



# Elderberries

Unitarian Universalist  
Retired Ministers and  
Partners Association

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Fall 2023

[www.uurmapa.org](http://www.uurmapa.org)

The UURMaPA Fall Conference on October 23 – 25 had “Blessings and Challenges: Faithfully Navigating Change” as its theme. It featured a panel of ministers and partners: Janne Eller-Isaacs, Larry Ladd (partner of Laurel Hallman), Duane Fickeisen, and Cathie Severance (partner of Art Severance). They addressed how they navigated their own elder years. Roberta Finkelstein coordinated that. Sonya Sukalski facilitated break-out groups led by a facilitator, and this year we arranged for people to sign up for groups of partners only, if they wished.

We also heard the Odysseys of a partner, Eleanor Richardson, and a minister, Olav Nieuwejaar. Charles Stephens organized that. We had our traditional service lifting up the lives of all members who died in the past year. This service, as well as the opening and closing worship services, were pulled together by Lynda Sutherland, with help from Anne Marsh, Terry Ellen, and Barbara ten Hove. The opening slide show with music was crafted by Jeff Briere.

*This conference review by Fritz Hudson is continued on the next page.*



*Conference participants included, from left to right, beginning at the top:*

Eleanor Richardson, Partner Odyssey Presenter;  
Olav Nieuwejaar, Minister Odyssey Presenter;  
Anna Gehres, Retirement Plan Specialist,  
Office of Church Staff Finances;  
Melissa Carville-Ziemer, UUMA Director of  
Ministries for Collegial Care;  
Keith Kron, UUA Transitions Director;  
Philip Lund, Congregational Life Consultant,  
Mid America Region;  
Jan Gartner, UUA Compensation and Staffing  
Practices Manager;  
Jessica York, UUA Director of Congregational Life;  
and Sofia Betancourt, UUA President.

(Fall Conference Review continued from previous page)

Wayne Arnason, as UURMaPA Board Liaison to the UUA and UUMA, was busy arranging a dialogue between Sofia Betancourt, our UUA President, and the UUA's Director of Congregational Services, Jessica York, followed by another panel comprised of Ms. York, Jan Gartner of the Office of Church Staff Finances, and Melissa Carville-Ziemer, a member of the Executive Team of the UU Ministers Association. Wayne also brought in Keith Kron to talk about the Targeted Ministry Program, as well as Anna Gehres to address retirement finances, and Linda Olson Peebles and Roberta Finkelstein to provide an update on the proposed UUMA Retired Ministers Chapter.

The UURMaPA Board was present with an opening welcome and worship by our President, Susa V. Rak, a closing worship led by Ned Wight, and updates by other Board members on various items of interest to UURMaPANs. Conference chaplains were new this year. John Gilmore, Diane Teichert, and Marni Harmony each volunteered to be on call one day. In his role as Good Offices person on the UURMaPA Board, Wayne served as Conference Chaplain Recruiter and Coordinator. The in-person Pod gatherings this year involved even more people and more places than last year. There were larger Pods in Seabeck WA (Barbara and Jaco ten Hove) and in Wilmington DE (Richard Speck). There was a new Pod in Columbus OH (Sylvia Howe). The option for us to meet in person, as well as online, added a vital dimension to the conference. We thank those who pulled together these Pod gatherings.

The technical aspects of the conference were handled again by Jon Claney, who not only had to integrate online programming with in-person Pods, but also integrated the increasing complexity, as the Planning Committee strove to democratize the conference by involving the voices of more people in the various activities. Shepherding all of these ventures and details was our inimitable Planning Team Convenor Barbro Hansson, who was involved in every aspect. She helped to keep the conference inclusive, on track, energetic, inspiring, and friendly, all at the same time. As of October 3, we had 130 UURMaPANs registered to attend. Since we are Unitarian Universalists, we expected a number of additional registrations to come in just before the deadline.

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## President's Ponderings . . . A Reflection on our Board Retreat by Susan V. Rak

Just after Labor Day the UURMaPA Board held an in-person retreat meeting - the first since February 2020. Before the pandemic there would be an annual in-person Board meeting two days ahead of the winter conference. Since then the Board, in its various iterations, has tried to recreate this experience on Zoom.

Our two and a half days at Bon Secours Retreat and Conference Center in Maryland were productive, energizing and relaxing. We found encouragement and had fun in each others' company, meeting face-to-face as a team, with one member joining in on Zoom. We enjoyed the beautiful surroundings (despite the heat!) and the gracious hospitality of the retreat center. The lovely thing about "retreats," even when they are business-focused, is the time and space provided to step back from the day-to-day needs of keeping an organization running. Without the usual business agenda that guides our monthly meetings, we could reflect and discuss in more depth and take a wider view.

We were intentional in structuring the retreat agenda around UURMaPA's mission and purpose. We agreed there's a big part of our purpose statement where we continue to succeed:

- in our efforts to connect retired ministers and partners through online small groups;
- in the semi-annual conferences (virtual and in person) that "serve the interests and enhance the well-being" of our members;
- and through the *Elderberries* newsletter, a source of information and inspiration.

We also talked about how we can widen our circle, sharing all this good stuff UURMaPA does with more people. In particular we wondered if there are ways we can partner with other credentialed Unitarian Universalist religious professionals as they retire. We didn't figure out a plan or process for this, but are opening up conversations with leaders in other UU Professional groups - in particular LREDA (Liberal Religious Educators Association) and AUUMM (Association for Unitarian Universalist Music Ministries).

We also continued our exploration of how we can "be an inclusive multicultural community" that continues to "cultivate anti-oppressive attitudes and practices consistent with our shared values, thereby promoting our collective well-being." With Unitarian Universalist leadership and ministry increasingly representing the diversity of our country, UURMaPA must consider how that diversity will be reflected, welcomed and included in our membership and programming. We spent considerable time exploring how we can meet that part of our Purpose statement.



View of  
Bon Secours  
retreat center.  
Photo by  
Susan V. Rak.

As stewards of this organization, we take seriously both the charge put forth in the purpose statement and the way change might happen or be perceived in an organization like this. We set ourselves a lofty goal, but it's a challenge grounded in reality. We are Unitarian Universalists, part of a denomination that itself has faced and continues to be challenged by the complexities of living in a diverse community, being a place of inclusion and welcome, all the while facing down white supremacy culture and working to be antiracist and inclusive. What this means for UURMaPA is an unfolding process. Our work in this area will be different from UUA or congregational efforts, since our structure is not fixed in one place, with our membership dispersed across the continent.

So just how does UURMaPA become an institution that is antiracist and multicultural and confronts white supremacy culture?

It's a big ask, and we are still considering next steps. But I think we can accomplish something, ensuring that our programming has the broadest content possible that reflects and includes a diverse and multicultural UURMaPA. As we grow into this, our attitudes, perceptions and expectations will change. Perhaps such evolution and adaptation are things we ought to expect and be accustomed to by now!

We, the Board, recognize that we are only temporary stewards of UURMaPA, and as new members join the Board each year, the focus may shift. But for now, we will continue to build community that makes our welcome visible and tangible to all, whether you are a veteran UURMaPA participant or just coming aboard.

