

The Unifier



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- * Rev. Diane Rollert issues call to “engage the heart”
- * Druid service to close Sunday evening in Spa
- * Meet the new Executive Board!
- * and much, much more



The Seven Principles of Unitarian Universalism

1st Principle:

The inherent worth and dignity of every person.

2nd Principle:

Justice, equity and compassion
in human relations.

3rd Principle:

Acceptance of one another and encouragement to
spiritual growth in our congregations.

4th Principle:

A free and responsible search for
truth and meaning.

5th Principle:

The right of conscience and the use of the
democratic process within our
congregations and in society at large.

6th Principle:

The goal of world community with
peace, liberty, and justice for all.

7th Principle:

Respect for the interdependent web of all
existence that we are all part of.

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Graphic designer wanted

To help design and execute editorial graphics for The Unifier. Familiarity with vector and raster graphics required.

Remuneration: undying gratitude of the EUU community and the pride of a job well done.

Contact: djsuchard@gmail.com



Players wanted

We are always looking for musicians to share their talents in our worship at retreats. To join us as a soloist or part of an ensemble, please contact Marcie McGaughey, Music Director, when you register (or before).

We especially need pianists who can play hymns during services and accompany the choir for worship and on Saturday night.

Contact: mcmouse54@yahoo.com

president's letter

Visions and Missions ahead for the EEU

by Carolyn Burlingame-Goff, President, EEU

While my husband Ray and I were in the U.S. this summer, we visited the Unitarian Universalist church of Annapolis, Maryland, where my mother, a newly-minted member, proudly introduced me to the congregation as the President of the European Union. I must admit that I am sincerely relieved not to have quite that level of responsibility as the new president of EEU.

EEU has had many exceptional leaders since its inception, and I am lucky to be inheriting an organization on such

solid footing.

That stability has given birth to a desire on the part of some of our members to explore new ideas, new priorities and new partnerships.

We find ourselves at a very recognizable place: the crossroads between the tried-and-true and the new-and-exciting. Finding the balance we want will be one of the challenges of the next few years.

As a first step in that process I would like to work together with you to develop Vision and Mission Statements

for the European Unitarian Universalists.

We will take the first few steps at the Spa Retreat, but we will look for ways to make sure all of our members are involved – not just those who participate in the retreats.

With all of the turbulence in the EU and in the world at the moment, I look forward to navigating the relatively calm waters of the EEU with you over the next year.



A first in Europe: lay and ministerial UU education on the continent

An English-language addition to the educational options in Europe for those aspiring to UU ordained or lay leadership is now available in Prague, Czech Republic, through a program under the auspices of the Religious Society of Czech Unitarians.

The Unitarian Academy was launched this year to promote liberal religion and spiritual values and prepare candidates for ministry.

Education in the Academy is focused on both theory and practice. A spring 2017 module on Unitarian History was held in April, with Reverend Sándor Kovács, of Cluj (Koložsvár), Romania, and Reverend Eric Cherry, of the UUA, delivering the lectures.

An October module is planned next month with Rev. Sara Ascher, Executive Director of the ICCU, and Rev. Larry Peers, UU minister and master trainer and coach.

While registration on the ministry track is closed for this year, those interested in the lay-leadership track can still register for next month's "Leadership Module, Ethos of Unitarian Ministry," a three-day educational retreat. Keep in mind that this event takes place from 26 to 29 Oc-

tober and is concurrent with our Spa Retreat. The venue is the Regional Educational Center Kuks, located at the historic Kuks Hospital, a baroque national cultural monument.

The Academy is sponsored by the Unitarian Universalist Partner Church Council and the International Association for Religious Freedom. Students at other educational institutions may participate at no charge.

Required modules for the lay program include Tradition, Management, Service to the Community, Service to Society,

Theology, and Education. Optional modules are Spiritual Practice and Educational Visits Abroad. The Ministry track includes additional theoretical and practical work.

Fees for food and lodging are modest. Unitarians and anyone from the general public whose behavior and thinking is aligned with Unitarian principles may apply for admission.

Please visit the website for more information:

<http://www.unitarska-akademie.cz>.



The Czech Academy at Kuks Centre, Prague, home to the UU ministerial and lay training modules.

Rev. Diane Rollert named UUA Ambassador to EEU

By Matt Gilsenan

The Unitarian Universalist Association has selected Diane Rollert, our Spa retreat speaker, as its Ambassador to the EEU, succeeding Mark Morrison-Reed.

“I am greatly honored by the UUA’s invitation to serve as UUA Ambassador to the EEU,” Rev. Rollert says. “I’m looking forward to meeting with everyone at Spa in October and a growing relationship with EEU.”

Diane was already scheduled to be our retreat speaker when she was approached about the role. Now that she has accepted, she will continue the process begun with Eric Cherry, Director of the UUA’s International Office, and Mark Morrison-Reed to design this relationship to best serve everyone involved, starting at the upcoming retreat.

