

**Opening Words**  
**Given by Julie Brannan**

March 26, 2017

All Souls Unitarian Church, New York City

Good morning, and welcome to All Souls. My name is Julie Brannan and I have been a member since 1989. Currently I serve on the Board of Trustees as well as the Steering Committee of the Capital Campaign.

To my eternal dismay, I am not a native New Yorker. Although I gave that gift to my three daughters, there is nothing I can ever do to change the answer to “Where were you born?” The issue of what my hometown is, however, is crystal clear to me. Home is truly where the heart is, and my heart is here in NYC. I think New York is that to many people – the place where they knew they belonged rather than the place where they happened to be born. Similarly, there is the family we are born into versus the family we choose by virtue of shared interests and ideals. My mother died when I was 17, and her favorite flower was a yellow rose. She grew them and often had bunches of them in the house. To my great surprise, when Bill Bechman was discussing the décor for last night’s kick off celebration for the capital campaign, he proposed yellow roses as a focal theme. This connection between the family and home of my past with the family and home of my present felt completely right.

All Souls is home as well as a family to me, and I know it is for many of you here. Our home needs nurturing, however. We have identified \$10.8M in needs if we want to maintain our home for the future. We were thrilled last night to announce that as we formally kick off the All Souls capital campaign, we already have \$5.3 million in pledges. We can do this! Today we continue this celebration of our church home as it approaches its 200<sup>th</sup> birthday, and as we prepare to keep it strong for at least the next 200 years.

Please rise as you are willing and able for the bond of union.