



Unitarian Universalist
Retired Ministers and Partners Association



Elderberries

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www.UURMaPA.org

FALL CONFERENCE REPORT

“A NEW NORMAL”?

October 18–20, 2021

“Splendid and significant!”

Our annual Fall Conference was again offered virtually over three days in nine sessions (thrice daily, from 1–2:30, 4–6 and 7:30–9 PM ET). The dual goal of the conference was to create an experience during which participants could explore a provocative theme (*The New Normal*) AND

connect more deeply in community, albeit in virtual space. The Registrar reported that 150 retired ministers and partners attended, with eight invited guests joining in to represent the UUA and UUMA.

ALSO FEATURED INSIDE THIS ELDERBERRIES:

- 3 • NEXT Virtual Conference: February 28–March 2
- 4 • Latest UURMaPA Leadership Transitions
- 5 • ??-UUMA Chapter amid UURMaPA?? – WAYNE ARNASON
- 5 • Latest Retiring Colleagues
- 6 • Book Bench — Offerings from MICHAEL D. O'KELLY
- 12 • *What's Up With* NEAL FERRIS & SYLVIA FOSTER?
- 13 • Obituaries

Continued, on pages 7–11...



The UURMaPA Board

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elderberries@uurmapa.org

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PRESIDENT'S PONDERINGS

The winter holidays have come and gone, yet I find myself reluctant to completely “put them away.” Outdoor lights still twinkle in our front yard tree, on the porch and in the windows. They might remain there until Valentines Day and on through Ash Wednesday. The return of the light is a reality as the sun sets later each afternoon, so the need for this extra sparkle may not be as crucial as it was in early December. But the lights will stay up and on—for awhile at least.

As I removed the major portion of holiday trimmings, I reflected on how these days have changed over the years. Of course in the last two years our Hanukkah, Christmas, Yule and New Year’s holiday-keeping has been affected by the pandemic, altering how and with whom we celebrate. Being a retired clergy person puts another spin on those changes as well.

Winter holidays as a parish minister were incredibly special and I cherished both repeating the time-honored rituals and the challenge of mixing in a new “tradition” here and there. I looked forward to it every year—the planning, the frustrations, the music, the joy of candle-lighting. It was always that one time of year when a special sense of community and hope could prevail.

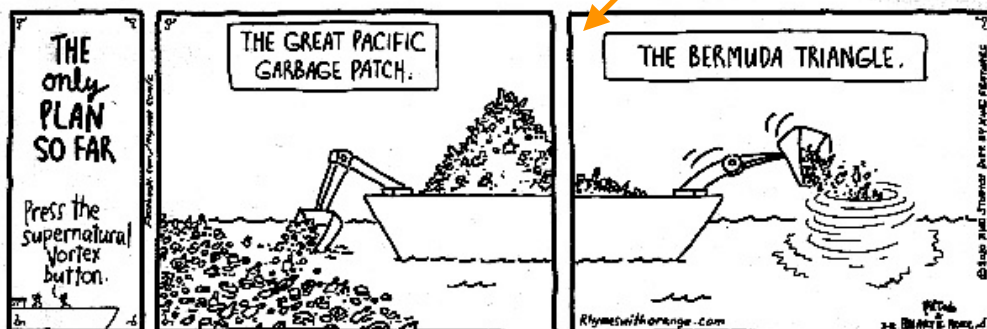
But ministry in that season was often all-consuming. Personal celebrations and family needs were sometimes shoehorned into the weeks leading up to the big day. I’ve been asked if I miss all that—the connection to that larger community and being in the center of it all when the holidays roll around. Frankly, I don’t.

I found in retirement that I can choose more carefully what to honor and how to celebrate; what traditions to carry on and how to adjust and scale back. With the burden of congregational expectations gone, I’ve found a more personal meaning in this season, this wintertime balance of light and dark.

The act of putting up and taking down the tree has become a kind of mindfulness exercise: what to keep, what to let go. Here is time for wistful remembrances of holidays past and yes, some rueful memories, too.

So as we move through the fallow times of winter, before spring bursts in on us (as it sometimes does in the northeast), let us rest, mindful of how our lives adapt, change and grow through it all. ~Susan

Contact info for most of the folks above can be found on the UURMaPA website www.uurmapa.org under **Governance**. (Directory password is WISDOM.)



EDITOR’S NOTE TO ONLINE READERS: You’ll see some lines in **bold, red type**, which indicates they contain web links. I avoid familiar underlinings, since they don’t translate live into a print medium and the added line can be distracting for readers. —JTH

COMING RIGHT UP!
February 28–March 2
Our UURMaPA
Winter Conference

**“PACKING IT IN AND
 PERKING IT UP:
 CHANGING
 PERSPECTIVES”**



How have our perspectives changed—or not—as ministers or ministers’ partners?

How have our perspectives changed—or not—as Unitarian Universalists?

If we’ve continued practicing ministry or other professions, does that mean we’ve “failed retirement”?

How have we maintained connections? What are we letting go of?

What new adventures are we exploring, welcoming into our lives?

How do we handle challenges of aging bodies? How are we facing death—our own and those we love?

Instead of a theme speaker, we’ll hear from a panel of four of our members, and have opportunities to reflect on our own retirement experiences in various facilitated small groups.”

As always we’ll gather for worship that will center us. During our Service of Remembrance, presented by **HOLLY HORN** and **BENJAMIN MAUCERE**, we’ll honor the memories of those whose lives have ended. We will be inspired by the personal Odysseys of **JUDY GIBSON** and **LILIA CUERVO**. And throughout it all will be woven our conversation, music (thanks to Richard Speck and choir!), our tears and our laughter—all the blessings we give to one another.

In order to ensure the safety of us all, this conference will again be virtual, utilizing the wonders of Zoom and technical skills of pro Jon Claney.

We look forward to seeing you there! —Your Planning Team:

You can still register, just go to this link:
<https://uurmapa.square.site/>

*Do You Have an Idea for a Special Interest
 Small Group at our Winter Conference?*

If so, we’d love you to lead/facilitate such a group! In former conferences there have been interesting small groups on Memoir Writing, Bereavement, Films, etc., and they’ve been very well-received.

Please let **ANNE SPATOLA** (amspatola@comcast.net) know if there is something you’d like to offer at this winter’s conference. We would be very grateful!

