

First Unitarian Church - The Church of the River



2012 Summer of Faith: Faith and Spirituality

Have you ever heard someone say, “I am not very religious, but I am very spiritual!”? Or, they might say, “I don’t believe in God, but I’m very spiritual.” What, exactly, does that mean? Can one be irreligious and still spiritual? Can an atheist be spiritual? What is the difference between religion and spirituality; between dogma and spirituality; indeed, between faith and spirituality?

Some might say religion is the vehicle and spirituality is the destination. If that is the case, are there other vehicles besides religion that can take you to a spiritual destination? Are some religions better vehicles than others?

Jesus said God is spirit, and his entire ministry involved finding the “Way” to God, to get closer to the spirit. “The Kingdom of God is at hand,” he proclaimed. Perhaps an awakening to a nearness of the spirit is the ultimate spiritual goal. Seeing God in ourselves and others just might be the beginning of a spiritual development that has the ability to transform us. Some might call this an “Appreciative Awareness” of the holy in all things.

This summer, eight sermons from a diverse group of preachers will explore “Faith and Spirituality” at *Summer of Faith, 2012*.

2012 Summer of Faith: Schedule

July 8, 2012

Dr. Andre Johnson
Professor at Memphis
Theological Seminary



July 15, 2012

Goyo De la Cruz
Methodist minister
involved in MIRA
(Mississippi Immigrant
Rights Alliance)



July 22, 2012

Cheryl Cornish
Senior Minister at First
Congregational Church
Memphis



July 29, 2012

Bob Klein
Senior Minister at Little
Rock Unitarian Church



August 5, 2012

Thomas Perchlik
Senior Minister at St. Louis
Unitarian Church



August 12, 2012

Brad Thomas
Senior Minister at
St. John's United
Methodist Memphis



August 19, 2012

Gail Seavey
Senior Minister at Nashville
Unitarian Church



August 26, 2012

**Muhammad Abdur-
Rahman**
Associate Imam Masjid
Al-Mu'minun



About our Guest Preachers

July 8, 2012

Dr. Andre Johnson

Professor at Memphis Theological Seminary

Andre E. Johnson, PhD, a Memphian, has an extensive biography that includes such highlights as serving in the department of Christianity and Culture as the Dr. James L Netters Assistant Professor of Rhetoric and Religion and African American Studies at Memphis Theological Seminary. He teaches classes in contextualized ministry, prophetic rhetoric, black church, African American theology, rhetoric and religion, pulpit rhetoric, race, and hip hop theology. In addition to his work at Memphis Theology Seminary, Dr. Johnson also serves as an instructor in Communications and African American Studies at the University of Memphis. Along with his numerous academic titles, Dr. Johnson is currently Senior Pastor of Gifts of Life Ministries an inner city church built upon the servant leadership philosophy and is married to a wonderful wife—Lisa Jones Johnson. Dr. Johnson is also an accomplished author, currently editing the works of Henry McNeal Turner under the title *The Literary Archive of Henry McNeal Turner*. The first volume, *An African American Pastor Before and During the American Civil War* was published in 2010 and the second one, *The Chaplain Letters*, is due for publication in November 2011. The *Literary Archive of Henry McNeal Turner* is part of a 12 volume series. In addition to what many consider groundbreaking work on Bishop Turner, Dr. Johnson maintains an eclectic research agenda. He edits the blog *Rhetoric, Race and Religion* and his ongoing research projects explore the nexus between rhetoric, theology and the Bible, urban ministry and theology, religion and politics, the religious rhetoric of Barack Obama, and religion and media.

July 15, 2012

Goyo De la Cruz

Methodist minister involved in MIRA (Mississippi Immigrant Rights Alliance)

Goyo De la Cruz was born in Huancayo, Peru. In 1977, he began his theological studies in Lima, and, in 1983, Pastor De la Cruz immigrated to Costa Rica where he continued studying theology. In 2001, De la Cruz graduated with a Master of Philosophy at the Birmingham University in the UK and migrated to the U.S. in 2003, at the invitation of the Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church in Mississippi where he works as a clergy for Hispanic immigrants. De la Cruz has been involved in interreligious dialogue and human rights organizations, through the World Council of Churches. Currently, he is a member of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights Committee and the Board of the Mississippi Immigrants Rights Alliance (MIRA).

July 22, 2012

**Cheryl Cornish
Senior Minister at First Congregational Church Memphis**

Rev. Cheryl Cornish has been pastor of First Congregational Church in Memphis since 1988. A past president of the Memphis Ministers Association, Cheryl has served as a Trustee of LeMoyne-Owen College and been Chair of the Board of Directors of the Midsouth Peace and Justice Center. She has served on the Board of Directors of the Memphis Interfaith Association and served as an officer of the Workers Interfaith Network. She serves currently as Chair of the Board of Trustees of the Memphis Mental Health Institute and is a member of the Yale University Divinity School Alumna Board. In 2003, Cheryl received Women of Achievement's "Courage" award for her activism as an advocate of peace and justice. Yale University awarded her the 2008 Award for Distinction in Congregational Ministry. Cheryl served as pastor of Ebenezer United Church of Christ in Augusta, Missouri from 1983 to 1988. A Nebraska native, Rev. Cornish received her Master of Divinity degree from Yale University in 1983. She is a graduate of Williams College, Williamstown, Massachusetts. She is married to carpenter and flamenco guitarist Mark Allen.

