



# Elderberries

Unitarian  
Universalist  
Retired Ministers  
and Partners  
Association

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

## ***Fall Conference: “The Faith Behind Freedom”***

The Unitarian Universalist Retired Ministers and Partners Association is pleased to convene this fall on Oct. 20, 21 and 22. As has been our custom of late, the conference will happen in the Land of Zoom, but we believe there may be two or three in-person gatherings as well.

Our theme is derived from a choir piece, “The Faith Behind Freedom,” which was first presented at the United Unitarian Advance Meeting in 1943, and later in a worship service at All Souls Unitarian Church in Washington D.C., in 1945. The chorale is an amalgam of statements contributed by ordained and lay Unitarians, who were convinced that in their heritage of free religion, historically centered in the struggle for a universal, free humanity, they find the faith that meets the challenge of the present hour. Drawing together the source material and giving the declaration its final form were the Rev. A. Powell Davies, the Rev. Delos W. O’Brian and the Rev. Dale DeWitt. For the worship service, the Rev. Vincent Silliman arranged the declaration for a speech choir and conducted it.

These are the opening lines:

*At a time of world upheaval  
when all things are called in question,  
it is well that men [sic] should search their hearts  
and know what faith they hold  
and whether it can shape the present miseries  
towards a happier future.  
Many beliefs, once confidently held,  
have crumbled with the coming of the modern age.  
Others are falling now before the fury of the storm.  
To cling to these beliefs means trusting in the effectual.  
We cannot build the future with a worn-out creed.  
Nor can we build it out of emptiness and unbelief.  
We need a faith that truly reckons  
with an age of transformation;  
that knows the inner meaning of events;  
that sees the coming victory of humanity  
within the present tragedy and loss.*

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**The next *Elderberries* deadline is  
November 12**

**Please submit stories, columns and pictures for  
the Fall 2025 edition to:**

**[elderberries@uurmapa.org](mailto:elderberries@uurmapa.org)**

## **Greetings from the Elderberries editor**

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

*I deeply appreciate the information provided by so many of you and wise copy-editing and layout advice my spouse Carrie Buchanan.*

*All outdoor photos without captions are from Perth, the Eastern Ontario town where I live.*

## **Speculations**

**By Rev. Dr. Richard Speck  
UURMaPA Board President**

Dear Friends,

I begin my journey as president of UURMaPA in a very interesting time in United States history. There is war in Europe and Gaza, famine in Africa, and a government that is abducting people off the streets by masked and armed thugs wearing no identification of who they are or what agency they represent. We have seen the deployment of our military on the streets of our cities to suppress civil protest.

And here we are, as an organization of retired UU clergy and partners scattered over the continent

who have as our purpose to connect and support one another. Here is the full text from our website:

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

The leadership makes many efforts to do just that. We have an upcoming conference in October that I hope you will attend virtually or in a Pod. You will read more about it in another article in this edition. We also have area connectors who try to stay in touch with you in your geographical area. But some areas have that position vacant. If you want to help out, contact Janet Tillman and volunteer. There are also support groups that meet regularly. All of these activities are ways we make the effort to connect with you.

One of my UU heroes was Rev. Dr. Vincent Silliman. I first learned of him when I was the part-time archivist at Meadville/Lombard Theological School and came across his papers in the files. They had not been cataloged, and I had the privilege of doing so with them. I have always loved hymnody and I discovered that he had been the major influence on Unitarian and Universalist hymnals throughout the twentieth century. He also was a progressive thinker in liturgy. He was

**Continued on page 6 (lower half)**

## ***Fall Conference, continued from page 1***

In 1945, The people who arranged the chorale and produced the worship service were certainly driven by current events. World War II was a part of everyone's daily life in those days. We were inspired by the words and realized they apply as well to our times and to our wars. We realized that we still fight today for our freedoms. Thus, we present some stories of the faith behind freedom, and we hope they bolster your faith as you "shape the present miseries towards a happier future" and fight for freedom in these days of "tragedy and loss."

Richard Speck has researched the life and works of Vincent Silliman and will introduce our theme in a session the first day. It will be developed through stories from others in succeeding sessions.

This fall, we will be graced by Odysseys from Leslie Westbrook, who will be introduced by Diane Miller, and Anne Spatola, who will be introduced by Cory Lovell.