ANNE SPATOLA, convener;

KATHLEEN ELLIS, FRITZ HUDSON,

WALT WIEDER, ANNE HINES

Call for ‘Creative Sageing Award’ Nominees

Each year, UURMaPA recognizes one of its members—minister or partner—with a “Creative Sageing Award,” which honors a member who has done something particularly impressive and/or inspiring during their retirement. Previous recipients have written books, undertaken significant projects, or done something unusually creative during this chapter of their lives.

If you would like to nominate yourself or another UURMaPA for this year’s award, simply submit—by **April 15**—a brief description of their achievement(s) or project to Vice President, **NED WIGHT** (vice-president@uurmapa.org). He and a small committee will review submissions, select an awardee and announce the award at the annual UURMaPA session at General Assembly in Portland OR (precise date still to be determined).

PEER SUPPORT GROUP UPDATE

Two new Peer Support Groups have recently formed. These consist of up to 10 colleagues who meet virtually once a month, generally on Zoom, to offer mutual support, encouragement and inspiration as we navigate the transition from active service to life during retirement. If you would be interested in joining—or facilitating—such a group, please contact UURMaPA Vice President **NED WIGHT** at vice-president@uurmapa.org.

Ned is also open to your suggestions about virtual support groups with a specific focus. Two such groups already exist: a Caregivers Support Group and a Grief Support Group. A third group, focused on social justice and social action, has been proposed. Please let Ned know if you are interested in any of these focused groups or if there are others you would suggest.

UURMaPA Leadership Transitions in 2022

BOARD (as of July 1):

- **GLORIA PEREZ**, secretary, and **RICHARD SPECK**, treasurer, begin second 2-yr. terms.
- **ANNE SPATOLA**, holding the Conferences portfolio, will finish her two-year term.
- **BARBRO HANSSON**, having very ably served as coordinator for some of our recent conferences, will begin a two-year term with that portfolio.
- **JACO TEN HOVE** completes four years as *Elderberries* editor.
- **ANN SCHRANZ**, already on the Board, moves over to take up the *Elderberries* editor role.
- **The Nominating Committee still seeks another new Board member to pick up Ann's portfolio of Connections Assistant.**

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

- **BARBARA TEN HOVE** and **DIANE MILLER** will depart the NomCom on July 1, **so their replacements are currently being sought.**

NON-ELECTED LEADERS

- **DUANE FICKEISEN** completes a long run as UURMaPA Webmaster.
- **ROGER ROCHESTER** finishes a long stint as editor of Partner Obituaries.

Both those positions will be open and nominations (including self) are welcome.

Contact: nominations@uurmapa.org.



New Board Candidate: **BARBRO HANSSON**

Since her retirement in 2014, Barbro has found new purpose through her involvement in planning UURMaPA fall conferences. She also discovered the art of needle felting and during the COVID pandemic, knitting became her spiritual practice.

Barbro is a naturalized US citizen whose Swedish heritage is at her core. On vacation in 1973, Barbro met her first husband, who was stationed with the US Army in Greece. He introduced her to Unitarian Universalism and Barbro attended her first UU gathering in Berchtesgaden, Germany, in January, 1974. A month later, she arrived on US soil. While acclimating to a new culture, Barbro worked as a layout artist at the Swedish-American newspaper in Brooklyn NY. Her daughter, Karin, was born in 1976 and when she was two, the family moved to Virginia and began attending the Waynesboro UU Fellowship.

In 1982, Barbro decided to pursue a college degree and two years after graduation from Mary Baldwin College (Staunton VA), she was hired as Director of Alumnae Projects there with the primary responsibility of planning events, like class reunions and homecoming as well as the College's Sesquicentennial celebration.

During the 1980s, Barbro became active within UUism, both locally and regionally. In 1987, she was elected to the Board of the then Thomas Jefferson District. Her call to ministry came amidst racial tension at the 1993 GA in Charlotte NC. When her term as TJ District president expired in 1994, she enrolled at Meadville Lombard Theological School.

After serving as Extension Minister in Plattsburgh NY, where she met Tom, her second husband, Barbro accepted a call to All Souls Church in Brattleboro VT, a congregation recently traumatized by a fatal shooting. Her ministry there focused on healing, re-establishing trust and mending the fabric of community.

After 12 rewarding years at All Souls, Barbro retired to spend more time with family. Tom & Barbro have three adult children and two grandchildren and split their time between Peterborough NH and Staunton VA.

Mid-Atlantic UURMaPAns Gather for Lunch & Such



A group from the Joseph Priestley North zone met for a lunch sponsored by **KERRY MUELLER** and **DAVE HUNTER** at Whitehorse Village, PA, on Dec. 8, 2021. We had a grand time catching up with one another after so many months of being separated.
Thank you, Dave & Kerry!—RICHARD SPECK

Front row: PEGGY DOSS, KERRY MUELLER, PAULA MAIORANO. Back row: RICHARD SPECK, DAVE HUNTER, CHARLIE DIETERICH, JOHN GILMORE, GIOVANNI MAIORANO

Editor's Note:

If YOU and other UURMaPAns gather for any occasion, think about snapping a group photo or two and submit here:
elderberries@uurmapa.org



Should retired ministers establish a non-geographic UUMA Chapter alongside UURMaPA?



UPDATE from WAYNE ARNASON, UURMaPA Board Liaison to UUMA

That was the question (above) posed in a workshop at our recent Fall 2021 Conference. A dozen participants considered the pros and cons and offered their thoughts. A straw vote of opinions at the end was inconclusive, with more people still uncertain than those who had formed strong opinions.

At their first meeting following the Fall Conference, the UURMaPA Board reviewed a summary of the conversations that happened in the workshop and discussed once again the pluses and minuses of such a development and some possible next steps.

Several points made in the conference workshop weighed heavily in the Board's discussion:

- Would a chapter within UURMaPA draw away leadership and energy from UURMaPA itself?
- What program needs would a chapter fulfill that UURMaPA is not already offering or couldn't offer?
- Could a covenant and a more expansive and creative approach to Good Offices *within* UURMaPA be investigated *first* prior to taking steps towards starting a retirees' chapter?

The Board was particularly interested in exploring more deeply this last point, and scheduled further conversations about a Covenant and Good Offices for a planned (virtual) Board retreat in mid-February.

We followed up with Melissa Carvill Ziemer of the UUMA Executive Team to report on our decision to set the chapter idea on a back burner for now. UURMaPA would explore how to move forward with a process for covenant-building and with models for Good Offices in situations involving retirees. Melissa was supportive of the UURMaPA Board's direction and offered to be of whatever help she could.

