

## ***Thanks for giving us a piece of your minds!***

Out of the almost-600 attendees of January Adventure (JA) 2016, three-hundred-twenty took time to complete questionnaires. That's better than 50% (!) and includes attendees from fifty first-timers to twenty-two 12th-timers, and everything in between. We are delighted to have all of your unfeigned opinions and ideas to plug into our planning for next year, and to consider for future-future January Adventures. Thank you!

Naturally we couldn't post all of the responses (but, believe us! We've studied them all), so we decided to select a few from each category that gave the tone and tenor of the majority. Here we go!

JA 2016 was "one of the best!" "Excellent" "Thank you! It's always a great weekend." "Just as refreshing as ever and a blessing." And from a 12-time attender: "This has been the best yet! Most relevant JA for me so far!"

Our speakers were Rev. Robin Meyers, senior minister at Mayflower UCC for 30 years and a Distinguished Professor of Social Justice in the Philosophy Department at Oklahoma City University; and Rev. Lori Walke, holds a juris doctorate in 2009 and passed the Oklahoma Bar Exam, and then Lori earned a Masters of Divinity degree from Philips Theological Seminary in 2011. She was ordained in the United Church of Christ in 2012 and serves as assistant minister to Robin.

Here are some of your words about them: Rev. Meyers: "dynamite" "thought provoking" "courageous"; and Rev. Walke: "a rising star," "a revelation," "great to have a youthful perspective." Both were "Challenging, engaging, thought-provoking speakers with important messages and new perspectives." "These teachers scintillate!" "Both treated us like adults and were not fearful of stretching our minds and hearts." And one or two: "I appreciated their take on everything. I do wish they had been more extemporaneous and not read from a script."

We were bold to have two relatively unknown working ministers: "To my surprise, both were excellent!" "Came having never heard of them, and they are tops." "We didn't know what to expect and were delighted."

You might have noticed we had one each -- a man and a woman. We also had one each -- a mature, experienced minister who is a Distinguished Professor at Oklahoma City University ("Enjoyed the pastoral and academic being combined"); and a Millennial, an ordained minister who's also a lawyer, a thirty-something with innovative views and insight on her fellow Millennials ("Fresh, lively presentations!").

So many compliments for both, and there were comments saying there was news attendees can use in their lives and churches: "This helps local church-goers reach and not settle for status quo." "So pleased to hear that we need to renew our

activism.” “Both speakers challenge us to evaluate current religious practice.” “Both are able to make one think about ways to re-make a church.”

The unexpected -- and therefore dearest -- remarks were about elements of January Adventure we failed to include specifically in the questionnaire...the things that you remembered when we forgot. These remarks, and many more like them, were in the “comments” section, and some, when there wasn’t enough space elsewhere, were in the margins. You wanted us to know. Thank you!

The traditional Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial was special to many: “MLKjr program was the best we’ve ever had!” “MLKjr program was great, and I’m glad you made it part of Saturday evening (program)!” “I loved the MLKjr tribute!” “Very good way to present the MLKjr tribute/remembrance. Beautiful!” “I cried!” “Best MLKjr program ever!”

And the new moderator received kudos: “Billie was an inspiration...the delightful glue to JA activities.” “Top marks for mistress of ceremonies Billy (sic)!! Invite her back as she was superb!” Along with Rev. Dave Hanson: “Dave Hanson does a great job with Lectio Divina.” “Thanks to Dave Hanson for Lectio Divina. Leadership and hand crosses that are so helpful to so many!”

And last, but certainly not least, suggestions for the upcoming January Adventures: These were among the many good ones: “Need more time for Q&A.” “Please! Let’s have an African-American voice!” “Please, have some meet and greet sessions!” “(Give us) more information about any discussion groups held on Saturday afternoon.” “Possibly have (Lectio Divina meditation) in the evening or late afternoon.” “Print (attendees’) home-towns a bit larger on name tags.” “Still need additional bathrooms for women.” “Please correct (JA) Epworth address (on web material) and map locator so GPS recognizes route.” “Would like something to do Saturday afternoon on campus that would supplement the experience.”

So there you have it! We’ll be talking more about January Adventure 2016 in future posts -- including where responding attendees called home, how many January Adventures responders had attended (more than you think attended all twelve!) and Robin and Lori will answer some Q&A questions we didn’t have time for during the event.

January Adventure 2017 is shaping up to be another humdinger, with some additions we know you’re going to like. Announcements with more details will be made soon. Registration will be this summer, so stay tuned!