

Greetings Dear WUS members,

I am so thrilled to have been offered the opportunity to serve as your intern minister beginning in September. I come to you after completing two years of a Master of Divinity program at Starr King School for the Ministry and three months of full time chaplaincy work at Albany Medical Center, all via a career as an executive chef, restaurateur and most recently food service consultant. Having just read all that in one sentence you may very reasonably be asking: How in the world does someone find their way to ministry from the kitchen - what's the connection?

I am happy to share more details about my personal journey when we meet in person but let me just preface the longer version with saying that food to me has always served one primary purpose: to be a vehicle to lovingly connect us to each other and to the world we live in. I have been a natural food chef for the last 30 years but did not start my career in the kitchen simply because of a love of cooking. I came more because food has always invoked in me what is known by African tribal philosophy as Ubuntu. One of my favorite explanations of the meaning for Ubuntu comes from Archbishop Desmond Tutu. Tutu says simply that Ubuntu speaks, "particularly about the fact that you can't exist as a human being in isolation. It speaks about our interconnectedness". He continues by saying, "You can't be human all by yourself."

Food speaks to this togetherness in a very visceral way. We cannot be alive without food and food helps remind us of our interconnectedness - if we allow it to so. And so while for some I may have looked like a chef with an aim to make delicious food, in reality I was a minister spreading the ministry of connectedness through a means that many could access. Indeed, the journey of my life has always been about consciousness and spiritual exploration. And though I did not come to UU until later in life the progression toward it was a natural one.

My journey has included being raised by an atheist father and agnostic mother which allowed me enough space to explore my own spiritual leanings and consciousness without being directed in any particular way. I lived in a yoga ashram for four years practicing yoga and meditation and studying yogic texts. I am a certified yoga teacher, life coach and am on my way to becoming a certified Qigong teacher. Perhaps my largest exploration of spiritual practice has come as a mother of two amazing young women, now 20 and 23. My husband has two grown kids as well, ages 23 and 26 (where does the time go?). I'm a lover of being in the woods and my husband and I want to start a national movement to promote the fine art of picnicking. We also feel that playing a good game of cards or a bit of tennis with family and friends is essential to health and happiness.

Why WUS? Initially I was stuck by your name. The word 'society' conjured up for me something that was larger than a congregation, something more inclusive than Sunday morning services. I was, and am, curious to see how you come together to create and live into a *society* dedicated to the search for truth and meaning and honoring the interconnectedness of all. Of course I will also say that choosing an internship site in the Boston area was an extra bonus. Steeped in history, Boston provides an amazing opportunity to explore some of the footsteps of our UU

ancestors.

All that said, the real element that drew me to WUS was you. During my interview process and visit earlier this year I felt so taken in as one of the family by each person I met, even though many of those meetings were very brief. Quite simply said: I felt at home.

I am excited to serve in whatever capacity I am needed at WUS. I have a particular interest in small group ministry opportunities, creating inclusive and uplifting worship services and being part of conversations and service opportunities that help us explore what it is to be truly interconnected.

I look forward to getting to know each of you and to serving your congregation -your society - and thank you once again for this magnificent opportunity.

Many Many Blessings,  
Deb Morgan Bennett

ps. I am currently in the process of searching for housing for my nine-month internship stay in Winchester. Any leads for a studio or in-law apartment or reasonably priced one-bedroom apartment outside the congregation are greatly appreciated. You can reach me at [lovedogdeb@msn.com](mailto:lovedogdeb@msn.com)