



LIBERAL BEACON

ISSUE 2

Welcome to our May 2023 edition of Liberal Beacon, our monthly publication of the North American Unitarian Association (NAUA). The purpose of this publication is to keep members informed about NAUA, to present articles of interest concerning liberal issues and concerns, and to provide a space for feedback.

This month's main articles begin with Terry Anderson's, THE ROLE OF ELDERS: ARE WE REALIZING THEIR POTENTIAL? Terry is a Unitarian living Edmonton, Alberta, and a member of the NAUA provisional Board of Trustees. In his engaging article, Terry reminds us that human cultures throughout time have valued the wisdom of their "grey hairs," and asks us to consider their important place within Unitarian Universalist communities.

Rev. Terry Cummings, whom you met in last month's issue, provides us with another thoughtful entry; IS THE TRANSIENT REPLACING THE PERMANENT? In this article, Rev. Terry considers the proposal to remove the Seven Principles from the Unitarian Universalist Association's bylaws in terms of 19th Century Unitarian Minister Theodor Parker's classic discourse, The Transient and the Permanent in Christianity.

This is followed by RELIGIOUS LIBERALS IN CALIFORNIA MAKE NAUA HISTORY, by Candace Schmidt, one of Liberal Beacon's Editorial Board members. Based upon her interviews with some of its members, Candace tells us about the origins of the Hayward North American Unitarian Association Fellowship.

And Kevin McCulloch, a UU who lives in Atlanta, Georgia, and the newest member of our Editorial Board, introduces himself with his insightful article, HELPING EACH OTHER BECOME BETTER VERSIONS OF OURSELVES: ANTI-RACISM, INTERFAITH DIALOGUE, AND OUR LIBERAL VALUES. Kevin offers us a reasonable approach to doing what Unitarian Universalists are supposed to be known for, being able to get along and dialogue with each other, even, especially, when we disagree about important matters.

There's lots more in this month's issue, including information about coming NAUA events, so be sure and peruse our entire magazine.

And while I have your attention, I'm excited about all the support and interest NAUA has received in just its first few weeks of existence. We're working quickly to finish laying a firm foundation to ensure our liberal religion stays liberal, as well as to put valuable services into place for our members. In the coming weeks we'll be working on and introducing a new website, establishing and improving upon our services, growing our membership, and finding new ways to help our liberal religion thrive. I want to personally thank you for your patience, support, and enthusiasm during this historic beginning of North American Unitarian Association.

Todd F. Eklof – Editor

THE ROLE OF THE ELDERS

Are We Realizing Their Potential

By
Terry Anderson

In a December 2022 Zoom meeting of the 5th Principle Project, over 70 participants listened to Rev. Todd Eklof explain the rationale and goals of a new liberal Unitarian organization, North American Unitarian Association (NAUA). During the discussion after the presentation, one middle aged participant commented on the large number of senior “grey hairs” amongst the audience. Indeed, in other related online fora, and in most Unitarian congregations, the majority of people are well past their 50s.

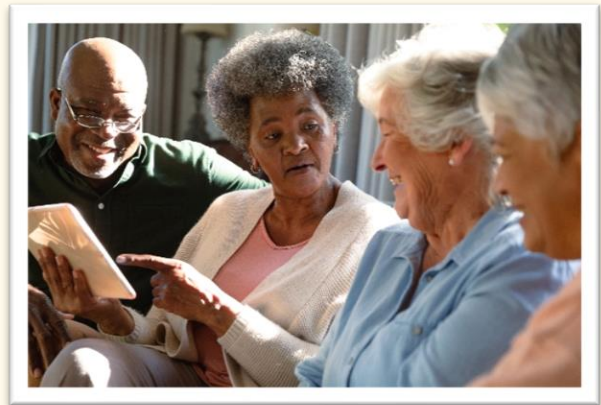
Are these grey heads assets or liabilities to the future of liberal religious organizations?

It is no surprise to churchgoers in almost all denominations that their congregations are growing older. For many, with age comes increasing health concerns and limitations on mobility. However, the lifestyles and interests of elders also provide opportunities for knowledge gain and transmission, and for community service. In this article, I examine the potential role for elders in UU communities.

