



The Beacon

of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Greenville NC
August 2016

President's Message



A Long Journey to Unitarian Universalism :

From Rome, Italy to North Carolina, via Pennsylvania, Oklahoma & Nebraska

We all have our different spiritual journeys that arrive at Unitarian Universalism and some of our journeys continue after that to unknown places. You have yours, I have mine and so we can learn from one another.

'Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.' George Santayana (1863 – 1952) American philosopher, originally from Spain.

Long ago (1961), in a far away place (Rome), a boy named Richard (11 years old) was interested in studying religion and becoming a Roman Catholic priest. So he read widely about the history of the Church and theology. One day this boy read about the heresy of Unitarianism, a minority opinion in 325 at the Ecumenical First Council of Nicea. Bishop Arias endorsed Unitarianism at the Council and as the bishop in the seat in Alexandria, Egypt, established by St. Mark the apostle, his was a weighty opinion. However, the majority opinion was Trinitarianism, which eventually became the official position. All mainstream branches of Christianity thereafter considered Arianism to be heretical. Needless to say there was intolerance and many Unitarians were killed, others went into hiding. Christian Unitarians effectively disappeared in the Dark Ages.

A year later (1962) the boy also read something bad about Unitarians. A certain Michael Servetus of Catalonia (1509–1553), developed a nontrinitarian Christology. Condemned by Catholics and Protestants alike, he was arrested in Geneva and burnt at the stake as a heretic by order of the city's Protestant governing council. The boy also read and was greatly impressed that this heretic, Servetus, was the first European to correctly describe the function of pulmonary circulation. Servetus decided to be rational and try to reason with others. He took up theology and humanism, minimized fear of the unknown and the mob. He wrote books with disastrous results. On 27 October 1553, Servetus was burnt alive—on a pyre of his own books—at Plateau of Champel, Geneva.

Another year later (1963) something terrible happened to the boy. He told no one, as he thought and feared, being burned at the stake, even though he thought he might be too young for such a harsh punishment. The boy had started thinking that the heresy was not all that bad. He prayed and was fearful for his soul. Eventually he decided that perhaps a Unitarian God was easier to believe than Trinitarian God. The boy noticed that girls were becoming more and more attractive, so the idea of celibacy and being a priest was abandoned, perhaps he could become a lawyer, a geologist, a scientist or a doctor like Servetus.

After 1553, followers of Servetus and anti-trinitarian thinkers began to be more cautious in expressing their views. They ceased writing or wrote only in private. The writings of Servetus influenced the beginnings of the Unitarian movement in Poland and Transylvania. Fausto Sozzini (Latin: Faustus Socinus) (1539 –1604) an Italian who died in exile in Poland laid the foundations for the Socinian movement which fostered the early Unitarians in England like John Biddle (1615 – 1662), often called "the Father of English Unitarianism." Unitarians survive to present day in Transylvania (now part of Romania) and in England.

Unitarians had survived into the 20th century. In 1966 the boy went to high school in Pennsylvania and finally met a real live Unitarian at the school drama club. The two of them and a Jewish fellow student became the first three in this

high school of 1200 to oppose the War in Vietnam. With time, more and more high school students joined the drama club which effectively became the hub of anti-war thought and action. Parents did not mind if their sons and daughters wanted to be actors — but if they had known that it was really an anti-war movement....

Seeking like-minded people, the boy found Friends (Quakers, aka the Religious Society of Friends) and joined them in the closest city. In college, he met the love of his life, a green-eyed Quakeress and got married. They visited a Unitarian Church in Columbus, Ohio during his graduate studies at The Ohio State University. Many years later, as an adult, he occasionally attended a Unitarian church in Oklahoma City for Sunday services. However, they visited this Unitarian church for folk dancing every week for six years and developed many friendships with Unitarians.

Following a move to Nebraska, his son did not fit well with the Quakers in Omaha and attended the Unitarian program, Our Whole Lives "OWL." The son went off to college but the parents (the heretic and his wife, the Quakeress) signed the membership book and started to be very active at Second Unitarian Church of Omaha.

Moving to Greenville, North Carolina, the former boy, now almost a senior citizen, arrived at the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Greenville, in February 2013, the same day as the first full-time interim minister that that congregation ever had and, as they say, the rest is history.

