

Introduction of "The Journey"  
A New Hymn by Tom Benjamin and Thomas Mikelson  
Dedicated to The Reverend Mara Dowdall  
On her Installation as Minister at the UU Society of Burlington, Vermont  
March 30, 2014

It is a pleasure to gather for the first time with you, UU Burlington, a congregation about which I have heard so many good things for a long time; and especially to be with you on this notable occasion, as you install the Reverend Mara Dowdall, a remarkable talent, as your new minister.

Both of you, the congregation and Mara, can look forward to a rich, inspiring, and challenging time together, a "journey," if you will. For many reasons, it looks like a happy match.

When Mara called to share her good news, she asked if I would be willing to draft a new hymn for the occasion. I said I would be honored.

The first thing I did was to call my dear friend, Tom Benjamin, a well known figure in UU music, to ask if he would compose the music for the hymn I would be writing. In recent years, Tom and I have developed a rich friendship and fondness for creating new liberal religious music together. I do the words, he does the music, and we consult back and forth about both. This will be the first time the hymn has been sung in a public service. I have never heard it sung by a gathering of the faithful. Nothing means more to hymnists than to hear their songs sung from the heart. For Tom Benjamin and myself I thank you Mara, and UU Burlington, for this gift.

Mara, you are moving into a new stage of your journey as you begin your ministry with this congregation. And this congregation is eagerly joining its life and journey with yours. You both understand that your ministry will be a shared ministry, a concept that is rich with promise and hope.

What we call our journeys are nothing more nor less than the core of our spiritual lives. Our journeys are very different. No one lives the same journey as another. It was that insight that gave birth to liberal religion, and specifically to

our UU tradition. That is our understanding of the title, "The Journey," for the new hymn. When religious community is alive and happening, it calls to us, it tests us, it shows us the way and it gives us strength and wisdom.

It is our hope that "The Journey," will be an inspiration along the pathways ahead for UU Burlington, and for you, Mara, in this new shared ministry to which you are committed. Hymns are written, both words and music, not only for delight, but also for how the music and the words speak to us. A good hymn touches our innermost lives. We sing it and listen to how it touches us somewhere deep within.

"The Journey," is dedicated to you, Mara, on the occasion of your Installation as Minister here, at the UU Society of Burlington, Vermont.