I am not going to apologize for my age (72 years young), much as I don't expect anyone to apologize for their gender, race, sexual orientation, height or weight – we all are beneficiaries of “inherent worth and dignity” – the 1st Principle of UUism. It follows that ill treatment of older people should be a concern. Both younger and older Unitarians can suffer from ageist reactions.

At the beginning of Canadian UU services, most public meetings and even hockey games, a statement is read that acknowledges the contributions of the first residents of the land

upon which the meeting is held. In addition, it is unheard of to open a meeting of First Nations peoples without a prayer from an elder. The [First Nations Pedagogy](#) site describes elders as “the



Gatekeepers of First Nations wisdom, knowledge, and history. Elders traditionally hold crucial roles in supporting both formal and informal education in First Nations communities. They impart tradition, knowledge, culture, values, and lessons using orality and role modeling traditional practices.”

Elders have a defined role in Christian churches (see Acts 14:23, 1 Peter 2:25, Philippians 1:1) which has been described by church consultant Anthony Hilder as those “responsible for the spiritual government, direction and overall leadership of a congregation – they were not subject to any kind of council, board or another body within the church.”

The role and importance of elders is also visible in North American postsecondary institutions. *The Canadian Journal of Native Studies* notes that elders primarily benefit younger students through counsel and through role modelling and that the positive effects of their actions permeate the institution and the wider community.

Elders also play significant roles in many other cultures. Aurushi Jain describes elders in East Indian culture as “the roots of the tree. They hold the family firmly at all times and make them strong.” Jain also notes that their role is to preserve traditional and cultural values.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, ancestor worship plays a significant social and political role. In these societies, according to Igor Kopytoof’s *Ancestors as Elders in Africa*, “the elders are the representatives of the ancestors and mediators between them and the kind group.” The role of the elders has played an evolutionary role throughout our history from earliest times, knowledge of which foods to eat and how to harvest and prepare these foods is critical

The role of the elders has played an evolutionary role throughout our history from earliest times, knowledge of which foods to eat and how to harvest and prepare these foods is critical knowledge that supports the well-being of the community.

knowledge that supports the well-being of the community. Traditionally, this knowledge has been passed down through elders.

When applied in a Unitarian Universalist context, we are obviously not predominantly First Nations, Christian, Southeast Asian, or African, yet even in modern North American society, elders can and do play important roles.

We learn a second lesson regarding elders from the role of hereditary kings and chiefs. Hereditary chiefs, kings, and sheiks are often older than the population they come from – largely because their terms of office only end with their deaths. I write this from Canada where we are immersed in the monarchical soap opera known as the royal House of Windsor. Despite this, our attention to the ongoing debate on fossil fuel use and methane (so called natural gas) pipelines also illustrates the role of elder wisdom.

In Northern British Columbia an international company, Coastal Gaslink, is building a gas pipeline that crosses traditional lands of Wet’suwet’en First Nations. The bands living in the area each have an elected Chief and Council, as defined by the Canadian Indian Act. The elected chief and councils from these bands have negotiated with Coastal Gaslink and struck a deal that they believe is both wanted and necessary for development in their communities. The hereditary chiefs, however, take a longer view, arguing that the best way to meet climate goals is to leave fossil fuels in the ground and most certainly not allow pipelines through traditional territories. This different world view has captured global press attention and manifested in protests and police arrests.

Regardless of your opinion on this issue, it is obvious that the hereditary chiefs, backed by culture and indigenous law, have an important voice and capacity to alter social behaviour. Their age, in addition to their hereditary titles, gives them an authority that serves their communities – especially in times of crisis.

At a practical level, elders often have free time to pursue social action issues. The work of rearing children often has been completed or transformed to the fun of enjoying grandkids. Most elders in North America also have at their disposal very sophisticated digital and nondigital access to information, government, law, scientific research, social media and much more. They have time to read the minutes, watch the videos and listen to podcasts of groups, councils, and “influencers”. Thus, they are valuable information and wisdom resources for their communities – at local, national and international levels. Melchor Lim argued that “elders deserve to be listened to – not because they are always right – but because they have more experiences of being wrong.”

Elders are also able to ‘speak truth to power’. This phrase is often used to describe protestors standing up to oppressive governments. However, it can also be applied to professions, cultural institutions or religions that fail to see or ignore uncomfortable truth. Elders are also gadflies and whistleblowers, they play the

critically important roles of questioning, illuminating and championing valuable ideas or behaviours that are not always welcomed and sometimes seen as divisive and counterproductive.