# Birdsong Preceding Official Sunrise

by Jade "JD" Benson

Calls so sweet  
to live—  
for us to live this  
day, this life,  
our way. Not  
the official way—  
the way of the clock,  
obligations made  
under a kind of  
inherited duress—

Calls that glide  
into a rhythm  
matching human  
hearts, seductive in  
their repetitive chant,  
their signal, their allure,

I want to be wrapped  
in a sheer warm  
something,  
woven of a previously  
unknown-to-any-of-us  
material, therefore one  
with no name,

I long to relinquish  
my name, surrender  
my fate to the soft  
chanting of Aves this  
morning, of them, those  
whose names, whose particular  
names and wants, demands,  
are only imagined, not proven,  
better fantasized, by the  
waking us, the waking me,  
reluctant occupant.



"Sunrise over the New London "Thames River"  
by Jade "JD" Benson



Jade "JD" Benson

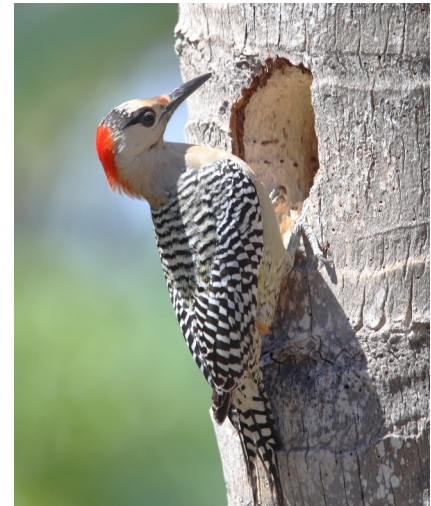


## Birding in Cuba

Clockwise from left: Fernandina's Flicker, Cuban Tody, West Indian Woodpecker, and bee hummingbird (the smallest hummingbird in the world) photographed by Peg Morgan

Photographer Peg Morgan writes:

*"I loved ministry. And I love being retired. Now each morning I wake up and decide how I will spend my precious day. Being in nature is one of my passions, and photographing the diverse beauty of other life species is a meditation for me, and a way for me to honor this amazing living earth home. This spring I was honored to travel throughout Cuba with the Cuban who wrote Birds of Cuba, Arturo Kirkconnell. I took 3,000 photos over two weeks."*



# Update about the Unitarian Universalist Retirement Plan

As we move into the last quarter of 2023, please make sure you satisfy your required minimum distribution (RMD) for the year, if needed. Our Plan participants must begin to take the IRS required minimum distribution after attaining the applicable age (currently 73) or retiring, whichever is later. The annual deadline for taking RMDs is December 31. Participants can delay taking their first RMD until April 1 of the year after they attain the applicable age. Remember that taking both the first and second RMD in the same year could cause one to owe more income tax than if those first two RMDs were taken in separate years.

Some of you still have money in the TIAA Traditional fund, which is transferring to Empower over 60 months. Our original understanding is that TIAA would calculate RMDs based on the balance of TIAA Traditional at 2022 year-end, and Empower would calculate RMD amount on the remaining balance at year-end, since that was transferred to them. However, we since learned that TIAA is calculating your RMD amount for 2023 based on your total balance at the end of 2022. This means that if you look at what TIAA calculates as your RMD for the year, it is likely correct as your total RMD from the UU Plan for the year. Empower is calculating as expected, based on your 2022 year-end balance minus the TIAA Traditional amount. What this means is that the RMD calculated by Empower is likely lower than the total required for 2022 since the TIAA Traditional balance is not included.

It is your responsibility to calculate your RMD and ensure it is paid, so please review your accounts. You can take your RMD from either TIAA, Empower, or split between the two. If you haven't already fulfilled your RMD amount for the year, we recommend that you contact TIAA (800-842-2829) and Empower (833-882-2023) and let each recordkeeper know what amount you would like them to pay. (That amount could be \$0 if you are taking the full amount from the other recordkeeper.)

Going forward past this year, TIAA and Empower will each calculate based on the balances they have for you at the end of each year. You can let both TIAA and Empower know what you would like to withdraw to satisfy the total. And after the 60-month transfer period, there will no longer be a balance at TIAA to attend to.

Some of you have already received communications from us about your RMD with TIAA and Empower based on your circumstances. This article is to reach a larger audience and doesn't change anything from what you previously received. Some of you may have already clarified what you would like paid by TIAA and Empower and need no further action. Finally, we know that some retired ministers are stepping back into service for interim and other needed positions. If you have returned to employment, you may not be required to take an RMD for the year.

Please contact us with questions about this and other topics, and visit our Knowledge Base <https://hrforuus.uua.org/help/en-us/1-uu-retirement-plan> where we have posted information and will continue to do so.

On the path, together,



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



Peter and Eleanor Richardson helped the First Parish in Kennebunk, Maine celebrate 250 years in its present building (1773 – 2023). Peter preached, and Eleanor played the historic 1900 Hook and Hastings organ. They remembered their time there, and congregants remembered them. It was a warm and loving occasion.



## Where Are You on Sunday Morning?

Where do retired UU clergy and their spouses go to church? Or do they? In either case, why did they make that particular choice? These questions came to me in my conversations with retired colleagues and their spouses. I've been instructed and surprised at the variety of answers.

I invite you to send me your responses and whatever comments, brief or extended, you'd like to add. Some of you may not name a given church or denomination but might describe your spiritual practice in place of that. Some of you may have chosen to be free of practice or institution. I hope you also will respond.

My email address is [carlscovel@comcast.net](mailto:carlscovel@comcast.net). My address is 36 Hampstead Road, Jamaica Plain MA 02130. My summation of these responses may appear in the January or spring issue of *Elderberries*. The summation will not include the names of persons or places.

If you have questions about this process, please feel free to email me at the above address. I look forward to hearing from you.

-- Carl Scovel



Carl Scovel



"Old Red Barn, Upstate New York" by Art Severance, printed on metal for a photo show at Padre Island (TX) Art Gallery. This photo was awarded the second place prize. Art Severance now has photographs in six galleries.

This issue of *Elderberries* features several stories and articles related to the theme of accountability. Marilyn Sewell sent three “short short” stories, Ned Wight sent a reflection he previously shared with the Malibu Study Group, and Robert (Bob) Murphy also sent an article. Many of the other contributions dealt with the theme of accountability, as well.

The following three “short short” stories by Marilyn Sewell are from her new book, *The Revenge of the Whale* (as yet unpublished).



## A Proper Grasp by Marilyn Sewell

Maddox Derkosh, two years of age, died after falling over a wooden railing into a pit of wild African dogs at the Pittsburgh zoo. The dogs fell upon him and he bled to death from massive wounds before his mother's eyes.

"Maddox had poor vision," his mother said. "That's why I lifted him up. He was so excited--he lunged out of my arms to see, and in a moment was gone."

"The injuries and damages sustained by Maddox," said the zoo's attorney, "were caused solely by the carelessness, negligence and/or recklessness of Elizabeth Derkosh, who failed to maintain a proper grasp of her son."

The County DA investigated the boy's death. "The zoo is not at fault," the judge said, "nor was it the mother's fault." He said it was a "tragic accident."

Glance away, make a wrong turn, step off the edge, notice too late, turn to help, and everything is lost. We fail to maintain a proper grasp.

# Hope Springs Eternal

## by Marilyn Sewell

God woke up, stretched and yawned, and decided to start on His next project, a new being. He wanted to create something really special this time. God's assistant, Murray, said, "Been there, done that. Remember how homo sapiens turned out?"

God remembered, and God became dejected. "OK, I know, I know," He said. "We'll have to build in more controls this time. The earth project turned out to be a colossal mess—embarrassing!"

