

On Pilgrimage

BY ALAN TAYLOR, SENIOR MINISTER, UNITY TEMPLE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATION, OAK PARK, ILLINOIS

All religious traditions encourage pilgrimages. They ask the faithful to leave familiar surroundings and daily routine, to travel unencumbered on a journey that can reveal both wisdom and insight.

Once, some years ago, I joined Hindus and Muslims making a pilgrimage to Sabarimala. It was a most memorable day during my nearly eight month solo journey through India. Hundreds of thousands of people go on this pilgrimage to the forest every year.

Father Bede Griffiths, in his book *River of Compassion*, says, "Some time each year, at least, we should go out from our fixed abode, leaving our possessions and everything to which we are attached, and become free to wander or to settle in some very quiet place, to be free for some time."

From my own writing about the pilgrimage to Sabarimala:

*Most of them were barefoot,
having walked dozens, if not hundreds, of miles
through forests and towns
with nothing but a small bundle carried on their heads:
a sheet, toothbrush, book of teachings,
a change of underwear, a little food and water.
Their robes were black or orange or red,
pilgrims coming from all over southern India
throughout the warm winter season.
For me it was Christmas Day, 1990.
For them it was a journey of epic proportions,
soliciting the blessing of Lord Ayappa.
Many chanted, some meditated quietly;
all were on pilgrimage to Sabarimala.
Never were Indian men so exuberant,
having left the routines of their lives.
Their eyes shined with anticipation
as they cheerfully greeted others.
This was a luminous time in their lives.
On pilgrimage, they were open to change.*

I didn't see my trip as a pilgrimage, per se, though my primary motivation for the journey was a deep longing to answer the question: to what should I devote my life? I was 22 years old, on a personal mission. I skipped tourist destinations, such as Agra's Taj Mahal and the castles of Rajasthan. Instead, my journey took me to pilgrimage sites, ashrams, temples, and holy cities. At every holy site I was transfixed not only by the places themselves, but also by the people who everywhere manifested deep spiritual devotion. I was envious. I longed for something to which I could devote my life.

Although I did not know it, I was on a pilgrimage of my own. When I returned to the United States I had accomplished many of my goals—to witness and engage with human beings in a different culture, to develop a deeper sense of independence, to cultivate a new lens through which to look at my own culture, to learn about Hinduism and how religions draw people to the sacred in India. I also



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The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes.

—Marcel Proust

A monthly for religious liberals

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The art of Walking...sauntering: which word is beautifully derived “from idle people who roved about the country, in the Middle Ages, and asked charity, under pretense of going a la Sainte Terre,” to the Holy Land, till the children exclaimed, “There goes a Sainte Terrier,” a Saunterer, a Holy-Lander. They who never go to the Holy Land in their walks, as they pretend, are indeed mere idlers and vagabonds; but they who do go there are saunterers in the good sense, such as I mean.... For every walk is a sort of crusade, preached by some Peter the Hermit in us, to go forth and reconquer this Holy Land from the hands of the Infidels.... We should go forth on the shortest walk, perchance, in the spirit of undying adventure, never to return,—prepared to send back our embalmed hearts only as relics to our desolate kingdoms. If you are ready to leave father and mother, and brother and sister, and wife and child and friends, and never see them again,—if you have paid your debts, and made your will, and settled all your affairs, and are a free [person], then you are ready for a walk. ■

by **Henry David Thoreau**, from his essay “Walking,” written in 1861

discovered a number of traditions that bring Hindus and Muslims together. However, the primary motivation for this trip was to figure out what to devote my life to, and upon my return I felt more lost than when I started.

In time, I realized that pilgrimages don’t typically usher in grand results, that their benefits are often subtle and take time to unfold. It’s like praying to God for something particular to happen, and when it doesn’t, feeling cheated and bereft, wondering what was the use of getting one’s hopes up anyway. Spiritual maturity comes with

learning that prayer doesn’t change what can’t be changed, but it changes things that can, like our own hearts.