“I know that there are changes being made which will differ from the arrangement you had with Mark Morrison-Reed. So, for now, I’m most interested in hear-

ing from all of you and where your thinking is about this relationship,” Rev. Rollert said.

“UUA’s Ambassador program is an important way to maintain and improve right relationship between the UUA and U/U communities around the world,” according to Eric Cherry. “This program relies upon the volunteer service of people with significant experience in global U/U ministry, with intercultural competency skills, and with pastoral leadership experience relevant to U/U congregations. These are skills that Diane has in great abundance,” Eric says.

Rev. Rollert will be available to make two trips to Europe each calendar year, including two Sundays and the intervening week. A typical trip might include a Sunday service with a different Fellowship on each of the two Sundays and a visit with a third Fellowship. A rotation of fellowship visits will be agreed on.



The EEU welcomes Rev. Rollert and looks forward to working with her to strengthen our Unitarian Universalist community in Europe.

a look ahead

The Edict of Torda – Happy 450th in 2018!!!

by Laura Fuchs

January 2018 will mark the 450th anniversary of the Edict of Torda, one of the world’s first statements of religious tolerance. The publication of the Edict on 13 January 1568 by King John Sigismund, who was himself Unitarian, was also the first recognition of Unitarianism by a government in the history of the world, and the beginning of the U* legacy of being a spiritual tradition that resists hatred, oppression, and the narrow view that there is only one way to be faithful or religious.

The Edict states: “In every place the preachers shall preach and explain the Gospel each according to his understanding of it, and if the congregation like it, well. If not, no one shall compel them for their souls would not be satisfied, but they shall be permitted to keep a preacher whose teaching they approve [...] no one shall be reviled for his religion by anyone [...] and it is not permitted that anyone should threaten anyone else by imprisonment [...] For faith is the gift of God, and conscience cannot be constrained.”

One of the primary shared Unitarian Universalist values is tolerance of differing systems of belief. We are free to follow our conscience in the search for our own personal truth about life’s big questions. And our “Six Sources of Faith” explicitly states the value of the world’s spiritual traditions.

Fellowships looking to celebrate this event at their service in January can find resources and information for marking this oc-

casation at the UUA International Office website. Individuals and small groups can continue to connect with others online for a year of theological reflection, and there are also opportunities to join in organized pilgrimages. Go to the website for more information and plan how you and your congregation will be marking this historic and memorable occasion. <https://www.uua.org/international/torda450>



The Proclamation of the Act on Religious Freedom at the 1568 Session of the Transylvanian Diet by Aladár Körösfői Kriesch (1896).

Who's who? The EEU Board for 2017-2018

President Carolyn Burlingame-Goff

I am a lecturer at the University of Heidelberg and love language in all of its forms and especially the theater.

My areas of specialization are the American Musical and cultural hybrids in works from 19th century author Lydia Maria Child (coincidentally a Unitarian) to current science fiction and fantasy. As anyone who knows me can attest, it is pretty easy to get me passionate on just about any topic, and, as EEU President, I welcome any suggestions you might have.

I have been involved in UU for about twenty years. Laura Bertuzzi-Ney, a member of the Heidelberg fellowship, accidentally left a copy of the fellowship newsletter in my hospital room while visiting me. I was bored, so I read it, and it piqued my interest. I was looking for a spiritual home to raise my daughter in, and UU seemed to be a good fit, so we started attending. I attended an EEU re-

treating in Spa shortly afterwards with Heidelberg Fellowship members, Carolyn and Bruce Saunders, and shared a room with Marcie McGaughey!

EEU and my UU Fellowships supported me when I was going through tough times and pushed me to greater good when things were going well. EEU Retreats provided me with a place where I could indulge in adult thought while my children were in the hands of caring individuals who helped develop their spiritual, emotional, and intellectual lives. I am so grateful to everyone who was a part of that process; it meant the world to me—especially when the kids were young. And look how great they turned out! Then there is Ray, whom I met and came to love through our EEU association, and I will never be able to light enough candles of joy to cover that.



Provisional Secretary Bonnie Friedman



UU/EEU is my anchor in life's storm, the community in which I feel most at home. It is the community with which I love to worship, change the world for the better, and play together! It is a big part of my life, as we are very active in the Wiesbaden UU fellowship, EEU and are still members of our church in San Diego as well as members of the Church of the Larger Fellowship. I love the e-mail and web resources, but best of all are the amazing, genuine, present and dedicated people whom I feel honored to call my friends and fellow faith-followers.

We found the UU faith on the web when we got pregnant with our son. We checked out UU and Quakers. We wanted to bring him up in an ethical and moral community with folks who shared our values, but without the baggage of either of our childhood faiths. UU was

the perfect fit for us both—enough ritual for me and no pacifism for Darrel. That was in 2000, and we found our church home in 2002 when we moved to San Diego. We joined First Unitarian Universalist Church of San Diego in 2004. We joined EEU when we found it in 2014....I think...sometimes the years run together! First we met with the old Frankfurt fellowship in Steve and Sabine's living room, then we helped John Keating bring back the Wiesbaden Fellowship.