Richard J. Baltaro, MD, PhD
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BRINGING DIVERSE FAITH TRADITIONS TOGETHER



On August 29th at 7:00pm our church will host the *Interfaith Prayers for Peace and Justice*. Following, at 7:45, Habiba Debi will present *Bias - the Inner Work*. We will work using Sufi/mystical tools to bring light and healing to our own shadowed bias. Please join us in this safe and sacred space for this very important work. Only when we know true inner peace will we be able to experience peace in our outer world.

Youth Religious Education

Youth Religious Education needs your help and support as several transitions take place. Holly Brown will be moving and is stepping down as interim DRE. Alessandra Lazarek will be leaving the role of nursery caregiver to step into the of Director of Religious Education position. Shannon Sparrow will continue and be joined by Patrice Alexander as RE committee chairs. The RE committee and Alessandra Lazarek will be finalizing the selection a new nursery caregiver.

Member stories continue to be a successful way for youth and adults of UUCG to interact in new and different ways. Laura Neece-Baltaro shared her knowledge and experience about seizures in June and Alessandra Lazarek taught them about poetry in July. If you are interested in sharing your story please let us know.

If you are a parent or just interested in what goes on in RE? Volunteering as a second adult once or on a regular basis is a great way to see what the youth of UUCG are learning. Having second adults is crucial in maintaining a safe environment for the youth of our congregation. These volunteers also have the opportunity to foster deeper connections between the youth and adults at UUCG. We encourage second adult volunteers that might be interested to develop a role as teachers.



Minister's Reflections



Recently, I received an email with some good questions about how I relate to Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender/Queer (or Gender Nonconforming) persons, as the minister of a Unitarian Universalist Congregation. I couldn't pass up the chance to answer---even on vacation! Here it is for your perusal.

1. Would you ever perform a marriage for a gay/lesbian/transgender person?

Yes. In the last almost two years, I have celebrated nine LGBTQ weddings.

2. How do you feel about the LGBT community?

I have profound respect for individuals who strive to live who they are despite slander and shaming, bullying and bashing, disowned by parents, families, friends and church, determined to live joyfully and with integrity this one precious life each is given.

3. What do you give back to the community?

As a religious community, this Unitarian Universalist Congregation goes out into the world with seven principles that we strive to uphold and promote:

"We, the member congregations off the Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to affirm and promote:

- *The inherent worth and dignity of every person;*
- *Justice, equity, and compassion in human relations;*
- *Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations;*
- *A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;*
- *The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large;*
- *The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all;*
- *Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.*

Grateful for the religious pluralism which enriches and ennobles our faith, we are inspired to deepen our understanding and expand our vision. As free congregations we enter into this covenant, promising to one another our mutual trust and support." (UUA Bylaws)

4. What is your mission?

The Board and Minister of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Greenville serve the following Mission Statement:

"United in our diversity, we covenant with one another to search, to serve, to grow and to love. We seek out those who have been turned away, we embrace those whose spiritual path has been isolated, we strengthen ourselves to comfort the suffering, we share with our children our commitment to a more just and compassionate society."

5. While dealing with those from the LGBT community do you love the sinner and hate the sin?

I do not judge as sin with whom and how individuals express mutual love. Mutual love and love-making is to be celebrated as a sacred expression of divinity.

What a privilege to share my answers to these questions!

Blessings!

Rod Debs

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August 2016 Worship Schedule

August 7	Update on the Zika Virus - Pat Dix
August 14	How to Treat Ourselves- Ruby Nancy
August 21	What Are People For? - Reverend Debs
August 28	Climate Change Topic TBA -Stan Riggs

Beyond Our Walls

From the 2016 General Assembly



As many of you know, every year the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) holds its General Assembly (GA) in June. This year it was in Columbus Ohio. Our Congregation had delegates participating. Holly Brown, Gail Butler, and I attended in Columbus, and Reverend Rod attended remotely.

The GA has 5 main functions. Worship is a main function. There are at least 2 worship services each day. Social Justice is another. Each year we hold a public witness to emphasize an issue. This year we raised the Black Lives Matter campaign. We also vote on social issues for member congregations to discuss, study, and act on. Education is a third. There are numerous educational and discussion sessions on moral, spiritual, and governance topics during the GA. Business is the fourth function. We elect officers and vote on UUA business matters that come up. Last, but not least, we celebrate. We skipped most of the celebrations in favor of sleeping, but if you like to party, there are plenty of opportunities.