Elders, like other “intersectionalities,” can be impoverished or living on very tight and fixed budgets. However, there are many elders who have more disposable income at this point in their lives than they had as youth or young parents. Both the resources of the fortunate and the challenges of poor elders can serve as catalysts for effective social justice programs.

Elders, like all humans, have different opinions, interests and commitments to social causes and issues. Opposition to illiberal activities, deep suspicion of ideologies and distrust of anti-democratic actions comes not only from old, privileged, mostly male activists. These injustices bother us all. There are many benefits of both giving and receiving guidance and support from older Unitarians. Besides this loss of opportunity, failure to recognize the value of our elders can result in their echoing Albert Einstein’s feeling that “as an elderly man, I have remained estranged from the society here.”

The challenges faced by Unitarian congregations in living our seven principles require the continuing efforts of all of us, including, and perhaps especially, our elders.

A VOICE FROM THE PAST

Freedom of Speech Creates Enemies and Requires Courage

By
Rev. John H. Dietrich

[Rev. John Hassler Dietrich (1878-1957) was declared a heretic by his Dutch Reform Church in 1911 and was immediately thereafter invited to become minister of the First Unitarian Society of Spokane, where he first began to define himself as a Humanist. Dietrich went on to become an original signer of the Humanist Manifesto, to

found the Humanist Pulpit during his 23-year ministry at the First Unitarian Society of Minneapolis and is remembered today as the Father of Religious Humanism. The following is an excerpt from his first annual report to his Unitarian congregation in Spokane, given in 1912. Perhaps it is even more a propos today than it was then.]

I have made many enemies in doing my duty and I thank God for every such enemy. I have buried many friendships in my fight for religious liberty, but I have also made many friends, for all of whom I am duly grateful. I have preached righteousness in this congregation, and I have preached it without fear. I know what this costs. I have had men attack me. I have had them smile at me and sneer at me. My name has been passed as that of one of the most dangerous men in the community. Thank God for that. There is no higher compliment that some men can pay me than to say that my teachings are dangerous. I would that men would open their eyes to their danger. The pity is that such will not discuss with me, they only damn me; and it is against this attitude that I have also fought.



We have here a free pulpit—absolutely free. Your minister stands today without obligation to anybody. Friends have been kind to him, and he has tried to be kind to friends. And while kindly acts ought never to be forgotten except when those who perform them prove unkind, your minister stands without a collar around his neck or padlock on his lips—the teacher of the truth as he sees it. And if at any time you choose to dictate the utterances of your pulpit, I pray do not insult me by asking me to trim my sermons according to your ideas, but straightforward and manlike ask for my resignation and secure one who is

willing to play the puppet, to be a mirror reflecting the opinions of his pewholders. As the result of a free pulpit, we have gained a fair hearing, and many hundreds of the best men and women in Spokane have been inside of our church. I do not say the richest men, for the richest are not always the best men in any city; but with us are many who are searching after truth, many who are seeking a broader and wider vision, many who having thrown off the shackles of a black past, are looking toward the East for further light. There are hundreds of men who have outlived timeworn isms and who are waiting for a fresh expression of truth; they are with us too, in spirit and, in time, will be with us in form.

IS THE TRANSIENT REPLACING THE PERMANENT?

Maintaining the Seven Principles and Six Sources of Unitarian Universalism



By
Rev. Terry Cummings

Nearly 200 years ago, Unitarian minister Theodore Parker penned a sermon on the transient and the permanent in Christianity. Parker argued that even if the mythology and miracles of Christianity were laid aside, there were certain principles, based on love, that would endure whether Jesus Christ was

real or not. For calling into question the factual basis of scripture, Parker was immediately ostracized by his peers, the equivalent of being removed from ministerial fellowship today. Yet his essay on the transient and permanent became part of the bedrock of modern Unitarian Universalism.

In more recent years, Unitarian Universalists have defined the perennial values they consider permanent in seven principles as written in Article 2 of the UU Association's bylaws, listed together with the six religious and philosophical sources from which they spring. These were adopted and placed therein nearly 40 years ago and have since become a beloved tradition in our liberal faith. But today the UU Association's leadership is seeking to eliminate them and to replace them with just seven words that, at least for me, do not reveal a sense of permanence, nothing that should make ours an enduring religion.