The same goes for pilgrimage. Perhaps that is why Islam holds as one of its five core pillars the expectation that every Muslim will make a pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in their lifetime. I have also come to understand pilgrimage not only as a long journey to a distant land, but also potentially as many smaller journeys. Indeed, a pilgrimage is any journey taken for the sake of bringing one closer to what some people call grace, the source of all love, the spirit of life, the creative mystery, God. One doesn’t need to leave home to embark on such a journey, for pilgrimages are fundamentally about the journey within.

Once in a while, however, it is good to go on pilgrimage beyond our familiar surroundings. For some Unitarian Universalists, this means a trip to Boston to learn about the roots of American Unitarianism or Universalism. Others journey to Transylvania to foster relationships with the people of Unitarian congregations there that have survived over 450 years. And for still others, pilgrimage involves going to Alabama, to Selma and/or other significant sites of civil rights demonstrations and struggle.

Some may take a different kind of pilgrimage, such as spending a summer building houses for people whose homes have been flooded and cultivating relationships with the people who will live in them. And others pilgrimage to a hospital or home of someone with a life threatening illness, maybe to deepen a relationship or to find one. Either way, wisdom and insight await those who engage in such journeys.

What makes for a pilgrimage? I believe you must nurture at least these four essential elements:

First, intentionally set aside time for a journey whose goal is to move you closer to that which you believe to be of ultimate importance.

Second, prepare yourself for the journey by taking along as little as possible.

Third, be open to encounters and people that present themselves, no matter how seemingly mundane. Allow the journey to work on you. Engage with whatever and whomever comes your way.

Fourth, allow the truth and wisdom of the situation to reveal itself, which may not happen during the journey itself. Don’t go with the expectation of being immediately transformed. Meaningful learnings may take weeks, months, or even years to emerge.

At the time of my journey in India, I understood pilgrimage only as a journey to a sacred place or shrine. But there is richness in the wider meaning of pilgrimage as a search of moral significance. Quests of moral significance can be cultivated into our lives on a yearly, monthly, and even daily basis.

One doesn’t need to leave home to embark on such a journey, for pilgrimages are fundamentally about the journey within.

Set aside a certain amount of time, say, to be in your garden, intentionally seeking to clear your mind, thereby embarking on the journey unencumbered. Be open to whatever needs doing, allowing this time to work on you, and allowing wisdom and insights to emerge. Or set aside the time to sit or walk in meditation, seeking to disencumber your mind. All meditation practice is a form of pilgrimage.

Sometimes the losses we endure oblige us to go on pilgrimage. Sometimes it is a deep longing that goads us on. And sometimes we move out of deep gratitude for the blessings that have been ours. Jessica Lash, in her book *On Pilgrimage*, provides a poignant metaphor for the spiritual life:

While we were standing together at the back of the basilica, there was suddenly a tremendous gust of wings. Sparrows and pigeons were continually flying around, but this gust of bird was mighty and different. We looked up, and there, high above the narthex was the unmistakable, compelling face of a barn owl. Again and again it flew and paused, frantically crashing its white body with terrible hopelessness against the dusty windows. I cannot describe how unbearable it was to follow the flight of that bird, knowing that we were quite incapable to give it its freedom. There were holes and spaces, if only it would see them.

We left. We couldn't bear to be there. I suddenly thought, what if God witnesses in every [human being] a divine spark, which flies within us blindly, like that bird, crashing in terror, punched and pounded from wall to wall, blinded by obstacles and dust, and yet, God knows that there is a way for natural freedom and ascending flight. What an extraordinary pain that witness would be.

Pilgrimage provides a vehicle for spiritual practice, so that human beings need not necessarily flail about or wander aimlessly. Spiritual practice, in my understanding, is engaging in a personal discipline in order to cultivate an ever-greater capacity for sustained attention. Many orthodox traditions teach that the world is broken and needs grace brought into it to save it. I disagree. I believe that in every person and place there is grace waiting to be brought forth, and that to be human religiously is to seek to do what we can to increase the odds of grace happening.

