

# Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Martin Woulfe

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library  
*People of Faith* Oral History project

Interview # PFM-A-L-2017-039

Martin Woulfe, who traveled a long life's path before finding his calling as a Unitarian Universalist minister, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *People of Faith – Mosaic of Faiths* Oral History project.

Interview dates & location:

Date: May 18, 2017

Location: Woulfe home in Springfield, Illinois

Dates: May 25, Jun 1, Jun 7

Location: Abraham Lincoln Unitarian Universalist Church, Springfield, Illinois

Interview Format: Digital audio

Interviewer: Mark R. DePue, Director of Oral History, ALPL

Transcription by: \_\_\_\_\_

Edited by: \_\_\_\_\_

Total Pages: \_\_\_\_\_ Total Time: 2:51 + 2:17 + 2:10 + 2:05 / 2.85 + 2.28 + 2.17 + 2.08  
= 9.38 hrs.

Session 1: Early years in suburban south Chicago through college graduation

Session 2: Post college career, decision to attend seminary and U-U principles

Session 3: Experiences at seminary, internship and setbacks and Maryville Academy

Session 4: Interim experiences and move in 2003 to Springfield to become minister at Abraham Lincoln U-U congregation

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on July 13, 2017.

The interviews are archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield, Illinois.

Transcript  
being processed

## Abstract

### Martin Woulfe, *People of Faith*, PFM-A-L-2017-039

**Biographical Information Overview of Interview:** Martin Woulfe was born on August 9, 1960 in Chicago Heights, Illinois, and grew up in a traditional Catholic family. He graduated from St. Ignatius College Prep School in 1978, and then attended Loras College, a Catholic institution in Dubuque, Iowa. He spent one year studying in Ireland, an experience that expanded his outlook on life. By the time of his graduation in 1982, Martin's views on Christianity were evolved considerably. He was married shortly after graduation and held a variety of jobs over the next several years, often working at his father's printing business; none of these jobs were entirely satisfying to him. On Christmas Eve, 1987, recently divorced and working in an uninspiring job, he was involved in a serious car accident. While recovering, he took stock of his life, and while working at a Kinkos in the Hyde Park neighborhood of Chicago, decided to enroll in Meadville/Lombard Theological School (M/L), a Unitarian Universalist (UU) Seminary.

Woulfe did well in the seminary and as a graduate student during his first two years, even while continuing to work, maintaining a grueling schedule. He started an internship at a UU congregation in Dallas, Texas, but that experience ended with his dismissal, which led Martin to once again assess his life and future. He took a job at the Maryville Children's Reception Center in Chicago from 1993 to 1997, where he worked with pre-adolescent and teen-aged children, performing a variety of duties in a very challenging environment. Martin then returned to the seminary, and had a second internship, this time a very successful posting at a congregation in Palatine, Illinois. He graduated from M/L in May, 1998. He also met Angela Aznarte, a Spanish immigrant on a student visa, during this period. The couple were married in 1999, at the same time Martin took a position at the Sheridan Community Group Home, an extremely challenging environment due to the behavioral issues of the home's young residents. In 2001 he was hired as the interim minister at the Unitarian Universalist Community Church of Park Forest, Illinois, a position he found very satisfying. He was ordained in the spring of 2003. Following that, he was called by the Abraham Lincoln UU Congregation of Springfield, Illinois after that church had conducted a lengthy search process. At the time of this interview, Reverend Woulfe still served that congregation. During his tenure, the congregation has doubled in size, and found many ways to serve the community through its ministry of social justice. During the course of the interview, Reverend Woulfe discussed the Unitarian Universalist history and theology at length, and offered his insights into the UU's future.

**Subject Headings/Key Words:** Unitarian Universalist religion; Abraham Lincoln UU Congregation, Springfield, Illinois; Maryville Academy (Children's Reception Center), Chicago, IL; Sheridan Community II Group Home; Clyde Printing, Chicago, IL; Loras College; life as a foreign student in Ireland; Mayor's Office of Employment and Training (Chicago); Angela Aznarte;

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