



# Elderberries

Unitarian  
Universalist  
Retired Ministers  
and Partners  
Association

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

## UURMaPA Fall Conference 2024

We are pleased to announce that our fall conference this year features eight sessions beginning October 21<sup>st</sup> and ending October 23<sup>rd</sup>. The conference will be available via telephone or personal computer on Zoom, but you may attend with your colleagues at a pod in Wilmington, Delaware; Kingston, Massachusetts; Seabeck, Washington; or Waverly, Ohio.

“Generative Eldering and Democracy’s Future” is our theme and will be addressed by Dr. Sharon Welch, in conversation with other presenters. Dr. Welch is the author of *After the Protests are Heard: Enacting Civic Engagement and Social Transformation*. In presenting this topic, Dr. Welch will focus on a few questions:

- What can we as elders do to support generative democracy throughout the world?
- What are the current risks to democracy? Dr. Welch will address the rise of authoritarianism and the risks to democracy worldwide.
- What leads to an expansive, generative and multi-racial democracy?
- What is being done now by Unitarian Universalists to create a generative democracy, and what are the particular roles that can be played by elders in this vital work?

In addition to the presentation by Dr. Welch, a service of remembrance will honor UURMaPAns no longer with us. We will join Diane Teichert and Larry Ladd in their odysseys as a minister and as a minister’s spouse. Small groups will form to discuss the theme, and representatives from the UUA and the UUMA will discuss our theme and this moment in our history. Ned Wight and Anne Marsh will collaborate to produce the opening worship, and the closing worship will be led by Susan Rak. We can engage in virtual socializing, and we’ll have several opportunities to go deeper into our theme in Connecting Rooms every day.

*(Continued on page 3)*

## Presidential Ponderings by Susan V. Rak

Living here at the New Jersey shore, every August the air seems thicker with humidity and the sand is so blisteringly hot that a trip to the beach becomes less and less attractive. I long for the waning light and cooling breezes of autumn during these dog days.

This shift in seasons, when temperatures begin to cool off and days shorten, signals a welcome change in my own energies. UURMaPA seems to mirror this, as a newly configured Board is coming together, thinking and planning for the year ahead.

In preparing for the Board's in-person meeting at the end of August, I've been gathering up bits and pieces of UURMaPA history. According to sources, it all started back in the early 1980s, when a small group of retired Unitarian Universalist ministers wondered, after so many years of leading an active life in congregations and organizations, was there anything available to retired UU ministers that was particular to or inclusive of their unique life as clergy in liberal religion?

Truly, a person could figure out living a life in retirement, free of the day-to-day bonds of work. But an important connection seemed severed - or at the very least, slackened - when they left their ministerial positions one last time. So a new organization was formed, the UU Retired Ministers Association. When it expanded its membership to include spouses of retired ministers, it evolved into what is now the Unitarian Universalist Retired Ministers and Partners Association.

*(Continued on page 4)*

### Greetings from new *Elderberries* editor

George Buchanan here. I'm the incoming editor for *Elderberries*. If you have story suggestions or ideas for improving *Elderberries*, please contact me at [elderberries@uurmapa.org](mailto:elderberries@uurmapa.org)

I deeply appreciate the help and wise advice of Ann Schranz, our previous editor, which was essential to getting me started. Thank you, Ann.

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## **Fall conference** (continued from page 1)

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You might reach out to colleagues in your area to plan a watch party or meal together, and if you want help with that, please contact Richard Speck [[rgspeck@comcast.net](mailto:rgspeck@comcast.net)].

**Before you register for the conference, we'd like you to update your contact information in our new member management system.** This will ensure that our announcements and news go to the people who want it. To do that, please take a look at this video: [youtu.be/ 71ReowqTXk](https://youtu.be/71ReowqTXk) If you need to change your name, please contact Richard Speck [[rgspeck@comcast.net](mailto:rgspeck@comcast.net)].

Online registration is now open, and here is a link to the registration page:  
<http://www.uurmapa.org.uurmapa.churchcenter.com/registrations/events/2428308>

The registration fee is \$45.00 per individual. Financial aid to cover the registration fee is available. To apply, send a message to Paul Johnson [[treasurer@uurmapa.org](mailto:treasurer@uurmapa.org)].

If you plan to attend an in-person gathering at one of the pods, you will probably incur additional expenses such as transportation, lodging and meals. Help is also available to cover some of these additional expenses. Financial aid to defray the cost of attending a pod will be disbursed by the UURMaPA Treasurer following the conference. To apply for financial aid, send a message to Paul Johnson at [[treasurer@uurmapa.org](mailto:treasurer@uurmapa.org)].

