

## **“Taking Root”**

Rev. Dr. Jan Carlsson-Bull  
Unitarian Universalist Church in Meriden  
Meriden, CT

May 22, 2016

However glorious the blossom, the roots tell the tale! Glorious indeed is the blossom and blossoming that is the person and growing ministry of Kayla Parker. Kayla, you have been with us for two years, the blink of an eye. In the setting of ministry that is shared—lay ministry, professional ministry, and teaching and learning ministry—we have seen you blossom. Already a hardy bud, you opened to the gifts that you held when you arrived. You are becoming who you are.

Most tellingly, you have taken root. Thoughtful discernment on your own and in conversation with your Ministerial Internship Committee and me, privileged as I have been to be your supervisor; openness to the blended family of personality and theology that we are as the Unitarian Universalist Congregation in Meriden; curiosity and research into who we are and who we have been as a congregation ever changing; engagement and connection of mind and heart; resilience and patience and imagination and initiative as you became a creative force for ministries filled thirsty wells—Mid-Week Worship and the Spirit of Recovery, to name two; worship leadership and participation that was experimental, imaginative, fun, moving and memorable—all embody the ways in which your ministry has taken root in the garden of wildflowers that is this congregation.

Your energy was a match for our youth. Your multicultural savvy, grounded in your experiences in vastly different cultures, was a match for our foray into the work of anti-racism and the budding partnership with our Muslim neighbors.

Shy you are not; diplomatic you are. Throughout our weekly conversations, we sought to realize the hopes and expectations embedded in that document that was your carefully formulated Learning/Service Agreement. Thankfully, we “colored outside the lines” when the realities of life intruded. Life is what happens when we’re busy making other plans (thank you, John Lennon). When life intruded for me and I wasn’t as present as I might have been, you didn’t hesitate to call me on it. When life intruded for you, we flexed. With abundant grace, gentle humor, and the willingness to gaze into an honest mirror, you offered the gift of vulnerability, that prerequisite for earning trust as the minister you are becoming.

Your sense of ministerial call has ripened over these past two years. I have no doubt that while that which we dare to deem a “call to ministry” is not fixed, you have heard and are heeding your particular call to this many-splendored, kaleidoscopic, heart-wrenching and soul-stretching profession that we name as professional ministry.

You are no longer an intern, Kayla. Tomorrow you will graduate from Yale Divinity School. Brava and Brava! I have no doubt that within the next few months you will land in a position of ministry in which you will more fully realize your gifts. I am confident that within the next year you will move through the rite of passage that is ordination to Unitarian Universalist ministry and that when we meet again, we'll just have to call you Rev. Kayla.

Your family is here and duly proud of you. Your friends are here and duly proud of you. Your congregation over these past two years is here and shouts out in gratitude for all you have done and all you are, Kayla.

You, dear flower of a person, blossom and blossoming, have taken root. Beauty in all its splendor is emerging, because the love you have given and received has taken root. Trust those roots. We love you, Kayla! Blessings and Godspeed!