



You Just Never Know: Epistles from Chautauqua

by Barbara Child

This sermon was delivered to the Unitarian Universalist Church of Bloomington, Indiana on October 9, 2022.

You never know what's going to happen next.

You decide to spend three whole weeks at Chautauqua in the summer of 2022 -- Chautauqua, that sublime stretch of lakeside grounds in southwestern New York state -- that place like no other where each of the 9 weeks of the summer season focuses on a different theme, with days filled with superb speakers and evenings filled with music, everything from the Chautauqua Symphony to the Temptations and the Beach Boys. That Chautauqua.

The day after you let your Facebook friends know you have arrived at Chautauqua, a good colleague in California, Barbara Hamilton-Holway, responds: "You really ought to meet my friend Eric, who is also at Chautauqua this week." And over coffee you and Eric have a wonderful conversation about Quakers and Unitarian Universalists and Parker Palmer and clearness committees. And then a couple of hours later, you run into Eric again. This time his husband Richard is with him, and you get the selfie you forgot to get earlier and so now it includes Richard.

You really don't know what's going to happen next.

When your French coffee press breaks the day after you arrive at Chautauqua, and it turns out the shop on the ground floor of the St. Elmo Hotel that used to sell kitchen gear isn't there anymore, you go to the Plaza Market even though you know they aren't going to sell anything like a French press but they just might know of somebody on the Chautauqua grounds who does. And they send you back to the St. Elmo, but to the restaurant on the ground floor.

They tell you there's a little shop in the restaurant that just might sell French presses. It turns out there is no such shop in the restaurant, but one of the waiters overhears your conversation with the reservations clerk, and the next thing you know you are walking back to your place with a French press on loan for the next three weeks from the swankiest restaurant at Chautauqua.



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President's Ponderings: The Last One Standing by Susan Rak

There comes a time in your life when you really ought to see it coming. But somehow age seems to sneak up from behind, ready to try to trip you up - or more subtly give you a slight nudge just behind the kneecap - just enough to make you go all wobbly and suddenly unsure of yourself. This can happen anywhere, so it shouldn't be at all surprising when this kind of thing happens at a luncheon. Not just any old luncheon, but a gathering of all your old classmates. I mean you were there for the 55th reunion - what did you expect?

Age will make itself felt in one way or other. I am never sure about whether or not I want to attend these events. High school is ancient history, right? But I always sign up. And it is always the same. Or is it? As per usual we gathered in a hotel ballroom. The chandeliers overhead added a gaudy beaded source of light; the carpeting under our feet a scrolled pattern of light gray against dark something. It all had a rather dizzying effect. And the attendees are all wearing name tags, of course. Is it so we can remember the names that go with the slightly altered - I mean aged - faces? Or is it to remind ourselves of our own names, of who we were or who we are?

The conversations are animated, especially for those who have been in close contact over the years. For

the rest of us, animated by the effort of finding things to say, of trying to remember exactly who that person was or is. People talk about grandchildren or where they live now or their health. The list of ailments or surgeries or gradual inefficiencies gets longer every time.

And we talk about those we have lost - from graduation on. Yet here we are and there I was - surprisingly pleased to be there. There is a lot that we carry - whether happy memories or awkward baggage - as graduates of a Catholic high school. We all went our varied ways into adulthood careers and families and interests all diverging. There are a lot of assumptions we have let go of - or ought to have let go of by now.

Even if I wanted to get out of going to this latest reunion, I couldn't have, since I was asked to give the invocation. And what minister worth her salt is going to say "no" to an invitation to get up and talk uninterrupted?

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(President's Ponderings continued)

But even more than that, I've always thought of myself as an outlier in this group - the ex-Catholic, lesbian, Unitarian Universalist female clergyperson. So I was flattered, touched and called to do this.

I mean, I was the one that our so-called "guidance counselor" Sister Joachim called into her office to discuss college plans - she had an offer she believed I could not refuse. It was a scholarship to a small Catholic all-girls college in NJ. But there, slacks were forbidden on campus - except for bermuda shorts worn to sunbathe on the rooftops. It seems awfully close-minded of me now, but I based my refusal on the dress-code.

And where did I plan to go, she asked. Oh, I've applied to four NJ state colleges, I replied. Aghast, Sr. Joachim exclaimed that I would lose my faith and become a communist if I attended any of those colleges.

Needless to say, neither happened - I didn't become a communist and instead of losing it, I think I found my faith in that ordinary,

unprepossessing state teachers' college. I found it in the freedom of thought, the new experiences of living apart from my family (once I got used to it), the challenge of not being one of the smartest people in the room... and the freedom to wear blue jeans to class!

So back to the reunion, I had put together and offered a 4-minute homily-prayer that spoke to a shared but diverse past, and it grounded us in the present.

Or maybe it - the process and the sharing - grounded me, surrounded by slippery time and nostalgia and the reality of our shared mortality. And then, after the buffet lunch, it was time for the group picture.

And here's where time and age really snuck up on us. I glanced around the room as I reached for my walker, placing my weight on the good foot as I prepared to rise, and there we were, almost every one resting hands on the table or on the back of a chair for leverage or an arm offered by a solicitous soul, as we made to rise.

And I was surprised that I was not the last one standing.



Not every farewell
is a brilliantly memorable
celebration of times past.
Some aren't even recognized as
such until an absence makes itself
known to the arms that ache to
embrace, to the ears that strain to
hear a long-unheard and very
particular voice, and to the heart
aware that it is now the keeper of
memory.

Words and image by Stefanie Etzbach-Dale

Wanted: Very Part-Time Web Designer

UURMaPA seeks a website designer who is skilled in WordPress settings that utilize complex plug-ins and code. Our prior designer is no longer available, and while we don't have any active design projects at the moment, it would be good to identify someone who could be available to respond to updates and assist with future new features.

We do not imagine a lot of time needed for this, but when necessary it is beyond the capacity of our current volunteer content managers. If this might be you, or if you have a referral, please let us know so we can explore how to make it work. Contact webmaster@uurmapa.org.

From time to time we may need more technical design skills to get "under the hood" of our site (www.uurmapa.org), which goes well beyond the standard features of WordPress, including use of posts that respond to different categories by changing the input formats, automated listing of the ten most recent deaths for sidebars, automatically organizing obituary posts into alphabet groupings, managing conference registrations, etc. The site uses a number of plug-ins, including VFB Pro, VFB Pro Payments, Shortcodes Pro, Advanced Custom Fields Pro, and others.

The UURMaPA Board

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Ned Wight, Vice President
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Patt Herdklotz, Membership Coordinator

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Jay Atkinson, Clergy Obituary Editor

Eleanor Richardson, Partner Obituary Editor

Contact information for most people can be found on the UURMaPA website (www.uurmapa.org) under "Governance."

We welcome contributions to Elderberries. Please email elderberries@uurmapa.org.

Fall Conference Review

This year the Fall Conference was presented as a multi-platform event, available in person in “pods” and on Zoom. The Reverend Dr. Tom Owen-Towle was the keynote speaker, and the theme was “Mindful Dying: Freeing Ourselves to Live.” The conference drew well on the skills of its planning team, the wisdom of its program presenters, our colleagues in leadership roles in the UUA, UUMA, and UURMaPA, as well as the insights of its conferees. The goals of our conferences are intellectual stimulation and spiritual deepening and strengthening. Look to the next issue of *Elderberries* for a more complete report on this event.

-- Rosemarie Smurzynski

Rainbow History Project Update

For those of you not familiar with the project, in October 2019 UURMAPA hired Rev. Diana McLean to work on a book project based on our Rainbow History Project celebrating the 50-year anniversary of Stonewall.

