

Liberal Beacon

ISSUE 11 | MAY – JUNE 2024

This issue of *Liberal Beacon* focuses much on liberal religion’s connection to the wider world, beginning with Ann Pandya’s article about India’s first woman doctor and her relationship to Unitarianism. This is followed by an article submitted by the International Alliance of Unitarians and Universalists (IAUU) discussing its work with religious liberals across the globe. Additionally, you’ll learn about NAUA’s growing lists of organizational members, hear a song written and performed by NAUA member Michael Johnson, and read some of my own reflections about moving forward together even though we may not all be starting from the same place. Check out these articles, along with our calendar of events, Letters to the Editor, and lots more in the pages ahead.

(You can access past issues of *Liberal Beacon* on our website at www.naunitarians.org.)

Todd F. Eklof
Editor

Featured Articles

Two Indian Unitarian Women

Ann Pandya

NAUA’s International Outreach

International Alliance of Unitarians and Universalists

Let Me Introduce You to Some Friends of Mine

Todd F. Eklof

What Will You UUs Do?

Michael Johnson

Together on a Continuum

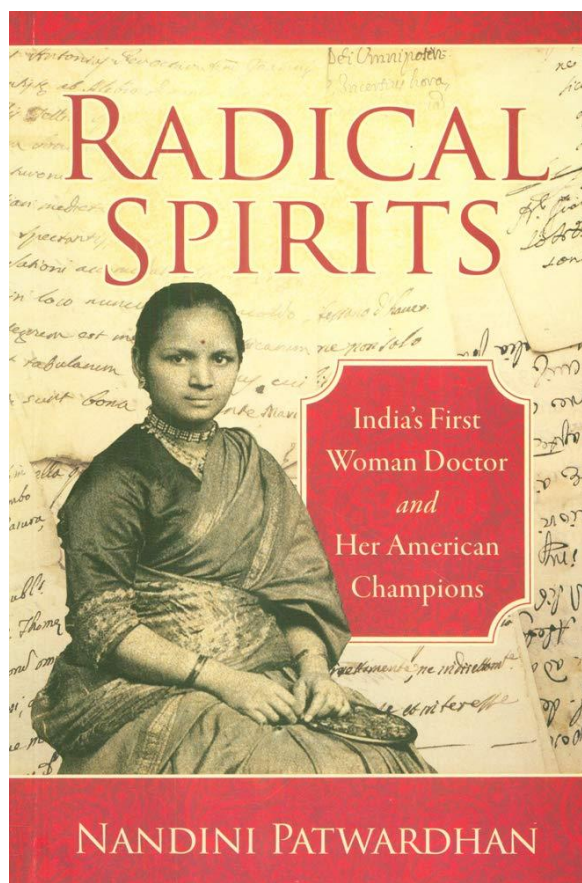
Todd F. Eklof



Two Indian Unitarian Women

125 Years Apart

Ann Pandya



[Ann Pandya grew up in Mumbai and has lived in the United States for nearly four decades. She has a graduate degree in mathematics from the Indian Institute of Technology and is a former software developer. In this article, she discusses her 2020 book, “Radical Spirits” (published under her maiden name), about India’s first woman doctor and her connection to Unitarianism.]

recently published a biography titled “Radical Spirits: India’s First Woman Doctor and Her American Champions.” It tells the

story of Dr. Anandi-bai Joshee (*bai* has the same connotation as *Madame*) who graduated from the women’s medical college in Philadelphia in 1886. One of the “American Champions” in the title is Theodocia Carpenter, a New Jersey homemaker who became Anandi’s “aunt” and mentor. Another is Caroline Wells Healey Dall, who took a special interest in Anandi and published a biography of her in 1888.

Tantalizing Questions

I had heard of Anandi Joshee when I was growing up in India during the 1960s. That half-remembered fable rushed to the fore in 2009 when I stumbled upon a story online that indicated that Anandi’s ashes were buried in a cemetery in Poughkeepsie, NY, in a plot belonging to the family of a New Jersey homemaker named Theodocia Carpenter.

