

Rev. Susan Sparks

As a trial lawyer turned standup comedian and Baptist minister, Susan Sparks is America's only female comedian with a pulpit. A North Carolina native, Susan received her B.A. from UNC and was President of her Senior Class. She received a law degree from Wake Forest University.

After ten years as a lawyer moonlighting as a standup, she left her practice and spent two years on a solo trip around the world, including working with Mother Teresa's mission in Calcutta, climbing Mt. Kilimanjaro, and driving the Alaska Highway. Upon returning home, she entered Union Theological Seminary in New York City, where she earned a Master of Divinity and wrote an honors thesis on humor and religion. Susan is currently the senior pastor Madison Avenue Baptist Church and the first woman in its 170-year history.

Susan is also a professional comedian touring nationally with a Rabbi and a Muslim comic in the "Laugh in Peace Tour." Her work with humor, healing and spirituality has been featured in O (The Oprah) Magazine, The New York Times and on numerous media networks including ABC, CNN and CBS.

A nationally syndicated columnist with GateHouse Media as well as a TEDx speaker, Susan's first book, *Laugh Your Way to Grace: Reclaiming the Spiritual Power of Humor*, was named one of the best spiritual books of 2010 and has sold over 25,000 copies. Susan is the recent recipient of the University of North Carolina "Habey" Award for the Arts presented to Susan by comedian and alum Lewis Black.

Coats Guiles, Broadway Producer, best described Susan as a cross between Joel Osteen, Ellen DeGeneres and Nancy Grace.