The other day I visited L'Arche Chicago. It is a home that houses and supports developmentally disabled individuals. I had received an invitation to their monthly open house event, but it wasn't a priority for me, and I nearly said that I had no interest. However, there was something genuine in the gentle persistence of the individual making the invitation, so I felt obliged, as a human being, to at least make their acquaintance.

The evening proved to be one of the most extraordinary I have had in a long time. That intentional community lives out of a theology of celebration, grace, and simplicity. I couldn't help but be touched by the residents and the genuine love of those who made their home possible.

What opportunities to connect with your heart are waiting for you? We may postpone them for months on end, but there's something persistent about the nature of grace: it never goes away. It is always there to be uncovered, and it is, I believe, a significant part of our human journey as we connect with the world authentically, so that grace is unveiled and brought forth.

There are so many things in life that, if we just give them some attention, reveal far more truth and wisdom than first meets the eye. It is easy to be judgmental, to live our days in hurried anticipation of achievement after achievement, and thus lose sight of the wisdom, the beauty, and the authentic significance of what is available to us. I believe that if we pace ourselves, pay attention, and intentionally make room in our lives for genuine encounter, we can uncover grace waiting to be manifested, and thereby bless the world. ■

Prophecy from the Hopi Nation

BY THOMAS BANYACYA, SR. (1910-1999) SPEAKER OF THE WOLF, FOX AND COYOTE CLAN, ELDER OF THE HOPI NATION

You have been telling the people
That this is the eleventh hour.
Now, you must go and tell the people
That THIS is the hour,
And there are things to be considered.

Where are you living? What are you doing?
What are your relationships?
Are you in the right relationship?
Where is your water?
Know your garden.

It is time to speak your truth.
Create your community,
Be good to each other.
Do not look outside yourself for a leader.

There is a river flowing now very fast.
It is so great and swift
That there are those who will be afraid.
They will try to hold onto the shore.
They will feel they are being pulled apart
And will suffer greatly.

Understand that the river knows its destination.
The elders say we must let go of the shore,
Push off into the middle of the river,
Keep our eyes open and our heads above water.

And I say: see who is in there with you.
Hold fast to them and celebrate!

At this time in history
We are to take nothing personally,
Least of all, ourselves!
For the moment we do,
Our spiritual growth and journey comes to an end.
The time of the Lone Wolf is over!

Gather yourselves!
Banish the word "struggle" from
Your attitude and vocabulary.
All that we do now must be done
In a sacred manner and in celebration.

We are all about to go on a journey.
We are the ones we have been waiting for. ■



Prodigal Songs

BY GLEN THOMAS RIDEOUT, DIRECTOR OF MUSIC, FIRST UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATION OF ANN ARBOR

Because your story is forever changing, you must sing forever.

Because you are not who you were, and because you shall not be who you are now, you must sing forever.

Because your voice is like no other voice,

Because your voice and your voice and your voice and your voice and my voice comprise the uncompromising strength that is our voice,

And because with your singing, our singing is miles wider...

You must sing forever.

It was three and a half years ago when Unitarian Universalists changed my life.

I was the newly-appointed director of music for the First Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Ann Arbor. It was one of my very first Sundays, every step filled with that particular mix that comes with doing anything new—a combination of billowing excitement mixed perfectly with sheer terror. Every name a new melody to learn, each conversation a new composer's duet, each moment an immersion course in a new language. I was learning to speak the dialect of the congregation, learning with each new morsel that this was not at all like the churches of my childhood.

Don't get me wrong, I've been to a lot of different churches. I was the poster child for the term "church kid." I grew up in churches that loved and nurtured me sincerely throughout my childhood and offered me opportunities in music and leadership for which my family could never have afforded to pay. And in return, I served the church zealously. I was the boy in every Christmas play at Hemingway Temple A.M.E. Church, taking on the complexities of such

roles as Joseph, or "Man at Christmas party," or Sheep #2. I was president of the Young People's Department and parliamentarian-in-training of the Lay Organization, Sunday school pianist and substitute teacher, church pianist, assistant minister of music, director of



music, lay preacher, president of the junior usher board, vice-president of the children's choir...though not all at the same time. Church had become the center of my living.

