UURMaPA Board Zoom Meeting — July 28, 2026

Board decisions are in bold-face type; action items are in red. Reports, include. Treasurer's usually follow meeting minutes.

Present: Joy Atkinson, Mary Ganz, Richard Nugent, Christine Robinson, Richard Speck, Charles Stephens, Janet Tillman, Fred Wooden

Opening: Richard S. called the meeting to order at 3:03pm Eastern - 2:03pm Central - 1:03pm Mountain - 12:03pm Pacific. Charles offered opening words by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

Agenda Review: Janet asked to add an item for consistent naming of Connections groups.

Check-in followed, responding to the question: *What is your best way to relax?*

Consent Agenda was accepted.

Matters for Discussion

1. Intent to Retire Form Distribution:

Richard S. and Joy both have been in touch with the UUA and though database manager Pallas has now been added to the distribution list, there are still names missing from the time the forms were not being made available to us. Richard S. will request copies of all forms filed since May 2025. Once they are received, Janet will set up a Zoom meeting with Pallas and Joy to compare lists and update UURMaPA's as needed.

2. New Member Welcoming

Draft schedule for the Sept. 3 event is attached in VP report and the program seems in good shape. Charles sent out invitations but his list was outdated; he has received a new list from Janet and will send out invitations tomorrow. Charles will check with Richard S. to make sure he has access to the UURMaPA Zoom account, and also check in with our technology person. Charles will loop back to the presenters to confirm they are available.

3. Common Read

Christine proposed ***So You Want to Talk About Race*** **as the common read; approved unanimously.** Christine acknowledged the complexity of creating groups for discussion of this book, and Janet said she would work on it with her, noting that outreach to BIPOC members could provide opening for further conversations about creating a BIPOC Connections group within UURMaPA. Christine suggested a timeline of planning in the fall and scheduling discussions or program for January.

4. Fall Conference October 19-21, 2026

- Denominational Affairs: Possible topics for this segment include Ministerial Education and How is ministry changing? Suggestions for presenters included seminary presidents, panel of newly ordained parish ministers, Nancy McDonald Ladd. Christine will reach out to seminary presidents.
- UURMaPA in the Loop: Richard S. will propose who should present what topics.

5. Retreat Planning

Richard S. provided a list of focus topics including Morning Centering each day, Land Acknowledgement, Review Goals 2025-26, Develop Goals 2026-27, Common Read Discussion, UURMaPA in the Loop Planning for Fall Conference, Special Zoom Programming, Odysseys Scheduling for Spring, Remembrance Service Scheduling for Spring, Rainbow History Book Celebration, update of efforts to create Membership Directory on the Website, Increasing Numbers of Small Groups, UURMaPA Endowment, Recruitment of Conference Convener Board Liaison. Board members agreed to read the Common Read book in advance of the retreat. After discussion, Christine proposed eliminating Membership Directory, as it requires specialized knowledge. Richard S. noted that "fun" should be added.

(10-minute bio/stretch break. During the break Richard N. resolved his computer problems and re-entered the meeting).

6. Recruiting for Conference Liaison

While Barry Finkelstein (NomCom chair) continues to recruit for this open position, we will receive reports from the Conference Planning Team. Richard S. said we will make a pitch at the Fall Conference. Richard S. will send the job description for this position to members of the Board.

7. Names for Connection Groups

Janet noted that a number of different names are being used for the groups, and the resulting confusion may make them harder for members to access. She proposed three categories of groups: "Connections Groups" which have no particular focus; "Focused Groups" which are organized around a particular interest, and "Support Groups," including the Grief and the Caregiver groups. Christine suggested "Topical" rather than "Focused," and Janet happily embraced that change.

August Meeting

With the retreat coming so soon after any scheduled meeting, **the Board voted to skip meeting in August and to take up any business at the retreat** (Sept. 7-10) at Bon Secours retreat center in Maryland. Those who are planning to attend will be in touch on email re: carpooling from the airport or the airport Amtrak station.