We reviewed issues about membership and covenant that had brought the idea of a retirees' chapter to the fore. Since UURMaPA membership is open to all fellowshipped UU ministers and their partners, without regard to whether the ministers choose to be members of the UUMA, we have heard concerns that some active UURMaPA members would be outside the Covenant, Code, and Guidelines of the UUMA.

However, reviewing membership statistics, we realized that there are currently very few participating UURMaPA members who fall into this category, and no active leaders. We saw the possibility of working on a covenant that could be affirmed by all UURMaPAs (partners and ministers) as a positive process of engagement about what we promise, as members of UURMaPA, to each other and to UUA congregations.

Regarding the ways that UURMaPA might participate in the new structure for the UUMA's Good Offices, the conversations raised some new possibilities that the Board can consider. One was to take advantage of UURMaPAs who are *already* serving in Good Offices roles for their UUMA Chapter or for one of the newer identity-based chapters. These colleagues have had Good Offices training, and although they are not identified as specialists in issues involving retirees, they have experience that might be brought to bear and could be willing to be of service if asked. They could be a focus group to help in thinking about next steps.

UURMaPAs and interested UUMA members, especially those with Good Offices experience, are welcome to share any thoughts or ideas they may have via goodoffices@uurmapa.org. The Board expects to report on our progress in this conversation once again after our winter retreat.

Latest Class of New UURMaPAs

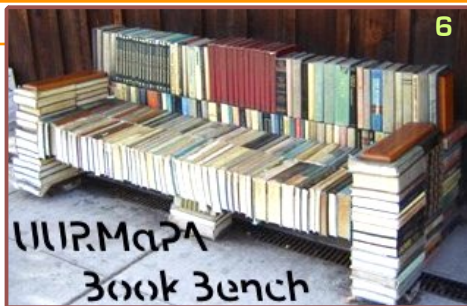
The colleagues listed here have filed UUA "Intent to Retire" forms, taking effect on or before January, 2022.

JAMES BLAINE
LAURIE BUSHBAUM
BARBARA G. FAST
DEBORAH HOLDER
VIRGINIA JAROGHA-
ERNST

PAUL S. JOHNSON
ANYA JOHNSTON
KATIE KANDARIAN
JIM PARRISH
SUZAN EMINE ALPAY
MCCRISTAL

LEE MARIE SANCHEZ
SYLVIA STOCKER
LOIS E. VAN LEER
KHLEBER M. VAN
ZANDT

Offerings from Michael D. O’Kelly*



I refer to my works as APEs: a mix of Autobiography, Poetry, Essay—and, needless to say, swinging-clinging to the lines and vines and times of a very active jungle of joys and journeys.

The three pieces of my trilogy—*Altarpieces* (2013), *Sympathies* (2014) and *Auguries* (2017)—are published through iUniverse. Each is a hefty book covering many spiritual/philosophical/literary issues and a lot of my own poetry included.



This is me reading my ODE—NINEELEVENTWOTHOUSANDANDONE—at the recent Clarksburg WV 20th Year Memorial Ceremony with city officials, first responders, police-fire-etc. and local citizens. It just shows I’m still standing.



The trilogy was in process when my wife, Marilyn, died in 2009. This led me to put all on hold and do her memorial book – *Glistening's* (2011) through Xlibris.

Then I did three books with Xlibris in 2020. Like *Glistening's* they are small books of 100 pages or less and are primarily poetry collections: *MOM (Muse of Mortality)*, *POP (Poetries on Purpose)*, and *SOS (Song of Songs)*.

Then in 2021 came *GOTMOL (Gracing Our Time’s Meaning Of Life)*—with a mix of philosophy and poetry and images (in color). I’ve designed the covers and basic formats of all my books. My current one is with Xlibris and should be available in 2022: *PORTS OF CALL – The Journey Home*. This book gets into religious liberalism, the struggle between science and religion, some UU history and concerns—and, most of all, my concept of spirituality as it “covenants” with the nature of existence behind it all. (Alas! The crack of light I see under the door and glistening through the transom.) I have three children’s stories due for 2022 and my memoirs to come when/if ever afterwards.

*Michael D. O’Kelly BIO

- ◆ BA (English-Theatre, 1956) West Virginia University
- ◆ M.Div. (1966) Meadville/Lombard (most studies at U of Chicago)
- ◆ M.A. (Clinical Psychology, 1976) Ball State University, Indiana
- ◆ Ordained in 1966, I served churches in MA, IN, OH, CA (interim), IL, Edmonton (Canada, interim), and CA.
- ◆ For various family reasons, we came back to home state of WV in 1995. I got a social work license working as family therapist for two agencies.
- ◆ Around 2005, the UU Fellowship of Morgantown WV brought me into their world as Consulting Minister, which I did for about five years. They, affectionately, designated me Emeritus in 2010. I still have a connection with them.
- ◆ I’m 87. I have three children and three grandchildren. A good world.



Continued from page 1

FALL 2021 CONFERENCE REPORT

This recap was written collaboratively by the Conference Planning Team:

- **BARBRO HANSSON**, Convener
- **ROGER ROCHESTER**, Registrar
- **ROSEMARIE SMURZYNSKI**, PR & Publicity
- **DAVE HUNTER & KERRY MUELLER**, Worship
- **MARNI HARMONY**, Odyssey
- **JOHANNA NICHOLS**, Small Groups
- **RICHARD SPECK**, Internet Advisor & Tech Support
- **ANNE SPATOLA**, UURMaPA Board
- (Jon Clane provided pro technical support)

Each session was preceded by a stirring slide show of “Greetings from Across the Continent,” creatively assembled by our convener from photos sent in by many conference participants, shown in their local or chosen environs.

Day 1, Session 1

Small Groups: Introductions and Check-In

After introductions of the Planning Team and reflections by Convener **BARBRO HANSSON**, 20 ministers and partners facilitated two breakout groups on this first day of the conference, to help attendees connect right away.

Some comments:

- "Facilitating was a delight; people were feeling a connection. Members shared how long they have been retired—from two months to many years—and being in the time that is now."
- About the pandemic, some said they were "hopeful, not optimistic."
- "Hope comes from being in beauty—the hope of the seasons." "It is an attitude of the heart."

Day 1, Session 2

Greetings from the UUA

SUSAN RAK, UURMaPA President, welcomed UUA President **Susan Frederick Gray**, who articulated impacts of the pandemic on clergy: some ministers are leaving their congregations, some the ministry. Others have left because of illnesses. These challenging times have resulted in some colleagues finding other avenues for fulfillment. Nevertheless, many congregations sustained their membership with vibrant online services that provided a way for all of us to be together despite the mandated sheltering.