One of the most important values of Unitarian Universalism is that it makes no claim to have a statement of ultimate truth. Unlike the creeds and dogma of some other religions, which claim to be the one true way of finding God, or salvation, or some other spiritual enlightenment, UUs have never claimed that they have everything figured out. Far from it. On their face, our Seven Principles fall short of being a statement of ultimate truth or ultimate reality regarding religious life or beliefs. Some find them uninspiring, even bland: A set of bullet points to put on a business card, from which deeper spiritual journeys can begin. For many, the loss of the Seven Principles, along with the Six Sources from which they are derived, will not represent a significant loss and could even be an opportunity to dig deeper into the realms of spirituality and meaning.

For many Unitarian Universalists our attachment to the Seven Principles and Six Sources is as much emotional as it is spiritual or theological. Thus, opposition to the pending proposal to

eliminate and replace them with something that looks and feels very different might be dismissed as nothing more than the typical fear and resistance to change that exists among most groups and organizations. Or as the refusal of an older generation to make way for the enthusiasm and ideas of the younger generation that's seeking to adapt the faith they've inherited to their own needs and values. Yet most of us, young and old, would agree we want Unitarian Universalism to thrive as a religious tradition for the indefinite future. After all, there are plenty of religions other than our own that have existed for millennia in the face of terrible odds.

That Unitarian Universalism has evolved from its early Christian roots is undeniable. Both Unitarians and Universalists once considered themselves Christians. Today, although some of its members may still identify as Christian, Unitarian Universalism is no longer itself considered a branch of Christianity. So, we are not strangers to major change and are not hostile

If one looks at other religions that have endured the test of time, it is their resiliency in the face of demand for change that has ensured their survival.

to change when necessary, including changing some of our most cherished ideas about the world as we discover and learn more about it.

As the great 19th century Unitarian minister, William Ellery Channing foresaw, reason and science would one day make way for new understandings of the Bible and religious teachings. Two hundred years later our knowledge of the origin of the universe, the nature of space and time, and the behavior of subatomic particles that seemingly defy the laws of physics, have only placed ultimate religious truth further from our reach. The mystery of creation, the nature of the holy and the divine, and the beauty of the experience of life itself, represented in drawings by ancient cave dwellers fifty

thousand years ago, is as much a puzzle for us now as it was then.

This is precisely why maintaining the Seven Principles and Six Sources of Unitarian Universalism—its “permanent” qualities—may be more vital now than ever. For today our faith is facing an unprecedented existential challenge, both from outside and within the denomination. If one looks at other religions that have endured the test of time, it is their resiliency in the face of demand for change that has ensured their survival. To paraphrase Reinhold Niebuhr's famous prayer, it requires *the courage to hold the things that must not change* (the permanent), *the serenity to release the things that ought to change* (the transient), and *the wisdom to know the difference*.

Whether one entirely agrees with them or not, for example, the Roman Catholic Church has seldom apologized for its beliefs and has been willing to suffer its adherents leaving the faith rather than accede to internal and external pressures to change. The same might be said for all of the world's major religions, including Islam and Judaism. I wonder whether Unitarian Universalism might likewise have a better chance of survival if it followed the example of other faiths and stuck with its defining traditions (permanent) no matter how flawed they might seem to the current (transient) generation? I wonder if the current (transient) leadership has the wisdom to do just that?

If it had not been for a major controversy erupting in 2017 around the UUA's alleged racially biased hiring decisions, I wonder whether the proposed changes to Article 2 of the UUA Bylaws, which would strike down our Seven Principles, would ever have been made? That controversy is transient, not permanent. It will pass in the course of time regardless of whether the proposed bylaw changes are approved by delegates at its next General Assembly.

As I see it, any claim that permanence is embodied in the proposed changes to Article 2 would amount to hubris. The current generation of UUs has no greater claim to know what ultimate truth is than did prior generations. For this reason, it is premature to cast aside our cherished principles and sources of inspiration in response to a passing controversy that was mishandled then and, as a result, is still causing damage. Religious principles and sources are not like fashion: They aren't akin to the bell-bottom jeans of the 1970s that gave way to khakis and tan pants in the 80s and 90s. It is troubling to me that the current generation of UUA leadership is unwilling or unable to distinguish between that which is transient and that which is permanent in consideration of such major changes to its bylaws. I wonder what Theodore Parker would say.