Closing:

Mary offered to provide opening and closing words in October.
For closing words, Charles read a selection from Howard Zinn.

The meeting adjourned at 4:40pm Eastern - 3:40pm Central - 2:40pm Mountain - 1:40pm Pacific

Next meeting after the retreat: Tuesday, Oct. 27, 2026, at 3pm Eastern - 2pm Central - 1pm Mountain - 12pm Pacific

UURMAPA President's Report — 7-26-26
Richard Speck

As I was out of the country, I missed the last board meeting. I know Charles Stephens did a fantastic job leading the meeting. I read the minutes in preparation for our July meeting. I welcome our two new board members, Mary McKinnon Ganz and Fred Wooden. I look forward to both of you joining our active board. I also want to thank George Buchanan for his service as Elderberries editor and Anne Marsh for her work as board secretary. Each is an important part of our board and UURMAPA.

My trip to visit Transylvania was wonderful. Being in the birthplace of Unitarianism was moving and I will have great memories for years to come. The people were warm and welcoming, the food was delicious, and the Palinka flowed freely everywhere we went. We saw where the Diet of Torda met, visited the Deva fortress where Francis David was imprisoned and died, and toured the Unitarian headquarters in Koleszar. We also visited several rural Unitarian Churches that date back to the 13th century in what were all Unitarian villages. I got to preach in the Deva congregation and was warmly received.

Since returning, I have caught up on the email traffic of the board, worked to secure proper communications of the Intent to Retire to those of us who need it, and created the agenda for our meeting in July. I have begun identifying items for our retreat in September. We will have a full agenda for our July meeting and need to discuss whether we meet in August or not.

There are probably things I am forgetting, but I am sure they will surface at the board meeting.

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Vice President's Report to the Board — July 28, 2026
Charles Stephens

For the virtual Welcome of New UURMaPA Members event I have omitted the section on Church-Staff Finances because there will be a stand alone webinar that deals with their information later in the year. But I am thinking we should keep the section from the Outreach Committee of the Society of Ministerial Relief **(by Harold Babcock last year)**. Or if that is also included in the stand alone webinar it could be omitted.

I have selected the same book *(Seasoned Soul)* we gave to retired Ministers and their Partners last year, because the other book I was looking at is out of stock.

I am attaching a draft agenda for that day:

Welcome Event 2026 — Schedule, Revised — Charles Stephens, VP

2:45 pm	Zoom Room Open-Slide of welcome to event	15 min

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3:00	Welcome & Announcements (Charles-Live)	3 min
3:03	Chalice Lighting by ???	2 min
3:05	Welcome & Introduction to the Q & A Session Managed by Richard Speck (live)	3-5 min
	Q&A from participants Responses from Board Members	10-15 min
3:25	Invitation to participate in the UUMA Chapter For retired ministers (Christine-live)	5 min
3:30	What does UURMaPA offer to its members Including comment about the virtual Fall Conference 101 event (Richard-live)	5 min
3:35	Invitation to join a Peer Group (Janet-live/recorded)	5 min
3:40	The "P" in UURMaPA: reflection from a partner (Janet-live)	5 min
3:45	Welcome to UURMaPA Web (Jaco-live or recorded)	4 min
3:50	Invite to Break-Out Room Conversations (Richard-live)	2 min
3:52	Break-out Rooms (5+ per room?) w/reflection Question, "How can UURMaPA serve you at this Point in your retirement journey?"	35 min
4:27	Closing remarks & chalice extinguishing (Charles-live)	2 min
4:29	Closing slide as people log off	1-5 min

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Report to the UURMaPA Board
August 2026, Christine Robinson, Denominational Liaison

I spent some time in July inquiring about and reading books that we might use as a Common Read for our Diversity Initiative. I settled on *So you want to talk about race by Igeoma Oluoa*. I detailed my thinking in an email a few weeks back. We will need to approve this as our Common Read, talk about the kind of program we want to have to go with the reading, and

who will lead it, and decide if the Board itself would like to devote some time, perhaps at the retreat, to a conversation about this book.

