



Spring Conference "Watch Party" in Albuquerque by Anne Marsh

What a great way to participate in the Spring UURMaPA conference! Four of us gathered at Sue Redfern-Campbell's home in Albuquerque, NM, to watch the conference. For the small group sessions, we were our own group, facilitated by Christine Robinson, so we didn't each need a laptop. We had known each other before, but we deepened our relationships through small group sharing and through talking together about the panels and Odyssey as they were being presented. Each of us had experienced the events the panelists spoke of in different ways, and sharing those perspectives enlarged our understandings.

We enjoyed going out to lunch together (see photo) and were able to fit in time for a walk. We decided to watch the evening programming individually in our own homes. The watch party option was a good way to participate in the conference with colleagues without a lot of traveling, preparation, or expense. We recommend it. See pages 12 through 19 for an overview of the Spring conference.



President's Ponderings

By Susan V. Rak



Some months ago a post appeared on Facebook asking if there was anything in particular for retired ministers at General Assembly. As I prepared to attend my first in-person GA (well, UUMA Ministry Days, really) in nine years, I wondered about this.

If one isn't involved in a congregation or actively following the developments in our Association, would the general sessions be of interest to a non-delegate? Workshops may not be as applicable as they once were. Of course there are worship services and lectures that would be inspiring. As folks mostly retired from the day to day activities of UU congregations, what, indeed, is there for us?

So I went to Pittsburgh for Ministry Days, which I've been faithful in attending virtually, and it felt good to be there in person. But my role or status has changed since my last in-person "GA." I found myself once again wondering, "Who am I now, and where do I belong?" Retirement from Unitarian Universalist ministry, it seems, is an ongoing journey of drifting away and then re-engagement. I would imagine it may not be too different for partners, this figuring out roles and identity.

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(Send any comments or contributions to editor Ann Schranz, elderberries@uurmapa.org.)

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In the end, my experience had the feeling of homecoming, but also with some subtle shifts. There's a feeling of looking in from the edges, recognizing familiar faces but finding a wistful catch in the throat realizing that so much is passing, so much lies behind.

Yet I experienced a strong sense of reconnection. After all these years, there I was, seeing people I knew from so many different parts and paths of my ministry. I was energized by the thought of so many UU's together in one space, facing the changes and possibilities that lie before us.

I also thought about UURMaPA, where our individual affiliation with and involvement in the wider Association varies from person to person. Yet UURMaPA is an important, vital connecting thread. I believe we offer retired Unitarian Universalist clergy and partners an additional way to nurture, develop and maintain a kind of reconstructed UU identity. It is something that connects us, no matter the level of our involvement, to a faith and a community that still lays claim to our hearts.

For some there may be, in all the changes affecting and embraced by the UUA, challenges to what we once perceived as UU identity 30, 40, 50 years ago. Shifting priorities and renewed commitments may mean that things once held dear are changed or gone.

Yet there is no need to revert to old ways or traditions to make us feel comfortable or secure as Unitarian Universalists. Perhaps, in community with one another in UURMaPA, we can find a place to embrace changes and see a new way.

A song was woven through my days in Pittsburgh: "Woyaya." Originally by an Afro-Pop band called Osibisa, it's a song of hope and perseverance. If you've not heard it, here is a link to a recent version: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BwckMpR9V-Q> . We're reminded that the road may be difficult at times, but together, we will arrive, as we will.

I am honored to begin my second two-year term as President of this organization and am looking forward to working with the Board and all of you - deepening our purpose and connection to one another, whatever changes and challenges that brings.

The Older I Get

by Art Severance



Art and Cathie Severance

The older I get,
The more I want to remember,
The more my memories
Become prayers and searches
For meaning
To times, places and people
That fill my head,
And especially my heart,
With a yearning
For recovering the smell of the lilacs
Outside my NH bedroom window,
Or the family living in that century old house
Across the street from the park.
The older I get,
The more I realize
that my life is a movie
Dreamed by Time itself
Ticking inside my years
That now speed by
As if I am or was an observer.
Are relationships real?
Is time or memory?
“I think,” said the famous philosopher,
But did he really know?

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Do I exist more because of memory,
Even knowing how fallible
And even fickle, yesteryear can be?
Photos can be altered,
Someone I love deleted
Or historic figures added.
I watch an old man shuffle by alone
And wonder what he dreams,
What or who he once was,
Because age can make you disappear
To younger people.
I think I smell a memory, sometimes
That evokes my Nana's kitchen pantry
Which always smelled like coconut cookies,
In her apartment
Reached only by the cautious climbing
Of the ancient rickety wooden stairs
That swayed slightly from age.
The older I get,
I begin to build a movie set,
Starring me, of course,
But at what age do I cast the actor?
And when memory falters,
When age starts to subtract-
What, sanity? Nostalgia?
Bittersweet visions of the heaven
Which was my childhood?
The house that was torn down in Lakeport, NH?
The summer cottage on Newfound Lake?
The friends and family now gone?
Oh, Time, I know you are fleeting,
And I have been blest
With wondrous love from
all those relationships
Of friends and family
Which will last as long
As memory permits.
The older I get.

Welcome to New UURMaPA Members

Margaret Haynes Allen and Linda Anderson

Shayna Appel

Kirk Ballin

Margaret Beckman

Deborah Cayer

Brian Henry Covell and Sharon Cyr

Brian Eslinger

Clyde Grubbs and Michelle Walsh

Patricia Hart

David Lyle Herndon and Cynthia Kirsch

Lucy Ijams

Bruce and Dianne Johnson

Kate Lore

Kelly Murphy Mason and Benjamin Unger

Susan Matranga-Watson and Jude Watson

Lisa and Michael McDaniel-Hutchings

David McFarland and Tim Nuttle

Carol McKinley

Joan Montagnes and Martin Morgan

Mary E.M. Moore

Gaye Morris

Rosemarie Newberry

Linda Olson Peebles

Kathy Riegelman and Larry Beckman

Dan Rollins and Mary Bracey

Samuel Schaal

Linda Simmons

Elizabeth "Libby" Smith

Carol Strecker and Kate Bermingham

Jan and Russ Taddeo

Jane Thickstun

Sam Trumbore and Philomena Moriarty

Michelle Walsh and Clyde Grubbs

Gretchen Weis

Weldon Frederick Wooden and Wendy Ricker Wooden

Consider Joining a Peer Support Group

UURMaPA members who would like to enrich their connection with retired colleagues through regular online interactions might consider joining a Peer Support Group.

These groups depend entirely upon volunteer facilitators, who offer to convene groups and facilitate virtual meetings. If you are interested in joining a group or serving as a facilitator, please contact Connections Coordinator Fritz Hudson at fhudson3@gmail.com. Based on those who indicate interest, he'll help designate two co-conveners 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.

Fritz is also open to your suggestions about virtual support groups with a specific focus. Two such groups already exist: a Caregivers Support Group for members who have particular roles as caregivers within their households, and a Grief Support Group for those recently bereaved. A member has also expressed interest in a group focused on Social Justice. If there are other specific groups that you would like to suggest, please don't hesitate to reach out to Fritz.

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.

Two-Year Online Spiritual Direction Program

Meadville Lombard Theological School is gathering the fall class for Spiritual Direction Formation and Certification. It is an online, two-year program with the values hospitality, liberation and sustainability at its core and Unitarian Universalism as its foundation. If you've been transformed by spiritual direction and are interested in exploring this vocation more deeply, reach out to Tandi Rogers, trogers@meadville.edu. Applications close July 31. About the program: <https://tinyurl.com/th3rrpeh>.



