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**North American
Unitarian Association**
naunitarians.org

**The NAUA Compass
Newsletter**

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**Mid-February 2026
Announcements &
Events**

North American Unitarian Association is a member service organization dedicated to supporting and 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.



Join this Saturday's Worship Service!



Third Saturday Worship Service: "AI and Spirituality" Saturday, Feb. 21st, 10:00 AM PT / 1:00 PM ET

NAUA hosts a monthly worship service on the third Saturday of each month, followed by small group discussion. February's worship service is on "AI and Spirituality."

AI (as large language models) is becoming increasingly woven into our daily lives. Our thoughts, longings, and our ways of making meaning are changing, with new questions arising around what it means to be human and to engage in "spiritual" matters. What trends are surfacing as our tools can seem to listen better than friends, comfort us, or provide us with both a sense of security and a sense of wonder? We'll explore how generative AI's unique and complex ways of reflecting back to us invite new takes on old desires for meaning, certainty, and purpose.

All are invited to attend. Zoom access at
<https://tinyurl.com/NAUAService>

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Below you will find a lovely poem submitted by Rev. Jeremias Bacaling: *"This poem is my story. It comes from the struggles I carry quietly every day. I learned early that life is not always gentle. I have faced worries about family, finances, and responsibilities that sometimes feel heavier than I can explain. There are nights I question myself and mornings I rise anyway, because people depend on me and giving up is not an option.*

My struggles shaped me more than my victories. They taught me patience, humility, and a deeper faith. Even when I feel tired, I keep moving forward. This poem is not about a perfect life — it is about surviving, hoping, and choosing to stand again after every fall. It is the voice of someone still fighting, still believing, still walking."

Still I Walk

I have walked through days
that felt heavier than night,
carrying worries
no one could see in the light.

My hands were tired,
my heart unsure,
yet something inside me
whispered, endure.

There were moments
I almost fell apart,
smiling outside
with a storm in my heart.

But struggle taught me
a quiet kind of strength —
to breathe through pain,
to hope at length.

I am not broken
by the roads I've crossed,
I am shaped
by the battles I've lost.

And still I rise
with each new day,
not because life is easy,
but because I choose to stay.

- **Rev. Jeremias Jr. B. Bacaling**

Note: Members and readers are invited to share a poem, short letter or artistic rendition of their hopes for NAUA and the wider world in the coming year. Please email your contribution to jmkrettek@gmail.com for inclusion in this newsletter or posting to our social media accounts.



Looking for Ways to Reduce Taxes this Year?

If you are age 70½ or older and take **Required Minimum Distributions (RMDs)** from an IRA, you may be able to make your giving to NAUA both meaningful and tax-efficient through a **Qualified**

Charitable Distribution (QCD). A QCD allows you to direct all or part of your RMD—up to \$111,000 per year in 2026—directly from your IRA to a qualified nonprofit organization like NAUA. The amount donated through a QCD counts toward your RMD but is **excluded from your taxable income**, which can help lower your adjusted gross income and reduce taxes on Social Security or Medicare premiums.

NAUA members may wish to consider this option because it aligns financial stewardship with personal values. Instead of taking a required distribution and then writing a check, a QCD allows your retirement savings to directly support our liberal religious community—making your required distributions an expression of purpose, not just obligation. Ask your IRA custodian about making a Qualified Charitable Donation (QCD) to NAUA (EIN #92-1079431).



Climb to the 2026 Summit with Us!

Every year in the fall NAUA hosts an annual Summit that includes workshops, a keynote presentation, a worship service and annual business meeting. We hope you were able to attend last year's 2025 Summit, which was our first fully online conference.

The Summit 2026 Planning Committee is now forming to organize and host this year's event, and we'd like to invite you to join us!

We are recruiting NAUA members and friends who are willing to serve on the committee and help with any of the following:

- Identify a theme and keynote speaker
- Host a workshop
- Contact, recruit and support session speakers
- Invent ways in which this event can rise to new Summit heights!

We are especially in need of folks with a background or skills in promotions/marketing to recruit organizations to serve as conference sponsors or partners. Sponsorship perks may include the opportunity to host a session or booth or have the organization's logo added to the Summit website and materials.

