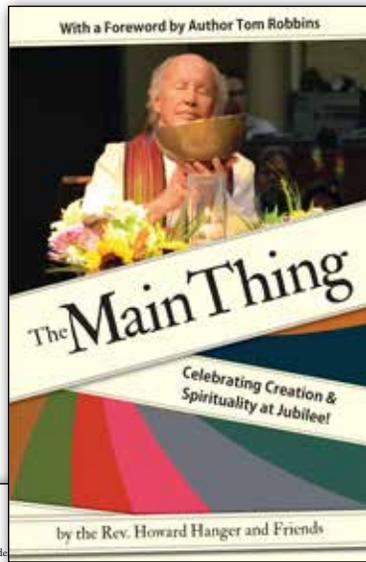


Project: Church history. Cover and interior design and layout.

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The Main Thing, by the Rev. Howard Hanger and Friends



THE MAIN THING

CELEBRATING
CREATION & SPIRITUALITY
AT JUBILEE!

THE MAIN THING PRESS
ASHEVILLE, NC

Benediction by Tom Robbins

Can you imagine a church — a Christian church — that is as free of fundamentalist fear-mongering as it is of modernist milquetoast namby-pambyism; a church where every clichéd crumb of cant has been swept out the door with a soul-cleansing broom, an exuberant church where Sunday morning is a lot like Saturday night?

Jubilee! in Asheville, North Carolina is just such a church, and the fact that as a boy I was Sunday-schooled within an inch of rigor mortis by rigid Baptist congregations not sixty miles over the mountains from the place, makes Jubilee! shine all the brighter in my consciousness. Psychologically at least, I withdrew from church attendance after watching my first Tarzan movie at age six, but if I lived now in closer proximity to Jubilee!, whose worshippers, like spiritual Tarzans, regularly swing on metaphoric vines in the free space between heaven and earth, there's an excellent chance I'd be a member there.

The guiding light at Jubilee! is its pastor, Howard Hanger, a selection of whose sermons are collected in this volume. More than anyone else, Howard sets the tone at Jubilee!, and readers will notice quickly the absence in his sermons of both brimstone and harp. Neither threatening us with eternal damnation nor seducing us with promises of a better life, Pastor Howard keeps the nitty to the

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Joy and Play

(from a conversation between Howard Hanger
and Matthew Fox, November 16, 2013)

MATTHEW FOX

Thomas Aquinas said: "Joy is a human's noblest act." I just lived with that for years and wondered — what if we re-did civilization around our noblest act? What would education look like if joy mattered? What would worship be like if joy mattered — you've been doing it, Howard. What would economics look like? Politics? Why don't we shoot for a high bar, like our noblest act? There are forces that want to keep joy out. So you are up against powerful forces. Joy — why don't we shoot for that kind of civilization?

HOWARD HANGER

The old Christian church called the leader the celebrant. Where did that go? I remember, when I was ordained, it was these six men — it was all men at that point in time — dressed in black, black robes, not looking happy about being where they were — ordaining us — and I remember saying, "I don't want to grow up to be

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NAVIGATION

Where did Jubilee! come from? Who inspired Howard Hanger to build this spiritual ship in the small, then-hardly-known, mountain city of Asheville, North Carolina? What voices move him and keep him moving? Also, who moves alongside him as the Sundays approach and recede wave-like, washing folks ashore for an hour of song and dance in worship? What is worship in Jubilee!?

Chapter 1

PORT OF CALL
by Minister of Ritual and Guidance
Howard Hanger

"Death's A Life Changer" wouldn't be a great bumper sticker; but certainly as good as "Death is Nature's Way of Telling You to Slow Down" or even, "I Wouldn't Be Caught Dead With a Necrophiliac."

Death is a life-changer, however. Even if you're not the one who's doing the dying. My father's death drastically changed my life; and it could well be said that it was his death that put me on the path which led to Jubilee!

My dad was a Methodist minister. As was my granddad. Both were graceful, well-read gentlemen. Both got in trouble with the Methodist Church.

Granddad was a pacifist and refused to allow the American (or any country's) flag to be displayed in the church. He adamantly contended that "religion and nationality

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