Disappointment and Hope

by Colleen McDonald

How are you dealing with watching much of what we've spent our lifetimes working for being dismantled? It's a good question. Here is my response:

The hatred, violence, and "supremacism," of various kinds, in our culture and world are frightening and depressing. It is heart-breaking to listen to the words of John F. Kennedy, in his Inaugural Address, 1961; Martin Luther King, and "I Have a Dream," 1963; Lyndon Johnson, in his Address to Joint Sessions of Congress (following Kennedy's assassination), 1963; these were the visionary and galvanizing speeches of my childhood. I worry about the future of democracy, and of humankind, and about what my children's and grandchildren's lives will be like by the time they are my age.

I remind myself that ours is not the first "older" generation to despair that the "world is going to Hell in a handbag" or to see our ideals in tatters. (I think of our forebears of fairly recent times who made sacrifices and even gave their lives that we might win "the war to end all wars.") And I remember the words of John F. Kennedy:

*Let both sides join in creating a new endeavor, not a new balance of power, but a new world of law, where the strong are just and the weak secure and the peace preserved. **All this will not be finished in the life of this administration. Nor, even perhaps, in our lifetime on this planet. But let us begin.***

and Reinhold Neibuhr:

Nothing worth doing is completed in our lifetime; therefore we are saved by hope.

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Leaving my church and retiring from active ministry was a lesson in letting go. It was hard to walk away from my position of influence and authority—to no longer have a say at the table where “insider” information was shared, problems were discussed, and decisions were made, and to lose my leadership role in the congregation and the larger community.

But when I stepped aside, younger colleagues and committed lay people stepped forward and came into their own as leaders. Its staff and members having navigated circumstances and made changes I could not have envisioned, the church remains a vibrant and welcoming place that brings in new members and does “good work,” and where I feel at home.

So it is with all our work for the greater good: We are always part of a team that spans the past, present, and future. Like a participant in a relay race, we each do our best to run our own leg of the race with alertness, skill, and grit, and to pass the baton mindfully; having finished our part, we breathe heavily and yet cheer on our teammates as loudly and energetically as we can.

In the legacy I leave behind in living out my “old age,” I do not want to be remembered as someone who was anxious and angry about the present, and worried and pessimistic about the future. E. B. White has written, “If we forget to savor the world, what possible reason do we have for saving it?” These days I pursue activities such as the following, to rest from the pain and predicaments of the world and renew my soul:

Listening to podcasts and programs from NPR that present interviews with activists, artists, and authors and feature solution-oriented journalism. I am moved and energized by hearing from diverse individuals who are thoughtful, passionate, and compassionate people, who are living intentionally and creatively and solving all kinds of problems in innovative ways, and who give humanity a good name.

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Playing the piano and participating as a student and board member at our local community music school. (A recent board meeting included a discussion about “inclusion,” after a parent of one of our young students protested the hiring of a faculty member who uses the pronoun “they.” In this community geared toward music-making, and made up of individuals who embrace a diversity of political and religious beliefs, I was heartened and proud that our leadership is united in our position that our school is open to everyone. And now we are writing a policy to make that stance clear.)

Taking daily walks, mindfully turning off the workaholic planning and problem-solving part of my brain in order to be more present to the sensory experiences of the out-of-doors. During a summertime walk in my own neighborhood, I admired lawn sculptures and other garden “pretties,” rainbow-/ “pride” flags, and a large banner featuring Ruth Bader Ginsburg and her statement, “When injustice becomes law, resistance becomes duty.” I was inspired to purchase a colorful pinwheel and a peace pole for my own yard, adding my own vibe to our neighborhood energy... Simple acts can have an impact!

When I take my last breath, I will not know what the future holds for my children and grandchildren, for our country, for the earth and all its inhabitants... even for myself! Still, as Bernie Siegel has written, In the absence of certainty, there is nothing wrong with hope.



Elderberries in bloom (photo by Ann Schranz)

Like Flies

by Joy Atkinson

I seem to be the fly that evades
the sharp clap
and lives to buzz again.

Flying fast and frantic
tracing corners in the air
what am I looking for?

Disasters
fire illness earthquake overturned cars heartache assault
Catastrophes!
chase and corner me
and yes, of course
I cower or collapse, chastened
stunned

Still in the room
I come up as if drunk
punching the air in defiance

I am still here.

Many I love
have succumbed, dropped
beyond revival.
This is what comes from long survival:
landing on a wall
I watch and wait
helpless
as they fall.

Guiltily, I rise to buzz
and buzz again.

I am still here
and they, unimaginably
are gone.



Small Beer

by Jeff Briere

Maybe this has happened to you: You produce something, a small something, and a part of a larger project. You enjoy your work and it fits well within the larger project. People notice what you did. They compliment your work, as if it were something very difficult, or requiring specialized knowledge and training.

But it wasn't that at all. Your product did not require innate talent nor lightning bolt inspiration, nor years of research and study. All it required was a little attention to detail.

This happened to me when I volunteered to produce the slide show of attendees for the Spring 2023 UURMaPA Zoom Conference. A couple people urged me to write about my experience.

Somehow, in late winter, word reached me (I cannot recall how; probably through Facebook) that the online spring conference was in need of someone to produce a slide show featuring all the people who would attend the event. "I can do that," I thought. I produced a slide show every Sunday morning for about 15 years before I retired. I knew how to produce a decent slide show.

So I raised my hand. And Barbro Hansson saw me.

A little discussion revealed that along with the images, I would also be required to choose appropriate music. "I can do that," I thought. For more than 13 years, I announced music and news on three different NPR stations. I recorded concerts, interviewed people and produced radio shows. And I listened to enough music for three lifetimes. I knew my way around sound recording and the music scene.

It was supposed to work like this: As people registered for the conference, they would send me a photo; I would edit the photo as necessary, add the person's name, and insert it into a PowerPoint file that I was building. It would eventually make its way to Jon Claney, who would add the music I select and fit it all into the Zoom session for everyone to see.

And that's the way it began. We got off to a roaring start when Diane Miller sent me the first photo right after registration opened. "Wow, what a great shot," I thought. It was a great pic of Diane, close enough to see her face, but at a slight distance to give her some context. The image size was large enough to withstand some magnification, too. I hoped all the shots would be this good.

Then nothing. Nada. Radio silence for nearly a month until Jonalu Johnstone prepared a reminder message promoting the conference and a nagging message for those who registered, but hadn't sent me photos. Then the photos began to arrive. Some singular portraits, some two-shots with partners, several with dogs, a few with grandchildren, one photo of a couple snorkeling, a photo of a couple with two horses, and one with a loaf of bread. Looking at them, I sensed a story in the photos.

The overall appearance of the slide show, I could not imagine; I couldn't see the final version. Never having attended a UURMaPA conference, I had not seen previous slide shows. And I didn't want to copy another production. But I finally took a peek at the slide show from last fall and began to understand how the slide show would fit in the conference.

I suppose I produced something that reacted against what I saw from last fall, but isn't that what every generation of artists and ministers do? My own preaching, I can easily see now, was partly a reaction to the overly-academic aspect of ministers I had experienced. So what I produced is probably *muy diferente* from what others produced for earlier conferences.

Initially, I thought to place everyone against a black background and identify them with first and last names only, so as to subtly focus attention on the person and not their circumstances. After I edited, cropped, adjusted and labeled about 25 photos, I thought they looked too somber, almost funereal. So I abandoned the black in favor of a gradient blue-gray, which added texture, a little movement, and made labeling easier.

Labeling each photo with the person's name incorporated as part of the photo looked classy. But it was a hassle to find a consistent place for the name, because each photo had a different background, which often competed with the printed name for the attention of the viewer. I kept the placement along the bottom edge, but it annoyed me that the name might move back-and-forth, depending on where I could find a clean background in the photo. And because some backgrounds were very dark, I changed the type to white, and then back to black for a bright background.