UUA Transitions Director Keith Kron gave a thorough update on a renewal of the *Targeted Ministry Program*, a full report about which was featured in the previous issue of *Elderberries* (Autumn 2021).

Small Groups: *How is it with thy spirit?*

When we broke into a second round of small groups to reflect on the question "How it is with thy spirit," the facilitators said that the sharing deepened. With a full hour for sharing, there was plenty of individual time for response.



Day 1, Session 3

This event's **Service of Remembrance** was led by **LESLIE WESTBROOK** and **ROGER FRITTS**, one of our clergy couples. It featured a song rendition (Shelley Jackson Denham's "We Laugh, We Cry") by the latest UURMaPA Virtual Choir, under the electronic baton of **RICHARD SPECK**. (See pg. 1 photo of the Choir.)

Leslie and Roger then offered carefully and tenderly crafted obituaries of those recently deceased, bringing back memories and inspiring

us to both look back at the past and prepare for the future. Infused with music, this service powerfully connected us to the years of our own ministries, to the lives of our departed colleagues and spouses, and to each other.

Day 2: Theme sessions follow on next pages...

FALL CONFERENCE REPORT

Continued from page 7

Day 2, Session 1 — Theme Presentation: *The New Normal: Adjusting to a New World*

Our keynoter, **BRUCE MARSHALL**, invited us on a journey exploring the conference theme. Drawing insights and sharing stories from 50 years of UU ministry, including 10 as UU chaplain at a large retirement community in Silver Spring MD, Bruce created a presentation that was insightful and engaging. The structure he chose was brilliant: a presentation in four parts, with breakout groups following each.

NANCY ARNOLD introduced Bruce and described him as a “Mystical Humanist” who is a 3rd generation Midwestern UU, with church central to his family. Nancy ended her introduction by saying, “Bruce will surely make us feel more deeply than we think.”

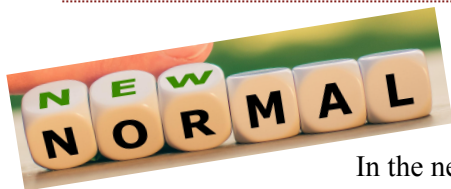
He began by addressing the premise expressed by the theme as we all live amid the coronavirus pandemic, where we have been anxiously awaiting a return to “normal.” However, he said, that old normal is being replaced by a “new normal,” which is an oxymoron—if it is new, it’s not normal and if it’s normal, it’s not new. Hence the adjusting.

He then shifted into some “new normals” to which we are all adjusting: retirement and aging. For his presentation, Bruce would address four aspects that we can and do inhabit: Change, Meaning, Spirit, and Legacy. In his words:

CHANGE. *Some things change in the new normal, some don't. Basic elements of our personalities—likes and dislikes, our approach to the world—these mostly remain constant, no matter what gets thrown at us. And while resistance to change can be a cause for consternation (“Why do I make the same mistakes over and over?”), it can also anchor us in this world of shifting sands.*

But some things do change. COVID-19 has altered our everyday lives as we respond to this virus. David Brooks of The New York Times observed, “My extroversion muscles have atrophied while my introversion muscles are bulging.” For those of us in this conference, retirement has also changed the structure of our days as well as our place in the world. And aging itself challenges assumptions about normal reality as activities which once came naturally now aren't so easy.

I conducted a series of interviews with seniors about their experience of aging and their own new normals. “Aging,” one person said, “is about loss.” We lose physical capabilities we once took for granted; we lose people—family and friends; we lose activities which once gave meaning to our days; we may find that we no longer understand how society functions. Another interviewee concluded, “If there is such a thing as successful aging—and I'm not sure there is—it's really dependent on how a person handles loss.”



Participants were invited into small groups to reflect on these questions:
What has changed for you during the new normal in response to COVID-19 or aging or both? What has remained the same? What difference has this made?

In the next part of his presentation, Bruce spoke about a second aspect:

MEANING *refers to what matters in our lives: what motivates us, brings us to care and make commitments. In a time of change, meaning becomes especially important amid the losses change brings.*

In my conversations with seniors, I asked what mattered to them in their later years. Has it changed as their life experience has changed? For some, the key was continued engagement in life, even if in different ways than previously.

Among UUs I spoke with, involvement in social justice work was often named, even though they were not able to be as active as they once had been. Others found meaning on a more personal level through giving and receiving service, such as helping others while also being open to receiving help themselves. The simple act of giving attention to another can be especially powerful during this time in our lives when the world no longer notices us.

Viktor Frankl emphasized the role of choice in his work on meaning, drawn from his imprisonment in concentration camps during World War II. Frankl observed, “The sort of person the prisoner became was the result of an inner decision.” That's true also in the new normal: the sort of person we become results from choices we make about who we will be.

He ended this session with another set of questions for small groups:

**What brings you meaning in these later years?
 What brings you meaning during COVID? What helps you feel fully yourself?**

Continued on next page...

Continued from previous page

Day 2, Session 2

Bruce returned to examine a third aspect:

SPIRIT. *Meaning is a powerful motivator, but what we find to have meaning is not always life-enhancing, and it is not always good. We live in an era bristling with conspiracy theories as well as “bubbles” in which we surround ourselves with others of the same opinions while sowing distrust of anyone whose life experience is different from our own. This produces abundant examples of the search for meaning gone bad.*

None of us is immune; all have blind spots. Which is where spirit comes in—spirit as defined by Gerald May of the Shalem Institute as “the energy of our lives, the life-force that keeps us active and dynamic.” There are times when “the energy of our lives” is enhanced by adding activities, interests, and things. But as we age—and as we mourn the losses brought by a world-wide pandemic, we might find renewal in letting go.

The world of music offers an image that offers access to spirit. “In music,” Miles Davis said, “silence is more important than sound.” And from the Zen tradition, “It is the silence between the notes that makes the music.” In emptiness—an absence of things and activities—we may encounter the force that gives us life.



BRUCE MARSHALL

Again, participants went into small groups, this time to reflect on:

What does spirit mean to you in the New Normal?

Coming back together, Bruce spoke about the fourth aspect:

LEGACY. *For many of us, the later years bring a concern with legacy: what we leave behind for those who follow. We come to the startling realization that much of what we have worked for—into which we have invested heart and soul—evaporates as the years go by and new generations take over. We yearn for some sense of having contributed.*

A legacy statement—a “spiritual will”—offers the opportunity to articulate what we have lived for and what we hope will survive. But we might also admit that our control over what of our lives resonates for others is limited. The next generations will choose what they retain.