The project is still underway, though it was slowed down by COVID and by its large scope--which has expanded as Diana has worked with Mary Benard at Skinner House Books to make this the best project possible. It quickly became clear that between the materials already gathered by UURMAPA and those submitted to Diana in response to a call for submissions and personal invitations, there is far too much important material for a single book.

At this point, there is a proposal going to the Skinner House board for the project to become two books; there are also possibilities for an online archive larger than what is already gathered at www.uurainbowhistory.net. Diana expects to turn in the final draft of the first book (a collection of first-hand essays from LGBTQIA+ Unitarian Universalists) this fall. Stay tuned for more updates once the Skinner House board has discussed the expanded proposal!

-- Diana McLean (dianakmclean@gmail.com)

The two UURMaPA directories (organized alphabetically and by geographical region) both use the password “WISDOM.” Find them under “Publications” on the <https://uurmapa.org> website.

Invitation to Join a Peer Support Group

Vice President Ned Wight coordinates “peer support groups” for new retirees or partners who would like to enrich their connection with retired colleagues through regular online interactions. These groups were initially launched by our colleague Jim Eller when he served as Vice President from 2013-15. He was inspired by Zalman Schachter-Shalomi’s book *From Aging to Sageing*, which acknowledged the challenge of shifting our focus from “doing” to “being.” Touching base with peers periodically seemed like a helpful way to facilitate this shift.

If you would like to participate in a collegial peer group, please register your interest by sending an e-mail to Ned at nwight@optonline.net. Please indicate if you’d be willing to serve as a co-convenor. Based on those who express interest, he will organize groups of 8-10 and designate two co-convenors for each group. They then become self-governing and self-regulating groups. Some decide to end after a year; others have been continuing for many years.

Two existing virtual support groups have a specific focus: a Caregivers Support Group for members who have particular roles as caregivers within their households, and a Grief Support Group for those recently bereaved. There may also be interest in starting a group focused on Social Justice Concerns. If any of these specialty groups (or another focus area) is of interest to you, please specify that in your response to Ned, as well.

Focus on Issues of Class

At the UUA General Assembly this year, there was a workshop on “class.” It was a welcome addition to the variety and diversity of available workshops. As we all consider how to “widen the circle,” it is critical that we include the impact that class has had in UU interactions.

As ministers or partners, we have had many opportunities to engage with UU’s over the years. Not all of these experiences have been positive. Unfortunately, these have resulted in misunderstandings or awkward interchanges.

Therefore, we strongly feel that it would benefit us to create a support group focused on “class” and other issues affecting marginalized groups. Class, unlike other statuses, may change over the course of one’s life. However, it seems that the class you are born into and spent your early years is never fully erased. It is an integral part of your identity.

If this speaks to you, and you wish to explore further, please contact one of us. We would love to talk even if you are not looking for a group but just want some individual contact.

-- Gloria Perez, UURMaPA Board Secretary (gjp68@me.com)

-- Anne Spatola, former Board member (amspatola@comcast.net)



After a thorough evaluation, the UUA Retirement Plan Committee, guided by several UUA Board Members and our investment advisors, Fiduciant Advisors, is pleased to announce that the Unitarian Universalist Organizations Retirement Plan (UU Retirement Plan) will be moving from TIAA to Empower effective February 27, 2023.

There is no action required of you as a result of this change and further information will be provided throughout the transition process.

Empower is the second-largest retirement plan recordkeeper in the nation (Pension & Investments 2020 Defined Contribution Survey Ranking, April 2021), helping more than 17 million people (as of June 30, 2022) achieve the future they imagine. Retirement is all they do, with a mission of empowering people to save enough money today to enjoy a more secure retirement.

Highlights of the transition include:

- ◆ A significant reduction in Participant Fees.
- ◆ A new and robust website with access to a state-of-the-art mobile app.
- ◆ Personalized planning tools to help you easily model different saving and investing scenarios.
- ◆ The automatic transfer of your assets, contribution elections, beneficiary elections and loan obligations.
- ◆ Enhanced and simplified financial planning resources, such as tools to help determine future healthcare spending.
- ◆ Access to a broad range of investment choices to help you build a diversified portfolio, including access to Empower Advisory Services. There is no guarantee provided by any party that participation in any of the advisory services will result in a profit.

The Unitarian Universalist Association is committed to helping you pursue your retirement goals and we understand you may have questions. Please direct any questions to: retirementplan@uua.org. You may also visit our UU Retirement Plan Recordkeeper Transitions FAQs at <https://hrforuus.uua.org/help/en-us/30> for more details about the transition and why we chose Empower. We are excited about the transition to Empower and confident that you will be pleased with the enhanced retirement plan!

On the path, together,

Reverend Richard Nugent
Director, Church Staff Finances

Gloria Guldager
Director, UUA Retirement Plan

Nominating Committee Update

Our five-member committee is pleased to report that we are more than half-way to our goal of confirming nominees for the July 2023 - June 2025 term. Several of our current leaders have agreed to serve a second two-year term in their elected offices. Serving in a leadership role for UURMaPA and collaborating with other retired colleagues can be fun and rewarding!

Now we want to invite you to let us know if you might be interested in considering a leadership role in UURMaPA, either now or in future years.

The Nominating Committee is responsible for nominating five (or four) new members of the nine-person UURMaPA Board and three (or two) Nominating Committee members (staggered odd/even years for continuity) by April each year. At that point, the new slate is confirmed by the Board and announced to the membership.

We would be glad to talk with you about the positions still open for nomination this year and opportunities in the future, provide you with job description(s), and answer any questions. Let us know if you might be interested in learning about leadership opportunities in UURMaPA!

Email our committee at nominations@uurmapa.org.

Judy Gibson, Chair; Mel Hoover, Ginger Luke, Beth Miller, Sue Redfern-Campbell



There's a lot to be said for allowing ourselves to "get lost" in unfamiliar places. Sometimes that's when we come to know we're actually in exactly the right place.

Words and image by Stefanie Etzbach-Dale

(continued from the cover)



The Chautauqua amphitheater (left) between events. It holds 4,000 people.

You really just don't know what is going to happen next.

At the beginning of the week, you told your friends that you chose to be at Chautauqua that week not for the speakers but for that week's theme -- "Redefining the American Home." But there was an exception, the final major speaker of that week, the one who was to speak on Friday morning. You really did want to hear that speaker -- Salman Rushdie -- prize-winning author of 14 novels and other books besides, founding president of the International Parliament of Writers -- that Salman Rushdie.

The Chautauqua Daily that morning said he planned to talk about the importance of literary arts in an age dominated by the false narratives of the powerful. He told the reporter he wanted Chautauquans to have a part in his story. In fact, you were so busy writing to your Facebook friends that morning about how you could hardly wait to hear him that you got there a little later than usual and had to sit in about the 8th row to get a center seat, a little further back than you like. You like to sit close enough to the stage to see the expressions on speakers' faces.

But of course when you sat down there in the Amphitheater that Friday morning, eager to hear the renowned author Salman Rushdie speak about the need to protect persecuted writers, you didn't know what was going to happen next.

Of course, soon afterwards the whole world -- not just the people in that amphitheater -- knew something about what happened next. While Rushdie was being introduced, a man ran up onto the stage and attacked him with a knife.

Now right here I invite you to take a breath with me. I am not here this morning to give you an eye-witness account of what happened that morning on the Chautauqua Amphitheater stage. For one thing, that would be pretty much impossible because someone immediately went to the microphone and in a very calm but firm voice told us to evacuate the amphitheater immediately, which we did. To begin with, that meant turning around, not looking at the stage. So it's literally true that you could learn just about as much from newspaper or TV news accounts as from me.

