

## Welcoming Our Newest Postulants – Fall 2016



**Tom Christofferson's** spiritual journey began in the Baptist tradition while growing up in southern California. He left the church during college and did not return until his mid-30s, troubled by all the innocent, beautiful, even holy, people who were being excluded, and sometimes even damned, by the church. It was just too difficult for him to reconcile this loving-wrathful and judging-forgiving God. However, to this day, the gospel songs of Alan Jackson's "Precious Memories" cd comfort him, despite his disagreement with much of its theology.

Tom attended college in San Diego and after working four years in the San Diego City Schools, concluded it was unlikely he would ever own a home there on a teacher's salary. Having completed a graduate degree in counseling psychology, his background in career development led to a job opportunity in Los Álamos, New México. Here he spent 28 years as a teacher, counselor, and principal, including a 2-year administrative interlude at a Methodist Mission School "off-the-hill". While in Los Alamos, he became a single parent and met the love of his life with which he replicated the Brady Bunch with three wonderful children.

While in Los Alamos he became fascinated by an unusually ecumenical, church (as well as meeting his future wife, Janice, there in a singles' group). The church had grown out of the interdenominational culture of the Army Chapel during the Manhattan Project. Any church that sponsored retreats with M. Scott Peck, Rabbi Harold Kushner, and Marcus Borg fascinated him. Each year this church shared a Seder Meal with the synagogue across the street, and it invited nearby Sikhs to share their faith tradition during Lenten classes. However, it was while building homes in Agua Fria, Tijuana, and Juarez, Mexico, that he first felt divine presence.

After 8 years in school administration, he was in a very dark place. With plans literally underway for retirement in Santa Fe, he and Janice came to visit her

parents in Kerrville, Texas in 2004. During a week that can only be described as divinely directed, their plans changed radically, and they left town owning a home in Fredericksburg. After extensive church shopping they found St. Barnabas Episcopal Church. It was there he first heard about the recently discovered gospels that "didn't make the Biblical cut", so to speak. His first "Wisdom School" was a weekend introduction to the Gospel of Thomas at Way of the Wolf. It was there, while failing miserably to understand any of these weird allegorical sayings of Jesus, that he experienced a loving welcome, openness to universal wisdom, and a belief in the divine force that unites, rather than divides, humankind.

That weekend led to more such gatherings and to the discovery of many shamanic guides, past and present that challenge the world's dualistic thinking and point toward the unitive consciousness that he had yearned for as a child. Those contributing greatly to his journey include Reza Aslan, Lynn Bauman, Cynthia Bourgeault, Blake Bursleson, Robert Farrah Capon, Pema Chodron, John Dominic Crossan, Matthew Fox, Bede Griffith, Thich Nhat Hahn, Ervin Laszlo, Jacob Needleman, J. Phillip Newell, Rabia of Basra, Jalaludin Rumi, Richard Rohr, John Shelby Spong, and Ken Wilbur. Today he is nourished in small communities that are studying the Gospel of Thomas, the Enneagram, and "Living the Questions". He is involved with the St. Barnabas Wisdom School and continues to attend weekend gatherings offered by Praxis and the OOOW. Blessings abound.

**David von Miller** was born in Yuma, AZ and grew up in rural Arkansas. His father was a Lt. Colonel in the US Army and retired when David was in 5<sup>th</sup> grade.



His grandfather was an Episcopal priest who spent the majority of his ministry in rural Texas and Louisiana. While his father was in the military, David attended Episcopal Church services every Sunday. After he retired, church attendance was sporadic. David was baptized and confirmed in the Episcopal Church although his parents did not discuss God or religion. Church was dull and stagnant.

David attended the University of Arkansas after graduating from high school in 1974. He did not

do well, found it difficult to focus on academics and had no direction in life. After his father's death in 1977, he was forced to think about his life and its direction. After graduating from the Texas Maritime Academy in 1981, he spent the next ten years working in the offshore oil fields, the dredging industry, and the shipping industry.

In his mid-thirties, he became depressed and disillusioned with life. He did not know who he was, he realized he was not living authentically; he had no relationship to God and no spiritual life. He began mental health therapy, became active in 12 step programs, and began his spiritual journey in earnest. He read **Iron John** by Robert Bly and was introduced to the poetry of Kabir, Rumi, and Rilke. While attending Wild Man gatherings with Bly and John Lee, he met other men who were also searching for their identity and spirituality. He began attending Episcopal churches. In 2001, after moving to San Marcos, he and his family began attending St. Mark's Episcopal Church. At the Wisdom School, he was introduced to **Foundations of Christianity Spirituality** by Lynn Bauman. Soon afterwards, he and his wife were invited to attend a weekend teaching in San Marcos and met Lynn. Since then, David and his wife, Cindy, have been active participants in the weekend teachings. David has been employed at Texas State University since 2004, working as an academic advisor.