As a 3rd grade teacher at a bilingual international school in Germany, I live and act on my UU values 24/7...although my work passion is probably the new Drama Club I am helping to develop at the school. Other passions include family time, long dog walks in the woods, reading, writing, cooking and eating with friends and loved ones...not to mention EEU retreats and being the Announcement Lady with the Hat!

Vice-President Gail Rosecrance



I grew up in a UU fellowship in Southern California. My newly single mother, with a POW brother in Vietnam, was looking for a community where she could voice her opposition to the war and be supported in raising her children in a humanist spirit. The small UU community met in living rooms, and my mother became a bulwark of the church. I drifted away during my studies and my settling in France. I came to EEUU about 8 years ago, when my children could benefit from it. They have and so have I. The retreats have been a refuge, allowing my children and me out of routine time together. We've traveled to Euro-

pean cities and lived our English speaking to the full, having left French speaking papa to his many commitments. At EEUU, the kids have been embraced by their peers and a multitude of adults; they have built relationships that continue to surprise me. They have shared their musical skills in gorgeous performance contexts with such gifted instrumentalists, growing ever more confident. I have made friends and basked in the wonderful ritual, workshops and sermons. Now, I have accepted the VP role as a means to give back and to be a part of EEUU's continuing quest to be a warm home and welcoming community for seekers.

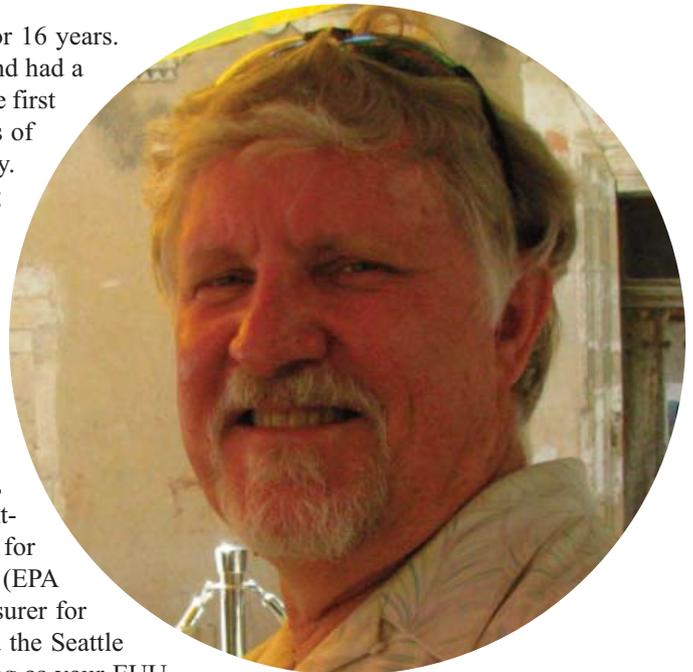
I am a communications facilitator in Paris; my focus is helping people to learn how to maximize their impact and assess the needs of those with whom they communicate. I love reading, cooking, traveling and spending long evenings with friends.

Treasurer Tom Sievers

My wife, Jeanette, and I have been involved in the EEUU for 16 years. We attended our first retreat in October 2001 at Rolduc and had a great time. We have been attending retreats ever since. We first became involved in the Coordinating Committee as Representatives of the At-Large Group. I later served for three years as the EEUU Secretary. It was a great opportunity to be a part of the central group coordinating the retreat experiences we have all enjoyed.

The EEUU has become our extended family. Over the years, we have shared our joys and concerns and were moved by those of others. It's a caring community that has helped us through the hard times of life. We respect the acceptance of diverse spiritual expression and practice and have felt welcome. I can't imagine our life here in Europe without the EEUU.

Jeanette and I have been married for 30 years, and we have two cats. We love Europe and don't want to ever leave. I love reading, the spiritual search and traveling around Europe. I'm a former accountant and auditor; I was an accountant at a publicly traded company for three years. I was also an auditor for the US Government for 27 years (EPA - 8 years and the Army - 19 years). I have also served as the Treasurer for non-profit organizations such as Drama Dock (a theater group) and the Seattle Lodge of the Theosophical Society. I am looking forward to serving as your EEUU Treasurer.



EUU Social Action Coordinators: a powerful synergy

By Sigrid van Eepoel

As the warmer summer months end, and autumn announces itself, social action becomes a crucial topic again. Let's take a closer look at what the EUU Social Action Committee has been accomplishing and what the EUU community is being invited to contribute to.

EUU Social Action co-chairs Diana Smith and Jodi Stolzenbach have the following message for us as they close their 2016 budget and are deciding what to do with the 2017 one. Together with them we look back on the past year as well as forward to their future plans.