Since we are a congregational polity organization, the member congregations are the ultimate governing group for the UUA, similarly to our UUCG where our congregational members are the ultimate authority. The GA is where the member congregations get to meet and make decisions, just like our UUCG Annual meeting.

Worship is a great reason to go. While I like our choir and we have good speakers, the GA choir had over 150 members, all of whom can really sing and rehearsed multiple times during the week to prepare. They also have professional UU musicians perform at various times. The speakers are selected from the best in the UUA, giving messages they have practiced to make their best, and a congregation of thousands changes the whole atmosphere.

If you want to learn or grow spiritually, there are multiple chances. The sessions are organized in tracks. There were multi session tracks on:

Black Lives of UUs	Multigenerational	Music
Wisdom and Generosity	Practical Arts	Accessibility
Association Governance	Racial Justice	Social Witness
Faith Development	Interfaith Relationships	Worship
History	Religious Education	International
Leadership	Sexual Identity and Gender	Multiculturalism
Youth and Young Adults	And others	

Business is usually fairly minor. This year we were introduced to the 3 candidates for UUA President we will choose between next year. The President serves for 4 years. We also voted to have no "Actions of Immediate Witness" next year in New Orleans so we can focus on Social Witness activities.

Which brings me to the most contentious and emotional issues. A Congressional Action Study Issue must be proposed by a congregation or region and endorsed by multiple Congregations. It carries the full authority of the UUA and its member congregations. Every year we can select 1 CSAI for 4 years of study by UU Congregations. This can result in a Statement of Conscience based on the discussion and congregational input. These become a focus of and basis for UUA actions.

We are currently midway through the 4 year study for "Escalating Inequality: Intersections of Faith, Race, and Class". At the 2016 General Assembly, four CSAIs were proposed:

- 1- Climate Change and Environmental Justice
- 2- A National Conversation on Race
- 3- Ending Gun Violence in America
- 4- The Corruption of Our Democracy

After much debate, "The Corruption of Our Democracy" was chosen as our new CSAI to study, discuss, and act on

for the next 4 years. This was a very involved, emotional and, for some, confusing process. After all, there were over 1,500 voting delegates, and any of these is well deserving of our attention and action. Only one could be chosen, however.

We also selected 3 Actions of Immediate Witness (AIW). While an AIW has no binding authority, it allows the UUA and its officers to speak out and issue official statements on issues. If there is no AIW, CSAI, or Statement of Conscience, then the UUA has no authority to issue statements on an issue. An AIW must be supported by a petition signed by delegates.

There were 6 AIWs presented (the maximum allowed). They were:

- A- Build Solidarity With Muslims
- B- Some Guns, All Guns: Legislating Appropriate Restrictions
- C- Stop Drone Warfare
- D- Stop the TPP
- E- Support HR 40: "The Commission to Study Reparation Proposals for African Americans Act"
- F- Stop the Hate: Protect and Support Our Transgender Brothers and Sisters

The maximum allowed 3 AIWs were approved:

- A- Build Solidarity With Our Muslim Neighbors
- B- Some Guns, All Guns: Legislating Appropriate Restrictions
- F- Stop the Hate: Protect and Support Our Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming Family

You may notice the titles changed. Mini-Assemblies labored over the wording before the final adoption. People spoke Pro and Con, and Amendments were proposed. Even our Moderator Jim Keyes got confused about proper Parliamentary Procedure at times. In the end, we did decide.

Interestingly, 2 proposals were introduced at the GA. One was "Screening out investments in corporations complicit in the violation of human rights including Palestinian Rights". During the discussion, it was pointed out that the UUA investment screening process already eliminated those investments, which may be why the proposal did not win the 2/3 vote required to pass. Another measure, a responsive resolution, was proposed to charge the UUA Board to issue a multi-year report "on the board, staff, congregational, and denominational responses to Black Lives Matter" and in particular year to year growth. This passed overwhelmingly.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention the exhibition hall. This is where you can meet with UU affiliated groups, suppliers of congregational services, makers and sellers of UU related goods, and the UU Bookstore (In Spirit). It is a great way to learn how wide our umbrella is.

I think everyone should attend at least one GA. It is important to learn about our larger faith community. It also is a great opportunity to experience powerful worship services, deepen your spirituality and social justice commitment, and meet lots of great people. While cost can make it difficult for some, the UUA and UUCG have ways to make it more affordable. At least, one should attend remotely. It is definitely a worthwhile experience.

