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Let the river flow MP3.mp3

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DURATION

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START OF TRANSCRIPT

[00:00:00] Speaker1

So what is this person in this photo doing? Any any ideas. Hiking. Very good. That is true. Swamp. Yes. There's water involved. They are standing. Absolutely. They. Straddling a river. Yes, they are, in fact, straddling the headwaters of the Colorado River at La Poudre Pass. Now, when you think of the Colorado River, something more like this photo might come to mind, right? And both of these things are true. The Colorado starts at a place that you can easily straddle. And it is 200 feet across at its widest point. 1440 miles long. And as deep as 30 feet. The headwaters may be small, but they continuously flow. You might even call the powder past the wellspring of the Colorado, if you will. In this message series Starting Small. We're exploring having the courage to start new things, even when we're unsure of the outcome, even when we don't have everything we need to finish, but we at least have enough to begin. Reverend Ken talk last week about what we called the planting team, that small group that gathered to start WellSprings 17 years ago. I know time flies, as they say. I was one of those people. And I'd like to share with you today some of my experiences during that time. Reverend Ken also mentioned that the planning team worked together for over a year before WellSprings launched. And I say WellSprings, but at that time we started meeting. We were as yet unnamed. Still, the northern Chester County, Pennsylvania new congregation of the Philadelphia Wilmington Metro Plan, or new congregation for short? And unlike most Unitarian Universalist congregations, ours had a minister before it had congregants.

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Generally, a congregation must have a minimum of 30 adult members to apply to be a member of congregation of the Unitarian Universalist Association or UUA, which is done before any discussion of hiring a minister. That's probably not surprising, then, understanding this that most congregations who meet the minimum threshold to become a member of congregation stay small. More than one in three congregations has less than 50 members, in fact. So WellSprings was an experiment in starting small but not staying there. And the idea was to have a founding minister to rapidly grow the congregation. Reverend Ken was hired directly by the UUA and the congregation was supported initially by funds from the denomination, from the Regional UUA District's Chalice Lighters Program and from our sponsor Congregation Mainline Unitarian Church in Devon, Pennsylvania. Thank you. Thank you to all of them. Absolutely. We would not be here today without any of them. Reverend Ken started in August 2005 and in September had several focus groups. Several focus groups to discern what people were looking for in this new congregation. Right. Understand your market. That's the first rule of entrepreneurship, right? He made invitations to join the planning team at the conclusion of those focus groups and we started meeting in October. This. Next slide, please, is the now 17 year old. Mead composition book that I used as my journal for that nine week course that Reverend Kent facilitated for the planters as we got to know each other.

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The first entry was dated October 17th, 2005. This course was called Listening to Our Lives, which is now better known as our signature small group WellSprings 2.0. Now, could you raise your hand if you participated in in 2.0? All right. Definitely some folks have if you haven't yet had the opportunity. I know our small groups team is working to once again offer 2.0 in the very near future. I highly recommend it. In 2.0, we talk about a lot of big topics, including including suffering, death, God's salvation, all the big ones and the one that had the most impact on me at the time. Spiritual practice. I remember describing myself and I think my husband certainly remembers me describing myself and remembers me being this way as late, lost and can't find my stuff. I was a mess. I had so much going on, so much good stuff. It was it was a time of real abundance in my life, but I was really overwhelmed by it. And our discussions and listening to our lives helped me clarify my priorities, including my priorities around my own spiritual life, and transformed how I approach the many competing demands I faced, both personally and professionally, especially at that point in my career. For the planting team. This experience was also collectively really important. Getting to know each other in this safe and spacious container of listening to our lives built trust among and between us.

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The opportunity to start not with doing, but with being. Not the how, but the why of WellSprings was such a gift, and I believe it was really critical to WellSprings success. Shortly after we had completed Listening to Our Lives, we had a church consultant, Tom Bandy, spend a Friday evening in all day Saturday with us to coach us on developing what we called our DNA, our beliefs, values, mission and vision that would define and guide our congregation going forward. And he encouraged us to really, really take our time and doing this, not to rush it. But to leave space and time for discerning our good news that we had to share with the world. And so what had been a planned September 2006 launch became a planned January 27 launch. Not a small thing, right? Remember, we have our venture capitalists behind us that were very intently watching every move, but we knew it was the right thing to do and they supported us in it. We began working to discern our DNA through our individual spiritual practices, interviewing people from the community, attending services at non-UK congregations locally. And I know this sounds a little creepy, but it actually was really, really informative spending time at local coffee shops, grocery stores and bookstores just listening and observing what people were doing and saying. In the summer of 2006 in pairs, the planting team led listening to our live sessions for small groups comprised of people who had expressed interest in the congregation.