"I'll say," said Murray. "The explosion will be reverberating through time forever."

"Yeah," said God. "I think the free will thing was a big mistake."

"So you're going for AI, programming them all?"

"No," mused God. "No, that would be no fun." God paused thoughtfully, then continued, "I think . . . I think I'll have them evolve into beings who love everyone—you know, everyone the same. That way there'll be no wars, no starvation, no racism, sexism, ageism, etc."

And so God began. He created what He called the Beloved Community. There was no greed, no envy, no competition, no conquering—and best of all, no fear.

One day some eons later Murray said, "Have you checked out the pure love group lately?"

"No, as a matter of fact. Thanks for the reminder. Next Thursday, it's on my schedule."

But when God visited, he was chagrined. He saw in his new creation no yearning, no curiosity. And of course, no devotion. They were a complacent herd of sheep, with no need for God.

"Damn," said God. "I forgot to include desire."

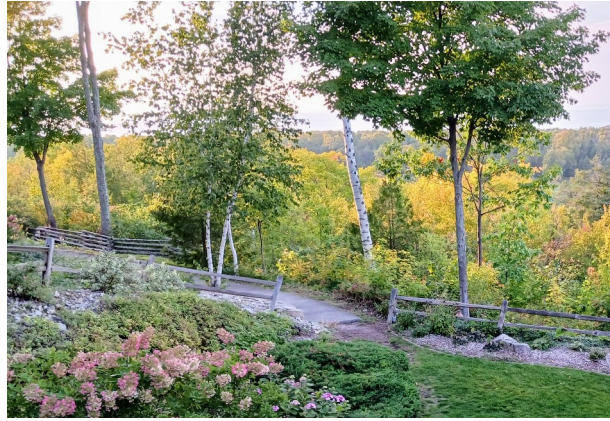
"Yeah, you really screwed up," said Murray.

"I have to agree—what an oversight! Nothing to do but let go."

"And this time, don't send an ark."

And so God made rain to fall 40 days and 40 nights, and a great water covered the planet. God was tempted to send an ark, because He loved all his creations, even this one. But He thought better of it: "No, with this kind of design flaw, there's no way to correct." God sighed. "I'll just have to start over."

Murray said, "I know you meant well, God. But hey—think it through next time."



## A Fervent Wish

by Marilyn Sewell

I just want to get out of this world without doing something really stupid. We all blunder into stuff—get a little drunk, or look the wrong way, or at the wrong person, and whamo! For some, it happens young, like the five-year-old who shot his sister. “Uh-oh,” he said, and put the pistol down. He could grow up to be a bank president or saint, but people will always whisper, “Did you know he shot his sister?”

Or the man who died trying to capture a grizzly on video in Glacier National Park—the signage was clear: “DO NOT LEAVE YOUR VEHICLE.” “This is a great shot!” he said. “The bear is there!” All the while his wife is begging him, “Herman, get back in the car!” It’s all on video tape. Friends will send friends the link to the article, will tell the story for years to come: “Did you hear about the man who got eaten by a bear? I knew him—the man, I mean.”

And then there was the high school teacher who fell in love with his sixteen-year-old student. It happens. He ran off with her, leaving his pregnant wife and two children behind, in Utah, which is a bad state for loving someone who is underage, especially if you have a pregnant wife. He got sent up for twelve long years. His wife forgave him, the state didn’t. Does anyone remember now that he was “Teacher of the Year” for three years running, or that he went back home and raised his kids? “What was he thinking?” people will say, and they’ll speculate about the girl, who never saw him again. They say she became a lawyer.

You try to do the right thing, to be good, like your mama said—I mean, unless you are the serial killer type. But then one summer day the sun streaks in and blinds you, and before you know it, whoosh, you’ve done that one unforgivable deed, taken that single misstep in the long march of days that defines you for good, the one stupid thing that people will remember, and believe that’s all you are.

# Accountability: To Whom? For What?

## Excerpt from Reflections by Ned Wight

(Shared with the Malibu Study Group at St. Dorothy's Rest in March 2023)

Accountability operates differently at each of several levels. Let's consider what accountability looks like at the individual level, the group level, the national level and the international level.

### **Individual Accountability**

What does it mean to hold ourselves accountable? For what am I accountable and to whom?

Based on my upbringing and education, I hold myself accountable

- for living a life of honesty and integrity
- for being a loyal and loving friend to those I know
- for loving my neighbor as myself
- for doing unto others what I would have them do unto me
- for admitting my mistakes and ways I've injured others
- for being open to try to understand and forgive others who repent of their wrongdoing
- for relieving suffering where I can
- for trying to leave the world better than I found it

To whom am I accountable?

- to my family and friends
- to the organizations in which I've agreed to serve in leadership: the UUSC, UURMaPA, Friends of Cedarmere, Summit UU Fellowship as a minister emeritus
- to my town, state, and country, under whose laws I live
- to the global community with which I am connected
- to God or that source of life and power to which I owe my very existence
- and finally, most fundamentally, to myself, to the values and commitments I've made throughout my seven decades of living on planet earth

Agreements and commitments to other people are the mechanisms through which we structure accountability into our lives. That's what makes accountability a uniquely human phenomenon. We enter into agreements and we make commitments to others in order to create a framework for accountability . . .

## Group Accountability

What does accountability look like at the level of the group? Let's look at this in the context of our identity as UUs? What does it mean for UUs to be accountable? For what are we accountable?

Before beginning, we might want to interrogate the phrase “hold someone accountable.” People say with considerable ease, “we’ve got to hold person X or group X accountable” for something. What do they mean by this? “We’ve got to compel this person to take responsibility—and accept the consequences?” “We’ve got to make this person feel guilty about their sins of commission or omission?” “We’ve got to figuratively hold their feet to the fire until they admit they’re wrong and we’re right?” “We’ve got to call them back to fidelity to their own commitments and principles?” People appealing for “accountability” need to be clear in their own minds what they mean by this appeal.

In our current incarnation, UUs are accountable for living in accord with our seven (or eight) principles and honoring wisdom from the six sources that we collectively covenant to affirm and promote; these are spelled out in article II of the UUA bylaws. We hold ourselves and one another accountable for:

- defending the inherent worth and dignity of every person
- practicing justice, equity and compassion in human relations
- accepting one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations
- pursuing a free and responsible search for truth and meaning
- championing the right of conscience and the use of the democratic process in our congregations and in society at large
- seeking to advance the goal of world community with peace, liberty and justice for all,
- protecting and preserving respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part and
- dismantling racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions

We also create mission statements, behavioral covenants, and strategic plans to articulate what we expect to be held accountable for in our relationships with one another—and with the wider world . . . It is important to remember that UUism is a faith tradition defined not by words of shared beliefs—creeds—but by words of shared commitments, for which we expect to hold one another accountable.



“Woven Kindness”  
book cover made by  
Kerry Mueller

## National Accountability

What does accountability look like at the level of the nation in January 2023?