In the crime-ridden community that was my home, church was a crucial element to my success—a safe space to hone my talents as a student and a musician. In my later teen years, I began work as a music minister around my hometown of Baltimore, consulting with preachers, guest preaching for increasingly larger congregations and setting on the path to reach my life's great goal—pastoring a huge church where thousands would come and find their lives transformed and renewed by the power of innovative worship. And, in my teenage years, every aspect of my life had been propelling me to that goal with a remarkable clarity...with one HUGE exception.

In those years, the conversation of religion (specifically Christianity) about its relationship to homosexuality was gaining considerable attention in churches with large black populations. The deep, throaty baritone of preachers proclaiming homosexuality to be the sin that will bankrupt our moral society

ran like the brooding soundtrack of a film that had just taken its most dangerous turn. I had certainly been taught that the upright man marries a woman, and I largely ignored the notion that I did not fit that mold. But by the time I had become a teenager, this previously dormant topic had risen to center stage on pulpits, on Christian television programs and even in conversations among congregants. Time and again we were scolded that "that lifestyle" (being anything but heterosexual) would guarantee an eternity in hell, that this "choice" would cause even God to turn away. I wrestled with the notion that this part of me, the gay part, could destroy the dreams I had for a successful life.

But the secret that I thought I held was, I would soon learn, not much of a secret at all. Pastors would offer me books on overcoming same-sex temptations, seeming to bargain with me. "It's not being gay that's the issue. God simply wants you to turn away from acting on those impulses," the cleric would send to my ear with a chilling insistence. Members of my church family would pull me aside, awkwardly dancing at the questions to which I had no answers, volunteering me to stand in the center of circles of praying clergy and fellow churchgoers. They shouted at that "evil spirit of homosexuality," that "demon" who was set to have my soul for its own. And there I stood—outwardly bruised, inwardly defiant, entirely bewildered.

Well, I left Baltimore (or should I say, fled that place) for Nashville, Tennessee. I began college and took what amounted to a three-year vacation from church. I wanted desperately to shed any evidence of the fire through which I had run. That tiny dorm room became my church, a sanctuary from the noise. And in the quiet, I mustered the courage to come out as a gay man. *If the church wouldn't have all of me, it would have none of me*, I thought. I dodged friends' invitations to church quickly and decisively, remembering

vividly what I had left in Baltimore and believing that the church had nothing more to offer me. They all offered the same deal, right? “I love you, you’re perfect, now change.” I had become a spiritual hermit, a loner, content to spend my Sunday napping or taking church jobs to pay the bills while practicing sight-reading during the sermon—an act of defiance of which I had become particularly proud. My spiritual life had become a jaded reflection, a bitter taste, a bad breakup, a nightmare from which I had woken and fled.

“We are a gentle, angry people and we are singing for our lives.”

When I moved from Nashville to Ann Arbor, the acrid defiance I had harbored for the church had cooled a bit...enough for me to give church one more chance. An internet search of “Ann Arbor church musician” turned up several listings, but only one I hadn’t heard of before. This growing curiosity led me to the source of all truth, Wikipedia, to look for “Unitarian Universalism.” “A free and responsible search for truth and meaning.” Yeah, right. “The inherent worth and dignity of *every* person”? I walked into the room on that morning, early in my new appointment, with more than a small share of curiosity. Are these people *really* who they say they are? Or is it all the same?

And Allison began to play the warm, optimistic chords that began the morning hymn. A hymn with a delightfully catchy melody and an all too intriguing title: “We are a gentle, angry people and we are singing for our lives.” I had taken time over the weekend to study the hymn as I’d prepared to lead it, but it was not until we were there—live—singing it, that I noticed that the author penned a fifth verse on the next page. And all at once, the voices of the congregation fused into a powerful

intonation, proclaiming in no uncertain terms: “We are gay and straight together, and we are singing for our lives.” I looked deeply into the faces around me, looking for some hint of shock or timidity over having to sing those words...those scandalous, scandalous words.