Ordinarily, I would have briefly considered this interesting tidbit before moving on to other internet curiosities. But a couple of aspects of the story kept calling to me. One was the fact that the ashes of a Hindu woman were sent all the way from India to be buried in the U.S. Another was the heartfelt bond between an Indian woman and an American one that had been forged during the 19th century—a time when, as citizens of a rising and predominantly white Christian country, Americans held unsavory views about people in more “primitive” locales.

How did the two women find each other? What made them so committed to each other? I *had* to find out more.

A UU Seeker

I started attending a UU church in 2000 and soon it became my community and spiritual home. On one of my first visits, a new acquaintance mentioned an article published in *UU World* magazine that explored the ties between 19th century Unitarians and progressive Hindus (like Swami Vivekananda). Intrigued, I did a deep dive into these connections. What I found strengthened my budding UUism. For, in joining a UU community, not only had I not abandoned my religious inheritance, but I had also found a newer version of it, a version that perfectly fit my new Indian-American identity.

And so, one additional question intrigued me. Were the Americans who supported Anandi Joshee either Unitarians or Universalists?

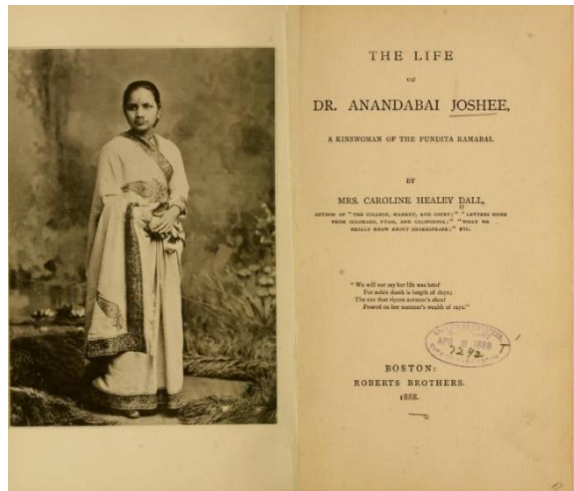
Religious Progressives

One of the first links I found on Google was Caroline Dall's book, "The Life of Dr. Anandabai [sp] Joshee: A Kinswoman of the Pundita Ramabai." Caroline Dall was a feminist, sociologist, and writer; and she was a Unitarian. Almost four decades older than Anandi, her deep respect, scholarly interest, and heartfelt sympathy for Anandi shone throughout the book. These were all the more striking because she had to overcome her self-confessed prejudices based on race, religion, and culture.

Dall's husband, Charles Henry Appleton Dall, had then been serving for over twenty years as a Unitarian missionary in Calcutta. He had made the acquaintance of Anandi and her husband Gopal and written to his wife about them. He had also made a name as a social reformer who sympathized with Indians' aspirations for social progress and freedom from British rule.

The most amazing find in Dall's biography was a comment about Rev. Charles Ames, the minister of the Spring Garden Unitarian Church in Philadelphia:

Between him and her [Anandi] there was no "need of words." She entered into his spirit, and it was her greatest delight to listen to his preaching in Spring Garden Street. "She was often at the church," writes Mr. Ames, "and showed her interest by lingering long at the close, and accepting with sweet and gracious silence, and hand pressure, all the greetings of the people."



Crossing the seas was a sin according to Hinduism, as was a woman pursuing an education. The certainty that she, a Brahmin woman, was about to live (and eat) among non-Brahmins only compounded her sin. While some Hindus threatened to cast Anandi out of the religion, others worried

that she might be coerced into converting to Christianity. She had therefore made a public speech explaining her reasons for pursuing this course of action. She had also made a vow that she "would go as a Hindu and return as a Hindu."

So, her church attendance (albeit a Unitarian one) is especially significant against this background. In her lonely student life, she clearly found spiritual sustenance in Rev. Ames' church. Also, in that church she was not pressured to give up her religion. Indeed, based on Rev. Ames' remarks, Anandi's being a non-Christian was a non-issue for the congregants.

I was not able to find definitive information about the religious affiliation of Theodocia Carpenter. However, I was able to ascertain

that her family members had been either Hicksites or followers of Spiritualism. While the former was a radical breakaway Quaker sect, the latter was a progressive feminist faith tradition with strong ties to Universalism.