Probably the first thing you would learn is that some people -- including but not only doctors -- who just happened to be in the audience that morning ran up onto the stage and intervened. They almost certainly saved Rushdie's life. They subdued the attacker so that he was immediately arrested. Notably, no guns were involved. No one got shot.

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The irony was not lost on us that the theme for the following week at Chautauqua was “New Profiles in Courage.” The people who ran up onto that stage and saw to both Rushdie and his attacker certainly exhibited considerable courage. And I’m glad to note that they received much richly deserved praise from Chautauqua’s President Michael Hill and a host of others.

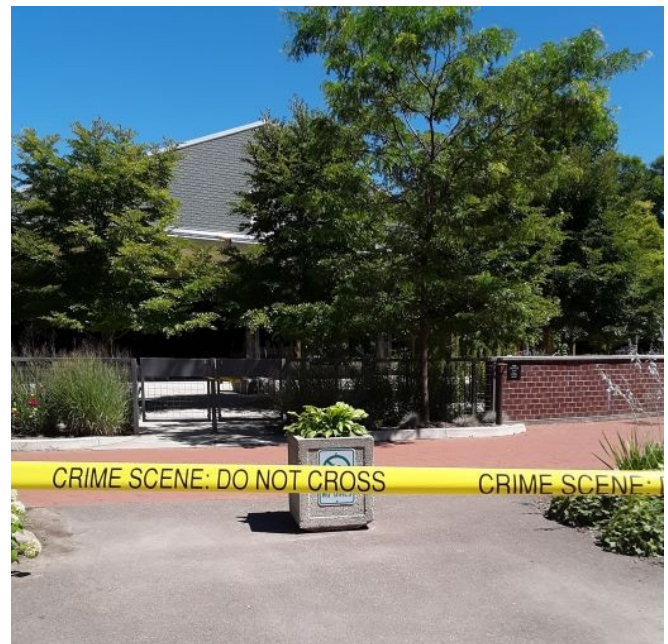
But if the only thing I had to say about all this is what happened there that day, I would not be here in this pulpit this morning, and I daresay I would not have been invited to be here. No, I believe the message for us all comes from Salmon Rushdie himself, even though he did not get to say a single word to the audience that morning.

Salman Rushdie deserves to be famous for the quality of his writing. But, world as it is, what brought him the most fame was something else. In 1988 he published a novel called *Satanic Verses*, inspired by the life of the prophet Muhammad. The title of the novel is a reference to some verses in the Quran. The novel sparked outrage among Shia Muslims, who thought it was blasphemous. And this led to a fatwa, essentially the proclamation by the Ayatollah Khomeini of a bounty on Rushdie’s head, a whole lot of money for anyone who would make an end of him. By the way, the fatwa was declared “finished” by Iran’s former president Mohammad Khatami in 1998, but it was never precisely lifted. In Shia Islamic tradition a fatwa is irrevocable.

There has been an assumption by some people since the events of this past August 12 that Rushdie’s attacker was looking forward to collecting all that money. However, if he had anything like a brain in his head, it had to occur to him that he could be killed that morning. Maybe he thought he would reap a different reward—immediate transport to heaven. One journalist commenting on all this said that the Ayatollah’s fatwa probably had less to do with the attack than the fact that this fellow was living in his mother’s basement and had no real life to sustain him. I’m with that journalist.

But my interest this morning is in Rushdie, not his attacker. When the fatwa was issued, Rushdie went into hiding, with protection from the government of the United Kingdom. He assumed an alias. In a way, he had something in common then with the man who attacked him on the Chautauqua stage over 30 years later. This diminished state of Rushdie’s life in hiding went on for nearly a decade.

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The entrance to the Chautauqua Amphitheater closed off by Crime Scene tape within minutes after the attack on Salman Rushdie.

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At which point he apparently had had it. He came out of hiding in 1997, nine years after the fatwa was issued. He resumed going by his real name. And in the great lot of writing about him in recent weeks, somebody quoted him as saying then, "I have to live my life." And he apparently also said, "Terrorism is the art of fear. The only way you can defeat it is by deciding not to be afraid."

We who were at Chautauqua in the following days received some glosses on that text. New York Governor Kathy Hochul spoke on the following Sunday to Chautauqua's institutional leaders, the press, law enforcement, and the first responders. She said, "I want it out there that a man with a knife cannot silence a man with a pen." And she quoted Rushdie as having said years before, when he came out of hiding, "No more. I will not be bound by fear or a threat."

Frankly, I prefer the gloss on the text from one of the Chautauqua speakers the week following the Rushdie attack. Dr. Abigail Marsh, a neuroscientist, turned my head around when she said that fear is not the opposite of being brave. Instead fear is a necessary prerequisite for bravery. Moreover, she said that the absence of fear is not courage but recklessness. Courage is being fully aware of danger and acting out of the belief that something or someone else is more important than our own well-being. I'm not here to put words in Salman Rushdie's mouth, of course, but I don't think I would be far off in surmising that he would say that for him embodying freedom of speech is more important than his living to a ripe old age.

And I do believe the reason I am standing here this morning is to invite you to join me in taking in the enormity of his embodied proclamation. With a bounty on his head, knowing there is the possibly of danger at every turn, Salman Rushdie says, "I have to live my life." He says it to would-be attackers. He says it to the world. Maybe most important of all, he says it to himself. And there, my friends, is a courage that I find to be unmatched.



Chautauqua's President Michael Hill and leaders of several of Chautauqua's major faith groups share a moment of quiet prayer before the vigil for the Chautauqua community the evening after the attack on Salman Rushdie.

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But even that isn't all. I believe that – not just by his words but also by striding onto the Chautauqua amphitheater stage that Friday morning last August and striding into the world wherever he happens to be every morning of every month, Salman Rushdie sends us a message for our own lives too, wherever we happen to be every morning.

That message is: You don't know what is going to happen next. You just never know. The critics might not like your work. The relationship might not last. The test results might come back positive. The plane might arrive late or not at all. You might find yourself picking up the pieces in Ft. Meyers, or Kiev. -- Or you might receive a gift you never expected. You might give a gift you didn't know you had to give. You don't think so?

A stranger might save your life. You might write something or say something or do something that – even unbeknownst to you -- saves somebody else's life. You just never know.

Salman Rushdie's very being urges us every day – Don't be content to hide out. Drop whatever alias you have adopted. Come up out of the basement. Take a chance on life. You don't know what will happen. You just never know.



The pulpit/lectern in the small Chautauqua amphitheater called the Hall of Philosophy. The Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Chautauqua holds Sunday morning services in the Hall of Philosophy during the 9-week Chautauqua summer season.

Book Bench – New Book

Alzheimer's Canyon by Jane Dwinell and Sky Yardley

Those of you who were at the winter conference in Texas in 2019 probably met my husband, Sky, who had dementia. He loved to talk about what it was like to have this disease, and he craved meeting other people who shared his diagnosis. We had the honor of speaking at 25 congregations across the country during 2017-2018, and there Sky met person after person who dared to “come out” to their congregation as having dementia. It made him so happy. To continue to share in our experience, we started a blog, *Alzheimer's Canyon*, and Sky wrote as long as he could, and then I took over.

After Sky died in 2021, I turned the blog into a book, found a publisher, and am delighted to share that the book will be published November 1st. As you can imagine, books written by people with dementia are few and far between. It is so great to think that Sky's words will be out there for all to read, and to learn from. Dementia affects nearly everyone these days — if you don't have it yourself, probably a relative, a loved one, a friend or colleague has experienced it.