Diane Miller has many fond memories of her work with Leslie Westbrook. She wrote, "When I was asked to serve on the UUA's Affirmative Action Committee for Women in Ministry, Leslie was our staff liaison. Those long meetings in Boston and our various projects gave us many opportunities to get to know each other. Later, as Reverend Mothers serving in different settings, we kept in touch. Leslie was appointed by the UUA Board to serve in a psychologist role on the Ministerial Fellowship Committee while I was the MFC executive secretary. In retirement, we have most recently been part of a foursome of women writing about our memoirs and experiences in ministry. Leslie is a dear friend and admired colleague. I am delighted to introduce her at our fall conference."

Leslie was ordained in 1973 at Arlington Street Church. She wrote, "I have spent my professional life as a Unitarian Universalist minister, working as a religious educator, as a parish minister, as staff at the Unitarian Universalist Association, as an interim minister, and as a chaplain at a hospice program. For the past 38 years I have been a pastoral psychotherapist. The Rev. Roger Fritts, to whom I have been married for 44 years, and I have three adult children. I took on many forms of interesting and meaningful ministry to simultaneously raise a family. My perspective on our work as ministers is thus influenced by my many roles within our denomination."



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## ***Fall Conference, continued***



Cory Lovell was recently called to serve the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Marin. He is a filmmaker, husband, father, and religious humanist. His ministry is focused on the religious projects of cultivating transformative community and liberating the human spirit from fear, exploitation, greed, and violence.

He uses contemporary culture, ancient wisdom, the arts and American history to create narratives of meaning and purpose. Cory was most recently in Oklahoma, where he served on the ministry team at All Souls Unitarian Church of Tulsa and as a contract minister at the UU Church of Bartlesville. He now lives in Terra Linda, California, with his wife Alexis and their children Charlie, Ainsley, Jake, Lexi, Vance, Dove and Steinbeck.

Anne Spatola retired in 2006 from the California Department of Social Services as Bureau Chief in the Disability Program. She wrote, "Since my teen years, I have protested wars; canvassed for presidential candidates; and been an activist for the environment, LGBTQ and voting rights. Currently, I am involved in my UU Congregation of Marin in San Rafael, California, and recently served on its board for five years, three as board secretary. In the wider community, I work for immigrant rights, am involved with promoting voting rights, and I volunteer in a public school with English learners."



Anne is originally from New York City, but California has been her home since she was 19. She wrote, "In 1970, I left college, my friends and family, hitchhiked across the country and found a new home. The San Francisco Bay area is my home, but for the seven years in Utah and a year in Maryland, when I accompanied my partner while she served churches in those states. The Rev. Theresa Novak and I have been together for more than 50 years and married for 12. We have three children: a son aged 40 and boy/girl twins aged 36. Before having our own children, we cared for my nephew and also two foster children."

Building on their well-received worship services of the spring, the worship team, led by Joan Van Becelaere, will produce the service of remembrance, the opening worship and the closing service. The team is comprised of Sylvia Howe, David Bumbaugh, Jan Carlsson-Bull, Ruth Gnagey, Jef Gamblee, and Marion Visel. Their worship services will revolve around storytelling.

Attendees will have a chance to make closer connections with their colleagues in Connecting Rooms on the first and last days of the conference. In addition, a breakout session is planned, focusing on the theme. We will hear representatives of the UUMA and the UUA address our theme. We will learn what our leadership has been doing to earn their keep, and the hotly

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## ***Fall Conference, continued***

contested UURMaPA awards for 2025 will be presented with fanfare and virtual confetti.

The planning team producing the conference is the finest assembly of good-natured folks you'll ever meet in the Land of Zoom. They are (with portfolios): Anita Farber-Robertson, Connecting Rooms; Wayne Walder, Stories Guru (see page 7); Jeff Briere, Slide Show, Publicity and Co-convener; Sonya Sukalski, Co-convener; Susan Smith, Scribe, Librarian and Amanuensis; Jef Gamblee, Quality Assurance; Linda Wright, Connecting Rooms and Accessibility Issues; Terry Ellen, Odysseys; David McFarland, Evaluation; and Barbro Hansson, Liaison to the Board and Gentle Guidance.

