

## Centennial Convocation

*Rev. Dr. Rebecca Parker*

***Parker**, who has served as president of Starr King since 1990, spoke the evening of Sept. 23, 2004, at the school's 100th anniversary convocation, a celebration of faith, music, art and joy. Here she honored those whose scholarship and loving support carried Starr King School to the beginning of a second century of educating Unitarian Universalist ministers and progressive religious leaders.*

Those who have gone before us,  
Rise up and call their names.

On this night  
As we begin our one hundredth year  
We remember with gratitude  
Those who built this house of study  
This community of teaching and learning  
That we now know  
As Starr King School for the Ministry.

Earl Morse Wilbur, first head of the school  
A sweet-spirited scholar minister  
Who spent his life collecting the books  
And doing the research  
That would make it possible for us to  
Know our history.  
May we remember him by echoing  
His dedication  
To making connections  
That cross the boundary of death.

Naokatsu Nobushiro  
First entering class, first graduating class  
Pioneering minister  
Connecting the cultures of Japan  
And the Western United States  
May we remember him by our open engagement  
with cross-cultural life, learning and ministry.

William S. Morgan,  
An exuberant and loving human being,  
A scholar with wide ranging interests  
From psychology and philosophy of religion  
To poetry and music.  
Who taught for decades here  
Then succeeded Wilbur, becoming  
The second head of the school  
May we remember him by  
Never letting scholarship be separated from beauty,  
Or church be isolated from the world.  
His loving family and our celebration tonight  
Is blessed by the presence of his daughter  
Elaine Morgan Clark.

Aurelia Henry Reinhardt  
Sustaining trustee  
International peace worker,  
Advocate for women's education,  
Scholar, religious citizen,  
Denominational leader.  
When the continued existence of our school was at risk,  
Her persistent and savvy advocacy assured our survival.  
May we remember her by making the scope  
Of our concern as wide as the world,  
Attending as she did  
To the importance of institutions  
With persistence as hearty as weeds.

Josiah Bartlett,  
Brilliant and imaginative educator,  
Who dreamed up and put in place  
Nearly 50 years ago, a set of  
Educational practices that have given the school  
Its distinctive focus on  
Student centered education  
And told us that ministry  
Is the best seat in the  
Theater of life.  
Laile Bartlett, a bright galaxy of fiery intellect  
And warmth partnered with Joe in all his labors.  
We rejoice that she and two of her children are here tonight.  
May we remember Joe by  
Our own brilliant acts of bold imagination.

There are so many more names  
That crowd our memories and heart tonight  
Of the people and events from a hundred years.

Arnold Crompton, librarian  
Roz Reynolds, who led the effort to assure  
In perpetuity a feminist presence at the school.

The guiding lights of more recent years,  
Robert Kimball, Gordon McKeeman,  
Til Evans

Core and associate faculty who've changed lives here,  
Ward Tabler, Horton Colbert, Ron Cook, Ed Setchko,  
Yielbonzie Charles Johnson

The teachers with us now,  
Deeply devoted to our students and the school  
Clare Fischer, Alicia Forsey, Patti Lawrence,  
Rosemary Chinnici  
With the leadership of our esteemed dean  
Ibrahim Farajaje'

Trustees who've kept the faith and led the way  
Art and Arliss Ungar,  
Rosemary Bray McNatt,  
Rig Currie.

The countless graduates whose ministries and witness  
Touch the world with transforming fire.

The honorary degree recipients  
Who've exemplified our hopes.  
Sonia Sanchez called this week to send us her blessing.

Tonight we give thanks for all that has been  
At this small and determined school  
Holding fast to Unitarian Universalist values  
And seeking to expand what is best of our religion  
Into ever widening and deepening applications.

There is nothing easy about what this school has done  
And is striving to do now.

Tonight, most of all,  
I want to honor the struggle --

If we have learned anything in 100 years  
It is that it is not easy to hold fast  
To that which is good.

It takes wild devotion  
Deep desire  
Boundless generosity  
And a capacity to be transformed  
And to create change.

So, let us tonight honor  
The struggle to establish and maintain an educational  
Institution in a religious tradition  
Still maturing in its understanding of the importance

Of investing generously in its institutions  
And upholding what is best in them.

The struggle to educate with an unwavering commitment  
To human wholeness and liberation  
In a world that wants education to form people into preconceived models,  
Stamp them out in an assembly line of conformity  
Rather than release the wild and precious life  
That unfolds in mystery and surprise from each soul.

The struggle to become truly hospitable to the diversity  
and particularity of human experiences and cultures  
and to educate to counter oppressions  
and create just community  
as we engage with histories of domination, exploitation,  
prejudice and fear that continually morph into new forms,  
The struggle here, now, in our centennial year,  
To stand for all that makes the beloved community possible  
Against the forces that would tear us apart --  
Within and around us.

The struggle to persistently hold together the elements  
Of life that must cohere for life to flourish:  
Body and soul  
Beauty and justice  
Love and accountability  
Individualism and community  
Politics and prayer  
Hard work and carefree play  
To welcome in joyful interaction  
Muslim, Christian and Jew  
Buddhist, Hindu and Pagan  
The struggle to teach and to minister in ways that claim  
The full embrace of all that is our life  
In this paradise  
That is our world.