This is my fourth book, and it's always stressful when you get to the editing part, and then wonder what the editor and designer will do with the cover.... I was incredibly lucky to have a good friend as editor, and our daughter, Dana, as designer! They did a fabulous job. Here's a bit of what's on the back cover:

“In the middle of the night I wake up and don't know where I am.... Am I in my house? My neighbor's house? Do I turn on the light? Do I get dressed? I turn to Jane, hold her hand, and let her bring me back to reality.’

“What do you do when your reality slips away? If you're Sky Yardley and Jane Dwinell, you accept each new challenge, reshape your life, and write.... With humor and honesty, love and compassion, Sky and his wife Jane describe what it's like to live with a constantly evolving and mysterious new life... Welcome to *Alzheimer's Canyon*: there is one way in, and no way out. Follow Jane and Sky as they navigate this journey they did not ask to take, a journey that balances pain, loss, and confusion with gratitude, wonder, and transformation.”



Thanks to the members of the Caregiver's Support Group who kept me together as I cared for Sky, and now to the members of the Grief Support Group as we hold each other as we grieve the loss of our beloveds.

Please ask your independent bookstore and your library to carry the book! Let's make Sky famous!

<https://www.rootstockpublishing.com/rootstock-books/alzheimers-canyon>

-- Jane Dwinell

Book Bench – New Book

Fred Wooden has self published his first book, *Basho and I Take A Long Walk*, being two pilgrimages on two continents. The first is his account of walking the Kumano Kodo in Japan in 2014, following the style of Matsuo Basho, the premiere poet and pilgrim of Japan. It is followed by a year of creating haiku daily in 2016 - 2017, treating ordinary days as pilgrim moments of their own.

“We met through a mutual friend in 1971, Basho and me. In my first semester of college my advisor tells me to take courses in things beyond my interest in music theory. ‘Here,’ he says, opening the thick catalog of courses, ‘right here on the first page is Introduction to Asian Studies. You should do that.’”

Forty-three years after that class, the little volume I bought back then is in my knapsack as I made my way to the Chuo line in Shinjuku Station, Tokyo. Between then and now I have read it several times, even set a portion to music - very badly I should add. When I went to seminary a fellow student and Shinto priest was impressed that I knew Basho. We became friends. He solemnized my marriage. He and the professor of that class have remained my friends to this day. Such is what the premier poet of Japan, the haiku master, can do centuries after he lived.

Basho made several journeys, of which the most famous is “The Narrow Road to the Deep North,” Oku no Hosomichi. That took weeks. My journey was barely a week, but perhaps more like his experience, as the Kumano Kodo is through woods and rural villages in the Kii Peninsula. Being a pilgrim route back to the 13th century, the destination is Kumano Nachi Taisha, the tallest waterfall in Japan and sacred in the Shinto tradition.

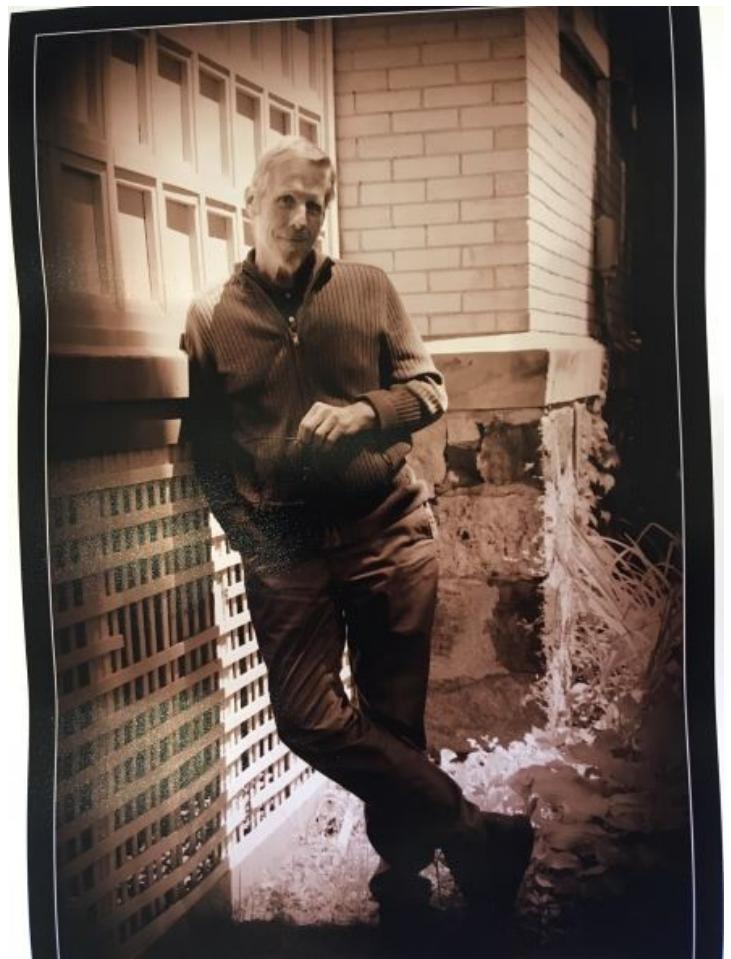
Unlike the Appalachian Trail or the Pacific Crest Trail, it is short and each day ends in a Ryokan or Michuku. Like then, it is truly a path: dirt and rock and only groomed enough to be safe. Dozens of jizos and ojis appear along the way, many in states of decay. But that is consistent with Japanese culture which prizes the patina of time.

Basho and I Take a Long Walk

Two years later I undertook a reverse pilgrimage as it were, challenging myself to compose a daily haiku for a year about something experienced each day. More practice than perfect, it was nonetheless a way of attending to the ordinary as a vessel of value and meaning. That portion I called “Catching Fireflies,” as it seems that is what haiku tries to do.

The book is available for \$8 as an e-book, and \$28.00 as a paperback because it has LOTS of illustrations. Consider a purchase, and consider also leaving a review.

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0BC6YQDJB>



Photos from *Basho and I Take a Long Walk*
by Fred Wooden



The torii at the beginning of the path in Takjiri



Takahara Oji, used with permission



Yunomine Village, famous for its hot springs. Original photo computer altered in the Ukiyo-e style.

UURMaPA Board Proposes A Purpose Change Rather Than A Covenant

by Wayne Arnason, UUA and UUMA Liaison

In the spring of 2022, the Board of UURMaPA began exploring whether we could adopt a “covenant or something like a covenant” among our members. This discussion was motivated by the Board’s desire to make UURMaPA a welcoming and inclusive space for all retirees and partners, regardless of UUMA affiliation or opinions, and regardless of racial, cultural or gender identities. Of course, we realize that aspiration and affirmation fall short of actualizing a culture that embodies this kind of beloved community. We thought that working together on a covenant for UURMaPA members would be a good first step, however. After some initial discussion about this idea in a “Topic of Interest” session at the March 2022 conference, we announced a year of study of how we might create a covenant or something like it. The year of study began in May 2022, with six focus group conversations led by UURMaPA Board members. The last issue of *Elderberries*, Summer 2022, had a front page article summarizing the learnings from these focus groups.

One of our learnings has been that no formal process exists to approve such a covenant or something like it for UURMaPA. Membership requires no dues, therefore has no beginning and end, and we have no by-laws based process for passing statements together. What UURMaPA does have is a modest set of by-laws that empowers the Board to keep the organization running. Our by-laws are actually the only document that contains a values-based statement about why we exist. That statement is in Article II - Purpose:

“In faithfulness to the Unitarian Universalist tradition and to the guidelines and code of conduct of the Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association, the purpose of this organization shall be to serve the interests and enhance the well-being of retired Unitarian Universalist ministers and their life partners through informational communication, periodic membership gatherings, and other supportive programs and activities.”