It all came to a head when I gave up trying to find a good place to label the photo of Jonalu Johnstone and Jane Powell. No matter where I placed their names, no matter if I used black letters, white letters, polka-dot or striped letters, their clothing interfered with my ability to clearly read their names during the five seconds I knew they would be on the screen. So I put their names outside the photo.

It looked good. I was amazed. Then I thought, "Why didn't I do this before?" I realized that I had been showing off, trying to be snazzy. Then I said "Duh." So that's why some photos have names as part of the image and others do not.

My computer had just died a few months ago, and when it croaked, it took all my favorite programs with it. All my experience and familiarity from fifteen years of slide show creation was useless now, because I was using a new computer. With new programs. Everything looked strange. Even the new PowerPoint, which had been around since the Civil War, looked different. Through much trial and many errors, I learned how to add the person's name to the photo, how to crop for appropriate headroom and convert odd formats to a jpeg file.

About 90% of the photos I received were usable as I received them. The remaining photos were too small, and pixelated when enlarged, or were out-of-focus, or the photographer was too far away from the subject, or there was extraneous material that detracted from the subject. In one case, too much sunlight obscured the subject's face. For these and others, Saint Google provided photos that we could use.

For the labels, I chose Cataneo, a typeface that is not widely used. I thought it would lend a little elegance to the visuals. Every time I use Cataneo, I re-learn this important lesson: When using Cataneo, if I want another person to see what I see, I must give them the font and they must install it in their computer. If this doesn't happen, the computer renders what I wrote in the nearest typeface as listed alphabetically, and that is usually Courier, or something equally unpleasant.

Once again, I re-learned this lesson in preparing the slide show. After I sent it to Jon, his reaction was underwhelming, and that was because all my labeling was ugly and uninspired. Jon suggested I export the slide show as a movie, thereby embedding the font, and all turned out well.

One comment that I heard about the slide show from the fall conference was a desire for more variety in the music. My first thought was to use Ian Anderson's music from his album, "Divinities," but the more I listened to it, the more I realized it was not enough to supplement three slide shows.

Three. Slide. Shows.

You see, one of the things I learned after signing up for the planning committee, was that I must produce three slide shows.

Three. Slide. Shows.

But, "No problem!" people said, All I had to do was shuffle the order of the slides (twice) and choose different music (twice more). That's all.

Knowing that “Divinities” would not be enough to cover three slide shows, and driven to find variety, I landed on Putamayo World Music, a music production outfit that produces music from all over the world, but especially, not first-world music. A few years ago, I lost all control and bought their entire catalog, about 4 dozen CD’s at that time. I pulled all of them out of the cabinet and began to listen to them in order to find appropriate music to accompany three slide shows of fifteen minutes each.

From my collection of music, I selected several pieces from countries that border the Mediterranean, two pieces from Southeast Asia, a couple of songs by Andreas Vollenweider, some European classical miniatures played on an eight-string guitar, a couple of tracks from “Divinities,” a track from “The Scarlatti Dialogues,” by Bob James, and a quirky rendition of “Wayfaring Stranger,” an American folk and gospel tune from the early 19th century. I guess that’s variety.

The piece from the slide show that I never tire of hearing is “Ya Rayah,” a song from the 1950’s by Dahmane El Harrarchi, an Algerian singer. It is a lament, in which the singer bemoans the fate of immigrants who yearn for their home. Rachid Taha resurrected it in 1998 and it became an international hit, driven by an infectious beat from the djembe and a mesmerizing melody from the oud and violins. The version in the slide show is by DJ Sonar, who used an early recording by Dahmane El Harrarchi, but inflected it with a contemporary flair.

I made three mistakes (that I know of), all of which appeared after I could correct them: Arvid Straube’s name I rendered as Arvin, I omitted Lynda Sutherland’s photo, even though I had it right in front of me, and I mis-identified Karin Peterson’s great-grandson as her grandson. I know that all it takes to produce a slide show is a little attention to detail. I didn’t pay enough attention to these details. I am sorry, and I’ll do better next time.

The whole effort seemed to me like small beer, ya know? This 15-minute assemblage of images and music for a virtual gathering of retired religious professionals and their partners seemed destined to be a blip in my memory, when compared with everything else that happened in the world those three days. And yet the people who complimented me spoke as if it were a big deal. I thought, “I was just doin’ my job here, so why does it matter to people so much?”

The answer came to me later. Of course it mattered to people. They saw themselves. They saw their friends and colleagues. They renewed their connections. That mattered to them; it wasn’t small beer to them.

When I was working for NPR, I attended a conference in Denver, where I met Noah Adams, who led a session on interviewing techniques. He said that one of his favorite lines to conclude an interview was, “What have you learned about [the topic]?” And so, interviewing me, I ask, “What have you learned about yourself?” And I reply, “I learned that I tend to devalue my own work. I learned to listen to my spouse, who believes that I worked hard on this slide show, that I sweated the small stuff and that I paid attention to detail.”

Spring Conference 2023 – Thirty Years Both Ways

Compiled by Jonalu Johnstone, Conference Publicity Chair

A total of 131 members of UURMaPA plus 13 special guests (2 newly retired ministers and 1 partner, 1 theme presenter, 1 UUA VIP and 8 panelists) joined together to contemplate the past and future May 1-3 for the Spring Conference, once again on Zoom. Two small groups, in Wilmington, Delaware, and Albuquerque, New Mexico, were able to break bread together. Though the rest of us did not have the physical presence of others, we did have true camaraderie, intimate conversations, and sacred connections across the miles.

Skilled storyteller and musician Reggie Harris, who provided Monday evening's performance, suggested the word *sankofa*, from the Twi language of Ghana, as resonant with our theme. *Sankofa* means looking back to look forward, or examining the past to see what we might want to bring forward. Throughout the conference, we endeavored to do just that.

Reggie himself, cradling his guitar in his hotel room as he was leading a Civil Rights Tour, interwove stories of that movement with upbeat movement songs and experiences with the Living Legacy Project, which helps educate participants about the racial history of the US. He had many of us clapping and singing along, safely muted in our homes. Reggie created the mood, staying hopeful and optimistic, while honest about past struggles and oppression. That mood echoed through much of our exploration during the conference -- the three theme panels, our worship together, small group connections, and more. Each of the members of the planning committee has prepared a brief report on their area.



Attendees in Wilmington DE, from left to right beginning with the back row: Richard Speck, John Manwell, Roger Fritts, Dave Hunter, Paula Maiorano, Janet Tillman, Phyllis Hubbell, Leslie Westbrook, and Lilia Cuervo.

Theme Panels

by Wayne Arnason

The theme for this conference, “THIRTY YEARS BOTH WAYS,” originated in conversations about the events around the 1993 UUA General Assembly. Ideas for what theme panels might be possible expanded when we remembered other important events in culture and technology from 1993.

Monday’s first panel, “After The Ball Is Over,” brought together a diverse group of colleagues and friends who shared personal experiences from before, during, and after the General Assembly that concluded with a Thomas Jefferson era costume ball, a moment that highlighted the way planners had thoughtlessly centered White experience. Wayne Arnason, Janice Marie Johnson, Barbro Hansson, Leon Spencer, Elnora Williams and Mel Hoover each told their personal stories and reflected on the evolution of anti-racist and anti-oppression work after the Ball in their own lives and within the UUA.