There are several other Unitarian references in *Radical Spirits*. When seen in the aggregate, it is clear that in helping Anandi Joshee and welcoming her into their hearts and homes, these religious progressives, many of them Unitarians, found a way to practice their highest and deeply held values.

A Memorial Service

Anandi graduated from the women's medical college in Philadelphia in 1886. Suffering from tuberculosis, she had to cut short her internship in Boston and return to India late that same year. During her final weeks, sensing that the end was near, and no longer willing to obey religious traditions that held little meaning, she made a most unusual request—that her ashes be sent to her Aunt Theodocia to be buried in her family's plot. Six years passed before Gopal could fulfill his wife's last wish.

The first Parliament of World Religions was held in 1893 in Chicago. Representatives of the world's religions came from all corners of the globe. The Indian contingent was one of the largest and one of its members brought Anandi's ashes to America.

A ceremony, presided over by Rev. Jenkin Lloyd Jones, was held at All Souls Unitarian Church in Chicago. Theodocia Carpenter and her husband Benjamin traveled from New Jersey to receive the precious urn. The standing-room-only crowd sang "Very Near," a hymn that was Anandi's favorite. One Indian guest spoke about Anandi's life before she sailed for America; another described her final days after she returned to India. Aware that this was likely the last public event honoring Anandi, Theodocia delivered a speech describing the divine inspiration that moved her to write the first letter to Anandi a dozen years previously. She

also spoke about the ensuing dialog-by-mail that was instrumental in Anandi's decision to seek a medical education in Philadelphia.

A Place in UU History

I thus found the answers to my questions. Anandi had indeed found community and a spiritual home among Unitarians and other religious progressives.

Had I not been a UU, I doubt the story would have ignited my curiosity. The self-directed study, upon which I had embarked after becoming a UU, gave me the will to persevere until I had uncovered the full history.

My hope is that *Radical Spirits* will secure a place for Anandi Joshee, India's first woman doctor, in the annals of UU history.

NAUA's International Outreach

International Alliance of Unitarians and Universalists

There are Unitarian and Unitarian Universalist churches and organizations in over 20 countries around the world.

While the largest number of Unitarians and Unitarian Universalists are in the United States, there are large numbers of Unitarians in Romania and Hungary, approximately 80,000 and 25,000 respectively, as well as approximately 10,000 in India and more than 5,000 each in the United Kingdom, Canada, and the Netherlands, with somewhat fewer in other European countries such as Germany as well as in the Philippines. The European Unitarian Universalists (EUU) is an association with fellowships in six European countries, as well as an at-large chapter spanning the whole of Europe. There are also small Unitarian and Unitarian Universalist communities in Australia,

Latin America, and Africa, specifically in Burundi, Rwanda, Nigeria, and South Africa.

In the past, Unitarian Universalists had a strong focus on international issues as reflected in the 6th Principle of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA), “The goal of world community with peace, liberty and justice for all.” Adlai E. Stevenson, a Unitarian, served on the committee that created the United Nations in 1945 and served as United States Ambassador to the UN from 1961 until his death in 1965. There was also a Unitarian Universalist Office at the United Nations with NAUA member Bruce Knotts serving as its director since 2008. However, Unitarians and Universalists have been active internationally for much longer, playing a key role in the International Association of Religious Freedom established in 1900 and the Church of the Larger Fellowship created in 1944.

In the early 1990s Unitarian Universalists around the world sought to further strengthen their international connections and cooperation with the formation of the Unitarian Universalist Partner Church Council in 1993 and the International Council of Unitarians and Universalists in 1995. But in March 2021 the UUA reversed course and closed the Unitarian Universalist Office at the United Nations and in November 2022 both the International Council of Unitarians and Universalists and the Unitarian Universalist Partner Church Council were dissolved after 29 and 27 years of existence, respectively.

While there are still Unitarian and Unitarian Universalist organizations that function effectively internationally, most notably the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee and the International Convocation of Unitarian Universalist Women (ICUW), the international activities of the UUA itself have been dramatically reduced in recent years.

