

## First Unitarian Church - The Church of the River



### 2009 Summer of Faith Speaker Series

#### Faith and Reunion

Have you ever felt separated from old friends or had that feeling of joy when you see old friends again? There is a homesickness of the heart that sometimes only reunion can heal, reunion with family and friends, reunion with the spirit of loved ones who have died, reunion with God, reunion with the lost faith of our youth, reunion with our heritage and culture. The Bible is replete with stories of separation and reunion. The Exodus from Egypt, the Babylonian Exile, the Parable of the Prodigal Son, the Parable of the Lost Sheep and the death and resurrection of Jesus, himself, are but only a few of those stories. What is it that separates us from our larger reality, the great, unknowable “More” and how can we begin to become whole, again?

We shall never cease from exploration  
And the end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started  
And know the place for the first time.

**T. S. Eliot**

*British (US-born) critic, dramatist & poet (1888 - 1965)*

## Faith and Reunion Schedule



July 12, 2009: The Rev. Glenda Gray, "Invitations in Life"

July 19, 2009: Muhammad Ameen, topic to be determined

July 26, 2009: The Rev. Jacqueline Luck, "As the Wine Must Taste of Its Own Grapes"

August 2, 2009: The Rev. Andrew MacBeth, D. Min., "Be Careful What You Pray For"

August 9, 2009: Rabbi Adam B. Grossman, "What does it Mean to have Faith Today?"

August 16, 2009: Andy Branham, "This I Believe"

August 23, 2009: The Rev. Elaine Blanchard, "Connections"

## About Our Guest Speakers

### July 12: The Rev. Glenda Gray, "Invitations in Life"



The Rev. Dr. Glenda Gray retired as minister of Emerson UU Congregation in Marietta, GA, having served from 1998-2008. A 1997 graduate from Starr King School for the Ministry, Glenda served her internship with us and was ordained by our congregation in 1998. While in Memphis, she was a ministerial consultant for Florence, AL, and Oxford, MS. Ministry is her third career; the other two were prologues for this great adventure. She taught Speech Communication at the University of Albuquerque and later was Staff Development Coordinator for the New Mexico Human Services Department in Santa Fe, NM. With its natural beauty and crosscurrents of spiritual energy, Santa Fe moved her from firm humanist underpinnings toward her spiritual humanist stance. Rev. Gray lives with two UU cats: *Waldo*, named after Ralph Waldo Emerson, and *Susie B.*, named after Susan B. Anthony; friends called her Miss Anthony.

### July 19: Muhammad Ameen, topic to be determined



Muhammad was born in Turrell, AK. He attended the Arkansas A. M. and N. College, majoring in Agronomy; his minor was Mathematics. Muhammad converted to Islam in 1975. In 1977, he became Assistant Imam at the Masjid in Memphis. Muhammad married in 1980. His wife, Constance, and he have two daughters and a son; Muhammad also has an older son. In 1983, Muhammad became the head Imam at Masjid Al-Mu'minun. In 1984, he joined the National Conference of Christians and Jews; he was the first Muslim to serve as a board member. He was the first Muslim to sing the National Anthem at the NCCJ's annual Community Service Dinner. Muhammad's knowledge of religion has allowed him to be called upon as a motivational speaker on various subjects. He has received numerous awards and recognitions. His prayer is that Memphis will become an example of love to the rest of America, an example of the good things that can be achieved when people, regardless of race, religion, age, etc, work together.

### July 26: The Rev. Jacqueline Luck, "As the Wine Must Taste of Its Own Grapes"



The Rev. Jacqueline Luck is parish minister of Holston Valley Unitarian Universalist Church in Northeast, TN amidst the beautiful southern Appalachian Mountains and a Ministerial Settlement Representatives for the Thomas Jefferson District. Jacqueline was a member of the Unitarian Universalist Association/Unitarian Universalist Service Committee Gulf Coast Relief Panel for two years; she was the only Unitarian Universalist minister in a full-time ministry in Mississippi in 2005. That three-year ministry with Jackson and Ellisville congregations became an unexpected and unforgettable justice ministry. Our church ordained Rev. Luck on November 6, 2004 after serving as her Intern Congregation. She received the Masters of Divinity Degree from Starr King School for the Ministry in Berkeley, CA in 2003. After graduation, she returned for nine months in Memphis at the Veteran's Administration Medical Center in the Clinical Pastoral Care Program and was recognized as she left the program for her achievement. J. Anne Luck was an art teacher in the Shreveport, LA public schools and Centenary College and member of All Souls UU Church where she raised her family. Her four sons and their families live in Baton Rouge, Pasadena, Chicago, and New York. She spends much of her free time traveling.