But that look yielded a surprising picture—young people and older people singing, “We are gay and straight together.” Black and white and latino and middle eastern people singing, “We are gay and straight together.” Lawyers and musicians, students and preachers singing, “We are gay and straight together.” They sang those words with strength in a nation battling marriage equality. They sang with strength in a world whose progress is crippled by hatred and bigotry. In a nation of Matthew Shepard, they sang a song I had never heard before. What came out of the sanctuary was made of the determination and resolve that says to a young gay man, “There is another way.” They sang to me and they changed my life.

I am one of many people whose lives have been affected deeply by that music. I am one of many who have found strength in the sound, and been renewed by the solidarity that springs out from our body’s music. Our bodies create music to soothe us, to comfort us, to pass time, but there is even greater potential. When we have the courage to lift up our voices, to clap our hands in time, to sway or to dance, we offer the world a music like no one else’s. You have a voice that no one else will ever possess, a rhythm that is so special because only you live in it. When you sing, you offer an uncompromising gift of yourself to a universe begging to hear more.

We can truly, easily be ourselves when we sing, and I think that’s what scares many of us (myself very much included) from singing more. When our bodies make music we are loud and we are quiet, we are in tune and not quite,

we are robust and piercing, thin and fragile, unrelenting and unsure. I get the same pit-of-the-stomach feeling every time I must sing, every time a rehearsal begins, every time a worship service starts with a song. But I think of those moments that my congregation sang to me. I remember the courage of those words and I remember that within me lies the same power to sing strength and hope into the lives of those with whom I share my music, and it becomes less and less important whether or not I am afraid.

The courage of conviction attained in singing has powered humanity’s greatest struggles for political justice, social equality and religious freedom. These struggles have been sustained and powered by the music inside human beings. When my congregation sang that song with clarity and with pride, they reignited the same strength of song that poured into the streets of Montgomery, Alabama, as hundreds of civil rights supporters joined voices to sing, “I woke up this morning with my mind stayed on freedom.” Within that singing beat the pulse of a people who had spent too long bearing the weight of racist oppression and disenfranchisement. Within that singing rang the determination of Americans all over this nation to wrest equality from the jaws of resistance. Still they sang: “Ain’t gonna let nobody turn me around...” And forward they marched.

To sing is to give voice to your self. It is to allow the body’s innermost aspirations to have space to speak with color and with inspiration. When you sing, your sound is rich with your history and your opinions, your heritage and your hopes. And so you must sing. We need your voice. And because your story is forever changing, because your voice is like no other voice, and because your voice and your voice and your voice and my voice comprise the uncompromising strength that is our voice, because through our singing we save lives, we must sing always. ■



From Your Minister

BY MEG RILEY
SENIOR MINISTER,
CHURCH OF THE
LARGER FELLOWSHIP

It is possible that the next Buddha will not take the form of an individual. The next Buddha may take the form of a community—a community practicing understanding and loving kindness, a community practicing mindful living. This may be the most important thing we can do for the survival of the earth.
—Thich Nhat Hanh, Buddhist teacher

I have been turning these words over in my mind for a number of months now, turning them over the way I would a small stone in my hand, to feel the planes and the smooth places. I feel as if the words describe what our collective lives are supposed to be about, even as each day's news points out that approaching collective Buddhahood is not what most of us appear to actually spend our time doing. But Thich Nhat Hanh's language expresses my heart's desire for life-giving connection, and I dare to hope that, in some way, it's what the CLF strives to do as well.

It's not that I have delusions of grandeur, or imagine that the rest of you do. I know I don't dwell anywhere in the 'hood of Buddha. But if I'm on a journey, I like to have a bold destination, and Buddhahood definitely qualifies. Why aim to go halfway to where you want to be?