Unifier: Looking back on the past year, what have you been working on?

Diana: More than I had imagined... Jodi Stolzenbach has been welcoming me as co-coordinator for the various EUU Social Action projects. I stepped in so that Jodi might continue!

In 2016 the EUU was able to support two European charities.

Jodi: Each received a grant of €500.

Diana: As it is important for different locations to be considered, we encourage fellowships and members at large to submit an application for a local charity they would like to support. For further information about applying for a local charity grant, send an e-mail to:

SocialAc-

tion@europeanuu.org.

The first is La Maison Verte, a charity in Paris. They serve the impoverished population in the northern part of the city, many of whom are refugees.

Mail boxes are set up for homeless people, and administrative assistance is offered to people seeking lodging, medical assistance, work, or judicial help.

French lessons for the often illiterate women, and homework assistance to children are other fundamental activities that the EUU grant will support. Additionally, transportation fees, beverages and snacks, and free clothing are offered. You can learn more in the La Maison Verte blog:

<http://blog.lamaisonverte.org/>.

Unifier: Why was La Maison Verte selected, specifically?

Diana: Some members of the Paris UU fellowship donate to La Maison Verte every year in order to become members. They participate in the annual meeting since La Maison Verte is our host association which welcomes us one Sunday a month for our services and one Tuesday evening a month for Special Events and Executive Meetings.

Unifier: That sounds like a beautiful partnership. For the second organisation different criteria must have been used.

Jodi: Indeed, because it's in Germany. FLAKS (<http://www.flaks-zentrum.de>) is a multi-generational centre for women in Altona, in the North of the Altona district of Hamburg. Their entire work revolves around helping women get and stay out of poverty. They may be single mothers, refugees, women without an adequate support network or schooling, some of them homeless. FLAKS tries to address their career, training, and psychological needs. The EUU grant would be spent on the specific career program, "Stark im Beruf", or Strong in your Career, that has its own separate website:



Jodi Stolzenbach

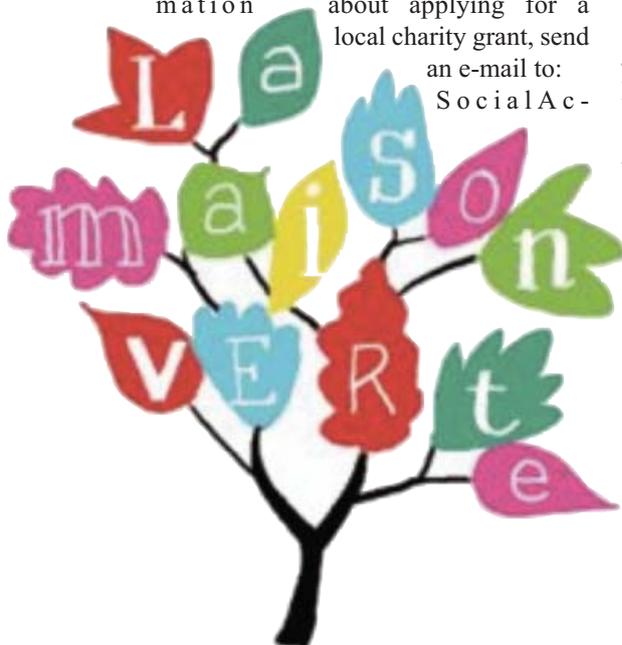
<http://www.starkimberuf.de>.

Unifier: So, what about the future? How would you like EUU social action to evolve?

Diana: Jodi and I have been and will be contacting our fellowships and members at large to establish exchanges and better practices. Our members are active in a wide range of charities within their communities or globally. Many of us respond to the needs we perceive in society and to which we contribute time, guidance, expertise, clothing, food, money etc. Service may consist of teaching, tutoring, nourishing, assisting with administration or house-hunting... the list is long.



Diana Smith





Unifier: Do you mean as UUs explicitly?

Diana: Not necessarily, no, and this is so important. So far we have often thought of EEU social action as a separate UU thing, but in reality each individual UU is also a citizen, a member of their community. Many things are being accomplished that way, and many more could be. It is my dream and Jodi's to encourage the development of networks between UU fellowships, as well as between our fellowships and the communities they are a part of.

For example, UUFP (Paris Fellowship) donates clothing (coats, scarves and socks), towels, sheets, blankets, sleeping bags, hot water bottles, and a small zip-lock bag of toiletries (soap, toothpaste, sunblock, washcloth, etc.).

Unifier: What is the goal you are aiming for?

Diana: We would be aiming for the fruitful exchange of ideas and best practices. Networking makes our work so much more effective. Additionally, I believe strongly in intergenerational exchanges specifically. But first of all, we would like to set up a structure or platform of some kind, through EEU Social Action. Connecting all those wonderful initiatives by UU fellowships and individuals, and reporting on those connections, may inspire many more to contribute some of their means and talents. Certainly with regard to refugee newcomers, that would really constitute positive cohesion building by UUs around Europe today.

