

**First Unitarian Church**  
**The Church of the River**



**2008 Summer of Faith**

First Unitarian Church of the River  
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Memphis, TN 38101

Phone: 901.526.8631

## 2008 Summer of Faith Speakers

<p>July 13 Speaker: <b>Katherine Bush</b> Lay Leader, Andy Branham</p>	<p>August 10 Speaker: <b>Dr. Stephen Montgomery</b> Lay Leader, Jack Richbourg</p>
<p>July 20 Speaker: <b>Josh Perry</b> Lay Leader, Liz Conway</p>	<p>August 17 Speaker: <b>Scott Morris</b> Lay Leader, Tim Wheat</p>
<p>July 27 Speaker: <b>Michael Dowd</b> Lay Leader, Dan Bing</p>	<p>August 24 Speaker: <b>Dr. Bashar Shala</b> Lay Leader, Cindy/Walid Sakaan</p>
<p>August 3 Speaker: <b>Rev. Bill Neely</b> No Lay Leader</p>	<p>August 31 Speaker: <b>Rev. Dr. Johnny Jeffords</b> Lay Leader, Bob Deiningger</p>

## 2008 Summer of Faith Speaker Biographies



### Katherine Bush

Katherine Bush joined the staff of Holy Communion in April 2005, but she was baptized there as an infant in 1975. Katherine grew up in Memphis and attended St. Mary's Episcopal School. Following graduation from Rhodes College with degree in English, she taught at the Maria Montessori School and then returned to St. Mary's as their interim chaplain. Katherine attended Virginia Theological Seminary in Alexandria, Virginia and received her Masters in Divinity with honors in 2003. Before coming to work at Church of the Holy Communion, she served for two years at St. Mary's Cathedral in downtown Memphis. At Holy Communion, Katherine serves as the Associate Rector for Formation and Family Ministries.



### Josh Perry

Josh Perry is an assistant professor in Vanderbilt University's Center for Biomedical Ethics & Society and an adjunct professor in the Law School. After his 1993 graduation from Houston High School in east Shelby County, he studied American religious history, American literature, and politics as an undergraduate at Lipscomb University in Nashville, where he also interned in the General Assembly. Interest in religion, politics, and the culture wars led him to Vanderbilt's Divinity School, where he graduated in 2002 with a Master of Theological Studies degree from the Divinity School and a Doctor of Jurisprudence from the Law School.



### Michael Dowd

For six years, Michael Dowd has lived entirely on the road, delivering talks for some 300 UU congregations, summer camps, and minister retreats as well as for other religious and secular groups. He is known as "America's Evolutionary Evangelist." His work was featured as the cover story of *UU World*, in the spring of 2006. Mr. Dowd, a former UCC pastor, is the author of the 2007 book, *Thank God for Evolution!* which has attracted endorsements from 5 Nobel laureates and a host of leaders across the religious spectrum.



### **Rev. Bill Neely**

Rev. Bill Neely came to Neshoba Church in July 2006. He is a graduate of Meadville Lombard Theological School in Chicago and served as a student minister at churches in St. Paul, MN, Rockford, IL, and Fond du Lac, WI. Raised Presbyterian, Bill found Unitarian Universalism in college when he joined the Unitarian Church of Norfolk, Virginia where he eventually served in various lay leadership capacities. In addition to serving Neshoba, he currently serves as President of Board Directors of the Southeastern Unitarian Universalist Summer Institute (SUUSI) and attends various denominational and professional gatherings. Bill and Shannon Neely have been married for just over ten years. They both lived in Virginia Beach, Virginia for most of their lives. Bill enjoys reading, politics, the Pittsburgh Steelers, and yoga. Shannon and Bill are the proud parents of an adopted gray cat, Oliver Maxwell.



### **Dr. Stephen Montgomery**

The dynamic leader of Memphis' largest PC (USA) congregation, Dr. Montgomery is known both for his compelling preaching and his commitment to engaging the church in "hands on" servant ministry and peacemaking initiatives. Dr. Montgomery earned a Master of Divinity degree from Yale Divinity School and a Doctor of Ministry from Georgia's Columbia Theological Seminary. He presently serves on the boards of the Metropolitan Inter-faith Association and Columbia Seminary, and is an adjunct faculty member at Memphis Theological Seminary, where he teaches Preaching and Worship.



### **Dr. Scott Morris**

Dr. Scott Morris is the founder and executive director of the Church Health Center, the largest faith-based clinic of its type in the country. Currently, the Center cares for 50,000 patients of record without relying on government funding. Dr. Morris holds a Master of Divinity degree from Yale University, M.D. from Emory University, is a board-certified family practitioner, and an ordained United Methodist minister.



**Bashar A. Shala, M.D.**

Dr. Shala was born in Aleppo, Syria in 1967 and is a U.S. citizen. His medical school training was completed at the University of Aleppo where he graduated in 1990. Dr. Shala completed his Internal Medicine training (1994), Cardiology training (1999) and Interventional Cardiology training (2000) at UT-Memphis. He is Board-Certified in all three areas. Dr. Shala has been a Staff Cardiologist at Memphis Heart Clinic since 2000. Since 2007, he has been the President of Memphis Cardiovascular Society. From 2003-2004, Dr. Shala served as Vice President of Muslim Society of Memphis. He is currently the Chairman, Board of Trustees of Memphis Islamic Center. His religious interests include Islamic History and Islamic Theology.



**Rev. Dr. Jonathan L. Jeffords, O.S.L.**

The son of a United Methodist pastor, Johnny Jeffords is a native of Paducah, Kentucky. He has lived throughout West Tennessee and Western Kentucky although he calls Memphis home, having attended high school, college, and served as pastor in the city for many years. He was ordained an Elder in The United Methodist Church in 1992. Rev. Dr. Jeffords earned his B.A. from Memphis State University in 1987; he earned his M.Div., from The Divinity School at Vanderbilt University in 1990; and he earned his D. Min. from Wesley Theological Seminary in 2000. Rev. Dr. Jeffords serves as adjunct faculty at Memphis Theological Seminary.