

June, 2011

Dear Unitarian Church of Norfolk Members:

I am honored and joyous to be chosen as your minister! I remember preaching and leading worship at UCN in January of 2005 as a very positive experience. I met a lot of people that day and believe I encountered a healthy and welcoming congregation – the one that persists today.

As a developmental (rather than a settled or interim) minister, I can stay with you for up to five years and the focus is work on very specific goals and objectives set by you. Think of it as a transitional ministry with a consulting aspect. Right now, the Board has determined that leadership development and strategic planning are the top concerns, with the latter being mostly about the need for attaining space that is adequate for UCN's program and mission. That is a huge task for a congregation to undertake and I know you are at the very beginning of the process.

Although I am coming to Norfolk to fulfill the tasks of developmental ministry, please think of me simply as your minister. I will address most of the tasks and work of any type of minister – leading Sunday worship, supervising staff, supporting the religious education of all ages, providing pastoral care and officiating at rites of passage. I will be there for you and with you in all the seasons of your life as your minister, and with the church as a *community* in all the seasons of its life.

That word, 'community,' is key for my vocation. The burning coal at the heart of my ministry is the creation of *Beloved Community* in its broadest sense – that community of loving support and challenge that grows us together towards what is best and highest for ourselves, our congregations and the world. So much is part of Beloved Community – how we treat one another and ourselves, how we are organized and function as churches, the power of our worship to transform, how we share our faith in the wider world and the effectiveness of our work for justice. My vision for ministry is of a powerful partnership devoted to building Beloved Community within and beyond our church walls.

I look forward to being in Virginia again – certainly most fruitful ground for our liberal religion! – and being part of a wonderful church community.

In good faith,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Cyndi Simpson".

Cyndi Simpson, MDiv

Cyndi Simpson Life Summary

I was raised in Richmond, Virginia by an outspokenly agnostic father and a mother who was not drawn to any particular religious tradition. Therefore I was able to speak and wonder and think and imagine about religion in any way that I chose.

I came home to Unitarian Universalism while a freshman at Franklin & Marshall College in Lancaster, PA. It felt like a homecoming to me because I realized "This is who I have been all along!" That was in 1974 and I have been a committed UU ever since. My travels for education, work and marriage took me to a dozen states over the next 30 years as I pursued a bachelor's and a master's degree in anthropology, a master's degree in public health and ultimately a master's degree in divinity. I worked mainly at state and local health departments or in nonprofit health and human service agencies, mostly as an Executive Director, planner, researcher/evaluator and epidemiologist, addressing such subjects as violence and injury prevention, chronic disease prevention and HIV/AIDS prevention and case management.

My other big 'homecoming' was to earth-centered practices. This took place in 1996 while I was living with my second husband in the most politically, religiously and socially conservative place I have ever encountered – Lubbock, Texas! A great place to become Pagan! The earth-centered approach continues to provide a foundation for my own daily and seasonal spiritual practice. I am also very influenced by Buddhism and religious humanism. I chose to go to a Christian seminary as I was not raised as a Christian nor had I ever read the Christian Bible. Lancaster Theological Seminary (United Church of Christ) was a wonderful place for me. My studies of the Bible, Christian history and theology were excellent and challenging.

After completing the requirements for admission to the UU ministry, I was received into Preliminary Fellowship by the UUA's Ministerial Fellowship Committee in September, 2010. I look forward to returning to my home state of Virginia and living near the ocean. At this time, I am single with two cats and enjoy reading, travel, jewelry-making and all things UU – especially history and biography.