EEU retreat collection(s)

The EEU organizes 2 weekend retreats per year. The next fall retreat in Spa, Belgium is being organized by the Netherlands Fellowship. The organizing committee for a retreat can select and request a local charity or one located elsewhere. The collection from the upcoming retreat will go to Vluchtelingenwerk Nederland. See the article on page 12.

In the past, retreat collections have included:

Glasses (lenses, frames, cases) are

collected and distributed in Burkina Faso by Optic 2000 from France.

Used or new postage stamps

Backpacks are distributed by the Belgian Fellowship

Books, CDs, DVDs. The money from sales are usually given to the chosen retreat charity.

Take a look at the pre-retreat materials and the article on "What to bring to Spa" on page 12 to see what collections will take place in Spa next month.

Your Pledge keeps EEU Strong!

EEU's annual pledge drive supports our ongoing work for Social Action, Religious Exploration for young people and for the development of our local fellowships.

This year's EEU Pledge Drive started at the spring retreat in Neu-Ulm and will end at next month's retreat in Spa.

If you have not yet made your pledge, please do so via our new online form: www.tinyurl.com/euupledge. You can also contact our Pledge Drive Coordinator, Tony Zamparutti at the Spa retreat or via email (zamparutti@gmail.com).

"We come together... Taking

the time to look into one

another's faces. And see there

communion: the reflection of

our own eyes."

Rev. Kathleen McTigue

Retreat speaker issues call to “engage the heart”

by Derek Suchard

Immigrant, expat, polyglot, ambassador.... the guest speaker at the fall retreat 2017, Rev. Diane Rollert, brings a lot to the table.

Originally a native of Cleveland, Ohio, and raised in Chicago, she eventually settled down with husband and children in Jersey City.

In 2006, following her graduation from Harvard Divinity School in 2005, Rev. Diane Rollert became the 11th settled and the first woman minister of the Unitarian Church of Montreal since its founding in 1842. She has since taken Canadian citizenship.

Prior to HDS, she had had careers in the online information industry and education.

In 2011, she presented the Confluence Lecture at the Canadian Unitarian Council Annual Conference, with a reflection on post-secularism.

In 2012, she served as the minister to the Unitarian Universalist Church of the Philippines while on sabbatical.

Diane has been a high-profile participant in the inter-religious discourse in Montreal, being the first female president of the Christian-Jewish Dialogue of Montreal and serving on the board of the Unitarian Universalist Partner Church

Council. She brought an interesting perspective to that role, having been raised herself in a secular Jewish family which also gave her deep “early experiences in the synagogue” she attended as a child. “I have always loved how UUism has enabled me to hold on to my past faith and to weave it into something that is always evolving,” she says. “To me, this faith is about dialogue, about being open to learning from one another as well as recognizing that there is something greater than ourselves.”

Diane has appeared on television, testified before the Quebec parliament’s Commission on Secularism, and has been published in Quebec’s English and French press regarding Quebec’s Charter of Values, among other issues.

She has been a key leader in the fight for religious freedom, having formed a group called Femmes qui croient en la femme (Women Who Believe in Women) and has worked closely with members of the Christian-Jewish Dialogue of Montreal to produce a series of videos celebrating Quebec’s diversity.

Asked about her ‘theological project’, she says “I have always preferred not to use a limiting term to describe my theology.[...]. To me, this faith is about dia-

logue, about being open to learning from each other as well as recognizing that there is something greater than ourselves. I cherish the beauty and wonder of nature and humanity but always am aware that we are challenged by what is wrong and unjust. So my faith calls me to be constantly confronting what needs to be changed.”

And she is aware of the challenges that are out there. As to the greatest challenge?

“This isn’t something that I can answer in a few words,” she says. “We are living through very challenging times that call us to truly live our faith in action. As UUs, we are called to honour the inherent worth of every person and to respect the interdependent web of existence in a time when individuals and the earth are facing a precarious future.

“In Montreal, I’ve been active in trying to build bridges between communities, especially bringing Unitarians, Christians, Jews and Muslims together. We need to overcome our fear of the other so that we can save each other and this planet together.”

Diane also also knows something about what it’s like to live abroad. She has lived and studied in Mexico and Spain, lived in Luxembourg for a time, and has spent a lot of time over the years with her husband’s family in Italy. Her language skills include English, French, Italian and Spanish.

Diane’s theme is *‘Engaging the heart: ways to spirit’*. She describes it like this: “As Unitarians and Universalists, although we have the freedom to chart our own spiritual paths, we live with a challenging dichotomy. We’re often caught in thinking mode. We question and we analyze, while our hearts cry out for deeper spiritual experience.”

We look forward to engaging the heart with Rev. Rollert as we go in search of a UU spiritual practice.