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Really, our very first WellSprings 2.0 sessions. We also started thinking about a name during that time. On August 17th, 2005, we discussed a number of potential names, including Bright Light, New U, u gateway and one that makes me giggle now. Verizon a play a combination of spirit and horizon. No doubt it worked for Verizon, right? So, you know, go to what works. But we did narrow it down to two. Chrysalis and WellSpring. After some debate about which would be more difficult to spell for anyone trying to find us on the Internet. WellSpring one. With the addition of an S at the end to reflect our belief that, as we phrase it at the time, there are many streams that flow to the same ocean and many paths paved with grace and wisdom upon which to explore our faith. I say as we phrase it at the time, because, as some of you may remember, we recharged our DNA back in 2018 with broad input from all of you. It was always intended to be a living document, and I expect our congregation will continue to iterate our DNA as it grows and changes over time. So my last entry and that planning team composition book. Was August 1926. It was around that time that the planning team split apart into our doing teams. Each responsible for a specific aspect of WellSprings, including religious education, programing, stewardship, Sunday morning hospitality and keeping the congregation running from a business perspective.

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And after several months of preparation on January 21, 2007, WellSprings had its official launch, and it was everything we hoped it would be. And then in a moment of sheer panic, we realized that we were going to have to do it every Sunday from then on. But that is a story for another day. Whether you have been here since the beginning, like me or adjourning for the very first time today. You have an experience of WellSprings, too. And just as I've shared some of mind, mine, we would love you to share some of yours, too. So as Kathleen mentioned, we have the WellSprings River, which thank you so much, Carole Breslin, for continuing to tape it up so it doesn't fall down. Very much appreciated. And it flows from left to right with the far left side representing pre 2005. And you're marking us up through 2000 to the right third of it or so is blank and that represents the future. And as Kathleen also mentioned, there are some Post-its on the chairs around you. There's a whole bunch of them also and markers and pens on the half wall over to the right side of Bell Hall as well. And what we'd love you to do is. Oh. And by the way, for anyone participating online, people are standing by, Jessica standing by in the back to record your comments as well and put them on Post-its and get them up on the WellSprings River timeline, too.

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So please post those in the chat. And for this exercise, it's very simple. You'll just need two Post-its. And what I'd like you to do is on one of your Post-its. Or in the chat. For those of you participating virtually, please write your name and the year your first came to WellSprings. And if you like, you might add a few words describing what you remember about that first experience. Let's take a minute and do that now. The following is a message from WellSprings congregation. Looks like we had a lot of input from our livestream, which is fantastic. And as Jessica is finishing that, finishing putting those up. I also want to let you all know about another timeline activity that we have going on throughout the month of May. If you could bring up the next slide. So this is. An invitation to contribute to this timeline that we're creating in honor of Reverend Kent's ministry again throughout the month of May in anticipation of his retirement at the end of June. We're looking for your stories, and you can do this in whatever form you have them documents, photos, videos, music, pretty much anything you can think of. You can upload to this site. You can see what it looks like on this slide. You'll see I've already put a few things on there. There's the Philadelphia Wilmington Metro Growth Strategy from which WellSprings was birthed.

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That is a picture of Tom Bandy, who was the consultant who came to visit with us. Also, Owen and my husband, Owen and I were the first WellSprings wedding. I went ahead and threw that in there too. That also happened in 2007. And so please add add from from whatever you have, whatever you may have collected, kept any or any stories that you have. If you don't have an artifact, please share those. It's very simple and easy. Jessica has a bit of an explainer video that's a few minutes long that you can watch, and there'll be more information about that in the WellSprings Weekly. It was in this week, and it'll be in for the next few weeks as well. So please look for that and we look forward to your contributions. So back in the summer of 2006, I jotted these words in my trusty composition book, a quote from filmmaker Ken Burns. Maybe you two can add something that will last and be beautiful. Maybe you two can add something that will last and be beautiful. It resonated with me because I very much hoped those words would be true for WellSprings. And it has lasted and it is beautiful. And sometimes when I stop to reflect, I get really overwhelmed by that. It's amazing. This is amazing. This is amazing. And this place means a lot to me. But let me be clear. Wellsprings is not mine.

[00:13:52] Speaker1

At least no more so than. Than it is all of yours. I'm just one of those stickies up there. Like a river. WellSprings will never be finished. Like a river. It will change over time. We've captured today some of our hopes and dreams for WellSprings future. We're going to take pictures. We're going to take a video. We're going to save this. As the river of WellSprings continues to flow. May we all have the opportunity to realize those hopes and dreams by participating in the continual creation and recreation of this beloved community. May it last. And may it be beautiful. Will you pray with me? God of life and love. As we reflect on where we have been and where we are going as a community, may we do so with honesty, compassion and trust? May we follow our core commitment to listen deeply with humility and vulnerability? May we honestly evaluate where we are in the hope of courageously going where we are called to be? And may we be open to the ongoing evolution of our vision, mission, beliefs, and commitments as our community changes and grows. May the WellSprings of our beloved community continue to flow. Among us. And beyond us. For this prayer and all the prayers on our hearts this morning. We say amen. If you enjoyed this message and would like to support the mission of WellSprings, go to our web site WellSprings uua org. That's WellSprings the letters u u dot org.

END OF TRANSCRIPT



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