For myself, I would like my legacy to feature a memory of what it felt like to be accepted and respected and enjoyed for who we are as complex, sometimes contradictory, rational/irrational human beings, who try to do the best we can with what has been given to us. That is, a basic acceptance. So that maybe the new normal might develop into something that isn't as mean as the old normal has been—that offers space for people to learn and appreciate each other and grow. And that the mystery of this life we share may be celebrated for the gift it is.

A woman who was turning 80 said to me, “I find myself filled with gratitude for so many things, like the clouds in the sky. Does that sound silly? Gratitude has been filling my life and sometimes spilling out of my eyes. Why did it take me 80 years to get here?”



And, of course, this was followed by another set of questions to ponder in small groups:

How have you benefitted from a legacy from another person?

What would you like your legacy to be?

The final 30 minutes of the theme presentation had all participants back together for large group sharing. It was a perfect ending on an exceptional presentation in the world of Zoom.

Conference Report concludes on next page...

Continued from page 9

FALL 2021 CONFERENCE REPORT

Day 2, Session 3 — First Odyssey: CHARLES STEPHENS (Blue Hill, Maine)

Charles was born of parents who grew up on farms and his early life began on one in Wisconsin. He loves gardening, thrives on being in touch with nature, and even built a log cabin. He once tried to quit a typing class by saying his fingers were too big, but his mentor encouraged him not to be a “quitter.”

He suggested two themes that have played out throughout his life: choosing options “outside of the ordinary box” (taking risks to explore new possibilities); and feeling like he didn’t really fit in.

Thus, while growing up Lutheran, going to a Lutheran college, being ordained Lutheran, and serving both Swedish and Czech Lutheran churches, Charles realized he just didn’t fit in with them theologically. His journey took him from liberal Christian to liberal theist to humanist to now considering himself a “mystical humanist.” He found his religious and spiritual home in UUism.

A bout with cancer left him deeply grateful for the supportive response of his church community. Cancer, he said, makes our choices in life clearer. “There’s nothing like it.” He became involved with the Shalem Institute (Wash. DC) and enjoys serving as a Spiritual Director.

Since retiring, Charles has “returned to holy moments in the woods” and his Odyssey offered us all holy moments. He was introduced by his longtime friend and colleague MARK WORTH.



Day 3, Session 1 — Topics of Interest in Small Groups

Various volunteer presenters enthusiastically offered topics for self-selected consideration in 10 intriguing interest groups:

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| 1. <i>During the “new normal” what has fed us? What in this time gives us life?</i> — BRUCE MARSHALL | 5. <i>Religious Films</i> —Carl Scovel | 8. <i>Targeted Ministry Program & the State of Ministry</i> — Keith Kron |
| 2. <i>Caregivers Support Group</i> — SYLVIA HOWE | 6. <i>Pros & Cons of a Retired Ministers UUMA Chapter</i> — WAYNE ARNASON | 9. <i>Lions, Tigers, and Retirement Plans, Oh My!</i> — Richard Nugent |
| 3. <i>Bereavement: Time of Many Changes</i> — CAROL TAYLOR | 7. <i>New Resource: “The Former Minister’s Partner, The Former Minister, and The Current Minister—Navigating in Unfamiliar Territory”</i> — BARBARA CHILD, GLORIA PEREZ | 10. <i>Open Room</i> —Hosted by ROGER ROCHESTER |
| 4. <i>Writing...for self & others.... Memoir & Short Fiction</i> — JUDITH CAMPBELL | | |

Day 3, Session 2

Greetings from the UUMA Leadership Team — UUMA leaders Melissa Carvill Ziemer, Darrick Jackson, and Janette Lallier reported that the UUMA has 1950 members, 54% are active ministers, 34% retired, 12% candidates and aspirants. Ministers’ learning needs are being met through the upcoming Institute, which includes programs on boundaries, trauma, and conflict issues.

We also heard about a new volunteer opportunity for seasoned ministers, matching retirees with new ministers in an advising capacity. This is called the **Minister Formation Network**.

The UUMA and staff are reviewing findings of the Commission on Institutional Change to determine how to create an anti-racism model. As there are few easy answers, they hope to be transparent and inclusive and make necessary changes. There is some tension between structure and change. However, as people begin to see themselves as part of the problem, hopefully they will be more likely to figure out how to be part of the solution.

Second Odyssey: KATHLEEN HUNTER (Athens, Ontario)

An UURMaPAn for more than 30 years (and the first partner to offer a solo Odyssey), she said that church and ministers have always been part of her life. She was President of our church in Montreal, served as Executive Dir. of the Canadian Unitarian Council, and is the widow of the Rev. **ALAN DEALE**.

She reported that when she and Alan found each other after he was widowed for the second time and she was single after a divorce, people frequently said, “Those two deserve each other”—and, she added, they said this “whether they liked us or not.” Kathleen spoke candidly of her own relationships, two of which involved married clergy, with appreciation for one and regret for the other to underline that people are complicated. One relationship is remembered as a positive contribution to her life and her career and the other as one in which she and others were hurt.

She called for more charity in our common life. Her Odyssey stimulated a lively discussion pushing us all to think about the systemic (even generational) harm that has resulted from the culture of the 60s through the 90s. Kathleen was introduced by her dear friend **JEAN ROWE**.



Report continues on next page...

Continued from previous page

Day 3, Session 3**UUA Church Staff Finances Director, Richard Nugent**

Richard provided an overview of various investment plans and upcoming changes in the retirement portfolio. It was reassuring to hear that the funds are safe and secure with minimal fee increases on the horizon. He further noted that Church Finances offers retirement seminars, with an in-person session planned for 2023.

UURMaPA in the Loop — SUSAN RAK, President, and UURMaPA Board Members

Susan covered areas for consideration within the board, such as future conferences—pros and cons of the virtual, hybrid and in-person models. These options will be analyzed in conjunction with costs and technical support. Other board members gave highlights from their portfolios.

- Vice President **NED WIGHT** talked about peer support groups that the board sponsors, including grief and caregiver groups, and the welcome event that UURMaPA holds for newly retired ministers honored at each General Assembly.
- **MILLIE ROCHESTER** described the Connections network of 33 geographical areas. Due to demographics, these are of varying sizes and compositions. She solicits feedback from all connectors to improve the process.
- **ANN SCHRANZ** is the Obituaries coordinator. She spoke of the major challenge to learn about partner deaths in a timely manner.
- **ANNE SPATOLA** gave an update for the Winter 2022 conference to be held virtually February 28–March 2, and invited members to join the planning team.
- Lastly, Treasurer **RICHARD SPECK** announced that UURMaPA's budget is in good financial shape with income exceeding expenses.