This is a tricky question, with so much being revealed all the time. Yet in light of our founding documents—the Declaration of Independence, our Constitution—and the body of laws and court rulings over the past 230 years, we have much to be accountable for as citizens—especially given the events of January 6, 2021 and their persistent aftermath. As citizens of the United States, we must hold ourselves accountable for:

- Informed and principled voting for candidates committed to preserving American democracy and constitutional governance
- Influencing government to protect and preserve a viable planet in the face of threats from climate change
- Redressing wrongs from over 400 years of slavery, white supremacy thought and policies, racist social, political and economic systems
- Eliminating poverty and its adverse affects on wide swaths of the population, and ensuring a more just and equitable distribution of the fundamental economic necessities of life in the 21st century and beyond
- Recognizing the peril and suffering facing millions of people because of natural and human-caused disasters and dislocation, and mobilizing the world community to address and alleviate this suffering

And we hold ourselves accountable to all those currently living within our borders—citizens or not—and to future generations who have yet to be born.

## International Accountability

What does accountability look like at the level of the entire planet? We need to hold ourselves accountable for the health and viability of the human community, with which we have expectations embodied in treaties and agreements and international institutions like the UN's millennial development goals, or the International Criminal Court, the International Court of Justice. But we also need to hold ourselves accountable for the health and viability of animal and plant species, who cannot speak or advocate for themselves.

I recently served as board chair of the UUSC. We held ourselves accountable to UUs in congregations throughout the land, motivated by our shared commitments to “a world community with peace, liberty and justice for all,” and to “the interdependent web,” and equally accountable to our grassroots partners, resisting and combating oppression in all its ugly forms and seeking to empower people through organizing and advocacy to bring about a better world for all.

At its most elemental, at the global level, we hold one another accountable for remembering our interdependence with the rest of the world. “Accountability” only makes sense within an interdependent web of relationships in which what each of us does makes a difference to ourselves or to someone else. At the level of the adult individual, the adult self is the most important agent of accountability. Ultimately, nobody outside myself can hold me accountable for what I value and cherish unless I allow them to have that influence over me. Nobody can make me be the person I want to be in the world. Others can influence me, teach me, inspire me, open my eyes to what I do well and where I fail, or even charge me, convict me, imprison, or execute me. But none of them is truly accountable for the person I am becoming in the same way that I am accountable to and for myself.

If we seek to live lives of meaning and purpose, we're going to have to come to terms with “accountability”—to ourselves, to family and friends, to the groups we've committed ourselves to, to our nation, and to the interconnected world we live in. We need to encourage and support one another in holding ourselves and one another accountable for honoring our commitments and promises so that we may live according to our values, and do whatever good we can to leave the world better than we found it. And, as UUs, we need to practice the grace of framing “accountability” not in terms of guilt, shame and blame, but in terms of fidelity to our deepest values, our shared vision of a just and reconciled world, and deep compassion for the difficult if necessary task of holding ourselves accountable for what we value through the words of our mouths, the dispositions of our hearts, and the deeds of our lives.



## “Woven Kindness” Book Pages by Kerry Mueller

The altered book pages in this photograph and the photograph of the book cover found elsewhere in *Elderberries* “express how collective action in groups, professions, and institutions have enhanced my life in the last year,” writes Kerry Mueller.



# Accountability and the Green Revolution in Religion

## by Robert (Bob) Murphy

Circe the sorceress changed men into pigs.

The story is told in *The Odyssey*. Today's audiences may yawn if they see such things on YouTube. A modern Circe and her team can sip iced coffee Americanos in Nevada, while sending a swarm of drones to destroy targets in Afghanistan or in Somalia. High technology plus human folly produces mass destruction.

There's more that needs to be said, and it connects to the themes of accountability and stewardship. Humanity has entered the Anthropocene Age, the era in which human beings have a major impact on global ecosystems. It's an era of climate change and widespread biodiversity loss, with widespread plastic trash that may be indestructible. Microplastics have been found on remote mountaintops and in human blood samples. Keep asking, "What kind of world is humanity creating? What are we doing to our bodies and to our environment?"

Scholars will argue about the moment when the Anthropocene Age started. There will be discussions about why and how it began, and much will be said about agriculture, demographics, and energy production. All of this is important, and it's important, also, to move the conversation beyond science and engineering. Clearly, a religious conversation is needed. Topics like environmental justice need attention. The questions must be asked, "What should congregations do? How can Unitarian Universalists care for ourselves and for others in today's world?"

Our religious experience in the Anthropocene Age will take us back to some of our religious roots. Something like this has happened before in human history. During the late Bronze Age, many of the city-states and civilizations in the Middle East and on the Mediterranean islands fell apart during a series of disasters. This was the era of Circe and Ulysses and the other characters in *The Odyssey*. Centuries after the Trojan War, the poet Homer told the story.



Photograph by Ann Schranz

(continued on the next page)

Tales from the late Bronze Age may have inspired the Book of Exodus. It's the oldest and the best of the environmental justice stories, and it's a source of inspiration for many. Read the Book of Exodus with a set of "green" glasses.

According to the Bible, life in ancient Egypt involved a pyramid scheme. Life was pleasant at the top, but life was difficult at the bottom of the pyramid. A bad situation became worse as new problems developed. At the start of the Exodus story, Pharaoh was worried about homeland security, and, despite his dependence on immigrant labor, he became increasingly hostile to immigrants and their children. What followed was the epic tale about culture wars, genocide, civil disobedience, and the plagues of Egypt. The most famous walkout in labor history happened.

Centuries after the events happened, writers tried to explain the situation. The Book of Exodus is very important in liberation theology. The Hebrew workers and their families, with others, escaped into the wilderness. They spent 40 years trying to establish a new and better way of living. Moses and Miriam, with brother Aaron and others in the narrative, made some mistakes, but the refugees who fled from Egypt enjoyed some progress.

Fast forward to the summer of 2023. The summer of 2023 was a long, hot summer filled with challenges. Racial violence continued. Immigrant workers and religious minorities were abused. Healthcare workers and other workers on the front lines for cultural change started to organize. Suddenly there was a resurgence of activity for organized labor, with some early support provided by organized religion. Hundreds of wildfires burned across Canada, and the resulting air pollution was measured in Boston and in Berkeley. The island of Maui suffered through one of the worst wildfires in the history of Hawaii. The Maui wildfire was preventable. Native Hawaiians understand the situation.

Humanity needs a green revolution in religion. We need new ways of living that are equitable, satisfying, and sustainable. Note the use of the plural. The term "green revolution in religion" started with Dorothy Day and Christian anarchists during the 1930s. However, there are different communities, in different places, with their own visions for a healthy future. Humanity won't be saved by one metanarrative, or by one religion, or by one race, or by one political party. Humanity won't be saved by the Unitarian Universalists, although we can join with others in the revolution.

Unitarian Universalists will be judged by history. We will be held accountable by future generations. Social Darwinism, fascism, and some nasty forms of tribalism and nationalism have developed during the Anthropocene Age. Still, there's good news in the present moment. Grassroots leaders are calling for accountability and stewardship. Native Hawaiians are forming resistance movements, and ecology-minded groups are being formed in Puerto Rico and in Guatemala. A green revolution in organized religion may happen. Unitarian Universalists can be helpful.

## My Life's First Turning Point By Art Severance

I'm 10 years old and I've just been told  
we're moving;  
it hits me,  
knocks the breath out of me --  
Moving?  
Leaving everything  
I know and love?  
All my friends?  
My school?  
My house?  
All the roads in town I know?  
The places, the people, the feelings, the town?  
Will all my experience  
cease to exist?  
Who am I  
if I do not live in this town?  
If I am not loved  
by my friends,  
if I am not known  
by my friends?  
Who will I be?  
How will I be me in a strange place?  
Am I literally leaving my childhood behind?  
Is this what growing up is like?  
I don't want to move!  
I want to stay here!  
I don't want  
to leave all my friends!  
I remember  
crying myself to sleep  
night after night  
in my tiny bedroom  
under the eaves,  
in my house  
where I feel safe  
in my 10 year old womb  
unaware  
that this will be  
just my life's first turning point  
out of so many more to come!