We are responsible for filling a one hour slot at the Fall Conference with one or two presentations informing our members about denominational affairs we think they would want to "keep up" with.

Barbro suggested a "whither UU'ism" focus, and I'm thinking that something like "how UU Ministry has changed since COVID" or "How goes it with our seminaries?" might garner interest. We can add your subjects to the list at next week's meeting, but we do have to decide on a topic and some speakers and alternates we'd like to hear from.

Richard N. offered a list of possible speakers he would like to hear from:

Nancy McDonald Ladd, VP, UUA
Barb Greve (newly announced UUMA co-exec)
Elias Ortega, Meadville President
Tomi Fatunde, President (DRUUM) or current Pres

I would like to shorten the (recorded) presentations and offer an opportunity for questions and answers, but that will have to be live, and that's harder to arrange. I will need to do this recruiting in August, as the videos are due on September 25, and I'm booked for our retreat, a family vacation, and a hip replacement in September. So….we need to make these decisions at this meeting. Please be thinking about topics and speakers!

I would like to shorten the presentations this time and give more time for questions, myself, but that is another decision for the board to make.

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Fall 2026 Conference Report

Barbro Hansson, Conference Convener

Living Into Aging and Spirituality — October 19-21, 2026

August 24 - Online registration will open registration fee set at $60.00/person. Scholarships at $60.00/person

September 25 - Registration fee increases to $80/person. Scholarships toward the virtual conference increase to $80.00/person.

Monday - Session I - 12:30 pm ET
Welcome by Conference Host Jeff Briere
Worshipful Ingathering led by Rev. Fred Wooden (15-20 mins)
Connecting Rooms led by Ned Wight

Monday - Session II - 4:00 pm ET
Welcome by Conference Host Jeff Briere
UURMaPA and Denomination Presentations (80 mins)

Monday - Session III -7:30 pm ET
- Welcome by Conference Host Jeff Briere
- Odyssey Presentation by Roger Rochester, introduced by Wayne Arnason and Kathleen Rolenz
- Virtual Reception

Tuesday - Session IV - 12:30 pm
- Welcome by Conference Host Jeff Briere
- Theme Presentation led by Rev. Bill Sinkford with 3 contributors of essays that were published in Kay Montgomery's book, Landscapes of Aging and Spirituality. Bill Sinkford is doing this as a way to honor Kay and hopefully we'll be able to include a brief greeting from Kay. Permission has been granted by Skinner House and Kay has given us her blessing via her son to use her book.

Tuesday - Session V - 4:00 pm
- Welcome by Conference Host Jeff Briere
- Theme-based Connecting Rooms led by Ned Wight

Tuesday - Session VI - 7:30 pm
- Welcome by Conference Host Jeff Briere
- Odyssey Presentation by Rev. Duane Fickeisen, introduced by Barbara and Jaco ten Hove
- Virtual Reception

Wednesday - Session VII - 12:30 pm
- Welcome by Conference Host Jeff Briere
- Remembrance Service led by Rev. Barbara ten Hove with local colleagues from Bellingham, WA. Service will be recorded late September or early October.
- Virtual Reception
- Conference Conclusion - Jeff Briere and Barbro Hansson
- Virtual Socializing

September 21 - Deadline for mini-eulogies to be included in the Remembrance service. Joy Atkinson is responsible for inviting next of kin of those UURMaPA members who will be included in the Remembrance Service.

September 25 - Deadline for submitting video recordings to Zoom Master.

Charles Stephens is responsible for extending invitations to newly retired ministers and their partners.