About EEU retreats

EEU's twice-yearly weekend retreats offer a unique combination of spirituality and fun, offering everything from worship to walks in the forest to late-night jam sessions. Retreats are mainly a time to connect with other Unitarian Universalists living in Europe. So many options are available that participants can emphasize whatever aspect they prefer.

We gather on Friday afternoon and our first meal together is Friday dinner. That evening we get to know one another and share candles of joys and concerns.

Saturday morning our guest minister gives a theme talk (see page 10).

Saturday afternoon will offer a wide choice of workshops or a walk in the forest, and then choir practice for anyone who would like to sing at the Sunday service.

Saturday evening is our Cabaret Night/Open Stage when we

enjoy musical, performance, and other talent from participants of all ages.

On Sunday morning, the guest speaker leads us during our Sunday service. At the end of the service, the retreat is officially closed and the next retreat is presented by the organizers.

Children and teens have their own exciting program throughout the weekend, along with some inter-generational activities that they also participate in.

Whether you choose a standard or extended-stay package, you won't want to miss the fall retreat, whether this will be your first time or you are a frequent retreator. Please join us and bring your talents: can you lead a workshop, play an instrument at our worship service, sing in the choir, help with the children and youth program, entertain us on Cabaret Night, play or sing along after hours?



How to get even more out of your retreat!

Stay for Sunday afternoon and evening and enjoy more activities, including a full Druidic Samhain celebration Sunday evening with Druid Taco Ijzerman!

"The cycle of the seasons inspires me as a connection to the 'here & now' and as a metaphor for professional and personal development," Taco says. "I became a member of OBOD, a modern druid order, in 1997. Since then I have been walking a wide path of self-development and working on a deeper connection with people and nature, which runs through my work and life like a green thread."

Taco will offer workshops both Saturday and Sunday.

Sunday workshop: Preparation for Samhain

This workshop is recommended for those who want to participate in the Sunday evening full Samhain celebration.

"Druids celebrate eight seasonal events; standing still to connect with their inner seasons and what they mirror inside us. We will deepen our personal understanding of, and experience with, the eight festivals, with special focus on Samhain, the start of a new year and the ending of the old."

Sunday evening Samhain celebration (Samhain is the ancient root of our modern Halloween.)

At this time of the year, we end a cycle and look into the darkness. We face pain, loss and letting go. The ancient Druids believed that at this time, the veil between the worlds grew thin, and for those who were prepared, journeys could be made in safety to the 'other side'. The Druid rites were concerned with making contact with the spirits of the departed, who were seen as sources of guidance and inspiration. The dead were honored and feasted, not as the dead, but as the living spirits of loved ones and of guardians who hold the root-wisdom of the tribe.

In addition to this connection with our ancestors, on the personal level we could say Samhain is the festival of the 'bare tree'. Almost all leaves have fallen, it starts to be cold outside, and all that's left is the skeleton of the tree, without leaves... naked. Without the distraction of its cover, we can see the tree: tall or small, impressive, damaged, nothing to hide, vulnerable and strong. We are the tree; it's the time of really 'letting go' and apparently dying, a time to rest and really turn inward. Then, firmly rooted in our innermost selves, we can make new buds and prepare to renew at the first stirrings of spring."

I'm going to Spa and I'm bringing....

Besides your own toothbrush and sturdy boots, you may be able to contribute to a number of repurposing projects: do dive into your attic, or anyone's else's for that matter (bearing in mind jurisdictional restrictions, of course), searching for any of the following:

- **BACKPACKS.** The Brussels Unitarian Universalist Fellowship will collect them at the retreat and make sure refugees in Belgium receive them. New arrivals in the country can make good use of your old rucksacks.

- **BOOKS, CDs or DVDs** in any language. These will be exchanged among the retreat participants as usual.

- For those with luggage restrictions: **EYEGLASSES**, broken

or intact, with or without their CASES. Optic 2000 repairs and distributes them in Burkina Faso.

- **STAMPS**, used or new, are welcome too, and do not take up much space in your weekend bag.

- We are also collecting **SEEDS** and searching for an organisation that can put them to good use.



Retreat service collection to Dutch refugee-support organization

By Matt Gilsenan and Shulamit Levine-Helleman

Donating our retreat's Sunday Service collection to a charity, chosen to be in alignment with EEU values, is a longstanding EEU practice. After a discussion between Social Action and the Spa Retreat Committee, the collection from the upcoming October Sunday Service with Diane Rollert has been designated for Refugee Work Netherlands, (in Dutch: VluchtelingenWerk Nederland (VWN)).

In the 1970s, a variety of religious and political organizations in the Netherlands were working independently to help refugees, primarily those fleeing Chile and Vietnam. In 1979, those organizations joined together to form VluchtelingenWerk Nederland.