## Reversing the Rivers

A Memoir of History, Hope, and Human Rights

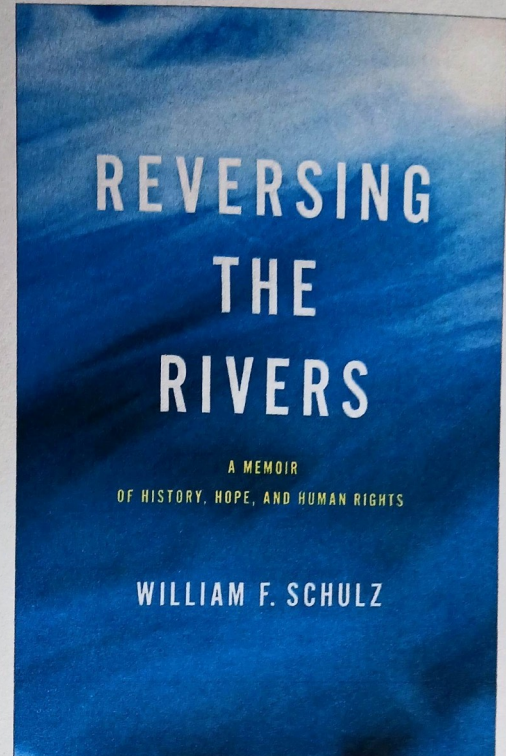
William F. Schulz

"A story of great leadership, action, kindness, and compassion, told with sharp prose and candid humor. Through his own extraordinary tale and those of the multitudes of people he met as executive director of Amnesty International, William F. Schulz's memoir shines a bright torch on the importance of human rights and our collective power to create a safer and greater world for all."—Loung Ung, author of *First They Killed My Father: A Daughter of Cambodia Remembers*

From 1994 to 2006, William F. Schulz headed Amnesty International USA. During this time, he and the organization confronted some of the greatest challenges to human rights, including genocides in Rwanda, Bosnia, and Sudan; controversies over the prison camp at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba; and the use of torture by the United States after 9/11.

Presenting poignant stories combined with amusing anecdotes and philosophical reflection, *Reversing the Rivers* is an engaging account of how one human rights activist faced the day-to-day realities of struggling with human rights crises while answering the question, "How do you retain any hope at all in humanity?"

**William F. Schulz** is a Senior Fellow at the Carr Center for Human Rights Policy at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government.



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Advancing knowledge, fostering collaboration, informing the future

# *Reversing the Rivers: A Memoir of History, Hope, and Human Rights*

A Review by Stephan Papa

During his years as UUA and UUSC President, you may have thought that our colleague Rev. Dr. William Schulz was a stimulating storyteller, but the stories in his recent book, *Reversing the Rivers: A Memoir of History, Hope, and Human Rights*, are even more powerful—because of their scale. Bill served as Executive Director of Amnesty International USA from 1994 to 2006. From the first chapter, titled “Welcome to Genocide,” this engaging book contains personal stories and eyewitness accounts of public stories; it raises ethical questions, such as the nature of evil and political issues, such as what is the role of government? His answer: “to make it as easy as possible for human beings to be good” (p. 124). The book edifies, instructs, and inspires.

Some of the stories of torture are appalling; they could lead you to despair, but the courage and perseverance of the prisoners of conscience, the commitment of letter writers, and the leadership of spokespeople like Bill have saved lives, and have made our world more peaceful and just. As Bill writes, “If those who have encountered the worst of humanity can find it in themselves to keep the faith, then surely you and I can muster the fortitude to be their allies” (p. 215).

The political stories of countries like ours denying culpability and responsibility are disappointing, but here too we see that honesty and empathy have a positive effect. There are thrilling stories of threats from tyrants; there are entertaining stories about celebrities who speak out for human rights such as Patrick Stewart, Don Cheadle, and Salma Hayek; and there are humanizing stories such as that of Bill’s personal relationship with the late Senator Ted Kennedy.

This is an engaging, behind-the-scenes recounting of his experiences working for human rights. It makes the challenges transparent, the horrors unsettling, the commitment of those who stand up for justice inspiring. His arguments for human rights are persuasive. He provides practical lessons on bringing out the best in organizations, individuals, and governments. Some of his stories are humorous; others break your heart; some contain very interesting gossip about well-known people. As he indicates, Amnesty did good work, despite its weaknesses. So, may we.

The challenges Bill confronted at Amnesty International were more grave than those he faced at the UUA and more than most of us faced as ministers or partners. And yet there are some common ones, such as the conflict between activism and institutionalism, between caring for yourself, your family, and society, and the search for meaning, justice, and hope. To find out how he managed them and how he responds to the most frequent question put to him, which is, “How do you retain even the slightest faith in the goodness of humanity?,” you will have to read the book. And you can get a 30% discount via the link from the publisher. Use discount code SCHULZ30 at [www.pennpress.org](http://www.pennpress.org).

## “Life Review” Sessions Offered by Karen Gustafson



Among the many noted categories of announcements, I wonder if we might add “Returning to Active Retirement”? In mid September at my final Sunday as Interim Minister of Pastoral Care at Unity Church Unitarian in St Paul, I noted that I would be entering my fourth and final retirement from parish ministry. It has gotten easier as, after a good and challenging year, I believe I have reached my “best used by date,” but am pretty sure I have some uses before my “expiration!”

One of them is connecting more intentionally with more of my retired cohort. Another is to resume a practice that, except for this past year, I have continued to do since 2016. That year, my husband and I created a retreat space over our garage in Knife River MN near the shore of Lake Superior, where I have hosted 40 colleagues and lay people in an experience of one-on-one Life Review.

The website ([uulifereview.org](http://uulifereview.org)) describes the concept in this way: “Life Review is a way of gathering up the seeds of wisdom embedded in a lifetime of stories of past transitions – seeds that often get lost in the pressure to get past the hard parts and on to the next thing. The Life Review Retreat is a time away, in comfortable accommodations in a beautiful North Woods setting near the north shore of Lake Superior, where you can focus entirely upon reviewing and sharing your story.”

This has been a deeply satisfying experience for both me and those who have participated. It combines two of my favorite interests: hospitality (cooking and sharing meals in a lovely setting) and deep story practice. Participants have ranged in age from 31 to 85. The experience can take place in any season.

I am planning to become more connected with you all through UURMaPA in the coming year. In the meantime, I would welcome inquiries about this ongoing opportunity.

# Obituaries

Marie E. Brown  
(1934 - 2023)



KERRVILLE TX – Marie E. Brown, 89, passed away June 22, 2023. She was born May 18, 1934, in England. When she was six, during the Battle of Britain, an air raid siren sounded. In the resulting confusion she fell out of a bus, causing a severe concussion and resulting in petit mal epilepsy that continued the rest of her life.

Marie's father was Roman Catholic and required that the children attend Mass weekly. Her mother did not follow any specific religion. While Marie enjoyed Catholic rituals and traditions, she was greatly influenced by her mother's openness to different beliefs. When she was 16, her family took a freighter to the US, traveling to visit her great-grandmother in Ohio. Her mother met Dwight Brown through the Chamber of Commerce and was so impressed she introduced him to Marie. Dwight described Marie as a lovely girl who loved moving about in nature, among trees and flowers, a dancing spirit. When Marie was 18 they married.