**Closing Worship**

ARTHUR SEVERANCE: *Searching for Love, Truth, Beauty, Perhaps Even God—40 Years Later*

Art took us back to his first visit, as a religious seeker in 1981, to the BuxMont UU Fellowship (Warrington PA), invited by a friend who thought he might like it. Within two years, he had decided on UU ministry, and soon he was serving BuxMont as their minister. With his own poetry and music he reflected on the four decades of his search, how colleagues and congregations had been so meaningful in his life, and how ministry makes such a profound difference in the world.

Conclusion

Along with helpful and challenging engagement with the theme, good worship and music, plus focused information exchange, the design of our three days together also allowed a spread of seven separate small group experiences, four of which were amid the theme presentation, all of which fostered personal connections that were richly nourishing.

See page 3 for details on the next UURMaPA conference: February 28–March 2, 2022.

SERVICE GRATUITY UPDATES

- ✱ For those receiving gratuity checks, the quarterly grants will be increasing by 5.26% in 2022.
- ✱ Another change, which may impact eligibility for a few, raises the age by which a minister must accrue 21 years of service from 70 to 71 years of age, retroactive to September 1, 2016.
- ✱ An option for direct deposit of quarterly checks went into effect for this most recent quarter, December 2021. *Thanks to UUA Staff who enabled this welcome administrative change.* Participants will be notified by communication from the UUA.

**UUA Retirement Plan Director Resigns**

Linda Rose decided to resign from her position for reasons related to her family, with her last day on Feb. 4.

Linda looks forward to ongoing interactions down the road since she and her husband, Rev. Eric Cherry, will one day be members of UURMaPA.

The knowledgeable Retirement Plan team within the UUA's Office of Church Staff Finances (working closely with Rev. Richard Nugent) will offer steadiness and continued excellent service to UURMaPAns.



Now Minister Emeritus with the Exeter (NH) UU church, I retired in 2000. I live in nearby Durham with my spouse, **SYLVIA FOSTER**. Our minister in Exeter, **Kendra Ford**, and I are friends. We meet monthly to keep our connection alive. My 40 years in ministry included serving UU churches in Pittsburgh and Meadville PA, Orange NJ, Fitchburg MA, and Exeter.

Now 86, I have weathered Lyme disease, several spinal compression fractures, some persistent nerve pain and, recently, a fractured femur that has been repaired, followed by rehab in hospital and at home. Fortunately, I am able still to play my violin in a chamber music group.

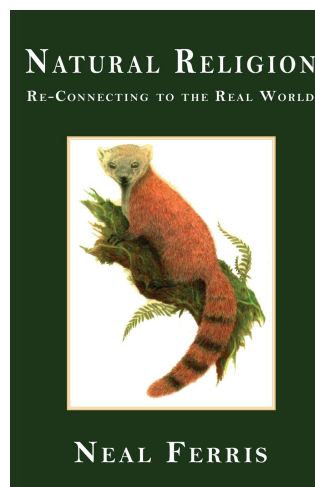
I am unable to attend conferences but can still communicate with colleagues who I have known over the years. It is good to be alive and a part of the UU family.

With a lot of physical therapy, violin practicing and various other things to keep me going, I have to husband my energy and time. However, as an example of my involvement these days, I recently wrote a letter that was published in the Portsmouth (NH) Herald. [See excerpt below.]

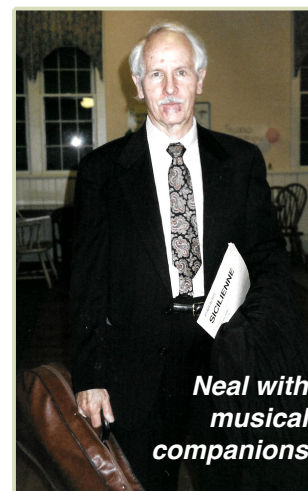
Sylvia grew up in the Universalist Church in Bangor ME. She recently retired from a career in education, including planning programs for the Univ. of NH President's Commission on Community, Equity and Diversity and teaching Women's Studies. She is very active with our church in Exeter and other projects, including a Seacoast racial unity team, 350 NH, etc.

My first spouse, **JOYCE FERRIS**, Ph.D., had a great career with several prep schools. She died about four years ago, after a fall that smashed her hip; she did not survive the operation. We had remained good friends after our divorce and she and Sylvia became good friends as well. I have felt so fortunate to share the love of both of them.

My best wishes to our colleagues.



My book, **Natural Religion: Re-connecting to the Real World**, was first published in 2003. A recent second edition is now available at Amazon.com for \$15. It includes praise by **BILL SCHULZ**, **GARY KOWALSKI** and the philosopher Charles Hartshorne. When ordering, specify the 2nd ed. paperback.



To the editor (of the Portsmouth Herald, excerpted):

With all of the present attention to the global warming crises, we should not fail also to attend to the other most urgent issue of our time: nuclear hair triggers... Unlike the nuclear weapons on submarines and airplanes, the 400 land-based Minuteman ICBMs that sit in silos in our mid-west are vulnerable to a surprise attack. On hair-trigger alert, once launched they cannot be recalled.

In the Nov. 1-8 issue of The Nation, Daniel Ellsberg and Norman Solomon point out that "The single best option for reducing the risk of nuclear war is hidden in plain sight... shutting down all of the nation's ICBMs."

Many false alarms have already brought the world dangerously close to disaster. But rather than dismantle the weapons, our government plans to pay \$364 billion to modernize the vulnerable ground-based leg of our nuclear triad—at more expense than building it in the first place. Former Defense Secretary William Perry [a Unitarian Universalist. -ed.] has called that "insane."

That's the political power of the military industrial complex about which President Eisenhower warned us.

—NEAL W. FERRIS, Durham, NH

Continuing gratitude to **JAY ATKINSON** (~JA) for careful researching and composing of obituaries for ministers.

ROGER ROCHESTER (~RR) has done a similarly fine job for partners for some years, but he is retiring from this post after the next (Spring) issue.

So we are seeking a new editor for partner obituaries. Nominations (including of self) are welcome. Please contact board@uurmapa.org.