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This same statement is contained in our only other governance document, our Operating Procedures, only it is described there as our “Mission Statement.”

In August 2022, the Board began to discuss whether this Purpose statement and the by-laws-specified method of amending this Purpose statement might be the best (and only) way for us affirm a changing direction and awareness in our shared culture.

Amending the by-laws of UURMaPA, including the Purpose, involves the Board taking action on its own authority, but within a framework of inclusive conversation among our members. UURMaPA is an organization that has long functioned with a trusted Board that is given all the authority and responsibility for managing our organization. No annual meeting of members is required or held. In that regard, UURMaPA is more like our UU “identity organizations” than like a UU congregation. UU Buddhist Fellowship and UU’s for Jewish Awareness are organizations that exist solely to provide programs, publications and conferences to support their members but avoid having annual business meetings by similarly fully empowering the Board.

Here is what the by-laws say about how the Board can amend the by-laws:

“Article VI – Amendments. These bylaws may be amended by a majority vote of the Board in the following manner: the Board proposes an amendment; it is circulated to the membership so that members can send comments and/or corrections to the Secretary; an official Board vote will be taken on the amendment no sooner than 30 days after it is published.”

We take the word “membership” in the second line of the article to mean the membership of UURMaPA, not the membership of the Board, although that is a little vague. This is the only consulting/approval role available to the membership.

So, as a next step in this year of study of “a covenant or something like it,” the Board has decided to go in the “something like it” direction! We are proposing the following changes in our Purpose, and inviting response and discussion during the six months between the Fall Conference 2022 and the Spring Conference 2023. The Board proposes the following amendments to Article II (in bold italics):

“In faithfulness to the Unitarian Universalist tradition and to the guidelines and code of conduct of the Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association, **the members of the Unitarian Universalist Retired Ministers and Partners Association embody in our lives and our conduct with each other the values that we proclaim on behalf of our faith. Our purpose is to be an inclusive multicultural community** that serves the interests and enhances the well-being of retired Unitarian Universalist ministers and their life partners through informational communication, periodic membership gatherings, and other supportive programs and activities. **As a Unitarian Universalist organization of professionals and partners, we recognize that fulfilling our purpose calls us to cultivate anti-oppressive attitudes and practices consistent with our shared values, thereby promoting our collective well-being.**”

After receiving input and possibly creating this winter some more face-to-face online discussion groups on this proposal, the Board will consider its next steps. These next steps could include: a confirming second vote from the Board formalizing this amendment OR new wording for the amendments based on input from the membership OR abandoning the idea of amending the Purpose and going in a different direction. We welcome your written reflections about this proposed change in our purpose to be sent to this email address: president@uurmapa.org.

Unencumbered as I sometimes am
By space
And place
And fear of ridicule
...the dance of word and thought begins

The possible would-be poem waits
One step forward,
One step back
A word,
A thought,
A fleeting theme
...And then a sudden pivot to the side...
"I'll just throw in the wash," I say
And maybe check my mail
Before I go and shop for supper.

The patient would-be poem waits.

I catch it up again
Somewhere between the grapefruits and the oranges
But the polished supermarket aisles are strewn with memories now
Tangled ones and twisted ones that curl around my ankles
Memories that would end my dance
Before I've half begun.

A shining metaphor slips past me on the left,
But I catch it slinking towards the door
The music quickens and the almost poem waits.
I know where to find it now
I'm on my way
I know how
To catch these fleeting images before they get away
And throw themselves headlong
Into another poet's poem.
It's running out ahead of me now
My almost just-about poem
Laughing at me over its shoulder
I race after it
Picking up the fragments left behind
A pronoun here
An adverb there
A neutered modifier and a participle
Left dangling from the underripe bananas

And another glowing metaphor dashes past
But not away this time.
I am too quick.
I catch it up and toss it in my basket with the others.
The memories don't trip me now
They nourish me
My basket runneth over
A veritable banquet is before me
And my almost finished poem comforts me.

SLOW DANCE IN THE GRAPEFRUIT AISLE:

A bit of whimsy on the very
ordinary nature of writing poetry

by Judith Campbell

I leave the basket by the door
And take my newborn poem home
with me
Still wet and glistening
From the mist machines
It wiggles in my pocket
Eager for release.
Unencumbered as I sometimes am,
By time and place
And fear of ridicule,
The dance of word and thought
begins
And then
It ends.



Amazing Grapes! *

Amazing grapes! How sweet the taste
That quenched a thirst like mine.
I was once parched, but now am braced;
Was drear, but now I shine!

The grapes that make the wine I crave –
Those grapes from Maconnais!
How precious is my brut blanc fave,
From grapes of Chardonnay!

Through pot luck dinners filled with bores
I have so sprightly come!
'Tis grapes that made them less a chore,
Turned doldrums into fun.

When they've been aged in oak for years,
Aft' ripened by the sun,
We've no less ways to sing their praise.
We'll sip 'til day is done.

*To be sung with besotted fervor – and tacit apologies to John
Newton

Becky Edmiston-Lange
September 21, 2022

Merry-Go-Round

by Duane H. Fickeisen ©2022

A single father is pushing the Merry-Go-Round at a playground on a Saturday morning. His three young children ride round-and-round. “Please God, don’t let anyone puke. And especially don’t let the little one fly off and break her arm.”

“Hang on!” “Don’t stand up!”

“Faster, faster, Dad!”

“Hang on!”

“Keep going!”

“No, Sarah is turning green. She needs us to stop for a minute. — Here, let me help you off. — Be careful, take it easy. — You’ll be OK in a minute. Sit over here on the grass. I’ll sit with you. Breathe. — Feeling better now? Do you want to do something else? Like maybe the slide?”

The middle one, Robert, says, “Michelle, you can push it! Make it go faster than Dad!”

She hops off, runs around the track, pushing, then jumps on, but it is out of balance. The bearings are worn and rusted. It soon slows.

“Dad! Push us again!”

Thirty years later, a different city, another playground, another Merry-Go-Round. This one with a more bone-friendly landing area. There are now six kids, two from each one. He’s still “Dad” to the first bunch. Their kids call him GD for Grandpa Duane.

“GD, push us faster!”



Permission granted for
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(Fall 2022 edition).

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“Please God, don’t let anything awful happen to their parents. No accidents, no violence, no serious illnesses. And take care of these little ones. If one of them flies off and breaks a bone, I can handle it. Puking I can handle. All in a day’s play. But keep them safe in this world gone wacky. Let them grow up loving life and with a commitment to make things better.”

“Hang on! Don’t stand up. Watch your little cousins.”

“Faster, faster! We’re not going to fall off!”

“OK, here we go. Sit down! Everybody hang on. Ready?”

“That’s not very fast. My Dad makes it go a lot faster! Why are you stopping?”

“I’m getting dizzy. I need to go the other way. OK, here we go again, hang on! Don’t push your sister! Sit down!”

“Come on, make it faster!”

“Let’s stop and let anyone off who is feeling dizzy.” None of them wants to get off, although it would be prudent, so back we go, round-and-round, until the next-to-youngest looks green and wobbly.

“OK, that’s enough. I’m stopping before someone gets sick. You can play on the slide or swings. ”Come on, GD, you can be on one side of the teeter-totter and we’ll all get on the other side,” says the oldest, the ringleader, the instigator.

Against his better judgment, he did it. The biggest kid thought it would be fun to hop off suddenly. The rest went flying up into the air and came back down hard on their butts. “Ouch!”

They were back home for lunch with nary a broken bone or puke. One of the farmer’s kids did drop his pants and pee on the park lawn. The others will tell his Mom, the first green kid. Perhaps someday in another city, another park, she’ll see his kid, her grandson, pee in a public place.