Upon Dwight's decision to become a UU minister, they moved to Berkeley CA for Dwight to attend Starr King School for the Ministry. Marie worked as a seamstress and in child care to help support the family, and they were blessed with four children within six years.

Marie attended Kent State University and Texas Wesleyan, receiving her M.A. in Gifted Education. She developed the Pegasus Program for gifted children in Ohio. Her teaching influenced an enormous number of children. While Dwight was pastor of the Dallas UU Church, Marie began Creative Movement classes. This became one of her most loved endeavors.

Marie and Dwight were married 60 years. His ministry took them to Trenton NJ, Calgary Alberta, Dallas TX, and Shaker Heights OH. He also served the UUA in Boston MA, New York City, and Ft. Worth TX. Dwight died in 2012. For the last years of Marie's life, she lived at Juniper Assisted Living. Even though she did not drive, she maneuvered all over town on her motor-powered tricycle. Marie became a member of the UU Church of the Hill Country in Kerrville TX, in 2004 when she and Dwight retired there. She initiated and organized Forums, Adult Religious Education, and Children's Religious Education. She even took the church trash cans to the curb. She supported UBarU, the retreat center in Mountain Home, and new buildings were named in honor of Marie and Dwight.

Marie is survived by their children, Janet Brown of Dallas, Deborah Brister of Austin, Stephanie Murray of Brownwood TX, and David Brown of Boston, as well as by eight grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. A Memorial Gathering was held July 8 at the UU Church in Kerrville TX.



Anne Clarke  
(1930 - 2023)



SISTER BAY WI – Anne Elizabeth Torrison Clarke, 92, passed away September 28, 2023, at Good Samaritan Society — Scandia Village in Sister Bay WI.

She was born Nov. 25, 1930, in Chicago IL, the daughter of Osuld and Marie (Schulz) Torrison. Anne graduated from New Trier High School. She attended Vassar College and George Mason University, earning a B.A. In 1951, she married Robert Clarke.

Rev. Clarke was ordained in 1964 and Anne followed him to UU churches in Exeter NH, Arlington VA, Dallas TX, Mequon WI, and Cincinnati OH, where he was named Minister Emeritus. In 1992, Anne and Bob moved to Sister Bay, where they had spent summers for many years.

Anne was a member of P.E.O. (a philanthropic education organization) and was instrumental in spearheading the project to build the new Sister Bay/Liberty Grove Library building, overseeing the money-raising efforts to completion. In 1996, Anne and Bob, by then retired, helped found the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Door County (UUFDC). When Anne was no longer able to attend UUFDC, she still wrote supportive notes to the Fellowship, cheering the congregation on as she read the monthly newsletters.

Anne will be missed by daughter, Betsy Clarke of Columbus OH; son, Jim Clarke of Ellison Bay WI; two grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. She was preceded in death by her husband in 2013; her parents; and her sister, Mary.

Anne's life will be honored with a memorial service at Scandia Village in Sister Bay, tentatively planned for November. She will be laid to rest in Little Sister Cemetery in Sister Bay WI .

## Treva (Zuercher) Frank

(1927 - 2023)



Treva Frank, 96, died May 8, 2023 in Orange MA in the comfort of her home with her family.

She was born in 1927 in Pennsylvania to Oswin and Priscilla Zuercher. She graduated from Bluffton College, Bluffton OH in 1948, where she met her husband, the Rev. Vance Frank. They enjoyed 70 years together before his passing in 2019. She and Vance raised six children as they served churches in Ohio; Rumford and West Paris ME; 1st Universalist Church of Orange MA (1972-1992); and First Church Unitarian of Athol (1984-1992).

In addition to church and community activities, Treva was an avid reader and was a member of the Atheneum and Unity Club.

Treva was a kind, gentle soul, full of grace with a quick wit and a ready smile. She was proud of her Mennonite heritage, living the values of kindness, acceptance and primacy of family. She made her home the gathering place for family and friends caring for aging parents and grandchildren.

Treva was predeceased by her parents, husband, her sister Vivian Skinner as well as daughter Karen Frank Mays and sons Micheal Frank and Daniel Frank.

She is survived by her sister Mary Reichley; daughters, Julie Frank (James Randall) of Colorado and Bonnie Frank (Kenton Tharp) and Anita Henry (James) of Orange; son-in-law Richard Mays of NH; and daughter-in-law Allyson Hart Frank of Gardner. Treva dearly loved her 14 grandchildren, 14 great-grandchildren and her great-great-granddaughter.

The family expresses gratitude to the Hospice Team of Care Central VNA for their compassionate care.

Service will be private.

Helen Lane  
(1935 - 2023)



Helen B. Lane, 88, beloved mother, sister, grandmother, and friend to all, passed away suddenly on April 20, 2023.

Helen was born on February 13, 1935, to Virginia DeCamp Beattie and William Douglas Beattie in San Francisco CA. She attended Pomona College, graduating with a bachelor's degree in biology in 1956. She received a master's in public health from UC Berkeley in 1960.

Helen worked at Scripps Clinic in La Jolla, CA and at Dana Farber Cancer Institute in Boston MA.

She was very active at First Parish UU in Needham MA. She participated in group leadership and fundraising activities. Lately she had been active in Vesper services at the church. Helen adored gatherings with her mother and sisters to spend time together where they laughed, told stories, and enjoyed each other's company.

Helen was married to Harry Lee Munsinger (divorced), John Baker (widowed) and Edwin Lane (also widowed).

She was preceded in death by her son Dennis Munsinger and her sister Ciele Tewksbury. She is survived by her sisters Genia Simpson and Cynthia Astor, her sons Douglas and David Munsinger, her stepsons Michael and John Lane, seven grandchildren, and 12 great-grandchildren.

A memorial service was held on June 10 at the First Parish in Needham.

Karen Kristine Muir  
(1949 - 2023)



LUDINGTON MI – Karen Kristine Sandstrom Muir, 74, a resident of Annapolis, MD, died August 17, 2023 while traveling to visit family with her husband, the Rev. Frederick Muir, minister emeritus of the UU Church of Annapolis.

She was born January 31, 1949, the daughter of Maj. Donald Gustave Sandstrom, a career Army officer, and Kaethe Bonnekamp Sandstrom in Staten Island, NY. She lived in Germany for a brief period, then moved to Indianapolis where her father taught at Fort Benjamin Harrison. “When she entered kindergarten, she only spoke German,” the Rev. Muir said.

After graduating from high school, she attended Butler University, both in Indianapolis, on a debate scholarship, where in 1970 she earned her B.A. in history and social studies, then obtained an M.A. there. She taught Social Studies for 40 years, in New York City, Sanford ME, then in Odenton MD, when she and Fred moved to Annapolis. He served as minister there for 34 years. She was active in Maryland Democratic politics. She was a fierce advocate of public education, a world traveler, avid reader, movie lover, devoted Orioles baseball fan, and dessert enthusiast (most notably cookie dough).

“It was very important to her to have a safe teaching environment. She was very good working with middle school students. She looked at them as people and not as pains,” said colleague and friend Meg Kauder. To bring the outside world into her classroom, Ms. Muir embraced the World Wise Schools program, where students and teachers corresponded with Peace Corps volunteers in the Central African Republic.