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Upcoming Roving Lunch Group Locations

Aug 7 Anchalee Thai
 Aug 14 El Azador
 Aug 21 Mellow Mushroom
 Aug 28 Bateeni

Share The Plate August 2016

In August, we don't have a specific group to receive the Share the Plate. Our Congregation, along with several others, is supporting an effort to bring a refugee family to Greenville. There isn't one single group doing this to receive funds, and when we do find out that we will be receiving a family here, there may not be much notice, but the needs will be immediate, not in time for us to designate it as a Share the Plate month, with those chosen several months in advance.

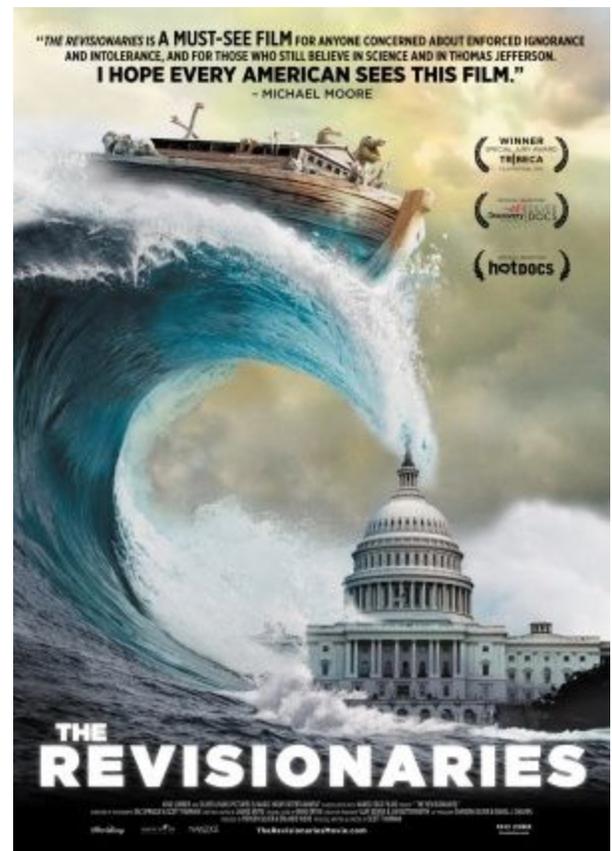
So while specific needs of a family will vary, we wanted to be proactive and set up a reserve fund for financial assistance which will be there when needed. If for some reason we do not receive a family locally, that money can later be allocated to a charity elsewhere who assist refugees.

Moral Movies

Moral Movies will go back to school in August with "The Revisionaries" (2012)

The theory of evolution and a re-write of US history are caught in the crosshairs when an unabashed creationist seeks re-election as chairman of America's most influential board of education.

In Austin, Texas, fifteen people influence what is taught to the next generation of American children. Once every decade, the highly politicized Texas State Board of Education rewrites the teaching and textbook standards for its nearly 5 million schoolchildren. And when it comes to textbooks, what happens in Texas affects the nation as a whole. Don McLeroy, a dentist, Sunday school teacher, and avowed young-earth creationist, leads the Religious Right charge. After briefly serving on his local school board, McLeroy was elected to the Texas State Board of Education and later appointed chairman. During his time on the board, McLeroy has overseen the adoption of new science and history curriculum standards, drawing national attention and placing Texas on the front line of the so-called "culture wars." In his last term, McLeroy, aided by Cynthia Dunbar, an attorney from Houston and professor of Law at Jerry Falwell's Liberty University, finds himself not only fighting to change what Americans are taught, but also fighting to retain his seat on the board. Challenged by Kathy Miller, president of the Texas Freedom Network, and Ron Wetherington, an anthropology professor from Southern Methodist University in Texas, McLeroy faces his toughest term yet. THE REVISIONARIES follows the rise and fall of some of the most controversial figures in American education through some of their most tumultuous intellectual battles.



Moral Movies is Saturday, August 13th starting at 6:30pm. Be sure to stick around for the discussion time afterwards, and of course we will have popcorn and drinks!

Classic GLBT Movie Night

Classic GLBT Movie Night takes August off each summer in order not to compete with the NC Gay & Lesbian Film Festival taking place in Durham that week. We will return in September with the star-studded 1997 comedy "In & Out".