

## studio

## THE BACK STORY

A Man of Many Secrets,  
Tongue-Tied No More

"PostSecret: Confessions on Life, Death and God" is the latest installment of Frank Warren's public affirmation franchise, an endeavor he began in 2004. Warren, 45, invites strangers to mail their secret thoughts and worries to his Germantown home. The most artful get posted on his Web site and a selection are on display at Hillyer Art Space this month. Warren has published four PostSecret books; a fifth, concerning spirituality, will come out later this year.



At Hillyer, the postcard-size musings vary from heartbreaking ("God forgot to give me talent") to snarky ("I convinced my friend that I was Jesus. She believed me"). A wall set aside for visitor confessions reads like a community bulletin board free-for-all, what with its public flirtations and haters ("I think some of these secrets are STUPID").

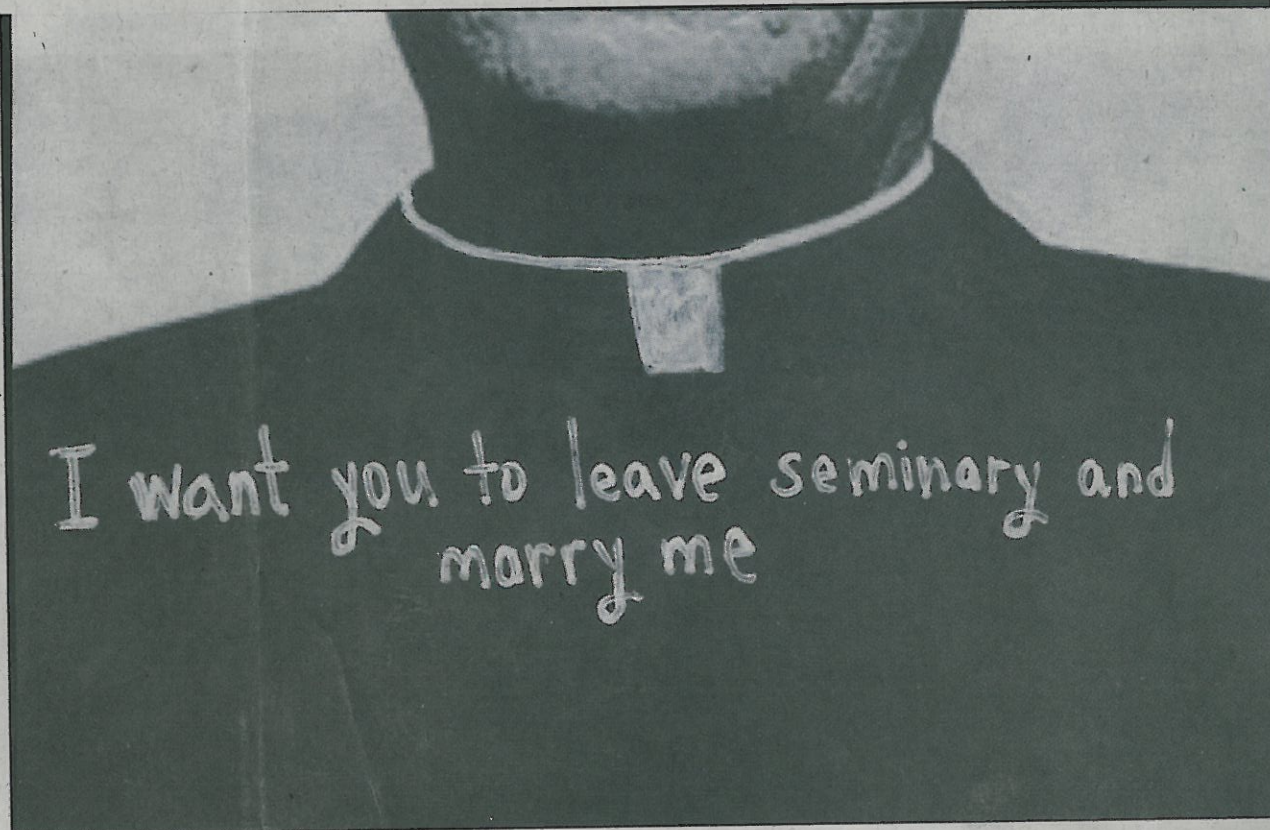
Below, Warren talks about his failed attempt to join the Pentecostal Church and his time spent working on a suicide hotline; both experiences inspired the PostSecret phenomenon.

At the age of 12, after my parents divorced, I moved from the San Fernando Valley to Springfield, Illinois. At the time I felt lost. I was searching for meaning. I had a friend whose father was a minister at the Pentecostal church there. At first the ritual and the outward expression of worship seemed comical to me. But the more I attended, the more I felt a part of something. Eventually I began going three or four times a week and each time after service praying with great devotion and trying to become a real member of the church. I did repentance and baptism. And then, finally, I was required to present the outward evidence of speaking in tongues. For about two years I struggled to speak but never did. At the time I felt like I had failed God.

I volunteered for a national suicide prevention hotline in college and then again about 10 years ago. I listened to anonymous strangers sharing deep emotions and secrets on the phone. A few months into that journey, I discovered that callers weren't that interested in the information I had been trained to give them. They just wanted to hear a person on the other end of the line who would listen in a nonjudgmental way.

Both experiences come together in the community-based Web site [www.postsecret.com](http://www.postsecret.com). The deepest meaning of PostSecret is to create a safe, anonymous "place" where people can hear unheard voices and share untold stories.

— Interview conducted and condensed by Jessica Dawson



Tithing and Other Offerings		
Date	Ward or branch	
Name (please print) _____		
Full address _____		
Tithing	\$	
Fast offering	\$	
Ward missionary fund	\$	
General missionary fund	\$	
Humanitarian aid	\$	
Temple construction	\$	
Other (specify)	\$	
TOTAL	\$	
Checks(s)	Currency	Coin
\$	\$	\$
All donations to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints become the property of the Church to be used at the Church's discretion in its missionary program.		
WHITE—Place with tithing and other offerings in envelope. Give envelope only to a member of the bishopric or branch presidency.		
CANARY—Keep for your own records.		

5/01 Printed in the USA. 31592