Surviving are her husband Fred, a son Andrew Sandstorm Muir, daughter Kristina Muir, two sisters, Kathe Donna Sandstorm and Karalyn Sandstrom Young.

A memorial service was held September 24, 2023, at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Annapolis.

## Martha Pohl (1932 - 2023)



CHELMSFORD MA – Martha Louise (Warren) Pohl, 90, died August 14, 2023, at her 1889 homestead surrounded by her loving family. She was the beloved wife of Rev. Dr. David C. Pohl with whom she shared nearly 68 years of marriage. Martha was born November 10, 1932, the daughter of Edwin H. and Helen M. (Pearson) Warren. Martha grew up on the family farm and was valedictorian of her class at Chelmsford High School. She studied at Lowell General Hospital, graduating in 1953 as a Certified Registered Nurse, and served four years at Mass. General Hospital in Boston.

In 1954, she met her future husband David at his ordination at the First Parish in Bedford. They were married in 1955. In 1957, she gave birth to their first child Elizabeth Louise and in 1962, Eric was born. They moved to the First UU Church of Cleveland, OH, in 1957 and four years later to the First UU Congregation of Ottawa. A decade later, they moved to Boston, where David joined the Department of Ministry at the UUA, where he served until retirement in 1993.

Martha resumed her nursing career at nursing homes in North Reading, Stoneham, Lexington, and later in Acton. In 1985, she joined David in a four and a-half month sabbatical in Australia, where he served the Unitarian church in Adelaide. In the closing days of their time there, an invitation came to attend a reception for a visiting Queen Elizabeth, as she unveiled a statue honoring Catherine Helen Spence, a Unitarian suffragist.

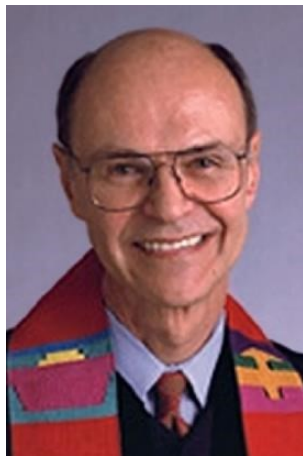
When Martha's father died in 1986, he left Martha his Chelmsford home and shared ownership of the farmland with her brother Franklin. Franklin farmed the land, but died in 2015. Five years later, the Pohl and Warren families sold the 54 acres to the Town of Chelmsford, creating The Warren-Pohl Conservation Reservation.

In retirement, Martha and David enjoyed gardening, their 1967 Vermont cottage, and travel. Her life was abruptly interrupted in mid-April this year with a major stroke. She was initially recovering, but then suffered several setbacks that led to a private, poignant conversation with David in which she sought his agreement that she begin home hospice care. It was a profoundly sad promise grounded in their deep and abiding love.

In addition to her husband, Martha is survived by her daughter Elizabeth Louise (Dean Corner) of Augusta, ME, and granddaughters Miriam Elizabeth of Lowell and the Reverend Erica Rose Long of Cambridge; her son, Eric Warren (Mary Patricia Anderson) of Chelmsford, and grandchildren Ethan Warren of Kingston, Ont.; Elena Ruth of Sherbrooke, Que.; Laura Elizabeth of Westmore, VT; Andre Anderson of Chelmsford, and numerous nieces and nephews.

A memorial Service was held on October 8 at the First Parish in Concord MA. Memorial donations may be made to the Town of Chelmsford/Warren-Pohl Reservation, 50 Billerica Road, Chelmsford MA 01824.

## Robert L. Schaibly (1942 - 2019)



The Reverend Bob Schaibly, whose life path was deeply shaped by Unitarian Universalism, by participation in the 1965 Selma march in his senior year of college, and by a mid-life embrace of Buddhist practice, died on 11 November 2019, aged 77, of complications from a more than 30-year battle with throat cancer.

Bob found his interest in Buddhism to be transformatively deepened in 1988 when Thich Nhất Hanh came to speak at the Houston church where Bob was serving. Already in the early stages of cancer therapy, Bob recalled that “Thầy,” as he was familiarly called, “saw the still-desperate look in my eyes as I was struggling to recover from radiation treatment. His personal message for me was that being was an important practice, since most people find their self-worth in doing.” On returning from his first retreat with Thầy the next year, Bob founded the Houston Zen Community and then supported the development of the Houston Sangha. In 1992 he was invited by Thầy to come to Plum Village, to receive the lamp transmission, and to be ordained as a Dharma teacher, whereupon he was given the name “True Deliverance.”

Buddhist teaching continued as a major focus of ministry for Bob after retiring from parish ministry and moving to Oregon. He became active in Portland’s First Unitarian Church, a weekly Sangha, and a Buddhist men's group. Bob’s husband, Steven Storla, having heard many of Bob's sermons and Dharma talks, described him as “a wonderful and powerful speaker.” In the memory of his friends in the Buddhist community, Bob touched many lives, and he is remembered for his kind, inspiring, and compassionate demeanor, [as he] continued to share his wisdom by his loving presence. Despite many years of health challenges and limitations, he consistently taught how to meet suffering with equanimity. Bob shared his true self — all of his humanity — by being transparent and vulnerable, and by being open to the “full catastrophe” when it arose.

Robert Lloyd Schaibly was born on 16 August 1942 in Lansing, Michigan, to Robert Lloyd Schaibly, Sr. and Dorothy Strieter Schaibly, who raised him in the Missouri Synod Lutheran Church. During college years at Michigan State University, he discovered a more liberating tradition at Lansing’s UU church, and in his senior year answered Martin Luther King’s call to Selma. “It changed Bob’s life to see religious institutions witnessing for justice and changing lives,” recalls his husband, and that was perhaps an important early experience in his call to ministry.

After graduation with a B.A. in humanities in 1965, Bob moved to San Francisco, joined the UU congregation there, and soon took a position as the church’s administrator. Turned down by Starr King School for the Ministry but encouraged by his minister, Harry Scholefield, to apply to Harvard, Bob moved east and completed work for his M.Div. at Harvard Divinity School in 1971.

Mr. Schaibly's first parish call was to the Beverly Unitarian Church in Chicago, where he was ordained in 1971 and continued to serve until 1979. In those years he served at times on the Planning Council of the Lake Geneva Summer Assembly, and at a summer gathering there he met, and later married, Elinor Berke. Their marriage ended amicably some years later, while she went on to pursue her own career in UU ministry.

The Rev'd Mr. Schaibly moved on to a briefer pastorate (1979 - 82) at the UU Church of Concord NH and then accepted a call to the First Unitarian Church of Houston TX. There he served as senior minister for two decades (1982 - 2002), during which that church was the first in Texas to become a sanctuary congregation for Central American refugees and to start a support group for gay and lesbian teenagers. In his public ministry to the Houston area, Mr. Schaibly spoke at multiple rallies against the death penalty, for abortion rights, for the right to die, and for marriage equality. In 1985, when the first UU LGBT convocation was held in Houston, Bob met Steven Storla. In 1991, they made their life commitment to each other at that year's convocation in San Francisco.

In 2002, with his preaching voice much weakened by throat cancer and radiation treatment, the Rev'd Mr. Schaibly took early retirement at age 60, and the Houston congregation named him Minister Emeritus. He and Steven Storla relocated to Portland OR, where Bob came briefly out of parish retirement to serve an interim ministry (2005 - 06) at the UU Community Church of Washington County (Hillsboro OR). It was in 2015, on the 24th anniversary of their mutual commitment, that Bob and Steven were finally married in a ceremony conducted by the Rev'd Bill Sinkford.

