

# Welcoming Our New Priests and Monks

## Spring 2017



**Diana Beardsley** was born to a mother raised in the Episcopal-Methodist Church and a Roman Catholic father. Raised in the Methodist Church, she was baptized, confirmed and attended the usual activities until high school. In high school, due to racial prejudice in her congregation, she decided that if so-called Christians could not live into the Gospel then the Gospel must be a bunch of baloney. At that point, Diana became an agnostic.

At 20, God directly intervened in an unexpected encounter, this experience radically shifted Diana's world and she began to search for "God". This included diving into the evangelical and charismatic movements (which she eventually left due to their exclusivity) as well as minoring in world religions in her undergraduate studies. During her late 20s and throughout her 30s, she attended and was involved in small group leadership at UCC and Presbyterian congregations. She was eventually ordained a deacon in the Presbyterian Church. During this time, she completed a Master's in International Studies focusing on Islam and its political and cultural underpinnings.

Commissioned to the Air Force after college, she became increasingly troubled during her career by the use of force driven by political and economic motives. She requested release from active duty but was denied several times. Meanwhile, she began seminary on a part-time basis pursuing a degree in theology believing this was her path after she left the military. After several semesters, she came to the conclusion she would never be ordained because her idea of God was too unorthodox and outside the stream of traditional Protestantism. She left seminary. Over the next few years, she remained "un-

churched” but broadened her personal search to Buddhism, Hinduism, TM as well as other esoteric streams.

After leaving the military in 1998, she returned to graduate school to study counseling. During a spring break trip, she met Karen and Ron while staying at the Way of the Wolf. In 2002, after a disturbing experience while visiting Lourdes, she contacted Karen for assistance in finding a spiritual director. Karen referred her to OOOW friend, Carol Husbands who, in turn, suggested she attend an upcoming Praxis seminar. The connection was immediate and Diana realized that (Abbot) Lynn could put into “words” what she “knew” but for which she had no language. Around 2005, she became aware of the Order but hesitated to commit without careful discernment. She took vows as a postulant in 2009. After three years in discernment and with encouragement by Monk Gail Ostensen, she took vows in 2012. In early 2016, Abbot Lynn suggested that she consider becoming a priest in the Order but she deferred. After members of her local community approached her suggesting she be ordained, was she convinced this was to be part of her vocation and she was ordained in February 2017.

Diana assumed duties as the first Host master for the Order from 2012 to 2016 and continues to function as the Order’s webmaster. She is active as a spiritual formatter in New Braunfels-San Marcos, offering small groups in her home as well as classes through St Mark’s Episcopal Church’s School of Wisdom. In addition to her spiritual directors, Abbots Karen and Lynn, she is most grateful for the teachings of Fathers Anthony deMello, Henri Nouwen, Richard Rohr, and Thomas Merton, the enlightened souls, Paramahansa Yogananda, Thich Nhat Hanh, Rumi, and Kabir Helminski and the lives of Martin Luther King, Jr., and Mahatma Gandhi who have deeply influenced her journey.



**Alison Hine** was raised in an intellectual, scientific, atheist family in Geneva, Switzerland. Her father was one of the founding scientists at CERN. She obtained a degree in zoology from Cambridge University (1971). After some field work in Kenya and further academic studies in Canada, she settled in Ann Arbor, Michigan where she obtained a Master's degree in Social Work from the University of Michigan. She practiced as a psychotherapist for 35 years and began offering spiritual direction in 2005. She has a grown son and Turkish daughter-in-law. She lives with her partner,

Murray, of 15 years. She loves BBC TV series, classical music, all manner of art and creativity to be found on the Web and growing orchids in her living room.

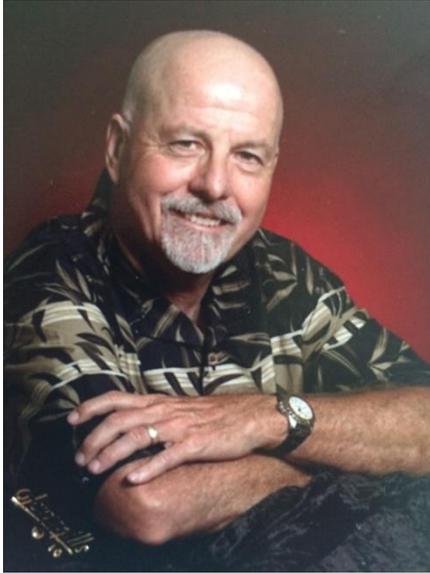
Her spiritual search began 25 years ago with a friend's astonished question. "How have you managed to get this far without God?" From this point her hunger for spiritual practice was unrelenting. After stops in some peculiar way stations, she became deeply immersed in Vajrayana Buddhism. Despite being drawn to this path, it did not bear fruit. In 2000 Alison discovered the Diamond Approach, a spiritual path rooted in the wisdom on Buddhism, Sufism and Depth Psychology. She continues to be a member of this mystery school. In 2009 she was drawn to a Christmas service in a small Episcopal Church in Ann Arbor, Michigan. To her great surprise this led to a deep study of Christian mysticism and theology. To this day the Christian path and the Diamond Approach sit synergistically alongside each other.