Our Tuesday theme Panel, “Women, Identity and Leadership,” brought together for the first time four women who have aspired to the UUA Presidency. Current UUA Presidential Candidate Sofia Betancourt acted as Moderator for a panel featuring Carolyn Owen-Towle (1993), Diane Miller (2001) and Laurel Hallman (2009), inviting conversation about women in leadership in our Association and the ways that identity issues shape (and some would say distort!) our expectations about leaders. Memories and insights from each person about the circumstances thirty, twenty, and ten years ago, the changes that have happened since, and the future of identity considerations in leadership roles in denominational and congregational life all made for an engaging conversation that sparked many moving comments and questions.

The third theme Panel on Wednesday fulfilled the “Both Ways” title with the focus “The Future of our Movement and our Ministry – Multigenerational Perspectives.” Three serving ministers, in parish and community roles (only one of them a retiree with a new community ministry career), and a seminary president each gave us their points of view from which to look towards the future.

Jacqueline Brett, Elias Ortega, Chris Rothbauer and Arvid Straube began with reflections on a study described by Arvid that predicts two-thirds of our congregations might not exist or exist very differently thirty years from now. This somber prediction brought forward comments from several panelists about the sources for hope they find in their ministries, colleagues, and students. All reflected on the ways that resilience and flexibility will be required for our movement not only to survive but to thrive.

Worship

By Lynda Sutherland

Worship for our Spring 2023 Conference was intentionally woven through with elements of our theme. I enjoyed working with the group of ministers who served on the planning team. The level of enthusiasm and creativity was amazing, and we had so much fun together as we discussed theology, messaging, artistic and technical elements, ways to make Zoom worship more engaging and worship-full, and so much more.

One of the things we tried this year during the Service of Remembrance surprised even those of us who crafted and presented the service. This was the open invitation for participants to express memories, thoughts, prayers, or other things they might like to share about the colleagues and partners we were honoring. About halfway through the service, I began noticing a feeling of real, present, intimate community, of walking together on holy ground. Reading the feedback from the surveys, this element felt powerful for many. We got lots of great ideas and feedback from those who responded, and I am looking forward to incorporating many of them in worship planning for our Fall 2023 Conference, coming up October 23-25.

Small Groups

by Sonya Sukalski

I've come back several times in my life to Margaret Mead's wisdom that small groups can change the world. Once again, a UU small group has done that. I started meeting with the Spring Conference planning team at the beginning of the year, and immediately sensed that this team was going to pull off a one-of-a-kind event. My timeline for communications was laid out clearly for me by Barbro Hansson, so that I could foresee month by month what I would need to accomplish. With that, it was relatively easy to imagine when and how I would need to communicate with the list of 25+ people who had done it in the past to encourage them to consider doing it again.

The planning team was always willing and able to provide suggestions for improvements to what I created. I had the experience of contributing something worthwhile to a team effort, of which our small groups were just a piece. It is always a little bit hard to predict just how many will register, and from those folks, how many will be able to navigate the technology, schedules and the vagaries of life to show up able to engage, but so many of you did! I know I am fortified by the sharing I did on the day, as well as having pulled together as an organization to create connections for many of you. I appreciate all the affirmations in the evaluation forms, and will know how to do it better next time. Thanks to all who participated, who said yes to facilitating, and who gave thoughtful feedback over the last couple of months!

Odyssey

by Charles Stephens

Odyssey presentations are always a highlight of our UURMAPA conferences. I enjoyed preparing and presenting mine years ago, so gladly agreed to help the planning committee with that portion of the conference.

Working with Carol Hepokoski was a pleasure. Carol raised the bar not only by openly and honestly sharing stories of her interesting personal, academic, and ministerial life with us, but Carol also included the Odyssey of her more recent retirement life. Carol shared how in retirement she decided to explore her hand and eye at art work. She combined that with her deep love and knowledge of nature. Carol impressed us all with her gorgeous renderings of beautiful plant life.

If asked to present your Odyssey at some point, I encourage you to accept the challenge. You will learn about yourself. And others will have the opportunity to learn about and appreciate you and your life journey.

UUA Business

by Wayne Arnason

The spring conference usually does not include time with UUA and UUMA leaders, but we felt it was important to invite Richard Nugent from the Office of Church Staff Finances to give us an update on the changeover from TIAA to Empower as the Retirement Plan so many of us participate in. Richard offered an overview and particular information downloads on notable areas of concern, especially avoiding tax withholding on housing allowance withdrawals and making the decision to annuitize TIAA Traditional Accounts. He got many questions and even though the time was short, Richard made it clear that he and his staff try to be readily available to help.

The President of UURMaPA Susan Rak offered an overview of the Board's work and introduced several Board members to discuss highlighted areas of the Board's work this year.

Wilmington Hosts its Second Pod Gathering

by Richard Speck

Nine UURMAPAns came together at First Unitarian Church, Wilmington, DE, to share being together during the Spring UURMAPA Conference May 1-3, 2023. We had people coming from Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Delaware. Attendees were Richard Speck, Janet Tillman, Dave Hunter, Lillia Cuervo, Paula Maiorano, Roger Fritts, Leslie Westbrook, John Manwell, and Phyllis Hubbell.

We had snacks and drinks to welcome everyone and keep them from getting too hungry. During breaks, people went to local restaurants to eat. We had dinner at a local diner the first night, a seafood restaurant the second night and Panera's for those who were still here on Wednesday night. People were free to come and go as they needed to. One even took a nap in another part of the building.

We had a good conversation around the two breakout sessions with lots of input from all. During breaks, conversation flowed between us. Everyone expressed interest in doing it again in the fall. So, we are planning our third Pod for the next conference.

You may ask how we did it. Richard reserved a room from the church office with a large screen TV connected to a computer for everyone to watch. It also had a camera so others could see us as well. We sat in a semi-circle to see the conference. Paula handled the snacks and drinks. Richard brought a cooler with ice to keep things cold.

Richard learned how to get the computer turned on and connected to the church's WIFI. It was a simple set up that took a minimum of effort. The whole Pod experience was simple for Richard and Paula as hosts. We might plan a communal meal at the start of the fall conference to welcome everyone together.

As you can see, hosting a Pod in a church was easy. Perhaps more of you will try this type of gathering for the fall. Let Richard know if you have any questions. He would love to help you get started.

Thanks and Invitations by Barbro Hansson

An effort like this one requires a great deal of coordination, communication, and planning. We deeply thank the conference chair, Barbro Hansson, who managed to keep us pulling together even through international travel. Anne Marsh served as scribe, so we had authoritative notes to refer to so we could remember what we had committed to. Jon Claney once more ably managed the technical aspects of our gathering, ensuring that everyone in the program was adequately lit and heard, organizing and playing videos at the appropriate time, splitting us into random small groups, and in general, making all the secret magic of Zoom come together.

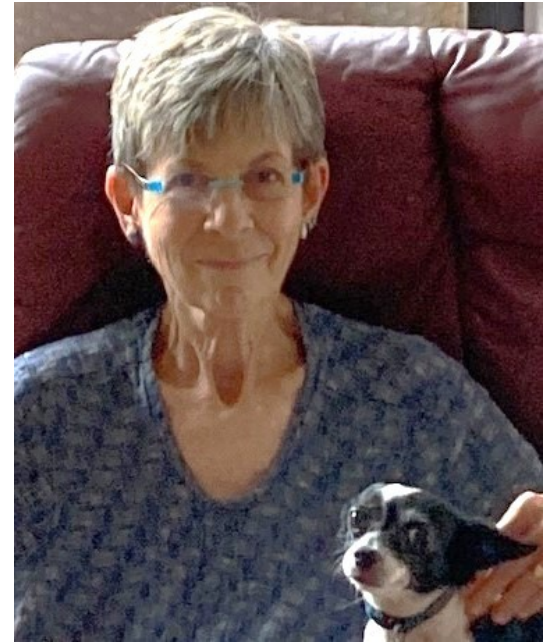
Each member of the planning team did masterful work in their particular area that they have described above, and all contributed through participation in planning meetings to the overall coherence and quality of the conference. Thanks, too, to all who attended and especially, to those who gave feedback. It seems that they liked the conference as much as we on the planning team did!