RELIGIOUS LIBERALS IN CALIFORNIA MAKE NAUA HISTORY

Origins of the Hayward North American Unitarian Association Fellowship

By Candace Schmidt

In early March of this year, a small group of members from the Starr King Unitarian Universalist Church (SKUUC) of Hayward, California decided to form a new Fellowship, the Hayward North American Unitarian Association (NAUA) Fellowship. This intrepid group took this action in response to what they had experienced and observed over the past several years in their home church, which they described as a slow introduction of ideas antithetical to liberalism, and not allowing any dissent within their ranks. While these members want to continue their ties to the SKUUC, they felt compelled to create a new fellowship in order to meet their needs for a truly liberal community,

one that allows for the freedom of expression and conscience and that honors the seven UU principles.



Hayward NAUA Fellowship members happily gather for services in one of their homes.

Bob Meyerson, one of the founding members of Hayward NAUA Fellowship, had loved the goals of the Unitarian Universalist Association when he joined in 2001. Now he hopes the formation of this new Fellowship can be one of many steps on the path of pulling the UUA back to the liberalism that attracted him to Unitarian Universalism in the first place. Bob expressed frustration with the inability to sing a song from the UUA's own hymnal that some now consider offensive, and with the refusal to acknowledge anything positive about the U.S., its founders, and the state of civilization in centuries gone by.

Roy Dickerson, a SKUUC member for 15 years, started hearing from the pulpit about six years ago that UUs were white supremacists and that most of them were oppressors. Roy does not want to pull other members away from their home church, but rather wants to keep the conversation going about the steady loss of traditional Unitarian values. Both Bob and Roy have given sermons in their church over the years, but say last year were told they could not speak from the pulpit anymore because their dissenting views would no longer be tolerated.

The Hayward NAUA Fellowship meets on most Sunday afternoons and sometimes during the

week in the living rooms of their members. They hope to be able to set up a website in the future to educate people about their concerns. One concern is that every Sunday the interim minister gives a “land acknowledgment” declaration at the beginning of the service. This is a verbatim account of how a local Indian tribe’s land was taken through conquest by White invaders. While some members of the Starr King church dispute this basic narrative, they are reportedly not allowed to voice their opinions that the continual recital of these land acknowledgements only serves to induce guilt on the part of those whose heritage is European and to mark a particular group as forever marred by the sins of those in the past. Lavon Hodges, another member of the newly formed fellowship, questions why this practice has taken root in their congregation while other churches in the central California area do nothing like it.

Bob Simoni, another founding member of the Hayward Fellowship, says the land acknowledgment was added to their SKUUC services without any discussion or input and he found it “to be mythological in nature, referring to a kind of Garden of Eden that we were expected to emulate.” Simoni also thinks the UU Association itself has become creedal and authoritarian. He says, “The final straw was when the UUA announced there would be only one candidate for the next UUA President.” He considers this totalitarian and nothing like the “tolerant, open-minded, and thought-provoking religion” he first joined.

Another issue that troubles fellowship member Walter Korus is that the UU Seven Principles seem to have been lost. Instead, Walter describes the Sunday services as being all about “love” and that everything is about “covenant.” Walter says he joined a liberal church, not a covenantal church, one that used to allow him to express his views without being looked down upon. And Bob Meyerson is now afraid to talk to other members for fear of being labeled a bigot for using the wrong pronoun. He is very concerned about the

Sunday services being negative and authoritarian in tone.

This small group of religious liberals is the first congregation to officially become an organizational member of the North American Unitarian Association. Welcome to the Hayward NAUA Fellowship and thanks for courageously working to preserve and promote our historic Unitarian values!

HELPING EACH OTHER BECOME BETTER VERSIONS OF OURSELVES

Anti-racism, Interfaith Dialogue, and Our Liberal Values

By
Kevin McCulloch

One dilemma of pluralism is that it requires people to hold conversations across unbridgeable divides. This is clearest when it comes to religion: orthodox Christianity and orthodox Islam, for example, make claims about the nature of God and the demands of a religious life that are incompatible. Both sides know that, no matter how strong their



arguments, they are unlikely to convince the other. So what’s the point of talking?