Finally, we know that many (most?) NAUA members have areas of particular interest, skill, expertise or knowledge that they could share during a 50-minute Summit session. We have room for a wide variety of sessions - musical, travel, personal care, friending, historical, theological, scientific - the possibilities are endless. Those interested in speaking will be asked to submit an outline of their session and (if available) a recording of past presentations. Workshop leaders will be selected by the committee based on a number of factors, including the topic's relevance to liberal religion and/or the Summit theme (TBD).

If you are interested in serving on the Summit 2026 Planning Committee or assisting during the Summit, PLEASE email the committee at summit@naunitarians.org. We would also like to invite suggestions for any of the following (even if you are unable to serve on the planning committee):

- Summit theme
- Possible options for a keynote speaker and how we might contact them
- Suggestions for workshop leaders or topics
- Organizations that might be interested in supporting and/or sponsoring the Summit

Again, please email summit@naunitarians.org with your ideas and/or interest in helping with the Summit!

NAUA Interim Board President **Roy Dickerson** has successfully completed his surgery and in-hospital rehabilitation. He is now recovering at home and will be undergoing physical therapy. Roy is able to receive messages, cards and emails but not ready to accept phone calls or attend online meetings. If you'd like to send him messages of support, please email them to president@naunitarians.org. We are all wishing Roy a full and restful recovery.



NAUA Forum Circle
Sunday, Feb. 22nd
1:00 PM PT / 4:00 PM ET

**Participation by Reservation
Only**

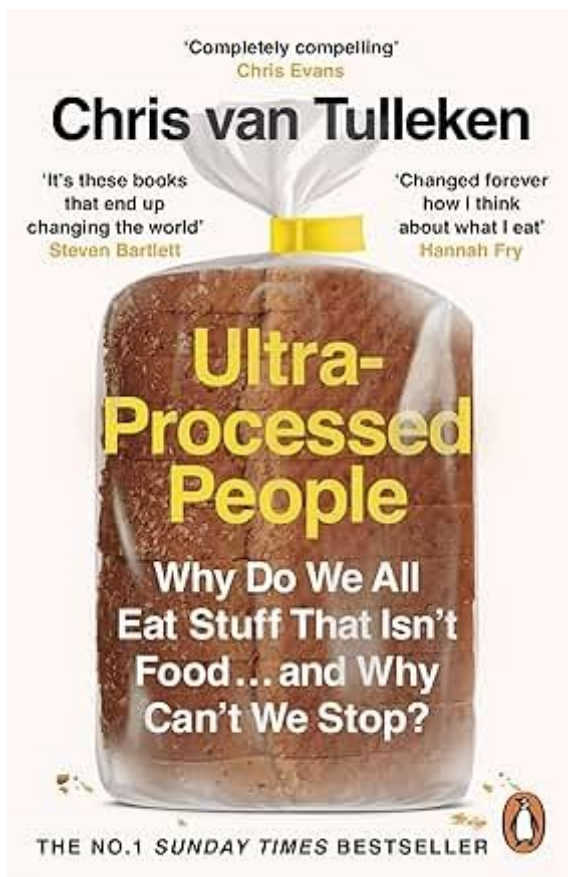
To register for the Forum Circle
and obtain the meeting link,
email
circles@naunitarians.org.



Each week the group reads about and discusses a different topic of interest. This week's topic is free will.

"Free will and responsibility have been central principles in thinking about morality and law for centuries. In recent years, some progressive thinkers have cast doubt on these ideas by trying to show how much our behavior is shaped by our economic or social class, or by our childhood trauma, or (more recently) by our genes. What do neuroscience, psychology, and genetics actually imply about free will? Is free will compatible with scientific laws? What kind of free will is worth having? Do we have that kind of free will?"

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NAUA Book Club: "Ultra Processed People"

Feb. 26th, 4:30 PM PT

The NAUA Book Club meets on the last Thursday of each month starting at 7:30 PM (EDT) / 4:30 PM (PDT). All are welcome. The book for February 26th is called "Ultra Processed People," and it was chosen by Teresa Klostreich.