Some of you are old enough to remember Ken Kesey's bus, where in that spot up over the driver's head that usually says something like, "Cedar Avenue," it said simply, "Further." When Tom Wolfe wrote about Kesey and the Merry Pranksters in his book, *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*, he reported that they had a slogan—"You're either on the bus or off the bus." On a daily basis, going "further" is about all any of us can hope for. Still, if the CLF were a bus, I'd want the words up over

the driver's wheel to read, "Beloved Community" or maybe "Buddha 'Hood." And I'd hope that hundreds of thousands of people, ultimately, would want to be on the bus!

Maybe it's because I'm an extrovert, and tend to wake up more in the presence of other people than when alone on a zafu cushion. But I'm particularly interested in that amazing journey we can only undertake together, the kind of bus only a community of faith could board together—the kind that lags when any one person believes that he or she is controlling the route, but picks up momentum through creative collaboration and co-creative ministry.

It said simply, "Further."

When I muse about this metaphorical CLF bus, I realize I'm not just thinking programmatically, about what might engage members and seekers to participate in activities. Though that's definitely fun, my bigger interest is in where we can go together spiritually as a large, diverse community of people on a fragile planet in this perilous time. What might the CLF contribute to healing the world? What would be compelling enough to cause people to look up from their own journeys and commit to a collective one?

Early each morning I speak on the phone with a friend, and we each state our desired intentions for the places we serve; we're the bus drivers, cranking through possible destinations to put the right words up overhead in that visible spot. For me, the words which declare our destination would be something along the lines of, "CLF is a global spiritual community which is alive, connective, transformational and fun. We are learning, through creative engagement, to love and care for ourselves, each other, and the planet."

As the CLF moves towards the launch of our new online sanctuary, new opportunities beckon that we could not have imagined even a decade ago.

We see more roads on which the CLF bus can travel. I know not all of you are online, and certainly we are keeping your needs in mind all the time. But more people are on Facebook than live in the United States! How many of them might want to get on our bus if it drove right by their house?

We are trying to create something new, and I am sure there will be times when it feels as if we are stumbling. Heck, it won't be a feeling—it will be a fact. The only way we can learn how to do something new is to be willing to fail. We will build in feedback loops and communication systems to "fail forward," so that each failure teaches us something new as we move ahead. The path of our journey together might have some switchbacks and side trips, but winding paths are often the most interesting.

I can't wait to see what we'll create together and where we might go! Are you on the bus? ■

Upcoming Online Class

Justice Theology & Justice Practice: Becoming a People So Bold

Recently thirty-six ministers, religious educators, and laypeople gathered to share their best theological and practical wisdom about what our faith calls us to do, and how we put our faith into action. In this four-session class, participants will reflect on select essays from *A People So Bold*, the book which came out of that gathering, and the brief online videos that accompany it, looking at how our UU faith grounds our work for social justice.

Taught by the editor of the book, **Rev. John Gibb Millsbaugh**, this class begins October 17th and runs for four weeks. To learn more about how CLF classes work and to sign up for this class go to www.clfuu.org/learn. There is a \$40 registration fee. ■

October 2011

REsources for Living

BY LYNN UNGAR, MINISTER FOR LIFESPAN LEARNING, CHURCH OF THE LARGER FELLOWSHIP

What comes to mind when you hear the word "quest"? Knights of the Round Table riding off in search of the Holy Grail? King Pellinore on his eternal search for the Questing Beast? An ongoing search for perfection, like my lifelong quest for the world's best lemon bar?

Does a quest have a single goal, like the Holy Grail or the perfectly but-tery-tangy lemon bar, or can a quest be more general—a kind of way of life? Perhaps it says a bit too much about my exact age, but for me the words that come to mind in defining a quest are the famous

words: "These are the voyages of the Starship Enterprise—its continuing mission to explore strange new worlds, to seek out new life and new civilizations, to boldly go where no one has gone before."

There you have it. To be on a quest is to be on a mission, to feel like you have a purpose. On a quest you know your life has meaning because you have a goal. Most religious faiths have a tradition of pilgrimages—a kind of religious quest to get to a special holy site. Muslims are expected to journey to Mecca once in their lifetime. Christians might visit the sacred site of Lourdes in France. Jews might go to pray at the Wailing Wall, the last remaining bit of the Temple in Jerusalem. Pagans might go to the great circle of stones at Stonehenge, or to Delphi where the ancient Greek oracles uttered their prophecies.