One of my college professors gave an answer to this question that has stuck with me. “The goal of interfaith dialogue,” he said, “is not for one side to convert the other. It’s for each side to help the other become better versions of themselves.” In other words, Christians should talk with Muslims not to make them Christians, but to help them be better Muslims. This is a radically humane

proposition. It affirms the value of relationships and the promise of mutual understanding, even in the face of irreconcilable differences.

To be sure, this attitude requires a temperament that, if not explicitly liberal, must at least be pragmatic. The two sides don't need to recognize the validity of each other's claims, but they need to agree that conversation and peaceful coexistence is better than a conflict that can only escalate.

It is easy to joke that all conversation among Unitarian Universalists is interfaith dialogue. We celebrate our diverse theologies and our hyphenated identities as humanists, Christians, Buddhists, and so on. But since we agree that our individual views of God are a private affair that doesn't impact our life together, this kind of dialogue isn't much of a challenge.

What *is* a challenge—arguably the greatest challenge to our unity as a religious community that we've faced in our lifetimes—is dialogue between proponents and skeptics of anti-racism.

I am a skeptic. We skeptics are often told that we need to hold our arguments at bay and listen to the anti-racist perspective. This is good advice for anyone who is new to anti-racism, but at this point anti-racism has been part of the Unitarian Universalist conversation for more than 25 years.

It was during its General Assembly in 1997 when the UUA passed the “Toward an Anti-Racist Unitarian Universalist Association” business resolution. I have attended two weekend-long Jubilee Anti-Racism Trainings, one around the turn of the century and another in 2017. I have attended a Beloved Conversations workshop and numerous anti-racism working group meetings at my former congregation in Washington, DC. I have engaged the work of anti-racist thinkers such as Robin DiAngelo and Ibram X. Kendi. I have done my due diligence, yet I remain skeptical of anti-racism. I think I can say with confidence that, after all this time, I am not going to convert to the anti-racist perspective.

Since I am not an anti-racist, I cannot in good faith adopt anti-racist language or participate in anti-racist rituals. Although I am white, I am unwilling to describe myself as a racist or a white supremacist because I think it is a serious mistake to dilute words whose plain meaning denotes racial animus. I am unable to give testimony to the ways in which white supremacy culture has shaped my mind because I do not believe that culture and psychology interact in this way. I

I cannot overstate how dispiriting it has been to feel that I dare not express my own beliefs in the very church that raised me to respect the beliefs of others.

cannot commit to dismantling systems of oppression within myself because I think it is a mistake to take a therapeutic approach to social justice. I am unwilling to preface every statement with a set of identity claims (“as a white, cisgender man...”) because this practice reinforces crude stereotypes that we should be trying to neutralize. I have not given up on listening to my anti-racist friends, but after all this time I cannot imagine being persuaded that I am wrong on these points.

Despite my objections, I have learned a lot from my engagement with anti-racist thought. This interfaith dialogue has exposed me to perspectives I would not otherwise have considered and challenged me to clarify my own perspectives in response. I like to think that this engagement has made me a better version of myself. When the UUA adopted its 1997 resolution, most white UUs could barely bring themselves to acknowledge racial dynamics at all. We have come a long way.

However, I am worried that the most committed anti-racists among us do not share my commitment to dialogue. I have seen and experienced intolerant behavior from anti-racist Unitarian Universalists that is unprecedented in my lifetime, and like many UUs, I have spent the

past several years keeping my skepticism of anti-racism and related ideas close to my chest for fear of being attacked. I can't overstate how dispiriting it has been to feel that I dare not express my own beliefs in the very church that raised me to respect the beliefs of others.

I am excited by the formation of NAUA because I think we need a new association that is committed, first and foremost, to the liberal values that make interfaith dialogue possible. My hope is that we can create an atmosphere where anti-racism proponents and skeptics can be open and honest about our convictions, where we do not attack or shame one another, where we do not abuse disciplinary procedures in order to enforce ideological conformity, where we can form coalitions to work together toward common goals, and where we can use dialogue to help one another grow into better versions of ourselves, even—especially—when we disagree.