"Ultra-Processed People" is a 2023 non-fiction book by Chris van Tulleken that explores the impact of ultra-processed foods on health and society. It discusses how these foods, which often contain ingredients not found in a typical kitchen, contribute to health issues like obesity and chronic diseases.

If you are interested in attending, please email Ed Hudak at bookclub@naunitarians.org.

[Download iCalendar entry for this event](#)
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NAUA Conversation / Discussion CIRCLE

Wednesday, March 4th,
4:00 PM PT / 7:00 PM ET

Open to All

No Registration Required



The **NAUA Conversation/Discussion CIRCLE** is a monthly space for connection and community building. This CIRCLE is designed for NAUA members and friends to gather, share ideas, spark meaningful conversations, and deepen our connections.

Our gathering take place on the first Wednesday of each month, from 4:00 - 5:30pm Pacific Time / 7:00pm Eastern Time. Everyone is welcome. Join in creating a vibrant, supportive space for dialogue and reflection. The zoom link is: <https://tinyurl.com/naua-circle>

For questions or to register for reminders, email us at circles@naunitarians.org. We hope to see you there!

[Download iCalendar entry for this event](#)
[Add event to Google Calendar](#)

**IARF Four-Part Course:
"Human
Consciousness"
Next Session March 7th**

In this four-part series, we are exploring various aspects of human consciousness as seen through two distinct lenses: the religious and philosophical traditions of humanity, and the recent scientific studies.



We seek to understand how science confirms or contradicts religious or philosophical conceptions, think about how the disagreements might be resolved, and also identify religious or philosophical issues that have been neglected by science, which might lead to fruitful growth on both sides.

- Session 1: February 7 (completed, [recording available](#))
- Session 2: March 7
- Session 3: April 4
- Session 4: May 2

Register with IARF.net and then register for the course at <https://iarf.net/network/courses/30/>. The time is always **8:30 AM**

ET. The course has a discussion board for announcements, asking questions and general conversation related to the subject. Don't worry if you missed the first session; simply review the recording from that session and join for the remainder of the series.



Your Instructor: **Mark Reimers** is an Associate Professor in the Neuroscience Program and the Department of Bioengineering at Michigan State University. His lab, the Reimers Lab for Computational and Systems Neuroscience, develops and applies statistical methods to analyze high-dimensional data from neuroscience experiments. Mark is also an NAUA Board Trustee and Chair of the NAUA Academy.





**March NAUA Academy Session:
"A Pilgrimage on the Camino de Santiago"**
with Penny Ridderbusch
Tuesday, March 10th
4:30 PM PT / 7:30 PM ET

The Camino de Santiago is one of the most ancient and well-worn pilgrimage routes in the Western world. For over a thousand years, people have walked these trails—from all across Europe and beyond—toward the cathedral in Santiago, said to be the resting place of the apostle James.

In today's hectic world that is constantly bombarding us with chaos, the Camino is a chance to hit pause. Hit pause on social media. Hit pause on politics. Hit pause on life's demands.

In this session, **Penny Ridderbusch** will talk about the history of the Camino de Santiago, her experience of walking the Camino, and what pilgrimage can mean for Unitarians.

The Zoom link is: <https://tinyurl.com/nauaacademy>.

[Download iCalendar entry for this event](#)
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REGISTER NOW



About Our Speaker: Penny Ridderbusch is a graduate of the Foster School of Business at the University of Washington. She has served on the boards of several non-profit organizations, including church boards, mutual aid organizations, and political action organizations.

At the age of 7, Penny rejected traditional conservative Christianity. As she became an adult, she began to crave a spiritual connection with a power greater than herself. After many years of searching, she discovered “the god of her understanding” through a 12-step program and eventually found her way to Unitarian Universalism. She considers herself a panentheist, believing that god exists within and without everyone and everything. Her favorite place to connect with god is anywhere.

Penny lives in Port Townsend, Washington, and is an active member of the new Salish Sea Fellowship.



NAUA Board of Trustees Meeting **March 11th, 11 AM PT**

If you are interested in joining or observing a board meeting, please read [the board meeting participation policy](#) on our website

before emailing our board secretary for the Zoom link:
secretary@naunitarians.org.

Note: Past board meeting minutes can be found on our [website](#).

[Become a Member](#)