Now, for the invitation! Whether or not you were present this time round, please come to the Fall Conference October 23-25, 2023. More pods are planned, and you, too, can plan one if you have a few people nearby who want to participate together! Finally, if you are so inclined, joining the planning team for a conference can be a great way to work with colleagues and produce something of value to a bunch of appreciative people. To do so, contact Barbro Hanssen at barbromhansson@gmail.com.



UURMaPA Announces 2023 Awards

At a July 10 virtual new member welcome event, we were pleased to announce the recipients of The Unsung UURMaPA and The Creative Sageing Awards. Each year, the Board of UURMaPA honors a volunteer who has made an extraordinary contribution to our organization, working behind the scenes during their retirement. This year's deserving honoree is the Reverend Marni Harmony (in the photo on this page). Her citation reads:



Marni retired from settled parish ministry in 2013 and has given of herself to UURMaPA in so many ways. She introduced the concept of targeted ministries, as well as peer support groups. She has served as a member of the Board, and held the portfolio of UUMA-UUA liaison. More recently, Marni has been a member of the team that selects our Creative Sageing Awards.

Over the years since her retirement from parish ministry, Marni has distinguished herself among colleagues and friends as being always willing to say “Yes,” when asked to contribute her gifts.

We offer hearty congratulations to the Reverend Marni Harmony, recipient of the UURMaPA Unsung Hero Award for 2023.

The second award is called the Creative Sageing Award, drawing upon the wisdom of rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi in his landmark book *From Age-ing to Sage-ing*. This annual award recognizes one of our members who has done something particularly impressive and/or inspiring during their retirement. We are honored to present the 2023 Creative Sageing Award to our colleague Janne Eller-Isaacs. Her citation reads:

Over the last three plus years, we have lost a significant number of well-known and well-loved colleagues, whose lives should have been longer. With the overlay of the pandemic, it was often difficult to gather together to share first, concerns and care, and later, memories. Some of these beloved colleagues created a presence on Caring Bridge, sharing their reflections and allowing us to respond and encourage while we ached and grieved. These often intimate reflections were a great gift as we witnessed courageous and very real ways in which our colleagues approached their own death.

(continued on the next page)

When we thought about this year's Creative Sageing Award, it became clear that we wanted to acknowledge this experience of loss and those who have helped us move through it. Most recently, Rob and Janne Eller-Isaacs kept us updated on Rob's too quick journey with pancreatic cancer. Now Janne has her own site as she deals with her own malignant melanoma diagnosis.

For modeling for all of us ways to deal with grief and keep finding joy, we are pleased to present the 2023 Creative Sageing Award to Janne Eller-Isaacs.

Janne maintains an attitude of and articulation of gratitude in her journal: "Who knew that every moment is a gift? I don't take anything for granted." Her journal expresses gratitude for medical research, gratitude to scientists around the world, gratitude for being able to watch early blossoms of spring, and gratitude for taking trips to beloved places. In Janne's words, "If you say Yes, things are possible that you couldn't imagine."

Janne emphasizes the importance of being kind to medical care workers: "Never take them for granted and always acknowledge them."

Her brother and our colleague Jim Eller says, "With courage and faith she is living each day and loving each day and loving each family member."

This tribute wouldn't be complete without speaking of Janne's capacity for lightheartedness, what Janne called "my true fiesta colors." It was no surprise to her family that she dressed as a pirate with her blocked eye in an eyepatch for Halloween, a high holiday in the Eller-Isaacs household.

Congratulations, Janne! You've modeled creative sageing for us in powerful and inspiring ways.

Both award recipients were acknowledged at the July 10 virtual event. They will receive a certificate and a modest cash award. We congratulate them both.

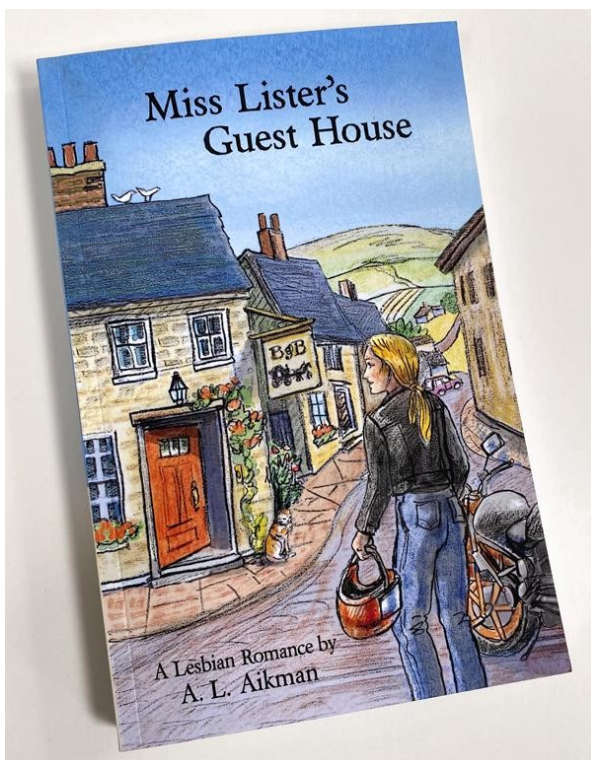
Update from the UU Organizations Retirement Plan

A question that has been coming up recently is whether you must complete the Housing Allowance Distribution Form if you are not going to use a distribution for housing expenses. Can you use the standard Empower withdrawal forms instead?

The answer is yes, if you understand that you will never be able to use that distribution as housing allowance and will not receive a form 1099-R that would allow you claim it as housing allowance. If you are comfortable with both of those things, then you can use the regular withdrawal forms, which can be completed over the phone with an Empower representative.

However, if you know you will use the withdrawal for housing, or want to keep that option open, you must complete the Housing Allowance form. Using this form will ensure you receive the correct form 1099-R to claim it as housing allowance and will allow you to suppress taxes if you wish. Please contact us with questions about this and other topics, and visit our Knowledge Base where we have posted information and will continue to do so. The Knowledge Base is found here: <https://hrforuus.uua.org/help/en-us/1-uu-retirement-plan>.

Rev. Richard Nugent, Director, Church Staff Finances
Gloria Guldager, Director, UUA Retirement Plan
Jackie Toone, Employer Liaison
Anna Gehres, Retirement Plan Specialist



See Amanda's article on the following page.

Book Bench



Amanda Aikman

Book Bench

A Madcap Adventure: Writing Fiction

by Amanda Aikman

Ever since I was 15, I'd wanted to be a playwright. When I quit my full-time ministry position in 2000, I threw myself into writing plays, and was very fortunate eventually to have about a dozen produced.

When my most recent play went up, a week before Covid hit, I realized I could no longer tolerate the stress. "That's my last one," I swore. It had become too nerve-racking to deal with the vagaries of actors, weather, and everything else that goes into staging a play. I looked forward to a relaxed and non-literary retirement.

But an idea for a novel grabbed me and wouldn't let go. And so, reader, regardless of my near-total ignorance of the process, I wrote the darn thing. After two years of hard work, and a great deal of help from editors, readers, and artists, *Miss Lister's Guest House* was published in February.

As a self-published author, I now am tackling the massive job of promoting and selling it, and feel daily like a babe in the woods. Lovely reviews from readers sustain me, and a lifelong dream was fulfilled when I saw my book for sale in an actual bookshop in Halifax, UK during Anne Lister Birthday Week in April.