In October 2023 the North American Unitarian Association’s Provisional Board of Trustees authorized the creation the International Alliance of Unitarians and Universalists (IAUU) with the initial objective of having NAUA recognized as a member of the worldwide community of Unitarian and Unitarian Universalist organizations. The current members of the IAUU Steering Committee are Bruce Knotts (US), Rev. Felipe Ribeiro (Brazil), John Eichrodt (France), Marga Hanna (Canada), Stephen Polmar (US/Italy), and Wayne Hanna (Canada).

Since its inception the IAUU has established contacts with several other Unitarian Universalist organizations and communities around the world. Rev. Felipe Ribeiro has traveled to Europe visiting UU congregations and attending meetings in Switzerland and England. John Eichrodt, who has been an active member of EUU since 1982, attended the EUU Retreat in Saarbrücken, Germany in April and participated in an EUU Coordinating Council meeting in May. At these meetings, he informed EUU of the existence of NAUA as well as the creation of the IAUU and its activities. Bruce Knotts was invited to attend the 4th Convocation of the International Convocation of Unitarian Universalist Women (ICUW) in Romania in September. He represents ICUW at the UN and will also represent NAUA and our International Alliance at the UN Convocation in Romania. Stephen Polmar is now in regular contact with one of the Lay Leaders of the Unitarian Universalist church of the Philippines, exploring ways of building a relationship between NAUA and that Unitarian Universalist community of 27 churches.

In addition, the International Alliance of Unitarians and Universalists is reaching out to individual Unitarian Universalists and friends in other countries by offering study courses related to Unitarianism. Our first course started

in April and meets once a month for six months. The course is a team effort coordinated by John Eichrodt from France. It focuses on Unitarianism and the Enlightenment, with the goal of enabling participants to clarify and deepen their understanding of their religion from an international perspective. It explores the central role of the Enlightenment in the formation of Unitarianism, its history, its philosophical origins, great ideals, different schools of thought, contradictions, and current relevance. There are participants from 9 countries spanning 10 time zones.

A second International Alliance course is currently in the planning stage. The main theme of this study course will be mythology and will be led by Marga Hanna from Canada. This study course is designed to deepen and strengthen our understanding of the origins of our Unitarian faith. This will be done by building awareness of how the early Greek and Roman philosophers, and after them, the Enlightenment thinkers, drew on their knowledge of myths of the world to understand how mythology shaped cultural practices and worldviews over millennia, and were then translated to develop key concepts about human nature, society, and politics in a more scientific and readily understandable mode.

The outreach to Unitarian and Unitarian Universalist churches and organizations, as well as the International Alliance study courses, are just the first steps in bringing Unitarians and Unitarian Universalists from around the world together and to having the North American Unitarian Association recognized as an active and important member of the worldwide community of Unitarians and Unitarian Universalists. Hopefully as NAUA grows, its International Alliance of Unitarians and Universalists will be able to play a significant role in the international community of Unitarians and Unitarian Universalists and help

achieve that goal of “world community with peace, liberty and justice for all.”

Let Me Introduce You to Some Friends of Mine

NAUA's Organizational Members

Todd Eklof

NAUA is a service and support organization for Unitarians, Universalists, and other religious liberals, promoting the practice of liberal religion by embracing freedom, reason, and tolerance—rooted in our commitment to the inherent worth and dignity of every person and all peoples. Our members include both individuals and organizations. After our website went live in March of 2023, our initial members were all individuals who were eager to be part of a genuinely free and vibrant community that continues to represent our centuries-old tradition's common values and principles. As the months have passed, we've also gained a growing number of organizational members.

NAUA Hayward Fellowship, another new community, has the distinction of being our very first organizational member. Founded in 2023 by a small collection of dedicated Unitarians in Hayward, CA, the Fellowship is “dedicated to promoting open discussion, democratic values, and responsible progress of the human condition,” asking those interested to “Join us in our mission to reach our highest potential and leave a positive impact on the world.” This small but mighty group reminds us of the true meaning of these words, that maintaining the freedom to disagree doesn't have to divide us but can be the key to uniting us in the true bonds of friendship. On a personal note, I feel fortunate to have visited

this group twice already, and for the friendships we've established in such a short time.