A pilgrimage to a sacred site can be a wonderful quest to connect your own life to the sacred tradition of your religion. But here's the thing. Unitarian Universalists don't really think that any one spot is holier than any



other spot. Our tradition pretty much says that the sacred is right here, right now, in everything

around you. So where are you going to go on your quest to meet the holy that's better than where you already are?

Well, the theme words from Star Trek have a suggestion. The purpose of your quest could be the process itself—exploring strange new worlds, seeking out new life. Yes, where you are is just as holy as anywhere else, but that doesn't mean that you should get stuck in a rut. New people can challenge your assumptions, introducing you to ways of thinking that never would have occurred to you on your own. Exploring strange new worlds—that is, worlds that are new and strange to *you*—reminds you that

there is always more to know, and that "truth" is something that can shift in surprising ways.

Our fourth UU Principle says that we affirm and promote "a free and responsible search for truth

and meaning." This means that being on a quest—a continuing mission to seek out new life—is part of who we are as Unitarian Universalists. Learning and growing is not just what we do, it's who we are. We're explorers, even if we don't have a spaceship available to take us at warp speed to new galaxies. We're explorers of life, people who might not be on a pilgrimage to a particular holy spot, but who are on a journey nonetheless, recognizing that all the paths we travel and all the people we meet along the way are holy.

More than 20 years ago I wrote a little song which, at the time, I called "Pilgrimage." The words are from the Sufi poet Rumi, who lived more than 800 years ago. They go like this: "Come, come, whoever you are: wanderer, worshiper, lover of leaving. Ours is no caravan of despair. Come, yet again, come."



I think that pretty much sums up our UU quest, our pilgrimage. Everyone is invited on the journey. Whoever you are, join us in our sacred wandering, our joy in leaving behind the tried and true in search of new adventures. Nobody says the journey will be easy, and there will probably be all kinds of trouble on the way, but we carry with us hope, not despair. Anything can happen. We just need to commit to being on the road together.

With luck (and a whole lot of effort), we expect to launch a brand new CLF website soon, at www.questformeaning.org. The CLF is on a quest to be the kind of place that people of all ages can come to for worship, for learning, for chatting with people who care about the things we care about, for comfort when they are sad, for help in planning celebrations like weddings and baby dedications, and, well, for all the things you might want from a UU church—only for everyone, whoever you are, wherever in the world you are, at whatever time of the day or night you might want to get there.

It might be kind of rocky at first, as we figure out what works and what doesn't. That's how a quest works. You don't have to do any part of it perfectly. You just have to set out and keep going. Luckily, we're all in this journey together. Come, yet again, come. ■

A Community of Giving



When you give a gift to support the CLF you join a community of people who are passionate about practicing and growing Unitarian Universalism. One great way to make a gift that is easy on your personal finances and hugely valuable to the CLF is to arrange for monthly contributions. Consider setting up a monthly contribution of \$25 or more—a way to make a difference that will inspire you and others each and every day. ■



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Watch for a new look for *Quest*, which will be redesigned to coordinate with our upcoming online sanctuary.

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Another Kind of Knowledge (Excerpt)

BY **HOLLY HORN**, INTERIM MINISTER, FIRST UNITARIAN
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To surrender oneself willingly to truth,
to earn it,
in every sense, to allow
a voice to the great unbegotten
mystery and, beyond that,
to listen,
is asking for trouble.

Don't doubt it. But prepare for the aftershocks.
Store water, and cans of tuna fish.
Plan an escape route, and a rendezvous point.
Write messages with lipstick on the bathroom mirror
reminding yourself...
where the flashlight batteries are stashed,
and how to find the pole star.



Keep a list of essentials
posted on the refrigerator: poetry, theology, an aria—
whatever works:
a ticket to Ravenna,
a menu from Provence,
a ballad to be sung at the tomb of Rachel.

And plan to go. ■