We will update the FaceBook page and the UURMaPA web page with information as we develop the conference, so check those occasionally this summer and early fall.

## Last Call for Creative Sageing Award Nominees

Each year, UURMaPA recognizes one of its members—a minister or partner—with a “Creative Sageing Award.” Drawing upon the wisdom of rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi in his landmark *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. Previous recipients have written books, undertaken significant projects, or done something unusually creative during this chapter of their lives. (Find a complete list of previous recipients on our website, [www.uurmapa.org](http://www.uurmapa.org).)

If you would like to nominate yourself or another UURMaPAN for this year’s award, simply identify the person and submit a brief description of their achievement(s) or project to UURMaPA’s Vice President, Ned Wight ([vice-president@uurmapa.org](mailto:vice-president@uurmapa.org)) by September 21, 2024. Ned and a small committee will review submissions, select an awardee and announce the recipient at the UURMaPA Fall Conference in October.

### Presidential Ponderings (continued from page 2)

Over the span of those two-score years, the organizers and leaders of UURMaPA have continued to refine its purpose and activities for each new “class” of members. Generations are short in UURMaPA parlance - shifts in focus or interests or needs seem to happen when there’s a change in leadership or a crisis refocuses our attention. We’ve grown with the times, assessing the needs of members and finding ways to nurture community, always seeking to inspire our ongoing growth and deepening for people in this new phase of life.

The post-pandemic shift to virtual gatherings has widened our circle, making our community readily available to more people. As I prepare to spend a final year as President of this esteemed organization, I know we will continue our efforts to encourage diversity, inclusion and equity in our relationships and continue programming and community-building. We will be sussing out how to augment the support and resources available to UURMaPANs in their home communities, making sure whatever we do has that unique character of Unitarian Universalism and the core values we endeavor to live by.

It is my fondest hope that YOU will be part of this ever-growing community in the coming year!

-Susan

## **Welcome to New UUURMaPA Members**

Ann Marie Alderman & Robin Alderman

Mary Foran

Frieda Gillespie & Jennifer Long

Lori Hlaban & Tom Hlaban

David Kraemer & Mary Duerson

Cheryl Leshay & Bruce Leshay

Suzelle Lynch & Tom Ness

Ren McFadyen

Shelley Page

Diane Rollert & David Rollert

Sarah Schurr & Scott Schurr

Lisa Schwartz & Jim Schwartz

Maddie Sifantis

Susan Smith & Robert Smith

Patty Willis

### **Save the Date**

UURMaPA Spring 2025 Conference

April 21-23, 2025

# CONNECTIONS CORNER

Want to strengthen your connections with other UURMaPAns? Here are 3 opportunities:

## Join a PEER SUPPORT ZOOM GROUP

**70 UURMaPAns are now involved in 11 regular Zoom Groups**

Though self-governing as to format and schedule, most groups

- > Have 5-8 members
- > Choose a Convenor/Facilitator member
- > Meet monthly for a 90 minute session to
  - \* open and close with a reading
  - \* give each member 5 minutes to share "How is it with thy Spirit"
  - \* spend the remaining time discussing a topic chosen at the prior session (and choosing the next session's topic.)
- > Each fall and spring, free all to "depart with thanks" or re-commit for 6 months more.

**To explore joining an on-going Peer Support Group, or forming a new one, email [fhudson@uuma.org](mailto:fhudson@uuma.org).**

## Try Out a SPECIFIC INTEREST ZOOM GROUP

We currently have 2 open **Specific Interest Groups**. (Learn more by contacting the Convenors directly)

- > **Care-givers:** Makannah Morris ([revs2uu@aol.com](mailto:revs2uu@aol.com)); Sylvia Howe ([sylhowe42@gmail.com](mailto:sylhowe42@gmail.com))
- > **Grief Support:** Duane Fickeisen ([dfickeisen@uuma.org](mailto:dfickeisen@uuma.org))

We also have UURMaPAns wanting to form Groups around the following Specific Interests:

- > Spirituality
- > International U/UU Today
- > Retired Life as Singles
- > Retired Life as LGBTQ+
- > Retired Life Managing Depression
- > Retired Life with Financial Constraints

**To be put in touch with others wanting to form any Interest Group, email [fhudson@uuma.org](mailto:fhudson@uuma.org).**

## Partner with (or Become) a LOCAL AREA CONNECTOR

Our membership is clustered into 33 Geographical Areas.