Registration is open at this link:

<https://uurmapa.churchcenter.com/registrations/events/2767109>

Regrettably, the fee for our conference has increased to \$50 to offset rising costs. However, our scholarship fund is healthy and if you need help, please indicate your need in an email to [conferences@uurmapa.org](mailto:conferences@uurmapa.org). You will receive a code to use when you register that will nullify the registration fee. Donations to the scholarship fund gratefully accepted. Also, if you join an in-person pod, you can apply for additional assistance to offset the cost of transportation and lodging. This assistance will be reimbursed after the conference. For more information about that, send a message to our treasurer, Paul Johnson, [treasurer@uurmapa.org](mailto:treasurer@uurmapa.org).

## ***Speculations, continued from page 3***

the creator of the first Service of the Living Tradition in 1949, which became an annual tradition that has honored our clergy who are new, retiring and/or died in the past year.

One of my favorite hymns is "Faith of the Larger Liberty," written in 1944. The closing stanza is a call to action that will hopefully guide me in my leadership of our association.

*Purpose we gratefully receive,  
Since life is more than pleasure,  
Gospel to them that do believe,  
For none may hide such treasure;  
Faith of the free! We hail thee now;  
With burning heart we make the vow  
To serve thee without measure.*

May I live up to these words over the next few years.

*Yours in the Faith,*

***Richard Speck***

# Tell Me Your Stories

**Photos and article by  
Wayne Walder**

Stories about freedom are easy to listen to. They are often about a brave person speaking truth to power. They end in triumph that sometimes includes struggle, and we easily get caught up in their narrative. One way or another, they end in a triumph for freedom.

Yet we all know that speaking truth to power does not always go this way. Even in our faith tradition we have on occasion been confined and criticized by the opinions and actions of others, limiting our own freedom.

“Freedom” can be different depending on who is speaking and how it is spoken, and to whom. Sometimes freedom means the freedom to tell others how to be virtuous, as our Puritan ancestors told everyone else. Other times freedom means “let me speak” or “leave me alone.”

This struggle with defining and understanding “freedom” is happening in our wider culture. It is easy to simplify it from a justice or righteous perspective, painting one side good and the other bad. But when difficult conversations about freedom occur with our friends and family—people we care about—it’s hard to know what to do. How in the world do we speak to our loved ones when we fundamentally disagree about our perspective of freedom? I bet we have all witnessed conflict happen in congregations when one side imagines freedom or faith differently than the other. Freedom can be complicated.

Yet I believe there is a simple (but not easy) solution. Marshall Ganz claims, “Stories communicate our values through the language of the heart, our emotions. And it is what we feel — our hopes, our cares, our obligations — not simply what we know.” Maybe stories are a good way to talk about freedom without the rhetoric of self-righteousness. When we tell our real stories, to our loved ones, even the beloveds in our association, we expand our own understanding of freedom, faith, and experience ... and theirs. As Ganz writes, “We communicate important values we hold in a non-threatening way, and articulate our hopes, cares and obligations (wishes).”



**“We traveled more than 40 hours to sit with the Dali Lama in Dharmasala. And as we sat together, he told us a story.”**

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## Tell Me Your Stories, continued

Do you have a story about your faith and/or your interaction with freedom you can tell us about? Not necessarily a “brag and boast” story, or a “woe is me” story, but a story that reflects your experience about faith and freedom. Can you tell us about a time when your perspective broadened in order to continue a relationship or deepen one. It could be what happened in your congregation, in your family or with your best friends.

Sometimes it can be hard to tell a personal story, because our stories are not perfect and, heaven knows, they do not set any record straight. We also might worry about being judged on the depth of our insight or the breath of our intellect. Let me reassure you, we want to hear your stories! They are among the legacies we offer to our faith and to freedom. In a time of division and outrage, telling stories about who we are and why we have faith and freedom can leapfrog righteousness into a deepening conversation. Your stories that speak about faith, truth, power and freedom, are what we need to hear.

By telling our stories, we learn how to love alike even if we cannot think alike.

Please contact me at [revwayne@live.ca](mailto:revwayne@live.ca). Tell me your stories! You know them because you lived them. Maybe it was the way your faith changed you, or the way you understood freedom differently. Maybe it was the way you saw faith or freedom, change others. I’ll help you tell a great story, and we can all enjoy deepening through your experience.



*For inspiration, perhaps go through your own photos and find some that evoke a story like those here and on the previous page.*

**Above:** "Take this candy" he said. "It will make you sweeter than you already are."

**At right:** "Who are you talking to on your phone?" said the child.

Jane said, "I'm talking to my son, and he is taller than I am."

"Wow!" the child said.