Over the years, the organization has opened offices throughout the Netherlands and has assisted refugees of many origins, including Tamils in the '80s, Former Yugoslavians in the '90s, Somalians, Afghans & Iraqis in the 2000s, and Syrians & Eritreans since 2015.

VWN is an independent non-governmental organization that represents the

interests of refugees and asylum seekers in the Netherlands, from the moment of entry up to and including integration into Dutch society.

The organization recognizes that the Netherlands cannot just speak to other countries about respecting human rights...action is necessary.

VWN promotes the idea that citizens locally take responsibility for helping their fellow humans. Their guiding documents include human rights declarations, national legislation, and international treaties,

VWN works with many volunteers to protect asylum seekers and refugees. This is done through offering personal support and representing their interests in permits, entry and integration. Protection is more than just giving the possibility to seek and be granted asylum. It also means preventing someone from being sent back, if he or she has a reasonable fear for what would happen or risks being a victim of torture or inhumane and humiliating treatment or punishment.

Finally, protection means offering

entry into Dutch society and offering the possibility of building an independent life. Refugees need to be able to find more legal and social safety, and the Netherlands needs to do more to solve the refugee crisis.

VWN keeps the rights, the capabilities and the needs of refugees central. It also monitors the situation on the borders of Europe as well as the situation in the regions where refugees come from. In this way, the organization is part of an international organization. This is the vision and ambitious agenda for VluchtelingenWerk in the near future.

Please support VluchtelingenWerk Netherlands generously when the collection plate comes around on Sunday in Spa.

To learn more about this worthy organization, you can check <https://www.vluchtelingenwerk.nl/> (in Dutch).

Note: Some of the material for this article adapted with permission from the VWN website and translated to English by Shulamit Levine-Helleman

Like-minded companions on Mindful Journeys

Members and Friends of EEU may be interested in some opportunities to travel with a team of Canadian tour guides who organize trips for Unitarian Universalists to destinations around the globe. Beverly Carr, and the Reverend Wayne Walder have been leading trips they call “Mindful Journeys” for over a decade and have previously attracted EEU members.

On the 12 journeys, they have led so far, the couple says that they have had travelers from all over North America as well as from Barbados, France and the UAE. Most of the travelers have been UUs.

Although the average age of participants is probably 60, the full range of ages of past participants goes from 20-somethings to 80-plus. They have been very “go with the flow” travelers and lots of fun to travel with.

Two journeys have been announced for 2018.

March 2018 — Mindful India: The group will visit Delhi, Dharmasala — the home of the Dalai Lama — the Sikh Golden Temple in Amritsar, and the Taj Mahal in Agra.

Experience the beauty of the mountains, as well as sacred temples and sites, in a relaxed atmosphere. Imagine the morning sun greeting you at the Golden Temple or at the Taj Mahal. Imagine chanting with 100 monks in the foothills of the Himalayas in Dharmasala. Imagine climbing the minaret at the Majid Mosque that overlooks the Delhi market. With our meditations and reflections we can experiment with the spiritual practices of our hosts, helping us to under-

stand comparative religion. With our own mindfulness we can adjust our internal dialogue. Join Rev. Wayne and Joan Walder. Contact saranac2@gmail.com.

May 2018 — England — The Gilded Age Meets Downton Abbey: Cora, of Downton Abbey fame, is the inspiration for this journey. The Gilded Age in the U.S. (1870-1900) was the time that American heiresses went to Victorian Eng-

land to marry into the aristocracy — sometimes for love and other times to rescue England’s great estates and/or to give status to their families back home. Their de-



Majid Mosque, Delhi, India



Highclere Castle, real-world site of Downton Abbey, but not (as in the show) the spoils of the confiscation of religious properties by King Henry VIII.

scendants include Winston Churchill and the future kings of England. We focus on the most renowned heiresses and their husbands, their palatial homes, customs and history of the time, and Downton Abbey filming sites. We will stay 5 nights in the unique university town of Oxford, 2 in the Midlands, 1 in London. Our small group (up to 15 travellers) will enjoy a ‘Blue Badge’ guide who will tailor her commentaries to our theme. Join Beverly Carr, contact beverlz@me.com.

Learn more at <https://nuuc.ca/spiritual-growth/spiritual-practice/mindful-journeys/>

in the spotlight

EUU members pitching in at home

EUU members ‘in the spotlight’ shows you some aspects of your fellow members that you might not know about.

To nominate an EUU member for ‘in the spotlight’, contact Matt Gilsenan, Editor.

The theme this issue: UUs working with local organisations



General Help Service in Nieuwegein

Shulamit Levine-Helleman, an at-large member of the EUU, has been working for a local volunteer organization called the General Help Service Nieuwegein (in Dutch: Algemene Hulpdienst Nieuwegein) in the Netherlands since 2015. Volunteering helps Shulamit feel more useful as she is no longer working because of disabilities. Through its volunteers, the AHN helps a wide range of people in Nieuwegein who need long-term help, from older or disabled citizens who need help with shopping or making social contacts to people who are referred by social service agencies for help with administration, and so much more. Since beginning to volunteer with the organization, Shulamit regularly helps an older woman with shopping and has helped ghostwrite the life stories of two older residents.