In 11 areas, Area Connectors now offer

- > welcomes to newly retired & new-to-Area UURMaPAns
- > annual check-ins with continuing Area UURMaPAns
- > support to survivors when an Area UURMaPAN dies

Check out your Area's listing. <https://uurmapa.org/resources/#Area-Connectors>

- > If your Area has a Connector, contact them to join in their ministry.

**> If your Area has no Connector, email [fhudson@uuma.org](mailto:fhudson@uuma.org) to become one.**

## *Let's Connect!!*

Fritz Hudson – Connections Co-ordinator

# POLL CHAPLAINS: KEEPING THE PEACE AT OHIO POLLS

By Joan VanBecelaere [uujoanvanb@gmail.com]



Two Ohio clergy responded to the threat of violence at the polls in 2020 by creating a Peacekeepers program, part of the Ohio Voter Rights Coalition.

Leading the state-wide Peacekeeper efforts as Poll Chaplains in the 2020, 2022, and 2023 elections — and now — are retired Unitarian Universalist minister Rev. Joan VanBecelaere and semi-retired UCC minister Rev. Dr. Susan Smith.

Ohio faith leaders know that our society and political landscape have become divisive: anxiety and tensions can easily rise. To help keep voters safe, Peacekeepers:

- Provide a ministry of presence, a calming influence at the polls where tensions might run high
- De-escalate potential conflicts
- Provide practical support to voters using a national hotline of election lawyers.

Peacekeepers also receive training in how to react in case of an active shooter at the polls. They serve in teams of two along with poll monitors (volunteers trained in voting laws) at the polls during early voting and election day.

Ohio faith leaders, social workers, and counselors are invited to be Peacekeepers, since they are



**Above: Retired UU Ministers Rev. Jef Gamblee and Rev. Lynda Smith. At left: Rev. Lynda Smith. Below: Poll workers.**



equipped with pastoral care and emotional caring skills to help keep the polls peaceful and safe. Unitarian Universalist clergy, both retired and active, as well as clergy from many other faith traditions have stepped up to volunteer.

Ohio Peacekeepers know that this is no time for a casual or timid faith. And they are willing to speak up.

*“I appreciate the freedom to use my pastoral care skills as I see fit, undergirded by our thorough training and the support system that’s available to us while we’re working. For me, serving as a Peacekeeper is a ministry of presence.” Peacekeeper Rev. Elizabeth Westphal (ELCA),*



**Retired UU Minister Rev. Christine Jones Leavy and two poll monitors.**

*“When I was outside the polling place in my suit and stole, hat and button, many people smiled at me. I could feel them relax a little bit. Voters have a right to a stress-free experience, and I was doing my part to make it so.” Peacekeeper Rev. Benjamin Maucere (retired UU), Montgomery County*

*“I became a Peacekeeper because it fills a unique and needed role. I see myself as being prayerfully attentive to the dynamics of a polling location, available to de-escalate conflict and better enable all voters to cast their ballot in a civil environment...One of the dynamics of being a Peacekeeper is that you never know what you’ll be responding to, but you’ll have support no matter the situation.” Rev. Joel Miller (Mennonite) Franklin County*

It is an incredible source of hope to see clergy and social workers bring their skills and courageous faith to support democracy and love in these challenging times.



## OBITUARIES



### Major David John Turner

**St. Stephen, New Brunswick, Canada** – David Turner died peacefully on May 31, 2024, while in palliative care at the Charlotte County Hospital in St. Stephen, New Brunswick. This was after more than twenty years living valiantly with Parkinson's. He was born Feb. 10, 1941, in Croydon, UK, to parents George John Turner of Leicester Sussex and Hilda Burgess of Kent, UK. He was married to the Rev. Carole Martignacco.

David joined the Royal Marines as a bugle boy at the age of 15; he was a fitness trainer and served in active duty in Borneo, Singapore, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Malta, and Northern Ireland. In 1976 he immigrated to Canada and took a position as Cadet Commander at Bishop's College School in

Sherbrooke Quebec where he also served as Athletic Director, and Houseparent. He retired in 2005 as Deputy Headmaster. He is the recipient of several accolades, medals, and awards, notably the Queen's Jubilee Award in 2002. In 2019 David and Carole moved from North Hatley to the coastal town of St. Andrews in New Brunswick.

David is survived by his loving wife Carole; sons Clifford (Suzanna), Darren, daughter-in-law Shelley Hughes; previous wife Patricia; and stepchildren Michael and Diana Henderson. David is mourned also by stepdaughters Maria, Anna, Lisa and Juliana Martignacco; his brother Malcolm Horsley and sister Wendy Shaw-Kew, and 8 grandchildren. Major Turner is fondly remembered by numerous past students and colleagues from his nearly 30 years at Bishop's College School, as well as many friends in the Quebec Eastern Townships and in St. Andrews NB.