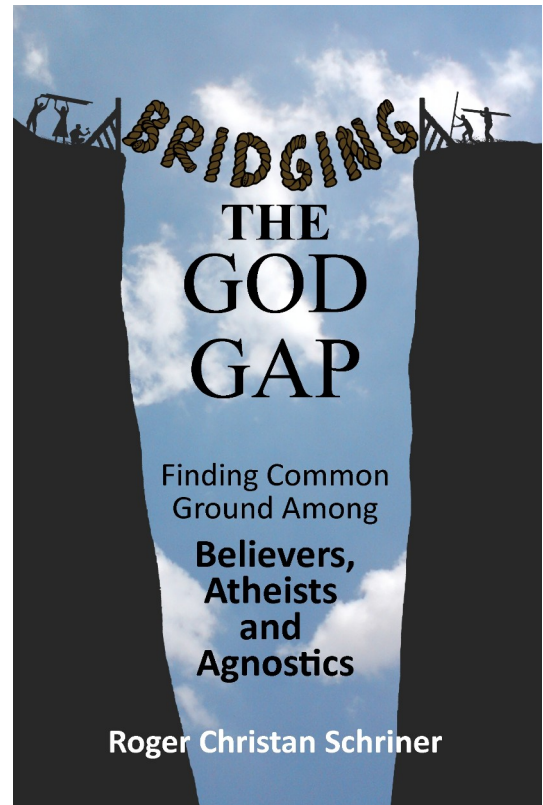
Some people smirk when they see the words "a lesbian romance" on the cover. Fine, be that way. That was the only descriptor that came close to describing the genre of this novel.

When I was halfway through writing it, I realized that this is actually, at its heart, a story about the life-saving importance of community. My UU congregations are one of the main inspirations. So I'm grateful to all the folks who have taught me how to create, sustain, and now, depict healthy communities. If anyone has experience promoting self-published fiction, I'd love to hear from you! Blessings on your own adventures.

Here is the website: www.miss-listers.com

Book Bench

Roger Christan “Chris” Schriener, Minister Emeritus at Mission Peak Unitarian Universalist Congregation, Fremont CA, has published an e-book version of his Amazon paperback, *Bridging the God Gap: Finding Common Ground Among Believers, Atheists and Agnostics*. The new edition can be read on tablets, phones, or computers. To read the first pages of the e-book version on Amazon, click “Read Sample” or “send a free sample.”



Justin Lapoint, Minister Emeritus at Outlaws Bridge Universalist Church, publishes a weekly web comic “Animal Town Confidential” with his son, John, on The Duck Webcomics, Patreon, and Facebook.



Book Bench

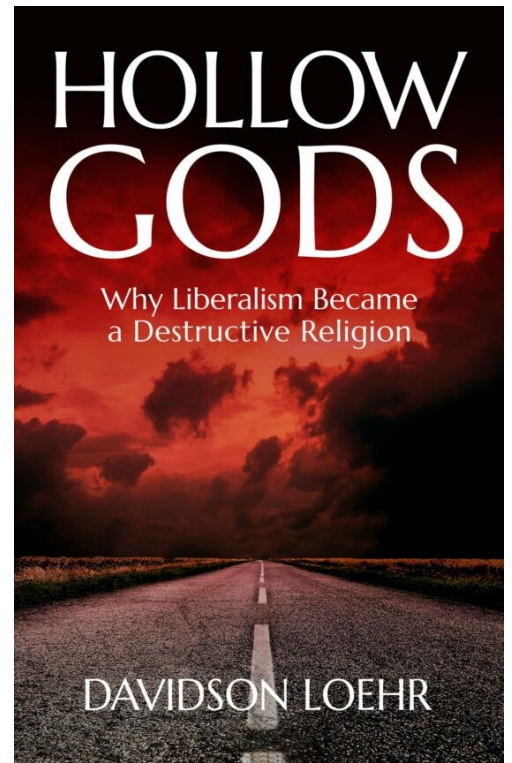
D. Donovan, Senior Reviewer with *Midwest Book Review*, writes of the new book by Davidson Loehr:

“Hollow Gods: Why Liberalism Became a Destructive Religion is especially appropriate reading for modern times because it embraces the ideas and sentiments connecting religion to political choices—and also because it comes from a liberal forced to reconsider his faith and political connections.

Every reader who considers himself liberal should digest these contentions, which are presented with footnoted references reinforcing statistics and contentions throughout.

Extensive footnotes aside, this survey is not written like an academic paper, but is lively enough that general-interest audiences can easily access its contentions and, hopefully, debate and consider them in group and book club reading circles.

Hollow Gods will make readers uncomfortable—especially liberal readers who have long held their contentions close to their hearts (often, so close that they have remained immune to deep inspection).”



Hollow Gods: Why Liberalism Became a Destructive Religion is now available through Amazon.

In another review, Kathy Stickles from *Feathered Quill Reviews* writes:

“In Hollow Gods, Mr. Loehr looks into what he thinks liberals have been trying to do in terms of replacing religion and God with a type of socialism where they are the ones in charge. In each of the areas -- education, media, politics, race, and religion -- the author puts forth a case to show that liberalism is failing in what they are trying to do because there is no tolerable or satisfactory way to replace religion.

While there are certainly a lot of points made regarding politics, as well as the other areas being discussed, the book is first and foremost about religion and how it seems to be used, at some times, as an excuse to explain what people are trying to do to change society into what they believe it should be. That, in itself, is enough to make the reader stop and think.

Hollow Gods is a well-written and interesting read . . . I would say it is well worth giving it a try as some of the points the author makes are very interesting. The book will definitely give the reader cause to do some deep thinking about how they look at these areas of life and how others may view them.

Hollow Gods: Why Liberalism Became a Destructive Religion is a compelling look at the beliefs that Mr. Loehr has and will give readers a reason to do some soul-searching as they look into their own thoughts on the topics that are being discussed.”

Ministry: Organizing for Health Equity

by Robert (Bob) Murphy

Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness are themes that my wife (Lyn Dalzell) and I have embraced in our community ministry. We know that systemic racism, with the other forms of oppression, prevents many people from enjoying good health. We encourage new alliances so that people in different communities can care for each other. Lyn and I started our community ministry during the 1990s, when I was a circuit rider on the coast of North Carolina. Lyn and I moved to Florida in 2015. Officially, we're both "retired," although that label is inappropriate.

We're baby boomers in the American South, which means that we're senior citizens in a region that has lots of seniors. We minister to congregations and communities from Key West to Pasco County with special attention given to health equity and environmental justice concerns. Much of our time is spent with Gray Panthers and Raging Grannies, and with other activists who are past the age of 60. We help with holiday celebrations, with pastoral care, and with wellness education, and we do a lot of community gardening. We exchange recipes. We're involved in advocacy work.

The health equity concept is explained in an Action of Immediate Witness that was endorsed by the 2023 General Assembly. "Organizing for Health Equity" is the name of the statement. The document mentions topics that have been mentioned before by political reformers. It expresses support for a strong Social Security program. Once again, there's a call for a medical insurance plan that will cover all people in all places in the United States.

What's significant is that the Health Equity statement moves beyond lobbying and into some deeper waters. The statement begins with the understanding that some groups are being kicked aside or exploited in health and safety programs. Individuals want to have more control over their bodies. People want to live in communities that are safe, welcoming, and sustainable. Wellness requires a sense of personal responsibility, and there's always a need for social action. People of faith can join in multicultural efforts to reduce suffering and to overcome injustice.

