

# “One Church, Many Perspectives”

A Homily delivered by Rev. Dr. John B. Wolf  
At All Souls Unitarian Church in Tulsa, OK, Sunday, November 13, 2011

Fifty-four years ago next Thursday, November 17<sup>th</sup>, 1957, my predecessor, Bob Sonen, stood on this spot to conduct the first Sunday Morning Service in this Sanctuary. When I came here two-and-a-half years later (and, by the way, it was already apparent that this room was too small!), I didn't know it then, and, I beg to say, it took me way too long to figure it out, but many of the people in our congregation were in grief.

Because, here they were, in this glorious new room which they had ordained and built because they knew the time had come for them to move if they were to grow as they were growing – the time had come for them to move out of the beautiful church that many of them, literally, had helped build with their own hands, and where, for over 25 years, they had married, named and raised their children, and buried their dead. Yes, here they were, having left behind the sanctuary they had long since set apart wherein to say their prayers, the language of their hearts, where for so long they had sung their praises, and, where they had reached for God! Even accompanied, as they were, by others like themselves, still, they felt like strangers in a strange land.

And, I – their new minister – didn't help much. What did I know? Besides, I was a young man then, a young man in a hurry. But, then, those were the 60's. And like these days now, there wasn't much time! You remember. Some of you here now were here then, I know you remember! Not that it made that much difference to them with a lump in their throats – a lump in their throats that, however proud they have had to have been for what they had achieved, and the courage they had shown in achieving it, simply wouldn't go away.

I will tell you a secret. I wish I had known then what I know now so that I might have been of some use to those, some of whom just drifted away, taking all their joy and grief with them. Some of whom, had I known better, might have stayed. Hard as it was for them. So, I know, I know only too well now what feelings go with this beautiful, this hallowed place, and what contemplating leaving it must mean – if we are to grow as

we are growing (and, God knows, for the sake of whatsoever things are true, just, and of good report in this town and all around, we must grow, and grow, and grow!)

I know, believe me, I know what leaving here would mean. Could it be otherwise! But, I also know that we have been through it before when the time came. Verily, we have done it before. Behold, this glorious place, this beloved room and all that surrounds it, is testimony to it. Had we not been through it before; had we not done it before; we would not be here, now!

So, if it is, in due course and with due diligence what we again decide to do, I know we can, with the same good will and vision as graced our earlier selves, carry with us, in the doing of it, the spirit of this place, once more renewing our calling, once more establishing the work of our hands, once more freshening our brave witness to the ever larger community of all souls.