A memorial was held in St. Andrews on August 25. A second service will be held 1 pm EDT, September 28 at Bishop's College School in Sherbrooke Quebec. The family appreciates the medical team at Charlotte County Hospital for their excellent care in his last days, and all the kind wishes of family, friends and this supportive maritime community.

In lieu of flowers, donations would be appreciated to the David Turner Scholarship at Bishop's College School to honour and continue Major Turner's legacy of steadfast and selfless leadership. [www.bishopscollegeschool.com](http://www.bishopscollegeschool.com).

## Christine Lilly Backus

Sharon, MA – Christine Lilly Backus, known as Chris or Christy, embarked on her final adventure July 14, 2024, at the age of 77. Born Oct. 15, 1946, in Eugene, OR, Chris and her husband of 53 years, Andy Backus, lived in Maryland, Massachusetts, New York, California, Vancouver, BC, and Bellingham, WA. She came back to the Boston area for the past 2 years to live near family.

Chris attended Moorestown (NJ) Friends School. She earned a B.A. from Goucher College and an M.A. in Education from Harvard. Returning to her alma maters, Chris was an art teacher at the Friends School and Art Librarian at Goucher for a time.



Chris' life with Andy was the stuff of quirky romantic comedies, deep love, and joint adventures. Their collaboration was a testament to their shared love of laughter and storytelling. They were excellent party hosts, especially on New Year's Eve, their wedding anniversary. She joined forces with Andy to co-write the play "Older But Not Wiser (Younger But Not Cute)," which, true to form, was a hit at the Bellingham (WA) Theater Guild.

Chris shared a deep involvement in the UU church with Andy, not simply as a minister's wife and church member, but as an active participant in the larger community. She was a frequent attendee of UUA General Assembly, a founding member of the UU minister's partners group, and an active member of UURMAPA, including editing *Elderberries*. In recent years, she found a spiritual home at the Unitarian Church of Sharon, MA. Chris knew every song in the UU songbook without looking.

Chris was always willing to lend a hand. Together, she and Andy boated the waters of the East and West coasts, taking on leadership roles within the Power Squadron at Semiahmoo Yacht Club in Bellingham. As a Commodore, she took pride and joy in teaching others about boating safety.

Throughout her life, Chris was active in social justice, and canvassed for local candidates she believed in.

As her capacity changed due to dementia, her core qualities still shone through, and she was beloved by all of those who helped care for her. And one could absolutely

imagine her making jokes about how being “demented” her whole life was finally catching up to her.

Chris leaves behind nieces Alisha Sarang-Sieminski and Hema Sarang-Sieminski and their children (her grand-niblings), her sister Deb Lilly, and countless extended family and friends.

As we say our goodbyes, let's not forget to smile and be kind to one another; after all, that's exactly what Chris would have wanted. Donations in her memory can be made to organizations that support democracy and reproductive rights - things she worked for throughout her life.

Chris' memorial was held at the Unitarian Church of Sharon on Saturday, August 24 at 3 PM.

## Book Corner

by George Buchanan, Elderberries editor

***Transcendentalism Yesterday and Today: A Collection of Addresses and Sermons on Transcendentalist Themes.***

by Barry Andrews.

Barry writes to let us know of this book, not mentioned in *Elderberries* before. Retired minister and former UUA President John Buehrens offers this review:

“No one has done a better job of lifting up the relevance of the Transcendentalists for today than Barry Andrews. Barry here brings out the best in them, to challenge each of us to bring their heritage into our personal and interpersonal practice today, attending to those who ask us to become better than we now are, to transcend ourselves, and thus leave a heritage for our children, and our children’s children.”

***In Search of The Thin Man: Dashiell Hammett, William Powell and the Classic Film Series***

by Philip Zwerling

Phil writes to tell us this new book is out, available in bookstores and online. One online bookstore describes his book this way:

“Dashiell Hammett, creator of the boldest hard-boiled fiction wrote *The Thin Man* in 1933, and launched the fun-loving, booze-swilling, mystery-solving couple Nick and Nora Charles into American Culture. MGM sold millions of movie tickets by casting William Powell and Myrna Loy as this classiest of romantic couples. Over 14 years and six films, these stars navigated some of the gravest periods of our history: the Great Depression, World War II, and the Cold War. The novel and films live on as gems of a unique, gritty sophistication.