IN MEMORIAM

ROBERT TALIAFERRO SORRELLS (1932 – 2021)

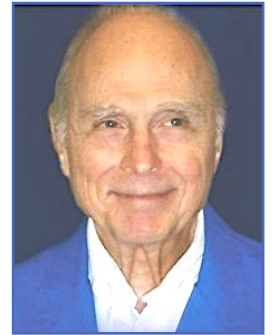
Robert Taliaferro Sorrells, spouse of Reverend **DILLMAN BAKER SORRELLS**, died 2 May 2021, aged 88, after suffering from Alzheimer's disease for several years. Born in New York City in 1932, Bob attended Staunton Military Academy in Virginia and then Vanderbilt University (Nashville TN), which was interrupted for service in the US Army. He returned to earn a degree in History and a Masters in English Literature from Vanderbilt. He subsequently earned an MFA in Creative Writing from the Writer's Workshop at the University of Iowa.

Bob was a faculty member at Murray State University (KY), Clemson University (SC), and the University of Arkansas before leaving academia to focus on his writing. He published several books, including one of short stories, *The Blacktop Champion of Icky Honey*, and a book of essays called *On Breaking One's Pencil*. He was awarded a PEN/NEA Syndicated Fiction Award, and his work was often anthologized, including in *The Best American Short Stories*. Though he was primarily a fiction writer, Bob often said that a history he wrote of the Clemson Univ. Experimental Forest was among the works of which he was most proud.

A long-time fan of the Atlanta Braves, he enjoyed listening to baseball on the radio, and wrote a short story about missing Hank Aaron's 715th home run. He was also a great fan of the Clemson soccer team. He loved to walk for exercise and could often be seen striding briskly along the roads of Clemson.

Bob was a UU for most of his adult life, and an early member of the UU Fellowship of Clemson. A great enthusiast of music, he sang for many years in the church choir and created Gifts of Music, a series that aired on SC Public Radio.

Bob is survived by children Walter Arl Sorrells and Ruth Lindsey Sorrells, both of Atlanta; grandson Jake Alfred Robert Sorrells of New Orleans; and by his loving wife of 59 years, Dillman Baker Sorrells of Clemson. ~RR



ELISSA BISHOP-BECKER (1947 – 2021)

Elissa Beryl Bishop-Becker, beloved partner of Reverend Dr. **RANDY BECKER**, died 27 April 2021 after a brief battle with cancer. She was born in New York on 20 July 1947 and grew up on Long Island. A journey through several universities (American, New School, Hofstra, Adelphi) brought her a bachelor's degree in English from Hunter College (NYC). Her early work was in editing and writing, especially poetry.

By her own admission and delight her greatest achievement was the birth of daughter Ericka Brindl Bishop in 1975. A single mother for many years, she supported and encouraged Ericka's growth and education. In 1992, Elissa married **RANDY BECKER**, a longtime friend to both her and Ericka. In their married life, Elissa and Randy lived on Long Island NY, Williamsburg VA, Park Forest IL, eventually settling in Key West FL.

Ericka's tragic death at age 20, caused by a drunk driver, was a turning point in Elissa's life. She entered the community counseling program of the College of William and Mary (VA) in 1997, and in 1999 graduated with highest honors. She became a licensed, nationally certified counselor, with a specialization in grief and loss. Her professional work touched the lives of many, and her book, *Loss and Growth: The Grief Spiral*, has received wide acclaim and use.

Elissa's life as a spiritual person and medium opened her to spirit communication. Nearly 26 years of those afterlife communications form the foundation of a spiritual approach known as Spiritual Persistence, which emphasizes the unity of all existence, the holistic nature of spirit, and the promise of essential good amid infinite potential.

Elissa is survived by her mother Hazel and brother Richard, both of Long Island; her husband Randy; three bonus daughters: Elizabeth McCann Mackay (David); Lee Lehman-Becker (James Larsson); Suki Lucier (John); and four grandchildren. ~RR





DOROTHY M. EMERSON (1943 – 2019)

IN MEMORIAM

The Reverend Dr. Dorothy Emerson—parish minister, scholar, writer and editor for women’s heritage and ministry, activist in race and class issues, and LGBTQ+ historian, who once called herself “kind of an out-there person”—died suddenly on 13 May 2019, aged 75½.

Most widely acclaimed for her devotion to the role of women in UU circles and wider social movements, the Rev’d Ms. Emerson founded the *UU Women’s Heritage Society*. As a board member of *UU Class Conversations*, she led workshops on class issues for many congregations and ministers.

At *Collegium’s* fall gathering in 2018, a full session was dedicated to Dorothy reading from her memoir, *Sea Change* (see below). In the last year of her life, Dorothy gave devoted leadership to the *UU Rainbow History Project*, documenting the **personal stories** and changing consciousness of gay and straight clergy around LGBTQ+ concerns.

Dorothy May Emerson was born on 20 November 1943 in Long Beach CA to Howard Douglas Emerson and Eloise Clark Emerson. She graduated from Pomona College (Claremont CA) in 1965 with a B.A. in German literature. After an M.A. in psychology and education from the Humanistic Psychology Institute (San Francisco) in 1974, she worked as a consultant. But eventually drawn to ministry, Dorothy earned her M.Div. at Harvard Divinity School in 1988.



Ms. Emerson began parish ministry with the First Universalist Society of Wakefield (MA) and was ordained there on 25 September 1988. After two interim positions, she accepted a call to the UU Church of Medford MA. During that six-year pastorate (1992–98) she earned a D.Min. at Andover Newton Theological School in 1997.

Over the next 12 years, the Rev’d Dr. Emerson intermittently served parish and community ministries while intensively pursuing her passions in a range of scholarly and writing projects. From this period came voluminous manuscripts and several edited volumes. Her final work was a memoir: *Sea Change: The Unfinished Agenda of the 1960s*. Just days before her death, she delivered 44 boxes of professional papers to the Harvard Divinity School archives.

At her death, Dorothy was survived by her wife **DONNA E. CLIFFORD**, son Damian Elrod, grandson Zade Elrod, sister Mary Lou, brothers Howard and Clark, and other nieces and nephews. Memorial donations are encouraged to the UU Rainbow History Project (*via* **UURMaPA.org**) or to a charity of one’s own choosing.

A green burial took place on 18 May 2019 at Cedar Grove Burial Ground, Limington ME. Dorothy’s life was celebrated on 8 June 2019 at the Melrose (MA) UU Church. Notes of condolence may be sent to Donna Clifford at 51 Cedar St., Apt #4101, Woburn MA 01801. ~JA

ELEANOR S. DUHAMEL (1942 – 2021)



The Rev. Eleanor (Ellie) S. Duhamel died on 22 Aug 2021, aged 78. She died peacefully at home (Winslow ME) of complications resulting from pancreatic cancer, with her spouse Reverend Rev. **MARCEL DUHAMEL**, and daughter nearby.

