

The Rev. Debbie Starnes is a Priest in the Inclusive Celtic Church. A Methodist turned Baptist turned Episcopalian, Deb left mainstream organized religion in 1996 to be ordained in an independent Anglican church. As one of the founding ministers of the parish, she was blessed to watch the small community grow and flourish as they become the hands and feet of God in this world.

Eight years later she was called to Pastor the parish which tripled in size as it multiplied its outreach through a homeless ministry, a food pantry for people living with HIV/AIDS, a strong pastoral counseling program, active participation with local civic organizations and bars, and numerous community events. From Easter egg hunts for the local families in the low income neighborhood in which the parish was located to hosting World AIDS Day, the Parish quickly became a safe haven for many who once had felt outcast by organized religion.

Deb or Priest as she is affectionately known to many of her friends is a graduate of John Brown University. She is no stranger to the small town church and the challenges it brings to the GLBTI community. While ministry is her love and avocation, Deb's professional life has centered on fundraising and program development. She has spent 31 years developing programs and raising money to help people with disabilities and developmental disabilities, people living with mental illness, and people living with HIV/AIDS.

As a minister Deb is an avid writer and the author of a popular blog and written series entitled "Pastor's Ponderings." Titles include "Faith is Just Quantum Physics", "A Politics of Compassion", and "Equal in the Eyes of God." Deb believes in equality of humankind, justice, and the love of a greater being for ALL people. These are things her denomination stands for as well. Her interest lies not in manmade rules of religion but in what she believes are the true teachings of a greater being who is called by many names. These are teachings that require us to be fair and just in our dealings with one another and to love all others as we love ourselves.

Deb is fascinated by vampires, believe in things we cannot see, and understand that a greater energy "speaks" to many people in many ways. Therefore she do not deny or judge the beliefs of others but tries to learn from them instead. Deb truly believes that we are all messengers on this earthly plane and until we begin to listen - truly listen - we will never be able to embrace one another in this world and beyond.

Deb and her wife Lynn will be moving to Eureka Springs in late August. They have been blessed with a wonderfully enchanted retreat complete with cottages and a chapel. Deb and Lynn are looking forward to sharing Garden of Dreams with others through weddings, retreats, private getaways, and spiritual gathering open to all those seeking a greater energy and the equality of love.