This selection and the selection by Judith Campbell on page 18 are from the forthcoming book *Beyond the Sabbath*, a collection of prosaic and poetic writings of ministers and their partners who attend a weekly UURMAPA writing group Judith Campbell facilitates. The book will be out in mid-autumn, (well before the holidays) and we will send out a notice to all and sundry upon its release.

Wrinkled Reflections

by Maureen Killoran

They told me it would happen, those wrinkly people with trembly hands and wobbly voices. They told me about all the dying, how they kept watching and every day more people they knew slipped away, old friends and lovers, world-anchors, makers and shapers and dreamers of difference, every day more were gone.

They told me it would happen, but I knew better. I was young and reckless and, despite this warning or that loss, I knew The World As I Knew It would go on.

Except, of course, it wouldn't. Except they were right, those wrinkly people with wobbly voices. They were right, and it is happening now. They are dying, my old friends and lovers, "my" world-anchors, "my" makers and shapers and dreamers of difference, and it is my turn now, from the midst of my own wrinkles and tremblings, it is my turn to grieve.

Let me not neglect to celebrate the gift that was their presence, to honor the blessings their lives have been. And may I remember always to cherish the memories that remain.



Maureen Killoran and her spouse, Peter Hyatt, live in a retirement community in Gainesville FL. There, Peter enjoys gardening and chess, and Maureen is exploring long-neglected interests in painting. Early in her retirement, Maureen challenged her natural tendency to depression by embracing the daily challenge of posting "#3GoodThings" on Facebook, a discipline that has now reached 1,500 days and counting.

A Flight of a Lifetime by Richard Speck

I recently had the opportunity to do something that every pilot aspires to do. I flew my Cessna 172 to Whitman Field in Oshkosh WI to attend the Experimental Aircraft Association annual Airventure which was held July 25-31, 2022. I and a friend, Randy Windle, took off from New Garden Airport Friday, July 22, to make the seven-hour flight to Oshkosh. We stopped along the way for fuel in Youngstown Elser Metro Airport, Youngstown OH. Luckily, we had brought snacks for the plane since there wasn't any food available near the field.

Our second leg took us to Michigan where we landed at Battle Creek Executive Airport at Kellogg Field. This is the home of Waco airplanes and we admired several of their airplanes and had some snacks from the Fixed Base Operator (FBO). We had to fuel the plane ourselves, which means positioning the plane near the tanks, reeling out the two-inch hose, securing a grounding strap to the plane, and climbing up a ladder to add fuel to the wings.

We crossed over Lake Michigan at 6500 feet and headed to West Bend Municipal Airport in West Bend WI. This was our final stop before Oshkosh. With full tanks and empty bladders, we were ready to tackle the approach to Oshkosh. This entailed dialing in the advisory radio frequency to know where to start the arrival procedure. On Friday, it was to fly to Puckaway Lake and level off at 1800 feet and a speed of 90 knots.

I could see on my moving map all the other airplanes converging on this one point in space. However, it is hard to actually see planes

unless they are fairly close. We found an airplane in front of us and attempted to follow at ½ mile behind. It is pretty hard to keep a constant speed and altitude while searching the sky for other airplanes. I realized I was too slow and holding up traffic behind me and accelerated to keep pace with others.

We follow along until we reach Green Lake and turn northeast to the town of Ripon. We then fly to the town of Fisk where controllers on the ground call out your plane by color and type and tell you which runway you are assigned. We follow a specified route and the controller then tells us to enter the downwind leg of the runway. There are two runways, 18/36 and 9/27.

We were directed to runway 18R and told to land precisely on the pink dot and exit the runway as quickly as it is safe to do so. There were four dots and planes were landing on each of them simultaneously. Then we taxied for a long time until we were motioned to turn on to the grass along with other airplanes and finally directed to park next to others in long lines of airplanes that were camping in the North Forty.



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We unpacked the plane and pitched the tent next to it. There is a store nearby to purchase food and drinks. We settled in by watching even more airplanes land and join us in camping. To give you a feel for how big this is, here are some statistics:

This year's attendance was approximately 650,000 people. Total aircraft: More than 10,000 aircraft arrived at Wittman Regional Airport in Oshkosh and other airports in east-central Wisconsin. At Wittman alone, there were 18,684 aircraft operations in the 11-day period from July 21-31, which is an average of approximately 121 takeoffs/landings per hour when the airport is open.

Total show planes: 3,226, including: 1,375 registered in vintage aircraft parking, plus 1,156 homebuilt aircraft (up 6 percent over 2021), 369 warbirds (up 5 percent from '21), 137 ultralights, 87 seaplanes, 77 aerobatic aircraft, and 25 rotorcraft.

Camping: More than 12,000 sites in aircraft and drive-in camping accounted for an estimated 40,000 visitors.

Forums, Workshops, and Presentations: More than 1,400 sessions hosted throughout the week.

Saturday afternoon and evening, a large thunderstorm hit us with heavy rain and 50-60 mile winds. The plane was tied down securely and did fine. We were in the tent holding on to the outside tent poles for dear life as the storm raged. We got soaked and spent a wet night cleaning up as best we could. We spent Sunday drying out sleeping bags and clothing using the airplane elevator and wing struts. We improvised a clothesline between the propeller and the wing as well.



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We took time out to visit the air museum and look at the hundreds of airplanes in the many halls. The main program began on Monday, and I took in several workshops. The grounds cover more than two miles and you walk a lot. In-between workshops I visited many of the show planes and vendors. There are four huge exhibition halls where you can buy anything aviation related.



On Tuesday, I took a half day workshop for instrument pilots to hone our skills. By the evening, Randy and I were exhausted from walking and standing and watching airshows that were in the sky every day. After three full days of all of this, we decided that we had done enough. We also learned that President Biden would be coming to Wilmington on the weekend and the airport we needed to come back to would be closed.



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So we struck our tent on Thursday, packed up our gear, and started for home. Leaving is as complex as arriving. Two airplanes were taking off staggered on the same runway at a time. It took 45 minutes to taxi to the runway.

Once we left Whitman Field, we circled north to avoid other traffic before heading southeast across Lake Michigan again. This time we had a strong tailwind. Coming up we had a strong headwind that slowed us down a lot.

With such a strong tailwind, we flew all the way to Toledo Executive Airport, Toledo OH, before landing to refuel. Then it was on to home where we landed less than 6 hours total back at New Garden Airfield.

This trip tested my flying skills in going to a complex airspace unlike any I have encountered previously. I gained some new knowledge that will benefit me in future flights. And I got to check off one more thing on the bucket list. I doubt that I will want to go again and camp. I'm getting too old for that. Next time, it has to be a room with a bathroom and a comfortable bed.

All day long the sun moves across the sky as we,
impervious to time's passing, go about our business.

Only when it reaches the horizon do we think to
stop and witness its passage.

This holds true not just for the sun,
but for those people and places
that brighten our days.

And it doesn't have to be.



Words and image by Stefanie Etzbach-Dale

(See [TendingSpirit.com](https://www.tendingspirit.com) and the Tending Spirit Page on Facebook for additional words and images.)

Obituaries



Dolores Marie Bierman (1931 - 2021)

Dolores Marie Bierman, 90, died November 3, 2021 in Beaumont CA. (Her photo is above.) Her husband of 59 years, the Reverend Carl Bierman, died in 2010. She was born in Albany NY on April 28, 1931, the daughter of John and Josephine Hart. While at Barnard College, she met and eloped with Carl.

