, hosts of the Folk Salad radio show on KWGS, offered to use their extensive music connections to tap into Oklahoma's musical talent and help choose opening acts. This gave local performers a venue like no other in Tulsa. Instead of having to play over clinking glasses and crowds talking boisterously, these musicians could know the audience was listening to every word and every chord. When Peter Mulvey played that first concert November 12, 2001, the series was born, and has grown into something cherished by audiences and musicians alike.



Anitra Lavanhar, Jared Tyler, Ray Bonneville

With each concert, the group of loyal volunteers also grew. Most of the volunteers came from the All Souls community and they helped with everything from publicity and concert set-up, to baking and serving desserts or selling CDs and

tickets. We were creating a place where people could come together to hear powerful music in a comfortable atmosphere. Soon, booking agents were contacting us asking if their acts could play here.



Eliza Gilkyson



Jeff and Vida Band

As the series gained momentum, it became an established part of the church's incredible musical offerings. Within a year of the debut of the Coffeehouse, the *Tulsa World* ran a story that some of the best music being presented in the city was at All Souls – Soulful Sundown worship programs featuring local musicians, Gayle Williamson's TGIF jazz gatherings, and the Coffeehouse series.

In the past 10 years, we have featured an incredible array of artists, including John Gorka, David Lindley, Eliza Gilkyson, James McMurtry, Ruthie Foster, David Wilcox, Lucy Kaplansky, Willis Alan Ramsey, Ray Wylie

Hubbard, The Gourds, Todd Snider, Chris Smither, Susan Werner, Ellis Paul, Joe Ely, and many, many more. Our show with Peter Mulvey, on **March 5**, will be the 83rd concert we have presented here. That translates into approximately 10,000 people who have walked into this church to hear great music at our series over the past 10 years. It's been a memorable ride, and we are still going strong. ✦

*For an in depth version of this history, please see our website
www.AllSoulCoffeehouse.com*

The All Soul Acoustic Coffeehouse presents a Special
10th Anniversary Celebration Concert

Featuring **Peter Mulvey** with Audrey Auld opening

Saturday, March 5, 7:30 pm

Tickets \$15

Doors will open early at 6:30 so we can celebrate with you. There will be free desserts, a slideshow of our history, and CD giveaways. Please join us for this special occasion!

www.AllSoulCoffeehouse.com



A MIGHTY CLOUD OF WITNESSES: RUTH SIGLER AVERY

-by Kathy Keith, Executive Director



Ruth Sigler Avery was a witness to the 1921 Tulsa Race Riot and spent much time in her older years interviewing witnesses and survivors and creating a record of what she learned. She and her husband, Leighton, (Cyrus Avery's son) were members of All Souls since the 1930s.

When I met her in the mid-1990s, she shared her vivid memory of seeing truck-loads of victims' bodies passing her house, including the particularly disturbing sight of the body of a child about her own age, head bobbing as the truck passed by.

In *History Knows No Fences: An Overview*, John Hope Franklin and Scott Ellsworth tell about a time when few Tulsans – and hardly any whites – even knew of the race riot's existence, saying:

One of the few who did was Ruth Sigler Avery, a white Tulsa woman with a passion for history. A young

girl at the time of the riot, Avery had been haunted by her memories of the smoke and flames rising up over the African American district, and by the two trucks carrying the bodies of riot victims that had passed in front of her home on East 8th Street.

Determined that the history of the riot needed to be preserved, Avery began interviewing riot survivors, collecting riot photographs, and serving as a one-woman research bureau for anyone interested in studying what had happened. Convinced that the riot had been deliberately covered-up, Avery embarked upon what turned out to be a decades-long personal crusade to see that the true story of the riot was finally told.



That story was to be published in a book called *Fear: The Fifth Horseman, A Documentary-Anthology of the 1921 Tulsa Race Riot*. While the book was never published, her well-respected research is now housed in more than 14 legal-sized document boxes in the OSU-Tulsa archives, a sizable contribution to the body of knowledge about the most terrible tragedy in Tulsa's past. †

Recommended Reading on Redemption

Blessing the World: What Can Save Us Now

by Rebecca Ann Parker; edited by Robert Hardies

"A remarkable collection of Parker's theological writings on salvation and redemption, now in one volume. Her life's work, so eloquently displayed on these pages, is to expose the lie that violence redeems and to direct us toward the forces that repair broken life." -UUA Bookstore

Redeeming Memories: A Theology of Healing and Transformation

by Flora A. Keshgegian

"... we are invited to understand worship as a time when 'we remember God and God remembers us'--the church as a place where remembering past suffering walks hand-in-hand with responding to present need. Keshgegian's book is beautifully written and well argued, compelling us to enter into the ambiguous, redemptive work of memory it so well describes."

Saving Jesus from The Church: How to Stop Worshipping Christ and Start Following Jesus

by Robin R. Meyers

"Every once in a while, a book comes along that changes everything. This is the book. It is scholarly, pastoral, prophetic, and eloquent – all in equal measure. Robin Meyers has spoken truth to power, and the church he loves will never be the same." -Desmond Tutu

No Enemy to Conquer: Forgiveness in an Unforgiving World

by Michael Henderson

"This is a timely and necessary book from the pens of distinguished public figures and writers. Showing clearly that there is no military solution to the many problems we face, it is a humane and thoughtful guidebook to the troubled times we live in." -Martin Bell OBE, UNICEF UK Ambassador

Made for Goodness: And Why this Makes All the Difference

by Desmond M. Tutu and Mpho A. Tutu; edited by Douglas C. Abrams

"Archbishop Desmond Tutu is the author of *Made for Goodness* - written with his daughter Mpho Tutu, also a priest in the Anglican communion - ... [a] reflection on faith, forgiveness and reconciliation." -NPR.org

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Contact Laurel Williamson williamson@allsoulchurch.org

- 1) Submit your text electronically via email in plain (unformatted) text. *500 word limit.*
- 2) Include your name and daytime number.
- 3) Not all submissions will be published. Submissions may be edited for length.



LOVE IS THE SPIRIT

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March Highlights

- March 3** Social Seniors
- March 4** Soulful Sundown - *Redemption's Song*
- March 5** Coffeehouse - *Peter Mulvey*
- March 6** All Souls 303
Youth Arts Exhibit Opening
- March 8** Open Women's Group - *Redemption*
- March 9** Open Branches - *Redemption*
- March 10** Day Alliance
- Mar 12-15** Coming of Age Boston Pilgrimage
- March 16** All Souls 101
- March 17** St. Patrick's Day
- March 18** Evening of Praise
Parents' Night Out
- March 22** Evening Alliance
- March 23** High Def Praise
- March 24** Board of Trustees
- March 26** Day Alliance 90th Birthday
- March 27** Heritage Sunday
All Souls Reads
- March 30** All Souls 101

Explore the intersection of music, arts, & spirituality

REDEMPTION'S Song

MARCH 4
7:00 PM

SOULFUL SUNDOWN

FEATURING
REGGAE MUSIC
FROM
Travis Fite & friends

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