# Obituaries



**Don Chery and Rev. Ginger Luke at the Attleboro UURMaPA Conference, 2014.**

*Photo by Eleanor Richardson*

## **Donald Luke Chery, Jr.**

BETHESDA, Maryland – Donald Luke Chery, Jr., died June 28 in his home at 5202 Bradley Blvd., Bethesda, surrounded by family and friends.

Don was born Sept. 16, 1937, in Denver, Colorado, to Donald L. Chery, Sr. and Beth Marcellus Chamberlain Chery. He grew up in Trinidad, Colorado, and later in Tucson, Arizona. His BA was from the University of Arizona in Tucson and his PhD was from Utah State University in Logan.

He married his first wife, Marsha Parkinson, Nov. 20, 1963. They were divorced in 1976. He married his second wife, Rev. Virginia Luke, Sept. 17, 1995. Together they built their dream house on Bradley Boulevard.

Don was a hydrologist by training and a strong social justice advocate his entire life. He worked for the Department of Agriculture in water resources in Tucson and in Athens, Georgia. Later he

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## Obituaries, continued

worked for Dames and Moore in Washington, D.C., and concluded his engineering career with the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, with 36 years of government service.

While in Tucson, Don was a member of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) Board, where a fellow member was a Unitarian Universalist minister. Later, in Athens, Don joined the Unitarian Universalist Congregation and three years later was the chair of their board.

When he moved to Bethesda in 1980, he became a member of River Road Unitarian Universalist Congregation (RRUUC). There he was on the board; was one of the planners for their Sunday forum called CC&C; was a youth advisor who took 40 youth in 1999 to The Hague Peace Conference, and youth delegations on immersion experiences to El Salvador for 17 years. He was a leader in the social justice programs at RRUUC, especially with the Latin America Taskforce. He was on the board of the UU Legislative Ministry of Maryland and a member of the UU Social Justice Immigration Steering Committee. He was also a member of the UUA President's Council.

Don has been active in the Maryland and U.S. Democratic parties. During elections, his yard has been full of signs supporting Democratic candidates. He often lobbied representatives and their staff at the Capitol. He also was a strong alumnae supporter of Utah State University, supporting its scholarship program.

He will be greatly missed by family and friends. One of his colleagues from the CoCoDA (Companion Community Development Alternatives) has said, "His life made deep and lasting impacts for good in this world."

He left a loving wife, Rev. Virginia Luke; son, Anthony Chery; brother, Allen Chery; sister, Pamela Chery; grandchildren, Nicholas Pryplesh, Alexander Chery, Alexandra Pryplesh and Morgan Chery, as well as many friends.

## Gladys Ferger Howard

WHIDBEY ISLAND, Washington — Gladys Ferger Howard, wife of the Rev. Mitchell Gwilym Howard, died in hospice care at their home on Whidbey Island, May 23. Gladys was 78 and had been looking forward to their 44th wedding anniversary July 4 and her 79th birthday Dec. 19.

Gladys, born in New York City, grew up in a small village in upstate New York. She earned a BA in Chinese History at Washington University in St. Louis, and an MA for Special Education at Syracuse. Between those two degrees, she spent three years teaching English Conversation in Japan.



**Gladys Ferger Howard**

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## Obituaries, continued

After working in Japan, Gladys returned to upstate New York, earning her master's at Syracuse and working in Special Education in Herkimer County. In the latter locale, she met Mitchell in 1977, when he was minister of the historic Unitarian Church of Barneveld, New York. They were married the summer before he took up ministry of the UU congregation in Athens, Georgia. During those years she continued working in special education in Social Circle and Winder, Georgia.

Her focus changed after they moved to Providence, Rhode Island, at the end of 1984, to work at Rhode Island's Bell Street Chapel. They remained there for more than seven years, during which Gladys was very involved in the Chapel's musical program while also working outside the Parsonage as a docent at the historic Slater Mill, and as a private recorder teacher in and around Providence. During this period, Gladys also bore two sons, the first of whom (Daniel) was too premature to survive more than about four months. His successor, Theodore, survived and thrived and now works as an attorney in Port Townsend, on the Olympic Peninsula.

In another, even bigger, change of direction, the still-youngish family moved all the way to Coupeville, Washington, where they spent the next three decades as bed and breakfast innkeepers. During those years, Gladys' baking gift flourished in their inn. She was also active in the larger community, particularly in fabric arts, music and stewardship of natural settings as a WSU Beach Watcher. Gladys and Mitchell were among the founding members of the UU Congregation of Whidbey Island, and both served at various times on that church's Board and other committees.