**August 2: The Rev. Andrew MacBeth, D. Min., "Be Careful What You Pray For"**

Andy has been Rector of Calvary Church since February 2004. His job is to hold out a vision for the parish about how we live out our calling to *make God's love visible in downtown Memphis*. He coaches the staff and parish leadership for this work; leads in worship, preaching, and teaching; and shares with the other clergy in providing pastoral care for parishioners. Ordained in 1975, he has served churches in various communities. Andy is especially interested in the hopes and questions people bring with them today when they explore a possible relationship with the Church. Andy is a graduate of Randolph-Macon College, the Episcopal Divinity School (Cambridge, Massachusetts), and Virginia Theological Seminary, where he earned a Doctor of Ministry degree in 2000. Andy and his wife Sybil have two adult sons. He is the author of *Dearly Beloved*, a book to help couples plan a wedding in the Episcopal Church.



**August 9: Rabbi Adam B. Grossman, "What does it Mean to have Faith Today?"**

Rabbi Adam Grossman began his tenure at Temple Israel in June of 2008. Rabbi Grossman earned his Master of Arts in Hebrew Letters from Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion and was ordained on May 31, 2008. He received a Bachelor of Arts in Communications from The Ohio State University and a Master of Education Administration with a Specialization in Jewish Education from Xavier University. He served as a Graduate Assistant at the University of Cincinnati, a Rabbinic Intern at Temple Israel in Dayton, Ohio, and an Education Liaison for the American Jewish Archives. Rabbi Grossman and his wife, Amy, have two children.



**August 16: Andy Branham, "This I Believe"**

Andy is an honors graduate of the University of Memphis School of Law and Rhodes College. Upon graduation from law school, he served as a judicial law clerk to the Honorable Robert M. McRae, United States District Judge for the Western District of Tennessee. Andy is licensed to practice law in Tennessee. He is the Chair of the Tennessee Bar Association Attorney Well Being Committee, Member and Immediate Past Chair of the Tennessee Bar Association Access to Justice Committee, Board Member and Past President of Memphis Area Legal Services, Board Member of the Memphis Community Legal Center, Member and past Chair of the Memphis Bar Association Access to Justice Committee, is a Fellow with the Memphis and Shelby County Bar Foundation and the Tennessee Bar Foundation and a Master Member of the Leo Bearman Sr. Inns of Court. Andy works extensively with lawyers concerning balance of life issues and is a volunteer and Commissioner for the Tennessee Lawyers Assistance Program. He is married to Pam Branham; they have a cat named Jimmi and are dedicated Midtown Memphis residents.



**August 23: The Rev. Elaine Blanchard, "Connections"**

A graduate of Memphis Theological Seminary, Elaine is ordained in the United Church of Christ. She has served UCC churches in Denver and Birmingham. Prior to joining the UCC, she served as a United Methodist minister in rural West Tennessee. Her call to ministry came while she was working as a registered nurse with clients and their families who struggled with alcohol and drug dependency. It was while working with recovering people that Elaine recognized the power of personal stories in our lives and in our communities. A story shared is a connection made and remembered. To know someone who will care to tell us a face-to-face story from their lives and to know someone who will care to listen to our face-to-face story is to be satisfied that we belong. This is the purpose of a faith community. Elaine's numerous accomplishments include having published her version of Bible stories, working through nonviolent conflict resolution, a Regional Consultant for Women's Ministries in the West Central Region of the United Church of Christ, volunteering at Snowden Elementary, and author of a play, a solo performance, "Blame it on the Walkers." Elaine and her partner, Anna Neal, live in Midtown with their fabulous dog and two beautiful cats.