

OPENING WORDS  
John Conti  
Sunday, May 27, 2018

Good Morning! and Welcome to all Souls - I'm John Conti.

I was brought up Catholic. I could not relate to what I was being told about sin and guilt. I was 11 when I left and never returned.

In the early 1980s my wife, Rae Ramsey and I visited AS with a friend. We were very touched, but were not ready to commit to a group at that time.

The tragedy on 9/11 made us realize the importance of belonging to a spiritual community. We remembered our visit to AS and decided to attend a service. After hearing Forrest's sermon, and listening to the beautiful music, we knew we were home. We joined within a couple of months.

Since then, All Souls has been an important part of our lives.

Here are some of the reasons I love All Souls:

- The UU Life affirming principles.  
These embody the values that I hold near and dear
- Galen & Audette's sermons that inspire and illuminate life
- David Robb's incredible work on the religious education program
- Alejandro & Trent who create our beautiful Music, by leading the best Choir in NYC.
- Pamela Patton who gives her heart and soul leading the Lay Pastoral group. They have helped countless people in our congregation.
- The men participating in the Laymen's League -  
It's taking on a life of its own, it's bringing men together to help each other
- The dear friends that are part of our wonderful community

I believe the next few years will be very challenging for our church, both environmentally and financially. I also believe we will get through this because we have some of the best people to help us succeed.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank some of these people.

- Galen, for his dedication, and taking time to meet with me for honest and heartfelt conversation. I was honored
- All the Ministers - Audette, David Robb, Tracey and Dick Leonard. Their love and dedication has made our church a warmer home for all our members

- The Board - It has been one of the best that I can remember and Julie's great leadership has made it happen
- The Deacons - Last year I became a member of this important group of wise church members. Also the new president, Beryl, has made it exciting to be part of this influential group.
- The All Souls Staff - I cannot remember when we have had such dedicated and hard working staff members

Knowing that all of the people I've mentioned are working on a common goal and vision, gives me confidence we will succeed.

Before I end, I would like to mention what helps me get through life's challenges - it's GRATITUDE, as Galen talked about years ago. We all have so much to be thankful for - our friends, our family, hot running water, heat in the winter, and on and on.

Another thing that keeps my spirits up is helping others. This is what John Wesley wrote in the 18th century, and it's how I try to live my life...

*Do all the good you can,  
By all the means you can,  
In all the ways you can,  
In all the places you can,  
At all the times you can,  
To all the people you can,  
As long as ever you can.*

I have this framed over my desk, and Galen recently sent it out in a Daily Meditation. I am so grateful to All Souls and Our Community for enriching my life in many, many ways

Now please rise as you are able, to recite the Bond of Union

*In the freedom of the truth  
And in the spirit of love  
We unit for the worship of God  
And the service of all*