

**Williamsburg Unitarian Universalists**  
**From the Heart 2/10/08**  
**By Martha Elim**

Good morning. I'm Martha Elim. I'm here this morning—at the connivance of Roger Baldwin and Preston Moore—to tell you a little about my WUU story.

Like some of you, I started out a mainline Protestant. As my family moved from one place to another, I was baptized a Presbyterian, went to Sunday school with the Methodists, taught Sunday school at the Episcopal church—and realized I didn't believe what I was teaching. Still, it was the '50s, I loved singing in the choir, and I continued going to church with my family. In college, I even had good experiences in one of the required religion courses and more than one of the campus religious centers. After which, I ignored religion for about 40 years.

When my husband Raga and I retired and moved down here four years ago, I felt a need to take stock of my life. Was I missing something really important? Was I ignoring a spiritual side to life? Was death the end of existence? In graduate school, I bought a book of John Donne's religious writings whose cover showed a man gazing at a human skull. I thought it was weird. By 2004, I'd come to a different view. I had a much more vivid sense of my own mortality. I asked myself whether I would come to the end of life and find I'd missed its heart, its excitement, its vitality.

Raga's daughter Tamra introduced her father and me to WUU. As we began attending regularly, it became clear that this was the right place for both Raga, a Muslim, and me. We participated in the orientation program in October 2006, and I became a member in November.

Since then, I've begun to discover a community. Several of us from the orientation group began meeting monthly to discuss subjects ranging from Buddhism to that noted spiritual study *Eat, Pray, Love*. Last fall, Raga and I joined a circle dinner group—a convivial bunch where I

found a long lost college classmate. With a little fear and trembling, I also signed up for a covenant group in the fall. There I found a wonderfully warm welcome from Gayle Henion and other longtime WUUs. As we share stories, and laughter, and build trust, I'm coming to feel that I want to be with these people in their hard times—and more surprisingly, I want them with me in mine.

Listening to Jennifer and Preston and people like Franz Gross, I've also realized that I can be honest here. That's a relief ... and a challenge. Accordingly, a few weeks ago, I plucked up my courage and joined Jennifer's theology class. I have to tell you that I felt really stupid during the second class last Sunday. Nearly everybody else seemed to know at least something about what they believed. A few were actually articulate. Later, of course, I did recognize that those people had earned their clarity. What, I asked myself, did I expect after 40 years on different paths? So I will show up for class tonight, trust a little more, risk a little more embarrassment, bond a little deeper with those who stumble ... and those who lead, and continue my WUU journey.