July 29, 2012

**Bob Klein
Senior Minister at Little Rock Unitarian Church**

Rev. Bob Klein grew up in the Chicago area, graduated from Northern Illinois University with a Bachelor of Liberal Studies, contract major in Religious Studies, went on to receive a Master of Divinity from Bethany Theological Seminary and entered United Methodist Ministry, mostly serving churches in Montana. A quest for personal renewal led him to Matthew Fox's Institute for Culture and Creation Spirituality, then at Holy Names College in Oakland, CA, where he met and married the Rev. Jane Bechle. Following a move to join Jane in New Jersey, Bob worked in Child Protective Services while completing requirements for Unitarian Universalist Ministry. Bob and Jane served for 8 years as co-ministers of Pacific Unitarian Church in Rancho Palos Verdes, California, before coming to Little Rock in 2004. Bob and Jane divorced in 2011, but remain friends, and continue to share 3 grown children from previous marriages and 3 dogs. Bob will begin his 9th year as the minister of the UU Church of Little Rock this August.

August 5, 2012

**Thomas Perchlik
Senior Minister at St. Louis Unitarian Church**

Rev. Thomas Perchlik is the Minister of First Unitarian Church, St. Louis. The oldest of four children, Thomas was born and raised in Greeley, Colorado by Richard and Sylvia Perchlik. He graduated from Iliff School of Theology in 1990. Ordained in 1991, he has served Unitarian Universalist Congregations in Wyoming, Texas and Indiana and was called to St. Louis in 2011. Thomas and his wife have been married since 1984 and they have two daughters, aged 22 and 25. His hobbies include hiking, canoeing, playing wooden flutes, and reading science fiction.

August 12, 2012

Brad Thomas
Senior Minister at St. John's United Methodist Memphis

Brad has been the pastor at St. John's since 2009 and has served in various United Methodist churches and ministries in the city of Memphis since 1992. He moved to Memphis with his family in 1974 at age 10 and, except for college and graduate school, has lived in Memphis since. He is a graduate of Ridgeway High School, '83; Lambuth University, '87; Emory University, '92 and The Wesley Theological Seminary, '00. Brad's approach to discipleship and ministry is summed up best with these words from Antoine de Saint-Expery: "If you want to build a ship, don't drum up people to collect wood and don't assign people tasks and work, but rather teach them to long for the endless immensity of the sea." He enjoys fishing, baseball, bike riding, camping, playing with his kids, spending time with his wife, Rebecca, and refinishing old furniture. Brad and Rebecca have two children, Mary and Bradly.

August 19, 2012

Gail Seavey
Senior Minister at Nashville Unitarian Church

The Rev. Gail Seavey, a graduate of Harvard Divinity School, has served four congregations in the last 24 years in the north, east, south, and west of the USA. She presently serves First UU Nashville. She is President of SouthEast UU Minister's Association. Last year, during a 5 month sabbatical she and her husband Jim visited Unitarians in New Zealand, North East India, Transylvania and the British Isles. Jim and Gail have two sons and two granddaughters. Gail, a former art teacher, is spiritually nurtured by beauty and ritual, yoga, stories and congregational life.

August 26, 2012

Muhammad Abdur-Rahman
Associate Imam Masjid Al-Mu'minun

Muhammad Abdur-Rahman has been an active Muslim, and a student of Imam W.D. Mohammad, since 1998. He is a member of Masjid Al-Mu'minun in Memphis and an Associate Imam under the guidance of the Resident Imam Rashad T. Sharif. He is an avid member of the community, assisting with various endeavors associated with Masjid Al-Mu'minun. Born and raised in Chicago, Illinois where he resided until the age of 7 with his mother, two brothers and younger sister, his family relocated to Carson, California. Upon graduation from high school, he enlisted in the US Navy and served for four years. After the Navy, Muhammad Abdur-Rahman moved to Memphis. Since living in Memphis, brother Abdur-Rahman has become an established businessman and entrepreneur. Until the decline of the real estate market, he owned a mortgage company, National Lending Corporation, employing over 120 loan originators. Currently, Muhammad Abdur-Rahman is the CEO of a transportation company, One Step Closer Transportation. He has a B.S. in Business Administration and is working on his MBA. Muhammad Abdur-Rahman is a proud father of three children, Jacques, Tariq, and Zakiyyah Abdur-Rahman.

The Covenant of the First Unitarian Church The Church of the River

The purpose of this church shall be to promote the high ideals of a rational, progressive, and exalting religion, in the love of God and service to humanity, and to hold regular church services in this community. To this end, all activities of the church shall be conducted without distinction related to race, color or previous religious affiliations; and the right of private judgment and the sacredness of individual conviction shall be recognized in all things. To join our church is to walk with other members of the congregation in the spirit of our covenant.

Remember every Sunday this summer is Ride Your Bike to Church Sunday. Be a good steward of creation by taking care of yourself and the environment.