She finished her B.A. at age 54 in Missouri, with a degree in antiquities and library science. She followed Carl to churches in Kennebunk ME, Yardley PA, Springfield MO, and Woodstock VT, finding jobs as registrar's assistant, library assistant, and bank employee.

She is survived by four children, eleven grandchildren, and four great-grandchildren. Dolores was a devoted and loving daughter, wife, mother, grandmother, great-grandmother and friend.

A graveside service was held November 19 in the Albany Rural Cemetery in Menands NY. Notes of condolence may be sent to her son, Andrew Bierman, 9 Mercer Street, Albany NY 12203.

Thank you to Eleanor Richardson for partner obituaries and to Jay Atkinson for clergy obituaries.

Dolores Pike Eaton (1927 - 2017)

Dolores Pike Eaton, 89, the surviving spouse of the Reverend David Eaton, died October 10, 2017. She was born Nov. 24, 1927. She was David's second wife, and they were married in 1961.

They resided in Washington DC, where he was first a counselor at Howard University, then the first African American minister at All Souls Church, where Dolores was a member. She was interred with David at Arlington National Cemetery.



Robert John Holler (1945 - 2016)

Robert John Holler, 71, died October 30, 2016. He was the longtime partner/spouse of the Reverend Thomas Anastasi. Bob was born May 22, 1945 and attended Marple Newtown High School in Newtown Square PA. After graduating from York College in York PA, he joined the U.S. Air Force. This led to a career working for United Airlines in San Francisco CA and later in Seattle WA, until his retirement. Bob and Thomas were married August 4, 2013 at Live Oak UU Church in Goleta CA, where Thomas was minister, although they had entered a committed relationship many years earlier, about 1981. At the time of his death, Bob and Thomas were living in Palm Springs CA. Bob is survived by Thomas; a brother, Bill; and two sisters, Betsy and Margaret.

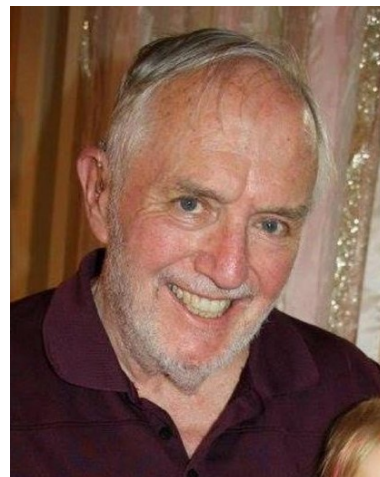
Kurt Schekel (1943 - 2019)

Kurt Schekel, 76, surviving spouse of the Reverend Marcia Schekel, died April 7, 2019, in Vancouver WA. He was born in 1943. Kurt and Marcia met in graduate school while attending the University of Colorado at Boulder (UCB) and were married in 1968.

He earned his Ph.D. in Horticulture at UCB, and spent the vast majority of his professional life as a professor of Extension Horticulture at Washington State University. In 2004, he was active in establishing a heritage orchard with cuttings gathered from local homesteads. He loved plants and experimented with a great variety of flowers. His home gardens, whether in Pullman WA, or upon retirement in Vancouver WA, were an Eden to behold -- tomatoes, string beans, garlic, leeks, and lettuces of all types. He loved to cook and to share his bounty.

Kurt had many interests. He collected both stamps and coins. He loved to walk the shores of the Oregon Coast, returning with treasured agates to polish and share with his adored grandchildren. Kurt and Marcia had enormous and kind hearts. Their home was always open. Homemade soup was always in their refrigerator. Their deaths, within two years of each other, leave a hole for all who knew and loved them.

They had two sons, Matt and Zachary. Tragically, Matt was killed in a bicycle accident in 1998. Kurt's wife, Marcia, died in 2017. Surviving are their son, Zachary, and his wife, Tiffany; his brother Mike; and four grandchildren.



Catherine M. Sterling (1929 - 2021)

Catherine M. Sterling of Wilder VT, died October 25, 2021 in Lebanon NH. Born March 4, 1929, she was the daughter of the Reverend Melville Clark and Olive Snow Mays, growing up in several towns in Vermont. Educated at New England Deaconess Hospital and Boston University, Catherine was a Registered Nurse who worked at the Unirondack Camp in Lowville NY, Plummer Memorial Hospital in Dexter ME, and the Hanover Terrace Nursing Home in Hanover NH.

She was predeceased by her husband of 44 years, the Reverend Robert W. Sterling. As the wife of a Unitarian Universalist minister, she lived in Hornell, Central Square, Little Falls, and Southold NY, West Upton MA, and Dexter ME. Catherine summered in Bridgewater VT, and for the last 31 years, she lived in Wilder VT. She avidly followed the ups and downs of the Red Sox, Celtics, Bruins and Patriots. A skilled knitter, she loved to make caps for newborns. She is survived by a sister, three children, and one grandson. Her family held a private ceremony in Danville VT.

Robert E. Senghas (1928 – 2022)

The Reverend Dr. Robert Senghas—beloved parish minister, widely honored for his great personal integrity, warm and loving pastoral presence, and deep commitment to social justice—died on 26 June 2022 at the Wake Robin Retirement Community in Shelbourne, Vermont, aged 94.

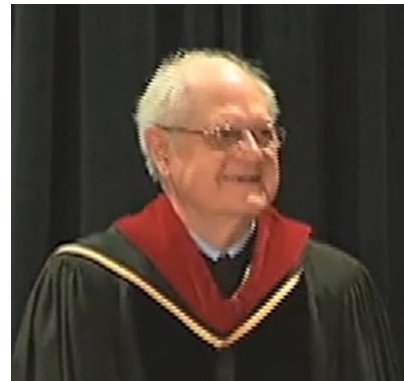
At Bob's memorial service, his middle son Ned recalled that one of Bob's grandchildren had said, just a few weeks earlier, that Bob's death "would be the passing of a titan." This, said Ned, recognized his father as "a moral titan, driven by moral imperatives, by a moral conscience that was the essence of the man." Such conviction was evident early in his ministry in 1964, when the Rev'd Mr. Senghas and a few others began weekly silent vigils in downtown Davis (Calif.) against the Vietnam War back when that conflict was scarcely a blip on most Americans' radar. It was, Ned added, "no small action for a Marine and an always proud one."

As a beginning minister in the 1960s, Bob Senghas found his social conscience challenged and strengthened not only by the specter of Vietnam but also by that decade's multiple assassinations and martyrdoms, civil rights struggles, and issues of black empowerment in the UUA. The UU Church in Davis was Bob's first parish settlement, he was their first minister, and as he later recalled, we "grew together." Three months into his tenure, he found himself, with three days' notice, setting aside a sermon about gratitude for life's joys in the wake of the JFK assassination and offering a more somber reflection on what he later called "a turning point in our national character." For the traditional Thanksgiving tune KREMSER, Bob and his wife Dorrie hastily wrote new words that sang of the mixed realities of "sorrow and gladness" and "joy and tribulation" (now #349 in the gray hymnal).

Then in 1965, when the call to Selma went out from Martin Luther King Jr, Bob Senghas along with all but one of the UU ministers then serving in Northern California, flew together on a single plane to Birmingham, as arranged by the Rev'd Dick Weston, and thence by bus on to Selma to for the famous march. Later in the

summer of that year, Bob returned to spend three weeks in Selma as part of a continuous UU clergy presence organized by the UUA in order to maintain public focus on the situation there.

It was in Davis that Bob "lost his ministerial virginity," as he put it in his [50-year reflections](#) at the 2013 pre-GA ministry days, "and much of my heart is still there." Invited back to the Davis pulpit in 1994 for the congregation's 40th anniversary, he remarked wryly that Dorrie had "encouraged" him in his sermon for that morning by saying "You'll never get through it." He did get through it, but not without many heartfelt tears from both pulpit and pew.



