

Good morning, and Welcome to All Souls. I'm Dana Ivey and I've been coming here since 1994. I became a member of this congregation in 1997, but really I have been a Unitarian most of my life. My family started going to the Unitarian Church in my hometown of Atlanta, GA when I was 11.

I went with them until I was in my mid-teens, when I began going to a Presbyterian Church that several friends went to. I remember telling my Mother that I wanted more ceremony, although, as many of you know, the Presbyterian Church is not noted for ceremony. However, they did have a very good choir and the ministers wore robes, both of which were lacking in our small Unitarian congregation then. Plus, the sanctuary was a beautiful and peaceful space, in contrast to the somewhat beleaguered atmosphere at the Unitarian Church.

When I was younger, I had gone to the Catholic Church with my Catholic Grandmother, and I really did like the ceremony there: the robes, the incense, the processions, the chants, the candles, the mysticism-- the drama. So it's not surprising that I went into the theatre and became an actress.

When I was a child, my parents belonged to the Atlanta Theosophical Society, and so I also had a grounding in Theosophy and associated Eastern religions. I grew up hearing the Theosophical quote: There Is No Religion Higher Than Truth, and in fact, had a tee-shirt with that printed on the front.

In college, I sang in the Chapel Choir at Rollins College, which was founded by the Congregationalists, and so I attended Congregational services every Sunday for four years. In subsequent years, I have flirted again with Catholicism, with Buddhism, with Gnosticism, as well as dabbling in a few New Age trends, but I never found a place that could be a home for my searching until I came to All Souls.

Many of you, like me, have tried on a variety of beliefs. I love the fact that here at All Souls each individual's way to truth is honored and respected and that there is no belief I must adhere to dogmatically.

The playwright George Bernard Shaw discusses religion extensively in his play MAJOR BARBARA, and has the character Undershaft say that religion is "the only subject that capable people really care for." The first time I heard that line was in my first year of

professional theatre, when I played Sara in a production of MAJOR BARBARA at the Front St. Theatre in Memphis, TN.

Over the years, I have learned a lot from the plays that I have had the good fortune to be in. In many ways, theatre has been my guru, my teacher, presenting me with ideas and perspectives to sharpen my mind on, and offering me a chance to become other people and live through many feelings and experiences I would not normally have the opportunity to know.

Here at All Souls I am similarly challenged each week. I relish and welcome the thought-provoking sermons. But I also come here because I am renewed by the peace I feel in this light-filled sanctuary and by the sublime music offered up by Wally and the choir. And I leave invigorated, and grateful, to be a part of this questing community.

Now I invite you to stand and join in our Bond of Union.