If you're in the Bay Area and want to learn more about or to become part of this friendly and supportive community, check out NAUA-Hayward Fellowship's website at nauahayward.net.

UUMUAC (Unitarian Universalist Multiracial Unity Action Council) is also among our very first organizational members. Founded by the late Rev. Dr. Finley C. Campbell, "a Black Baptist minister and longtime UU who is a near-contemporary of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.," UUMUAC (pronounced YOU-me-ack), is devoted to what has been referred to as Dr. King's common humanity ethic. Rather than

UUMUAC reminds us that being together in our diversity doesn't have to be "harmful" and is the only means by which we can truly unite and come to love one another.

combating racism by further dividing and segregating the human family based upon race and identity (as the new, so-called "antiracism" movement does), UUMUAC seeks to foster multiracial unity. "We envision our congregations, denomination, and society as not being color blind but color appreciative; as judging and treating members of the world's rank and file by the content of their character, not the color of their skin or their cultural heritage."

UUMUAC reminds us that being together in our diversity doesn't have to be "harmful" and is the only means by which we can truly unite and come to love one another.

The late Rev. Campbell was dear to my heart. He visited my home and church in Spokane

during his final year of life and became known to me as "big brother." Finley affectionately referred to me as "little brother." I miss him and am glad to remain friends with so many of UUMUAC's leaders and members.

To learn more about or to join UUMUAC, visit its website at www.uumuac.org.

Unitarian Universalist Congregation of the Shoals, in Florence, Alabama was established in 1956. Located next to the Tennessee River in Colbert County, along with four other cities commonly known as "the Shoals." UUCS's inviting church building is only a few minutes-drive from the Muscle Shoals Sound Studio where some of the greatest singers, groups, and songs in American history were recorded. Its list of artists include names like Aretha Franklin, Duane Allman, George Michael, Wilson Pickett, Willie Nelson, Lynyrd Skynyrd, Rolling Stones, Joe Cocker, Levon Helm, Paul Simon, Bob Seger, Rod Stewart, Tamiko Jones, Cher, and Cat Stevens.

It's a great place to visit if you're a music fan, but an even better place to visit if you're a religious liberal! UUCS's Sunday gatherings overflow with joy, warmth, and friendship; its regular attendees are always eager to see their friends and to welcome newcomers and visitors with the same enthusiasm and hospitality. This historic congregation is filled with deep thinkers, warm hearts, and open arms. If you're in the area, stop by. If you're not, plan to visit—it's well worth the trip! (I know because I've already visited twice, love my new friends in the Shoals, and am eager to visit all of them again!)

To learn more about or to contact UU Congregation of the Shoals, visit www.uushoals.com.

Another UUCS, the *Unitarian Universalist Church of Spokane*, where I am the minister, is both a member of and the physical home of NAUA and will be the in-person site of its first

Yearly Summit happening in October. Like many UU congregations thrust into conflict over the illiberal direction of the UUA, our 137 year-old Spokane congregation has faced its share of turmoil, including internal and external attempts to force me out of its historic pulpit.

I'm glad its members have kept me around, remained true to the church's long and reliable history as a genuinely liberal presence in our local area, and has become a leader in the current movement to restore and preserve our venerable religion for future generations.

Over the years, just when I've thought, "This will be the sermon that gets me in trouble," I get a standing ovation and think to myself, "Damn, these people are even more liberal than I am!"

To learn more, check out our website at www.uuspokane.org.

The *Unitarian Universalist Faith Alliance & Ministries* joined NAUA in November of 2023, and we are deeply honored to count this unique organization as part of our community. UUFAM describes itself as "a contemporary, progressive, Christian Unitarian-Universalist church." It is post-denominational and values "sacred eco spirituality" (sacred space/creation spirituality). Faith Groups meet for worship where they celebrate the awe and mystery of the divine. "We are a religious organization, covenanting community, and ordaining body. Knowledge and wisdom from global truths complement our values."

Based in Massachusetts, UUFAM serves "marginalized and disenfranchised Christian Unitarians, Universalists, Christian Deists and other faith-based progressives." Having myself studied under theologian Matthew Fox, the founder of Creation Spirituality and my fellow heretic, I'm looking forward to better getting to know UUFAM, to being of support, and to

benefiting from this unique community's wisdom.