Robert Erwin Senghas was born on 30 June 1928 in Cleveland, Ohio, to Lydia Mueller and Erwin William Senghas. After graduation from nearby Lakewood High School, he headed east, earning a B.A. in economics at Yale in 1950 followed by an LL.B. (legislative law, later converted to a J.D.) at Harvard in 1953. It was while at Harvard that Bob began sporadic attendance at the Unitarian Church in Concord, where he met Dorothy Caiger, a Radcliff student who had grown up in the church. They were married there in 1953.

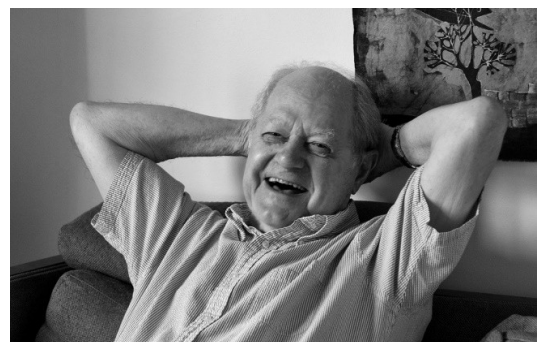


From 1953 to 1955 Mr. Senghas served in the U.S. Marine Corps, first in the infantry and then as defense counsel in general courts-martial and as base legal assistance officer. Accepting a position in estate planning with the law firm Chickering and Gregory in 1955, he and Dorrie moved to San Francisco, where they became active in the First Unitarian Society there. Increasingly restless with the moral sterility of his law practice (“saving a lot of money for people who had plenty”), Bob discovered a deeper enthusiasm for religious and philosophical questions. Listening one Sunday morning in 1960 as Harry Scholefield was preaching, Bob found himself thinking, “I can do that.”

Thus answering a truer calling to exercise his social conscience, Mr. Senghas enrolled across the Bay at Starr King School for the Ministry, completing his M.Div. in 1963 while Dorrie taught at a local high school. He was quickly called to the pulpit of the Unitarian (now UU) Church of Davis (Calif.) where he was ordained on 27 October 1963 and served for eight years. In 1971 he took a call to the Unitarian (now UU) Society of Wellesley Hills (Mass.), staying for three years until his skills were requested by the UUA, where he served five years (1974-79) as executive vice president, working with UUA presidents Robert Nelson West and Paul N. Carnes. The tug of his deeper love for parish ministry eventually pulled him away from this administrative work, and in 1979 he accepted a call to the First UU Society of Burlington, Vermont, where his ten-year ministry was marked by growth in his own and the congregation’s spiritual life. Midway through his tenure there, in 1984, Starr King School awarded him an S.T.D. *honoris causa*, and on his retirement in 1989 the congregation named him minister emeritus.

Mr. Senghas was always actively committed to local and wider communities wherever he lived. He served the San Francisco congregation as a lay member of the Planning Committee, chaired its bylaws revision committee (1960-1961), and was a member of the 9th grade RE Curriculum Committee (1960).

In Davis, he helped establish a human relations council and a suicide prevention hot line. He was a draft counselor at the University of California at Davis during the Vietnam War and served (1966-1968) on the board of the ACLU’s Sacramento Chapter. He was elected vice-chairman of Starr King’s governing board and chaired its faculty selection committee. In Burlington, he served on the Coordinating Council of the Burlington Ecumenical Action Ministry (BEAM), the boards of Planned Parenthood of Northern New England and the Committee on Temporary Shelter (COTS), worked to train volunteers for the Chittenden County Hospice Organization, and was twice elected to the UUA Board of Trustees.



He contributed an original marriage homily to *Great Occasions* [Carl Seaburg, ed. (Boston: UUA, 1968) 145] and published some of his best writing in *Cycles of Reflection: On the Mystery and Challenge of Living* (Jericho, VT: Lilac Mountain Books, 2001). As a long-time lover of music, both classical and jazz, Bob took up the viola later in life, playing proficiently in Burlington’s Amateur Musicians Orchestra (AMO), the University of Vermont Orchestra, and in chamber groups.



The Rev'd Mr. Senghas was always deeply concerned with matters that disturb the hearts of our congregants and the need for open confession and dialogue on questions that are divisive or make us uneasy. Looking back in 2013 at the UU ministerial profession, he noted that we are often “preaching to the choir” in our sermons and public witness on social issues, but that we don’t do so well in speaking to the often-hidden ambivalence and value conflicts that can lie below the surface and trouble our moral clarity, like our near-universal UU support for pro-choice reproductive health posed against the moral unpleasantness and ambiguities of abortion itself. “Do we demonize the opposition on abortion or gun rights,” he asked with visible emotion, and thus “drive away from any possibility of persuasion those of good will who may disagree but who have ambivalence?”

Perhaps in search of more insight into such troubling realities, Bob became a practitioner of Zen Buddhism in 1982, later a nonresident member of the Zen Mountain Monastery in Mt. Tremper NY, and a senior student of its abbot, the late John Daido Looi, Roshi, as well as a founding member of the Zen Affiliate of Burlington and of the UU Buddhist Fellowship. “[A] primary responsibility of a minister,” he said in [an interview](#), “is to earn and deserve the trust of the congregation. One should be emotionally open and able to accept, if not agree with the differing opinions of people of goodwill. Simply reinforcing the beliefs of those we agree with is not the path of a true spiritual leader.”

Robert Senghas was survived by sons Frederick Christian Senghas, Edward Caiger Senghas, and Stuart Bailey Senghas, several grandchildren, a niece, the Rev'd Catherine Senghas, and an identical twin brother, Richard, a retired Catholic priest.

A memorial service was held September 10, 2022 at Burlington’s First UU Church.

Notes of condolences can be sent to Stuart Senghas, P.O. Box 36, Wolcott VT 05680.



Mary Alice Thompson (1936 - 2020)

Mary Alice Thompson, 83, died April 15, 2020 in Ravenna OH from complications of COVID. She was the spouse of the Reverend Rod Thompson.

She was born August 25, 1936, in Emma IN, graduating from High School in Columbus OH, from Miami Valley Hospital Nursing School in Dayton in 1957, and from Ohio State with an M.S.W. in 1976. She was a co-founder for the Columbus OH chapter of MENSA.

Mary had a passion for her professional life. She helped hundreds of people as a nurse and social worker in Columbus, Mt. Vernon, Ravenna, and Massillon OH, as well as in Georgia and Maryland. She was married for 20 years to James McFarling, until his death. She met Rod at a singles group of the UU Church in Columbus OH. They married in 1980.

Rod said, "Mary was the quintessential minister's spouse. She sang in the choir, met people easily, stayed out of church politics, occasionally shared the pulpit, offered sermon ideas and critiques, and played her Autoharp whenever possible." She accompanied Rod from Ohio to Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, Minnesota, New Mexico, and back to Ohio. She was a devoted member of the UU Church of Kent OH.

She had a passion for music, band music in high school, then mostly folk music. In addition to playing the flute and piccolo, Mary learned too many folk instruments to name. At one time she played in four northeast Ohio folk groups.

Mary is survived by their children, Bruce McFarling, Robert McFarling, Karen Scher, and Carolyn Hall; grandchildren and great grandchildren; one brother; and one sister. One son, Douglas McFarling, preceded her in death.

Memorial gifts can be directed to the Unitarian Universalist Church, 228 Gougler Avenue, Kent OH 44240 and the Woodlands Comfort Corner Activities, 6831 Chestnut Street, Ravenna OH 44266. Condolences and memories may be shared at www.wood-kortright-borkoski.com.