Since then she has been teaching the practice of Presence under the auspices of her church, the fruits of a cross pollination of these threads of practice and teaching. In 2014 Alison met Lynn at a School of Wisdom. This meeting resulted in a one of a kind collaboration and with his support she created digital illuminations of the "Luminous Gospels". She took vows as a monk at the Annual Gathering in February 2015.

In 2015 Alison took on the leadership of restoring a small house dedicated to silence, contemplation and spiritual practice on the property of her Episcopal church. The doors opened in May 2016. Over the last few years, a wisdom community has emerged and now gathers in this intimate sacred space.

Her collaboration with Lynn Bauman continues and now includes digital illuminations of some of the great mystical poetry in the Abrahamic traditions.

At the annual gathering in February 2017 Alison was ordained as priest.



**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, Rabiya 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. He became a postulant in October 2016 and took vows as a monk at the annual gathering in February 2017.

**Rex Foster** was born and raised in San Antonio, Texas, and now lives in Baltimore, Maryland with his wife, Lindsay, and two kids, Vera (5 yrs.) and Rowan (4 yrs.). He grew up as an active member of Trinity Baptist Church in San Antonio and then attended Baylor University from 1997-2001 where he earned his BS in



Health Sciences. After attending Baylor, Rex earned his MS in Human Resource Development from Texas A&M (2004) and Ph.D. from The University of Minnesota (2007), with a focus on organizational change.

Rex was introduced to Thomas Keating's "Open Mind, Open Heart" as a freshman at Baylor in 1998, which began his relationship with the contemplative tradition, and he has been pursuing growth in this area ever since. This seeking journey led him to many places over the past 15 years including a Quaker community, a Unitarian

Universalist church, a United Methodist Church, regular yoga and meditation practice, and most recently to his current Baptist church home.

In his professional life, Rex has worked and consulted in a variety of industries (education, government, Fortune 500, faith-based, non-profit), and currently works at Catholic Charities of Maryland where he works closely with numerous social service programs to improve the effectiveness of their services.

Rex is a writer, researcher, and loves music (playing guitar and singing). He became a Postulant in February 2016 and took vows as a monk at the annual gathering in February 2017.

**Susan King** was raised in Detroit, Michigan where she grew up during the civil rights movement and the era of the Detroit riot of the late 1960's. Having parents that were working for the Catholic Church as educators, Susan had a unique and wonderful opportunity to see faith and social justice work in action, not only in



her family but in the community as well. She attended the University of Detroit as a theology major for two years, then left to get married and raise four wonderful children. After 34 years that marriage ended, Susan came to terms with her true sexual orientation and is now married to an incredible woman; they have a son who is now a junior in college.

Always knowing she needed to respond to a spiritual 'call', Susan left the Catholic Church and joined the Episcopal church in 1987. In 1988, she returned to complete her theological education. She received a BA in social justice theology in 1994, a MA in pastoral ministry in 1998, and a doctorate in spiritual psychology and discernment in 2002 from Christ Church, Oxford. She was also ordained as an Interfaith Minister from New Seminary in NYC in 2002.

Susan moved to Ann Arbor, MI in 1985. After finishing her studies she has engaged in a wide variety of ministerial and educational endeavors. She has directed an Interfaith Soup kitchen, been a chaplain at a peace and social justice campus ministry for the University of Michigan, served as a minister at an

Episcopal mission church, and as a minister at an Interfaith Center. For 10 years, she taught religious studies at Siena Heights, a Dominican University in Adrian, MI. In 2004, Susan joined the faculty at the University of Michigan in the School of Public Health, where she became the Associate Director of the Life Sciences and Society program, working at the intersection of genetic and scientific technical advances in human reproduction and how those issues intersect with the teachings of a wide variety of faith traditions. In 2007, Susan was offered a joint appointment to also teach in the Program on Intergroup Relations, where she teaches undergraduates utilizing a social justice pedagogy examining identity issues and how power, privilege and oppression operates in our society. This combinational work is a joy in her life. Three years ago Susan took this pedagogy and began offering similar courses to graduate students in Public Health, Higher Educations and Social Work.

For the past 16 years Susan has also been deeply involved in the Interfaith Roundtable of Washtenaw County. The mission of this organization is to dialogue across religious differences to find commonality, but most importantly, to explore differences and how they can inform faith expressions. Susan was the chair of the board for 10 years, and is now serving as the Co-director of the organization. As well, she is a member of a Meti (mixed blood) Native American society that works to teach non-native Americans the beauty and truth that springs from ancient and long-lived spiritual truth that has lived on our continent for millennia.

At the end of 2016, Susan will retire from the U-M. Her heart's desire is to engage more deeply in contemplative endeavors and to braid together some of what she have learned and lived into the new millennia, especially as it relates to how we have lost touch with our spiritual roots, and how wisdom is speaking so strongly to us today. Becoming a postulant in the OOOW has been a true blessing in her life and she is so looking forward to the chapters ahead. Susan became a postulant in Spring 2016 and took vows as a monk at the gathering in February 2017.



**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. David has been employed at Texas State University since 2004, working as an academic advisor

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 (Abbot) 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. He became a postulant in October 2016 and took vows as a monk at the annual gathering in February 2017.