Gladys is survived by her husband Mitchell and son Theodore, by sisters Kathy and Carol and Carol's husband Bill, as well as five of Theodore's cousins and quite a few other persons with a familial link.

## Nancy Schwartz Young



**Nancy Schwartz Young**

LOS ANGELES, California – Nancy Schwartz Young, 84, passed away June 23 in Los Angeles. She was the wife of Rev. Mike Young.

Born Jan. 11, 1941, in Beverly Hills, a fifth-generation Los Angeleno, Nancy's life was defined by creativity and compassion. With her BA and MFA, Nancy taught special needs students and was a ceramic artist, sculptor and poet. A lifelong advocate for children's rights, Nancy parented more than three dozen foster children and foreign exchange students. New Economics For Women honored her as Mother of the Year. Her artistry was matched by her activism: from early anti-war protests and women's rights campaigns to later efforts championing affordable housing in

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## Obituaries, continued

Honolulu. She rescued two public housing projects and convinced the Hawaii legislature to allocate \$2 million for their rehabilitation.

She is survived by her husband, Rev. Mike Young, their children Caprice, Joshua and Daniel, and five grandchildren. Those who knew Nancy will remember her spritely energy, bold intellectual determination, sharp wit, love of puns, unmatched capacity to plan other people's lives, and unshakable optimism.

Her Celebration of Life was held at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Studio City on July 18.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to [Getlit.org](http://Getlit.org) (youth poetry), [ACLU.org](http://ACLU.org) (civil rights), [EmilysList.org](http://EmilysList.org) (getting women elected), or [Allianceforchildrensrights.org](http://Allianceforchildrensrights.org) (support for children in foster care).

## Gerald Oelberg

MILWAUKEE, Wisconsin — Gerald Oelberg, 87, died on April 3 of complications of Parkinson's disease. He was the 65-year spouse of Rev. Dr. Sarah Oelberg.

Gerald was born in Zeigler, Illinois, on Feb. 14, 1937. He received a BS degree in mechanical engineering from the University of Illinois, and an MA in Education from Hartford University.

Jerry pursued several occupations and enjoyed extensive travel, including one year-long trip with the four children through the U.S., Canada and Mexico in a converted school bus, and five trips to Transylvania with Sarah. He was an avid square and folk dancer and participated in various community plays and musical events.

He is survived by his wife, Sarah; one brother, Sanford; four children: Brian, David, Joy and Sylvia; six grandchildren and three great grandchildren.

A service of remembrance will be held on Oct. 5 at 1 p.m. in the cemetery of Nora UU church, Hanska, Minnesota. Following the church service conducted by his wife, Sarah, there will be a Norwegian smorgasbord.



# Book Corner

By George Buchanan

*Elderberries* editor

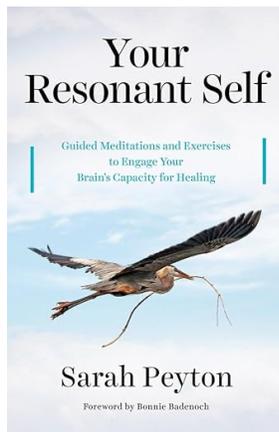


## ***Your Resonant Self: Guided Meditations and Exercises to Engage Your Brain's Capacity for Healing***

By Sarah Peyton

I heartily recommend this book to you all.

Sarah Peyton is a neuroscience educator and a Certified Trainer of Nonviolent Communication. She draws on her own group leadership experience and recent brain research to offer what she calls “guided meditations and exercises to engage your brain’s capacity for healing.” I have found these meditations and exercises very helpful.



The author develops several key ideas:

**Resonance:** It seems our human brains, when we are really communicating with one another, get into a state of resonance measurably different and more satisfying than our usual brain states. This fits with the kind of mutuality we Unitarian Universalists strive for in our small group ministry programs

**Self-warmth:** We can treat ourselves with warm self-regard, which she calls self-warmth.

**Resonant Self-witness:** With careful preparation, we can find resonance between different parts of ourselves. So, for example the resonant self-witness part of my mind can resonate with the anxious part of my mind.

Peyton has a later book: *Your Resonant Self Workbook: From Self-Sabotage to Self-care*. This may be worth your time as well, if you find the ideas and practices in the first book useful.



# Save the Date

UURMaPA Fall 2025 Conference,  
October 20-22, 2025