Conference Chaplains: Christine Robinson and Marni Harmony

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July 2026 UURMaPA Board Report - July 26, 2026
Janet Tillman, Connections Coordinator

A. Status of 2026 Board Goals assigned to the Connections Coordinator

1. Explore (and develop, if feasible) a member skills exchange/skill sharing section on the website. **(Completed)** (Since May, there have been no new skills added to the Skill-Sharing Network.)
2. Create new Focused-Interest connection groups.
   - The search for facilitators for groups focused on *Living with Less* and *Living with Chronic Illness* continues to be a challenge. As soon as I can identify two co-facilitators/conveners, I will publicize these groups.
3. Explore a Focused-Interest Group for BIPOC members.
   - As soon as I can identify two co-facilitators/conveners, I will publicize this group.

Finding facilitators for the above-mentioned groups is quite challenging. I plan to pursue this more intensely in the fall.

B. <u>Area Connectors</u>

- There has been no change in the number of Area Connectors since my June 2026 report. Recruitment for Area Connectors is an ongoing and challenging process.
- In October I will reach out to the members living in the sixteen areas in need of Connectors to identify people interested in becoming a Connector. I will also confirm that the current Area Connectors are continuing to serve for one more year.

C. <u>Connection Groups</u>

- There continue to be twelve active General-Interest Groups with sixty-nine participants.
- There are six Focused-Interest groups: Caregivers, Grief, Partners, Writing for Witness for Resistance, Penelope's Bones Book Discussion, and UU Mystics.
- I held two separate Group Conveners' Zoom meetings in July. The Conveners of the General-Interest Groups met on July 22 with seven of the twelve conveners participating. The other meeting was with the Conveners of Focused-Interest Groups held on July 21. All six conveners participated in the meeting.
- ***Summary of the meetings:***
  - ➢ The General-Interest Groups are doing well and maintaining a steady membership of five to nine. Eight groups have openings for more members. Currently there are no partners participating in the General-Interest Groups. Eight of the groups are for ministers only. Four groups are willing to accept partners.
  - ➢ The Focused-Interest groups likewise are doing well. The Caregivers and Grief Groups average 14-16 members with 8-10 attending each month. Members of the Grief and Caregiver Groups highly value the support and guidance they receive

during particularly challenging times. The other four Focused-Interest Groups have 5-14 members.

- ➢ All agreed that the flexibility of the groups as well as the strong, caring connections are what sustain the groups and keep them meaningful to participants.
- ➢ Challenges discussed were spotty attendance by some people, new members' lack of understanding of how Zoom works, and securing successors to current conveners. The conveners shared ideas and suggestions for addressing these.
- ➢ Conveners shared general tips on formatting and implementing the structure of the group to prevent one person from taking up too much time. A new convener attending the meeting found this information immensely helpful.
- ➢ I learned that the groups vary a lot as to how they structure their time together, anywhere from selecting a topic to discussing a topic that arises from the check-in, setting a timer for check-in to prevent any one person from dominating the check-in time, and closing with a silent meditation versus a reading. Each group does what works best for their participants.
- ➢ No one had any ideas for attracting people to join a Connection Group and/or finding conveners for new groups. All liked my idea of developing a Connections video of group members' testimonials and are willing to identify group members to do a video.
- ➢ *Connections Video*: I sent the conveners instructions for selecting one person from their group to record a one-two minute testimonial relating to:
    - What they appreciate about their Connection Group.
    - How the group is important to them in their retirement.

  Once I have the names of those wishing to do a video, I will send them instructions for recording a quality video on their phone or computer. Richard Speck has graciously agreed to be the video editor and produce two fantastic Connections videos, one on General-Interest Groups and one on Focused-Interest Groups. The videos can be shown at new member orientations and conferences and posted on the UURMaPA website.
- ➢ I have the ambitious goal of having one video ready for the New Member Orientation and the Fall Conference. It is my hope that group members' testimonials will entice UURMaPA members (new and long-time) to join a General-Interest and/or Focused-Interest Connection Group.

D. <u>Connecting New Retirees/Partners</u>

- There were two notifications for new retirees in July.
- In July, there were three deaths of people living in areas with no Connector.

Treasurer's Report delayed.