The health equity movement has developed with significant support in BIPOC (Black, indigenous, and people of color) communities. Historically, the BIPOC communities have had a holistic understanding of health and healing, and the religious leaders who are part of the different communities have been among the healers and teachers. White people have much to learn from the BIPOC traditions. BIPOC communities know that pollution and disease are often the products of imperialism.

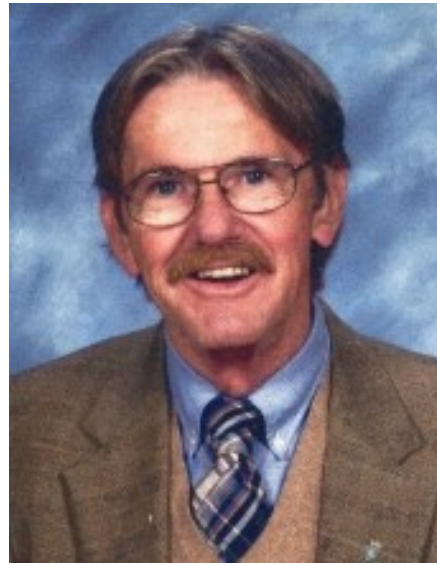
The "Organizing for Health Equity" statement ends with some comments about accountability. To whom or what, if anything, are people accountable? The question is important in organized religion. It was discussed at the 2023 General Assembly, and the question will be raised again in future years. There will be long debates. While the debates continue, people will shape the environment and social arrangements for future generations.

Good religion stays grounded. It's organic. It bends towards justice, and it's sustainable. Elders in some of the Native American communities have said that seven generations and more will hold today's people accountable. They're right. If you're involved with health equity and environmental justice ministry, keep this bit of wisdom in mind. Plant the trees that others will need because each summer is hotter than the last, and the sea level keeps rising.

Note: Robert Murphy is in fellowship with the Unitarian Universalist Association. Lyn is a physician's assistant (retired) and a former social worker from West Virginia. They live in a retirement community in Saint Petersburg, Florida.

Obituaries

Richard F. Beal (1944 - 2021)



The Reverend Richard Beal, whose mid-life turn to a career in parish ministry embodied strong devotion to UU connections with Transylvanian Unitarians and steady community action for LGBTQ rights, died on 7 July 2021, aged 76¾, with his wife and son at his side.

Long before Transylvanian churches were on the radar of most American UUs, Richard had become aware of their Unitarian history and presence there, and he took the opportunity of a backpacking trip around Europe in the early 1970s to visit Koloszvár. It was the first of thirteen trips that he would make over the years as a dedicated member and sometime president of the UU Partner Church Council, establishing many close personal friendships and building up congregational connections.

Interfaith coalitions, community affairs, and public leadership in social justice causes were all important components of Mr. Beal's ministry. He was a lifetime member of the NAACP and a founding member of the Religious Leaders for Fairness, a clergy group advocating civil and human rights for LGBTQ persons in Louisville KY. During his fifteen-year pastorate there, he led the church to become an official "Welcoming Congregation" and to be the most active congregation in Louisville in promoting the Fairness Ordinance, an extension of civil and human rights protections to the LGBTQ community. He taught UU History and Polity on the adjunct faculties of Bangor Theological Seminary and Louisville Presbyterian Seminary, and was a guest lecturer at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville.

In addition, the Rev'd Mr. Beal served on the board of the Kentucky Civil Liberties Union, as vice president of the HELP Ministries of Central Louisville; and as a founding member of the Metro Louisville Inter-Religious Coalition for Civil Rights. He was active in two other clergy groups: Interdenominational Ministerial Coalition (primarily an African American group), and Downtown Clergy Association (entirely European American membership). For a lengthy overview of his Louisville years, click and listen [here](#).

Richard Frederick Beal was born in Brunswick (Maine) on 20 October 1944 and received his name five months later on being adopted by Blanche Grindle and Edmund W. Beal, a Universalist minister. Four years later, another adoption gave him a new brother, Donald. The family lived in Claremont NH and Harrisville RI before settling in Saco, Maine. Richard was an active and entrepreneurial child, engaged in clamming, raking blueberries, digging worms, and running an ice cream stand. He treasured his memories of teenage summers working on a small dairy farm near South China, Maine.

After graduation from Saco's Thornton Academy in 1962, Richard spent eight years working his way through Goddard College in Plainfield VT—years remembered as transformative for him as the beginning of his activism, his commitment to social justice, and an appreciation for diversity and creativity in the world and its people. For three years he worked in the children's unit of Metropolitan State Hospital (MA) as a nurse attendant. In 1972 he married Joan Schumacher, whom he had met back in 1968 when both were working as counselors at a camp for emotionally disturbed boys.

Richard and Joan were partners in many endeavors throughout their 49-year marriage. In the first five years, during which their son Barney Eben was born, they ran the Homestead Project, a residential home/farm for teenagers in Maine and then moved to Boston to manage a private half-way house for twenty-four adults. Richard had long felt a leaning toward ministry, and attendance at a Cambridge Forum session on ministry gave him a final push. He entered Harvard Divinity School in 1978 and completed his M.Div. in 1981, serving as DRE for the UU Church in Melrose (MA) during his last year of seminary.

Mr. Beal was ordained jointly by the First Parish in Malden and the Melrose UU Church on 7 March 1982. His first call was to yoked service in rural Maine with the First Universalist Church of Dexter and the UU Church of Sangerville & Dover Foxcroft. During four years there (1982-86), he helped those congregations to establish children's RE programs and a joint youth group, and both churches began community ministry and social justice activities.

In 1986 the Rev'd Mr. Beal was called as senior minister to the First Unitarian Church in Louisville KY and on ending that pastorate in 2001 was named Minister Emeritus. He spent four-months in interim service to the Unitarian Church of Auckland, NZ and then returned home to serve as DRE (2002-05) at the Thomas Jefferson Unitarian Church (now All Peoples UU) in Louisville KY, while Joan finished out her teaching career in Louisville public schools. During part of that time (2004-06), he was also engaged as an interim minister at the Emerson Church UU in Troy MI.

With Joan's retirement, the couple was free finally to return to Richard's Maine "homeland." Following an interim ministry (2006-07) with the UU Church of Brunswick, he took a joint call to the First Universalist Church of Norway and the First Universalist Church of West Paris, serving them until his final retirement on 31 August 2011, when the West Paris congregation honored him as their minister emeritus.

Over the years, the Rev'd Mr. Beal was active in many UUA, district, civil, political, social service, and interfaith organizations. He was a member of the Northeast District Chapter of the UUMA, where he also served as District President (1985-86), and a board member of Project Harvest Hope. He served the Ohio Valley District Chapter of the UUMA as good officer (1987-88) and the UUA Board-appointed Urban Church and Ministry Committee (1987-91). During 1992-99, he was a founding member and executive committee member with several different portfolios of the UU Partner Church Council. He also served as a Ministerial Settlement Representative (1997-2002) for the Ohio Valley District of the UUA and as a chaplain at the Midwest Leadership School at Beloit College in Southern Wisconsin.

Richard wrote in the First Days Record for several years and published liturgical contributions in multiple UU collections. Several sermons and other pieces were translated into Hungarian and published in Unitarian journals in Transylvania and Hungary.



In 2002, Richard Beal received the “Living the Mission Award”, presented by the Partner Church Council at the UUA General Assembly Awards Breakfast in Québec. He also received the annual “Excellence in Psychiatric Nursing Award” of the Mass. Mental Health Association. In his spare time, Richard enjoyed reading history, biography, national and international affairs, essays, poetry, travel writings, popular science, devotional literature, biblical criticism, mysteries, and fiction. He loved gardening, walking, and cooking special event meals.