Ellie was born in Stoneham MA on 28 Nov 1942. After graduating from Westwood HS in 1961, she attended the Boston Conservatory at Berklee to study ballet. She graduated from the University of Massachusetts-Amherst, in 1964, with a Bachelor of Arts in English.

In 1965, she married Thomas E. Flanagan and moved to Durham NC to teach 8th grade while Tom attended grad school. In 1968, Ellie and Tom moved to Calgary AB, where she taught kindergarten. Ellie returned to the States in 1972 and continued to teach in the Rochester NH school system. She married Lewis B. Sykes in 1978.

In 1995, Ellie received a Master of Divinity from Andover Newton Theological School. She was ordained in 2004 to the Ministry of Religious Education by the UU Church of Concord NH, where Ellie and Marcel Duhamel were married on Jan. 1, 2005. Together, they served interim ministries in Ottawa ON, Bloomfield Hills MI, and Kennebunk ME. After retirement, they settled in Winslow ME.



Ellie was an avid knitter, quilter, and seamstress, with a deep commitment to friendship. She listened intently, provided advice that was needed, and often had a humorous quip to lighten the mood. She kept an affection for Star Island, having worked her first season there in 1961. She returned to the Island for many years and was pleased to visit it one last time in June 2021.

Ellie is survived by husband Marcel; brother Donald E. Smith; son Thomas C. Flanagan (Leslie); daughter Melissa Bailey; son Peter Sykes (Audra); stepsons Marcel C. Duhamel (Jacqueline) and Paul E. Duhamel (Tess); and her grandchildren.

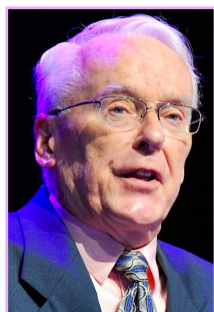
Memorial donations may be made to Star Island (**<https://starisland.org/donate/>**) or the Wounded Warrior Project (**<https://support.woundedwarriorproject.org>**). ~RR

CLARK B. OLSEN (1933 – 2019)

The Reverend Clark Olsen—parish minister and non-profit consultant, whose life was enduringly stamped by his witness of the 1965 murder of UU minister James Reeb during the Selma witness for racial justice—died on 21 January 2019, aged 85.

The Rev'd Mr. Olsen was serving in Berkeley CA in 1965 when Dr. King famously put out the call to American clergy to join him in Selma for protest and presence. "I'd like to go," was his first thought, despite a packed schedule and no funds for the trip. But when a couple in the congregation offered to pay his way, "I suddenly had to rethink all those excuses."

Once there, he ran into ministerial colleagues, James Reeb and Orloff Miller, and as they left a local café, they were brutally attacked. Reeb died



from his injuries two days later. Over the years, Clark returned to Selma ninety times to share his story with middle and high school students whose travel was sponsored by civil rights groups to promote understanding of those historic events. In 2015 Mr. Olsen received the UUA's Award for Distinguished Service.

Clark Bird Olsen was born on 22 June 1933 in Boston to Arthur W. and Catherine Bird Olsen and grew up in Toledo OH. He earned a B.A. from Oberlin College (OH) in 1955 and completed ministerial study at Harvard in 1959. Following his father's profession, he began in 1957 as a student minister to the First Unitarian Society of Westborough (MA), was ordained by them on 28 October 1959 and continued there until 1962. Parish settlements then followed at the Berkeley (CA) Fellowship of UUs (1962–68) and the Morristown (NJ) Unitarian Fellowship (1968–78). In the 1980s, he shifted his career to corporate and non-profit consulting.

At his death, Clark was survived by his second wife, **ANNA (ROGERS) OLSEN**, children Marika and Todd, and brother Lee. A memorial service was scheduled for 2 February 2019 at the UU Congregation of Asheville NC. Notes of condolences may be sent to Anna Olsen at 23C Trillium Ct, Asheville NC 28805. ~JA

IN MEMORIAM

In Moscow in 1954, as one of two students chosen to be part of a Soviet-American exchange



JOHN CUMMINS (1926 – 2021)

The Reverend Dr. John Cummins—remembered for his wry humor and a 23-year ministry to the First Universalist Church of Minneapolis (1963–86), recognized for many more years as a local leader in liberal religious and social causes, and deeply venerated as a mentor to younger ministers and aspiring seminarians—died 11 December 2021, aged 95.

When the call rang out in 1965 to bear witness for justice in Selma, John Cummins showed up. As an opponent of the Vietnam war, he counseled more than 500 draft resisters and conscientious objectors. Preaching on the Watergate scandal, he titled his sermon, "Malice in Blunderland."

John Cummins was born on 8 September 1926 to Alice E. (Grimm) and the Rev. Dr. Robert Cummins, who for many years was the General Superintendent of the Universalist Church of America and a leader in consolidating the Universalists and Unitarians in 1961. Enrolling at Bowdoin College (Brunswick ME), John joined a college fraternity but withdrew on discovering that they refused entry to Jews and Blacks. A screed, "Fraternity Without Brotherhood," was John's outraged response. He completed work for his B.A. in 1947, went on to graduate from Harvard Divinity School, and was ordained in 1950.



After parish settlements in Brunswick ME (1950–54) and Waltham MA (1954–63), the Rev'd Mr. Cummins took a call to First Universalist in Minneapolis, where he would remain until retirement and honored as emeritus thereafter. Members recall him as "prophetic, a caretaker, nurturer, and something of a poet," helped perhaps by the editorial pencil of his spouse, Drusilla ("Dru"). "Your ideas soar like eagles," she once told him, "but your grammar has webbed feet."

In an interview at 90, John looked back, "I was naïve, an idealist, a dreamer, a humanist, a visionary, I guess, and I don't regret any of it."

John was preceded in death by spouse Dru and a son, Christopher. He is survived by daughter Carol and son Clyde. In a celebration of life at First Universalist Church of Minneapolis on 20 December 2021, no fewer than six colleagues offered tributes to John's warmth, gentleness, humility, wit, and pastoral presence. ~JA





Unitarian Universalist

Retired Ministers and Partners Association

c/o Patt Herdklotz
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Ashland, Oregon 97520



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**“You know you’re old when you clean house
to the music you used to drink to.”**
(Sign seen outside El Arroyo Restaurant, Austin TX)