UUA TROUBLES REPORTED ABOUT IN POPULAR PODCAST

In a recent *Blocked and Reported* podcast entitled “How the Unitarian Universalist Church Melted Down,” journalists Katie Herzog and Jesse Singal talk about some of the problems happening in the UU Association. Focusing on what led to the disfellowship of Rev. Kate Rohde, the report also goes into detail about what happened to Rev. Eklof after he gave away *The Gadfly Papers* in 2019. If you don't wish to listen to the episode's first story about diaper fetishes, scroll ahead 23:30 minutes into the program. Then again, you may enjoy listening for the entire hour. Here's the link:

www.blockedandreported.org/p/how-the-unitarian-universalist-church#details

NAUA ACADEMY NEWS

NAUA Academy sponsored its first evening seminar on April 19, 2023. Bruce Knotts led the

session entitled, **The Goal of World Community with Peace, Liberty, and Justice for All: Unitarian Universalism at the United Nations – Past Present and Future.** The Recording of the presentation, including a video on UUA involvement at the United Nations, will be available soon at www.NAUnitarians.org. Nearly 40 participants attended the session and joined breakout groups toward the end to get to better know each other, as well as to reflect on the seminar content.

Our next offering will occur on May 16 and is entitled, **What**

4:30 – 6:00 p.m. PST
5:30 – 7:00 p.m. MDT
6:30 – 8:00 p.m. CDT
7:30 – 9:00 p.m. EDT

is Liberal Religion? It's History and Values. In this session, Rev. Dr. Todd F.

Eklof will discuss the origins and characteristics of liberalism in the Renaissance and Enlightenment periods, how liberalism manifested as Unitarianism in Eastern Europe and, later, in the United States, and why it remains essential to human progress in today's world. Click [HERE](#) to register for this course.

Academy Course Interest Survey

Unitarians are interested in many different topics. We try to provide quality courses on those topics of greatest interest. **We hope you will take the time to complete the short survey at <https://forms.gle/VUA9x3i7WTikBYsg6>.** The results of this survey will guide our programming efforts and decisions.

Planning Fall courses

Our new Academy Advisory Board will be meeting in May to plan future single-session and multi-session courses. Already we have some very interesting topics and speakers who have volunteered to lead Academy sessions. However, we will need session hosts and continue to welcome proposals, suggestions, and teachers for new courses. We are particularly looking for a

volunteer to do light video editing of the recorded sessions and post to our YouTube Channel. If you wish to volunteer to help build the Academy, please contact Terry Anderson or Stephen Polmar at Academy@naunitarians.org

COMING EVENTS

NAUA Monthly Worship Service – May 20, 10:00 a.m. Pacific Time

We do apologize for any confusion caused by our need to postpone the start of our monthly worship services until May, but we are looking forward to holding our first NAUA service on Saturday, May 20th, and each third Saturday of the month thereafter. A link to the Livestream and Zoom Room will be posted on our website and sent out to our members and subscribers in advance of the service. Although speakers will vary, our first sermon will be offered by NAUA founder, Rev. Dr. Todd F. Eklof.

NAUA Monthly Clergy Gathering – May 25, 10:00 a.m – 12:00 p.m. Pacific Time

We continue to experiment and respond to feedback regarding our budding NAUA Clergy Gatherings on the fourth Thursday of each month. Although we do not expect to meet the exact wishes of everyone, we have decided to settle upon the traditional cluster-type clergy meetings in which ministers in attendance will spend most of the time checking in with supportive colleagues. We also intend to hold semi-regular ministerial retreats to allow space for professional development and content sometime in the near future.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

We welcome letters from our readers for potential publication in *Liberal Beacon*. Letters should address matters of interest to Unitarians and Universalists and other religious liberals, including current news and events.

Please email your submission no less than five business days before the end of the calendar month in order for publication in our next issue. Letters are shorter than opinion pieces and should be no more than 250 words. Form letters and letters considered libelous, obscene or in bad taste will not be printed. Anonymous letters will not be printed. NAUA reserves the right to edit all letters for length. The decision to print any submission is completely at the discretion of the editors.

Please write “Letter to the Editor” in the subject line and email your submissions to nauaedboard@gmail.com or mail them to:

North American Unitarian Association
Letters to the Editor
4340 W. Whistalks Way
Spokane, WA 99224

Letters must include the writer’s name, full address, and phone number for verification purposes. Only the name and town will be published.

