

Interview with Kendra Ford May 11, 2000 done by Arthur Poltney

This is an interview with Kendra Ford, our Ministerial Intern, Unitarian Universalist Church, Asheville, North Carolina, 1999-2000. I'm Arthur Poltney, Church Historian. The date is May 11, 2000.

Arthur Poltney (Arthur): Kendra, let's start by you talking about your association with the Unitarian Church.

Kendra Ford (Kendra): Well, I was born and raised in the Unitarian Church. I started out in Massachusetts in a church there and my family was quite involved there and my family was involved in churches until I was in high school. And in college I was in rural Iowa so there were no Unitarian churches, but as soon as I got out of college I was involved in a church again so most of my life I've been in a UU church.

Arthur: OK, that's interesting, Kendra. Not many were born into the Unitarian Church. Now let's talk about what influenced you to become a minister.

Kendra: Part of it I can't explain. When I was about 16 I remember telling one of my fellow YRUUers that I thought I wanted to be a minister. And he said, "Oh, you'll outgrow that." So I tried to outgrow it for a while, but I guess I didn't! It just kept coming back, as what I thought I wanted to do and it took me a few years to think that, that *I* was qualified, that I *could* do that. But when I realized that the things I was interested in, and who I was, as a person might work out as a minister, I really pursued it. I thought about going to seminary and *did* go to seminary, and then I came here!

Arthur: Where did you go to seminary, Kendra?

Kendra: Meadville Lombard, in Chicago.

Arthur: OK, that's good. Is there any more you care to talk about your interest in becoming a minister? If not we'll talk about your reflections on your internship to this church.

Kendra: OK. I'll talk about the internship. I looked at a whole *bunch* of places to do my internship and I sent my application pretty late to Maureen. And she faxed me right back and said, "We're very interested. We were thinking about *not* having an intern this year, but you might be a good fit." So, it's really by Maureen's good eye that I ended up here, that she could see that it would be a good fit and I think it's been a *wonderful* fit. I've grown up a lot as a minister here and Maureen has been a *wonderful* teacher for me.

And the congregation has been a wonderful teacher for me. The great variety of people who are here have taught me all kinds of things. And it's a large enough church that there are just, . . . there's just everything happening at once, which is overwhelming sometimes, but that's really the best place for me to learn. So, to watch a church trying to grapple with its growing has been useful because I think almost all congregations are grappling with that in some way, changing all the time. I think we like to imagine that there are moments in our lives when everything is calm and steady. (Laughs) But I don't think there ever are. So to get to be in a congregation which is very openly dealing with its change has been very useful.

Arthur: OK, Kendra, you've seen our church now for almost a year and . . . what would you like to see our church become in the future?

Kendra: Well, the short answer is *more* of itself. I think what this church has is wonderful and as it grows and changes it should just *be* that, except more of it! (Laughs) I think the church will *have* to add on a pretty large piece to this building. Really, to accommodate its current congregation, it needs to add on. And if it's going to grow at all, it will have to add on. So as it does that, as it expands its capacity for programming and its capacity to be a community resource, I would *love* to see this church do more community justice work and I think if it had the space and a few more resources, this church could be a really powerful force because so many people in the congregation are already important in the community and we have a history with that, at least in our denomination, so I would love to see that happen. And we also have a great capacity to be a contact church for other, smaller churches in the area, that are springing up, so I think that would be a good gift for this congregation to give to other congregations, their experience, and their wisdom and their energy.

Arthur: Yes, even now we're working with spin-off churches. Is there anything else you'd care to talk about while we're doing this interview, Kendra?

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