At his death, Richard was survived by his wife Joan, son Barney, grandson Jayden, sister-in-law Pamela Beal, as well as nieces, nephews, and in-laws. His parents and brother Donald had died earlier.

A celebration of Richard’s life took place on 11 September 2021 at the First Universalist Church of Norway ME. Beals Island, settled several generations earlier by his ancestors and to which the family returned every summer, was the place Richard most considered home and where his ashes were scattered.

Memorial donations are encouraged to the successor organization of the UU Partner Church Council (<https://www.uua.org/international/partnerships>). Notes of condolence may be sent to Joan S. Beal at 15 Crescent St, Norway ME 04268 or joanbeal@yahoo.com.

Margaret (Margi) Nasemann
(1935 - 2023)



Westborough, MA – Margaret “Margi” A. (Hoyt) Nasemann, 87, of Westborough, passed away May 6, 2023. She was born Nov. 9, 1935, in Parkersburg, WV, the daughter of Claremont E. and Margaret (Hawkins) Hoyt, and graduated from high school in Middleport, OH.

She graduated from Marietta College in 1957 with a degree in education. Following her parents to Weedsport NY, she began her career as an elementary school teacher. On August 12, 1960, she married the Rev. Raymond Nasemann (1926-1997), who served Unitarian Universalist churches in Perry, Bristol, and Auburn NY. They settled in Syracuse, where Margi was a sixth-grade teacher at Percy Hughes school for 10 years.

While raising four boys, Margi attended SUNY-Cortland, and was first VP of the Syracuse Teachers Association. She fought successfully for maternal leave for city school district teachers. She then earned a Master’s in education at Syracuse University, before becoming vice principal and finally a principal of Meacham and Webster elementary schools.

(continued on the next page)

Margi retired in 1992. She was strongly supportive of the Syracuse Symphony Orchestra. She was also president of the Centers for Nature Education at Baltimore Woods.

She remained in Syracuse until ca. 2015, shortly after she met a second love, the Rev. Glen Snowden (1932-2020) at a UURMAPA meeting. Margi served as a Partner member on the UURMaPA Board as Connections Network Chair from 2012-2015. She is also the mother-in-law of Rev. Alice Anachecka-Nasemann, who serves the Unitarian Church of Marlborough and Hudson.

They spent the last ten years of Glen's life together until his passing in June 2020. Thereafter, Margi slowly succumbed to emphysema and Alzheimer's.

She is survived by her sister, Josephine (Burke) Bero; sisters-in-law Trudy Hoyt and Della Gregory; sons Eric (Bobbi) Nasemann, Brian, David (Kalindi), and Alan (Alice Anachecka-Nasemann), two grandchildren, and 18 nieces and nephews.

A Memorial Service was held May 13 at the Unitarian Church of Marlborough and Hudson. In lieu of flowers, you are encouraged to donate to the Camp Unirondack campership fund, 8522 Unirondack Rd., Lowville, NY 13367.

If you have contributions for *Elderberries*, please contact editor Ann Schranz at elderberries@uurmapa.org.

Have you heard of the death of a partner? Please contact Partner Obituary Editor Eleanor Richardson (grandmoot@aol.com) and Connections Assistant Joy Atkinson (revjoy@aol.com) so they can prepare a short announcement and an obituary. Clergy Obituary Editor Jay Atkinson works from information provided by the UUA.

Please send a copy of any such notice to the Board (board@uurmapa.org), as well. The website shows the most up to date information regarding clergy and partner obituaries.



Photo by Anne Spatola

Blessings and Challenges: Faithfully Navigating Change

UURMaPA Fall 2023 Conference

Monday, October 23 through Wednesday, October 25

Come join us at our upcoming conference, offered online and also at several in-person pods. As we UURMaPAns retire and face advancing age, we encounter both blessings and challenges in our personal relationships, our faith communities, and the wider world in which we live. How do we navigate all these changes while being true to our deepest convictions, living our lives as responsible elders, creative beings, bringers of joy and peace and justice?

No matter our differences, we are all in this same boat. How good it is to come together to find our collective wisdom, encourage one another, and move forward with our faith renewed. A special panel of ministers and partners will reflect together on the theme, and programming throughout the conference will offer opportunities for continued exploration of how faithfully navigating change brings both blessings and challenges.

The registration fee stays at \$40/individual and on-line registration goes live July 17th. Remember, financial aid in the form of scholarships toward the virtual registration fee is available. All you need to do is contact UURMaPA Treasurer Richard Speck at treasurer@uurmapa.org.

Between now and then, make sure to look for more complete information on UURMaPA's web pages. You will also receive updates on a regular basis from the "UURMaPA-announce" email list. In addition, we will also post late-breaking news on the UURMaPA Facebook page.

Pod Offerings During the Fall 2023 Conference

There are two official Pods at this point. One will be held at the UU Congregation of Wilmington, DE with Richard Speck as host and registrar. For more information about the Wilmington Pod, Richard can be reached at rgspeck@comcast.net.

The other official Pod will be held at Seabeck Conference Center in Washington State, with Jaco & Barbara ten Hove as hosts and registrars. The program at Seabeck begins on Sunday evening, October 22, and ends after lunch on Wednesday, October 25. For more information about the Seabeck Pod, Jaco and Barbara can be reached at jbthishere@gmail.com and revbabs10@gmail.com respectively.

Kathleen Hunter is organizing a Pod in New Hampshire and welcomes hearing from others who would like to help or know more about that Pod. Kathleen can be reached at kdhag@mac.com.

There are several different options for offering an in-person gathering during the Fall 2023 Conference. The most elaborate and formal option is to gather at a conference center, like the Pod at Seabeck. This kind of gathering is very much like our pre-pandemic conference gatherings with everyone in one place for 3-4 days and where all meals and overnight accommodations are included in an additional registration fee. This is the most expensive option.

An in-person gathering at a UU congregation that offers the capacity to be on line is a bit less complicated, and also less expensive. With the example offered by the UU Congregation in Wilmington, people who attend arrange for their own accommodations (if they are not local) and eat their meals at local restaurants.

A third option is to offer a Watch Party, which represents the most informal way of gathering. It could simply be in a home setting with good internet connection. Christine Robinson organized a Watch Party in Albuquerque, NM, during the Spring 2023 Conference with a handful of UURMaPAns attending and enjoying each other's company, in-person. As this article is being written, there is the potential for a Watch Party in Kansas. Whether a formal Pod or an informal Watch Party, it is important that the chosen location offers good internet access and coverage.

Here are some locations suggested by attendees of the Spring 2023 Conference: Phoenix AZ; Asilomar, Los Angeles, Santa Barbara, Villa Maria del Mar and Santa Cruz, CA; Bon Secours, Marriottsville, and Dayspring Silent Retreat, MD; St. Paul MN; Murray Grove NJ; Clinton (Children's Defense Fund) and Nashville TN; and Montpelier VT. If you are interested in organizing a Pod or Watch Party, please check in with Richard Speck, who serves as the Pod & Watch Party Liaison to the Fall Conference Planning Team, at rgspeck@comcast.net.

Fall 2023 Conference Planning Team

Convener: Barbro Hansson

Scribe Plus: Anne Marsh

Publicity: Terry Ellen

Worship Coordinator: Lynda Sutherland

Odyssey Coordinator: Charles Stephens

Small Group Check-Ins Coordinator: Sonya Sukalski

Theme Panel Coordinator: Roberta Finkelstein

Slide Show and Sound Track Creator: Jeff Briere

Evaluation Coordinator: Jeff Briere

Pod and Watch Party Liaison: Richard Speck

Assistant to Tech Professional/Registrar: Richard Speck

Tech Professional/Zoom Master/Registrar: Jon Claney