To learn more, visit its website at <https://uufam.site123.me/>

Glacier Unitarian Universalist Fellowship is one of our most recent congregations to join NAUA and is one that I'm happily familiar with, having spoken in its pulpit a couple of times each year ever since I moved to the Pacific Northwest in 2011. GUUF is located in beautiful Kalispel, Montana, close enough to Glacier National Park to claim its namesake. You'd think, rather than listening to me or anyone else, its members would be satisfied to simply look out the church windows and be inspired by the area's natural wonder and beauty.

But, beautiful as the location is, the reason I love to visit so often is to be with the many friends I've made there over the years. So, if you're a UU heading to Glacier National Park, be sure to schedule some time to attend a service at GUUF, where you'll meet many warm, brilliant, and extremely talented individuals who will welcome you with open minds and hearts.

Like me, GUUF turns 60 this year and I'm looking forward to celebrating the occasion with all my friends there during my next visit to Big Sky Country. For now, Happy Anniversary and congratulations to the Glacier UU Fellowship from your NAUA family!

Here's GUUF's website: www.guuf.org.

Open Hearts and Minds Fellowship in Austin, Texas, "believes in making the world a better place by treating each other well and working for the common good," aspiring to "listen to all voices and experiences with compassion and encouragement toward spiritual growth," to "unite around principles of liberty, equity and peace," and to "advocate for the democratic

process, reason, free inquiry and freedom of conscience.”

I’ve had the privilege and pleasure of being OHMF’s guest speaker on two occasions during the past couple of years (remoting in from my Spokane home) and have also enjoyed the supportive friendships I’ve developed with some of its brilliant and goodhearted members.

Although the Fellowship doesn’t call itself Unitarian or UU, its founders are refugees from Unitarian Universalism who have chosen to maintain their traditional liberal religious values in new and meaningful ways. NAUA is proud to have this inspiring community as one of our organizational members.

Open Hearts and Minds Fellowship’s website address is www.ohmfellowship.org.

NAUA is pleased and honored to count all of these incredible organizations, and the many individuals they represent, among our founding members. We look forward to continuing to build our bonds of friendship over the years, to being of mutual support, and to working together to help make our world a better place for all; just as we are grateful to all our members for helping us to co-create a new home and to forge a way forward for our liberal religion.

What Will You UUs Do? *A Song for Wondering and Wandering Religious Liberals*

Michael Johnson

[The following song lyrics were composed and first performed by Michael Johnson for UUMUAC’s recent 2024 Convocation. In addition to being a songwriter and musician, Dr. Johnson is a practicing psychologist, a UUMUAC

member, NAUA member, and a founder and Board President of the Open Hearts & Minds Fellowship in Austin, TX. A link to his original performance of the song is included beneath the following lyrics.]

What Will You UUs Do?

Tell me whatcha gonna do
When the church you love becomes dogmatic,
And then abolishes the principles for which it
stood?

Tell me whatcha gonna do
when they tell you to keep your mouth shut,
and then punish those who refuse to get in
line?



Will you try to reason?
Will you try to fight?
Will you stay cause you sing in the choir?

Will you go along to get along?
Will you meet with your friends to conspire?

Is there a light down the road that leads back
home,
or are we just facing the end?
What will You UUs do?

Tell me whatcha gonna do
when Woody Guthrie songs can’t be sung here
no more,
and everyone’s supposed to think alike?

Tell me whatcha gonna do
when they tell you that they love you,
and that's the reason you've been canceled and
publicly put to shame?

Will you try to reason?
Will you try to fight?
Will you stay cause you sing in the choir?

Will you go along to get along?
Will you meet with your friends to conspire?

Is there a light down the road that leads back
home,
or are we just facing the end?
What will You UUs do?

Tell me whatcha gonna do
when the pulpit isn't really free no more,
and the letters to the editor are all gone?

Tell me whatcha gonna do
when they attack your character,
and the enlightenment grows darker day by
day?

Does it stand to reason
to stand to and fight,
and to say what you think to the choir?

Or to go along to get along,
And then meet with your friends to conspire?