In the wider UU movement, Mr. Schaibly served on the boards of the UUA's Southwest District, the Houston Area UU Ministers, and the UU Service Committee, and on the Emerson Centennial Celebration Committee of the UU Historical Society. He was active with the UUA's Office of Gay & Lesbian Concerns. He was a member of the UUA Affirmative Action Task Force, served as president the UUMA's Southwest chapter, and was a founder and chair of the New England Students for the UU Ministry. He was the theme speaker at Star Island's "Life on a Star Family Week" in 1983. The Rev'd Mr. Schaibly saw many of his sermons published in *The UU World* and the CLF's newsletter, *Quest*. Other publications include "Is There a Crisis in the Ministry?" (*Journal of the Liberal Ministry*, v. 12, no. 3), and "The Power of the Patient" (*DAY Magazine*, v. 3, no. 2).

During his three parish settlements and beyond, Mr. Schaibly was supportive of or active with the Child and Family Services of New Hampshire, a food pantry program, a day center for the homeless, Amnesty International, and People for the American Way. He was president of the New Hampshire chapter of the ACLU (1980-1982), a community representative for the University of Houston Animal Research Committee, a board member of the Houston ACLU and the AIDS Foundation of Houston, and a theme speaker for the American Cancer Society of Texas. He chaired a local mental health council and an ecumenical ministerial fellowship.

At his death, Bob Schaibly was survived by his husband, Steven R. Storla; a sister, Rebecca Davidson; two brothers, Ben and Bill; and many nieces and nephews. Donations in Bob's memory are encouraged to the Endowment Funds of the First Unitarian Church of Portland ([firstunitarianportland.org/foundation](http://firstunitarianportland.org/foundation)) or the First UU Church of Houston ([firstuu.org/donate](http://firstuu.org/donate)). Memorial services were held at both congregations.

# Barry William Strejcek

(1932 - 2023)



WALNUT CREEK, CA – Barry William Strejcek, 90, “The Mayor of Oakmont,” died peacefully at home on April 29, 2023, from heart disease and dementia. He was born October 28, 1932, to Doris and William Strejcek and grew up in the Cleveland area. He attended Miami University of Ohio, then served in the Army in Germany during the Korean conflict. He returned to earn a BA in political science and a master’s in labor economics, both from Ohio State.

Barry married his first wife, Mary Jo McPherson, in 1959. They lived in Ohio, Missouri, New Jersey, and Washington DC. Children Kier (1960), Nathan (1962), and Mardi (1969) were born to Barry and Jody. Their marriage ended in divorce. Barry’s working life centered on civil rights and the common good. He was active in the Democratic Socialists of America, founded by Michael Harrington. His career was with the National Urban League, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, and the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). Barry appreciated that the federal government gave him the opportunity to work towards justice and equality.

In 1976, Barry met Yvonne Schumacher at EEOC; they married in 1980. Their son Brendan was born in 1981. When Barry retired in 1989, they moved to Nevada City CA, where they were leaders of Sierra Foothills Unitarian Universalists in Auburn. They were among the founders and charter members of the UU Community of the Mountains in Grass Valley. Barry and Yvonne moved to Berkeley in 2004 for her completion of an M.Div. degree at Starr King School for the Ministry. They moved to Harrisburg PA, Boston MA, and Brighton MI for her parish ministry positions.

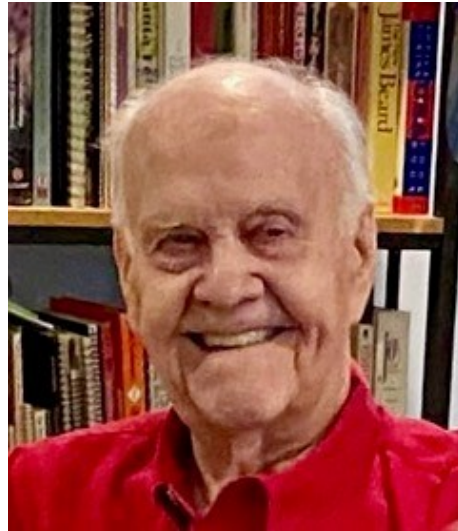
They retired to Rossmoor senior community in Walnut Creek CA in 2015. There Barry’s friendliness earned him that moniker “Mayor of Oakmont” during COVID in 2020, as he would wave to every car driving by while walking his dog Sammy daily, often wearing his dog mask. His passing is deeply grieved by his wife of 43 years, Yvonne; his children Kier (Cathleen) of Naperville IL, Nathan (Stacey Moye) of Washington DC; Mardi (Alberto Muciño) of Arlington VA, and Brendan (Chenbo Zhong) of Toronto, Ontario, Canada; four grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. He was predeceased by great-granddaughter Violet Joan.

A memorial celebration was held Aug. 15 at the Dollar Clubhouse at Rossmoor.



Joseph M. Wesley

(1936 - 2023)



SEATTLE WA - Joe Wesley died on August 29, 2023. He was born on March 14, 1936. Joe was Alice Blair Wesley's husband, the father of Becky Bell-Wesley and Hope Wesley Harrison, and the grandfather of their four grandsons.

A talented DuPont engineer and engineering manager for 30 years, Joe subsidized Alice's ministry for more than 20 years. He thought of his salary as "their" money, not "his" money. His salary paid for her theological schooling, including all those trips between Meadville in Chicago and their residence at the time in Beaumont TX.

Nobody could have lived on what the congregations paid Alice for her work to turn struggling congregations into thriving ones. "And, of course, the congregations did not pay Joe for the repairs he made to their buildings, or for the church furniture he designed and built for them, or for the free supervision he provided for construction of a new building, or for the lovely baritone solos he sang in their services," Alice wrote.

Joe prepared many, many typescripts of Alice's sermons and lectures and revisions for her books "so that I can know and keep what you're thinking and learning," he said. He was much beloved in his and Alice's Seattle retirement community for his ready smile, his sense of humor, the stories of his Kentucky upbringing, and the countless repairs he made in the wood shop for other residents.

## SAVE THE DATE – SPRING CONFERENCE

No, it's not a blind date. But you have a date on April 15th.

You know how good UURMaPA conferences are -- contemporary, insightful, engaging and meaningful. We don't have every detail worked out yet, but we know the spring conference will be worth your attention. If you live in the Wilmington DE area, you have the opportunity to attend in person, and we encourage other pods and watch parties as well.

So start your spring cleaning early and prepare for your date with the 2024 spring UURMaPA conference. It begins on Tax Day, April 15. You can celebrate or drown your sorrows for three days, in a virtual conference with your colleagues through April 17. For more information, or if you'd like to help produce the conference, send a message to [BarbroMHansson@gmail.com](mailto:BarbroMHansson@gmail.com).

This is a note from *Elderberries* editor Ann Schranz --

I will complete my commitment as editor after two more quarterly newsletters. This has been a rewarding way to strengthen my connection with retired Unitarian Universalist ministers and partners. Perhaps you are interested in becoming the next editor? Contact me with any questions you may have. The email address is [elderberries@uurmapa.org](mailto:elderberries@uurmapa.org).



Photograph by Stefanie Etzbach-Dale  
(revsteffi.com and "Tending Spirit" on Facebook)