This complete history of *The Thin Man* series covers the brightest stars, the tastiest scandals, headlines, and conflicts behind these classic films. Along with a cast of hundreds, we see Hammett, his lover Lillian Hellman, and their friend Dorothy Parker fight alcoholism, sexual convention, and Senator Joe McCarthy in culture wars with eerie resonance today.”

## Book Corner - continued

### ***Ashes to Ashes, Stardust to Stardust: Writings and Poetry for Aging, Reflections and Memorials***

by Art Severance

In the previous issue of *Elderberries*, we offered a poem “Age: Taking its Toll” by Art Severance, from this book. Art writes to tell us the book is now available on Amazon, including via Kindle. If you contact him directly at [aseverance@uuma.org] he has signed copies for sale.

Retired minister David Johnson offered this to help us appreciate Art’s new book:

“But More of Reverence in Us Dwell”: An Appreciation of Rev. Art Severance’s  
*Ashes to Ashes, Stardust to Stardust.*

For over four decades Rev. Art Severance has served Unitarian Universalist congregations as pastor and poet, scholar and musician. This recently published anthology of poems / prayers / musings invokes the spirit of Wordsworth’s “Intimations of Immortality”. Art also wrestles with the greatest Mystery / Paradox: Even though we’re fully alive, we know that death awaits us all.

Many of Art’s writings – especially “Music Play On” and “Immortality” – call to mind one of my literary and spiritual mentors -- Alfred, Lord Tennyson: Poet Laureate of England (1850). How so?

Tennyson was born in 1809. The Tennyson household was close to the family of the historian Henry Hallam. Tennyson and Arthur Hallam, Henry's son, were undergraduates at Trinity College Cambridge at the same time and became strong friends. Each was a brilliant writer. As the two families grew closer, Arthur Hallam and Tennyson’s sister Emily were engaged to be married. But in September of 1833, tragedy struck. Arthur Hallam, at age 22, died suddenly in Vienna of a brain aneurism while touring Europe with his father. The loss was devastating to Tennyson; its impact upon him endured for many years.

Tennyson's first response to Hallam's death was to write a short poem, "Ulysses". A familiar poem to many, it's a tribute to human resilience and steadfastness amidst tragic loss:

***"Tho much is taken, much abides; and tho'  
We are not now that strength which in old days Moved  
earth and heaven; that which we are, we are; One equal  
temper of heroic hearts,  
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will  
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield."***

"Ulysses" was written only a month after Arthur Hallam's death. It was Tennyson's courageous fortification of his broken heart so that he could live forward with head held high, "onward and upward." But then, over the next seventeen years, Tennyson wrote a much longer poem: "In Memoriam: A.H.H.". A.H.H. was his friend Arthur Hallam. This poem was Tennyson's quest for peace, transcendence, and renewed faith amidst tragic loss. Queen Victoria, after her husband Prince Albert's death in 1861, declared "In Memoriam" to be her most important source of hope and solace amidst tragedy.

Art Severance's *Ashes to Ashes* deserves to be read alongside Tennyson's "In Memoriam". Both authors address the relationship between facts and meanings; between science and human values; between stuff-that's true and stuff-that-matters.

Tennyson was a trained scientist, describing nature as "red in tooth and claw"; a domain of death for all species; a realm of steady progress through history. Yet he rejects these metaphors, because they are insufficient to resolve his emotional anguish and ethical dilemmas. Science, he says, cannot provide answers for moral questions about life's meanings. Empirical evidence is not meant to be used as a resource for moral instruction:

***"Our little systems have their day  
They have their day and cease to be: They are but broken  
lights of thee,  
And thou, O Lord, art more than they."***

When Tennyson died in October 1892, he was buried alongside England's greatest in Westminster Abbey. Britain's leading scientist of the times, Thomas Henry Huxley, eulogized Tennyson at his funeral – naming Tennyson as “the only poet since the time of Lucretius who has taken the trouble to understand the work” of scientists. Tennyson had sought to harmonize the ways of Nature with the moral imperative that we love one another.

Perhaps if Tennyson were here today, and if he were to meet Rev. Art Severance for chicken-fried-steak somewhere near San Antonio, they would rejoice in their devotion to **both** knowledge and reverence --- echoing these words of Tennyson from “In Memoriam”:

***“Let knowledge grow from more to more, But more of  
reverence in us dwell;  
That mind and soul, according well,  
May make one music, as before.”***

I say to my colleague Rev. Art Severance, in appreciation for *Ashes to Ashes*: “Well done, thou good and faithful servant.” Keep making music!