Is there a light down the road that leads back
home,
or are we just wasting our time?
What will You UUs do?

Tell me whatcha gonna do
All you dear UUs?
Sisters and Brothers,
what the hell are we gonna do?

[LISTEN HERE](#)

Together on a Continuum

Todd Eklof

At the time of this writing, we are inching closer to knowing whether most General Assembly delegates will accept or reject radical changes to Article II of the Unitarian Universalist Association's bylaws. Article II contains the seven principles that, for many of its members, have come to epitomize Unitarian Universalism's core values. There is a growing movement to prevent these changes from happening, but if past voting habits of delegates are any indication, the amendment has a serious chance of passing.

I personally think that what happens to the seven principles at this point is irrelevant for two reasons. Firstly, the attempt by UUA leaders to alter them in a way that eliminates serious reference to individual worth and dignity, to unconditional freedom in our individual search for truth and meaning, and to our individual voices with an explicit commitment to democratic processes in our communities and in the world at large, should tell us all that the UUA has already undergone a major ideological change and is now merely tweaking its bylaws to reflect its new mindset and purposes.

Secondly, our values and principles are not "things" that can be imprisoned or enshrined in a written list, not in a set of bylaws, on the back of a business card, on a placard, a Bible, nor anywhere else. They exist only when they are put into practice, which means nobody can take away or change our principles but us. So, whatever the UUA decides to do with them, they are still yours if you want them. The only important question is, what are you going to do with them?

What is relevant, however, is that the impending Article II vote has made a growing number of Unitarians Universalists aware that the UUA has already been radically changed. Until now, some UUs have been like the proverbial boiling frog, not noticing the Association's slow transition from a fundamentally tolerant religion into a dogmatic and intolerant one. Hence, they are only now experiencing the feelings of shock, betrayal, anger, and grief that some of us experienced as many as five years ago. Some of us may still be working through these emotions, even after so much time has passed. They still come and go for me, although never as intensely as when they first emerged.



Some of us are ready to forget about the UUA and move forward in a more positive and productive direction. I know I am. That's why I founded NAUA, not as an alternative UUA, but as a new means of supporting each other by maintaining our historic liberal religious identity, fostering our broader continental and international community, and working together to help one another and our world. But the point here is that NAUA members are in

different places on an emotional continuum between the initial impacts of realizing something has gone terribly wrong in Boston and the eagerness to take charge of our own lives and move forward.

Sometime during the next few years, I suspect most of us will have moved toward the "ready to move forward" end of the continuum. But, for now, many among us are just realizing the serious changes that are afoot. No matter where we are emotionally with what's happening, NAUA members are together on this continuum. Let's keep this in mind and commit to being patient, compassionate, respectful, and supportive of one another, even if we are in different places. For those ready to move on, remember there are those who aren't. For those who aren't, remember there are those who are. As people who are both compassionate and committed, it is more than possible for us to console one another while progressing together.

As one of my favorite hymns (now forbidden from being sung at UUA events) goes, "One more step, we will take one more step, 'til there is peace for us and everyone, we'll take one more step."

NAUA's First Yearly Summit

Save the dates! NAUA's first Yearly Summit will take place both online and in-person this October 18–20 in Spokane, WA at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Spokane. All major offerings will be available at the location and remotely via Zoom and livestream, and will include worship services, a keynote address, workshops, and voting on important business matters. There will be greater details in future issues of this publication, but, for now, please make plans to participate and attend.

Cult Expert Steven Hassan Interviews Rev. Eklof

In our last issue of *Liberal Beacon*, Rev. Todd Eklof wrote about mind control cults, during which he mentioned the work of psychologist, author, and cult expert, Steven Hassan, PhD. Hassan has since agreed to be the keynote speaker at our NAUA Yearly Summit in October. He also recently interviewed Rev. Eklof about what's going on in the UUA and other topics. To watch the interview on *The Continuum Influence with Dr. Steven Hassan*, click on the following YouTube link:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z9_6jcTw5RU

To listen on Apple Podcasts, click here:

<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/the-influence-continuum-with-dr-steven-hassan/id1603773245?i=1000654656556>

Or, to listen on Spotify, click here:

<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/the-influence-continuum-with-dr-steven-hassan/id1603773245?i=1000654656556>

Your Support is Appreciated!

Mother Teresa once said, "It's not how much we give but the love we put into giving." NAUA strives to be an organization that others love to give to, not only because of what we stand for, but because of what we do and the value we bring to their lives and to our world. Thanks to our members and friends for your continued support! As a budding association, NAUA remains all-volunteer and depends entirely upon your generosity.

<https://naunitarians.org/support-us/>

Coming Up at a Glance

June 15 @ 10 AM PST | NAUA Worship

June 15 @ 10 PM PST | NAUA Saturday Circle

June 18 @ 4 PM PST | NAUA Tuesday Circle

June 27 @ 5 PM PST | NAUA Book Club

July 3 @ 4:30 PM PST | NAUA Saturday Circle

July 3 @ 4:30 PM PST | Anything Goes

July 20 @ 10 AM PST | NAUA Worship

July 25 @ 5 PM PST | NAUA Book Club

For information and updates about specific NAUA events please visit our website at www.naunitarians.org



Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor,

It's now been 5 years since Rev. Todd Eklof published his book *The Gadfly Papers* and distributed it freely at the UUA General Assembly in Spokane in July 2019. Like the ceremonial nailing of the 95 Theses on the door of the church in Wittenberg by Martin Luther in 1517, it has led to major changes in the trajectory of Unitarian Universalism. First and foremost was the launching of the independent

North American Unitarian Association. And just as Martin Luther was branded a heretic by the Catholic Church four years later, Rev. Todd has been disfellowshipped from the UUA. But unlike the Catholic Church, which later underwent a Counter-Reformation to try to correct some of the abuses that Luther noted, there is no sign of the UUA leadership's willingness to remedy theirs.

On the occasion of this memorable anniversary, I thought it would be appropriate to point out some of the most pertinent parts of *The Gadfly Papers*, especially those that were particularly prescient.

From the Preface:

These are not easy matters to write about, having witnessed the vitriol directed at well meaning individuals who get off script, and knowing that some of it is now sure to come my way ... But, in fighting for what we believe in, we cannot allow ourselves to become what we disbelieve in, nor achieve our goals by adopting the cruelties of those we oppose. The end matters, but so do the means. I, for one, cannot continue traveling along a path with those who no longer respect the minds and voices of their fellow sojourners.

From the Afterword:

Either we reconnect with our historic roots, dealing, at last, with our theological and class conflicts, so we can return to and fulfill our promise of establishing a universal nonsectarian religion of humanity, or we allow a misguided identitarian philosophy to continue segregating us from each other until all that remains necessary for the dissolution of our denomination is mere formality. I hope it doesn't come to this, but if it's the only way to remember and recommit to our once cherished principles of reason, freedom of conscience, and common humanity, we may have no other choice.

Bob Simoni
Hayward, CA

Dear Editor,

[RE: *Religious Liberalism in Context*, by Terry Cummings, *Liberal Beacon* | March/April 2024]

Rev. Terry asks: Can we agree that building a denomination in which everyone has the opportunity to embrace, expand and develop their individual religious and spiritual identity is one of its principles and purposes?

I think a distinction has already been made that renders my answer twofold.

First, if you mean "we" as Unitarian Universalists, then no, I do not think we can do so within the denomination going forward. Not even if the appalling 8th Principle is defeated. Too much damage has been done by the UUA's current leadership to the unity UUs may have felt prior to the 8th Principle's formulation and promotion. I would henceforth wonder if another UU I encounter is 8thP-Yes or 8thP-No and would hesitate to speak my truths.

Now, if "We the NAUA" constitute the denomination you mean, we can certainly endeavor to build one such.

In which case, I fear, the schism must be complete.

Dot Weinstein
New Britain, CT

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.

Notice

We are still looking for a new Editor of *Liberal Beacon* who has the time, desire, and some experience with layout, design, and editing. The volunteer position includes working with our current Editorial Board and other contributors to help put together this bimonthly publication in a timely fashion. If you are interested, please let us know a bit about your interest, skills, and background by emailing us at nauaedboard@gmail.com.