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‘Our House Project’ in Belgium

Sigrid Van Eepoel, a member of the Brussels UU Fellowship (BUUF), has volunteered as head of accommodation for www.ourhouseproject.be since January 2017. Unemployed at the time, she wanted to make herself useful to refugees the way she had not been while working. Finding housing for people turned out to be a big need, which she could help meet through her house-hunting skills honed over years of frequent moving. These activities by a small team of volunteers are now expanding into several Belgian cities. Yves Kanarek, Sigrid’s husband, has also joined Our House.

Our House is a not-for-profit start-up aiming ultimately at genuine integration of communities. Newly arrived refugees, born and bred locals, and immigrants from around the world who moved in years ago: they form a group of people devoted to sharing food, stories, life, and



mutual support. Our House currently caters professionally prepared meals to a variety of events, sets people up in adequate accommodation, including things like interior decorating, furniture moving, admin and sourcing schools, operates pop-up beauty salons, partners with employment organisations, and facilitates language learning. Most importantly, at Our House, the refugees themselves bring their skills, knowledge, support, and sense of humor, to rebuild their lives, as well as enrich those of others.



Diana’s interest in greening Paris

The greening of France’s capital, with the goal of reducing pollution, is a cause that Paris-based Diana Smith is very much involved with. If you are interested in this, or active in the same way where you live, Diana would love to hear from you. Networking is a great way to get more things done, better. You can reach her at dianalsmith@wanadoo.fr



Brava, Cara!

Cara Burmedi has relinquished her role as EEU Religious Education Director in order to pursue an opportunity to study abroad in the United States. Cara is an alumna of our own EEU Religious Education program. She stepped up when needed and did an admirable job. Thank you, Cara, for all of your hard work!



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Recently, the AHN has started helping refugees in Nieuwegein, who were referred by the Vluchtelingenwerk Nederland, to help the newcomers after they received their official refugee status and are therefore no longer eligible for help through Vluchtelingenwerk. Since the beginning of this project, Shulamit has helped refugees from three different countries of origin. She helps them with administrative and language support, especially helping to translate official mails and helping them with their contacts with a wide range of government, business and social organizations. At the same time, she also learns something of their lives and hopefully helps them feel more at home in the Netherlands.

Nurturing the next generation

By Jeanette Wild-Sievers

The EEU Religious Education program at retreats offers many ways for those with some life experience to contribute to the next generation of Unitarian Universalists. We are currently recruiting teachers, teaching assistants, adult presenters, teenage mentors and babysitters for our upcoming retreat in Spa.

At each retreat, the EEU Religious Education Committee facilitates an informative and enjoyable educational program for children from 5-18 years of age. Goals of the program include helping children and teens learn about UU principles and famous UU's, other cultures and religions, and current social and political issues.

Many parents have also appreciated the opportunity for their children to strengthen their beliefs and to make new friends. Parents have commented that through the RE program their children have "strengthened their understanding and increased their ability to be with others," and "have learned more about how to be a good person." Since RE activities are usually conducted in English, many parents have stated that they appreciate the opportunity for their children to practice their English language skills, as well. All of this while having fun in a lively and safe environment!

RE participants are welcome to attend adult workshops, if desired, and are also encouraged to participate in the multi-generational talent show. In addition,



young musicians often share their musical gifts by participating in the Sunday service.

Do you have a message or talent you would like to share with our RE children and teens? We are looking for adult vol-

unteers to teach 15-30 minute sessions. They could also lead activities such as storytelling, singing, dancing, meditation or a nature walk. This will benefit not only RE participants, but also adults who wish to share their gifts. In addition, teachers would get a much needed break, so they can give their all to our kids: a "win-win-win" situation!

Babysitting and the RE program will now be

treated as two separate programs. If there are children under the age of five, we will encourage parents and volunteer babysitters to be with the children in shifts.

If you are interested in offering your life experience to our next generation of UUs, or have any other questions, feedback or ideas, please contact Jeanette Wild-Sievers, EEU Religious Education Director, at jeanette.wild.s@icloud.com.

*The children
"strengthened their
understanding and
increased their ability
to be with others".*

Third night features nature-based Druid ceremony

By Matt Gilsenan

One of the down sides of coming to EEU retreats is having to say goodbye to new and old friends after less than 48 hours after your arrival. We have experimented successfully in recent years with an optional third night, with additional programming and opportunities for fellowship. Sunday afternoon at the Spa retreat center will feature additional workshop opportunities and the chance to enjoy the onsite Spa facilities and nearby amenities.

A Sunday evening Samhain Ceremony will be led at the Spa Retreat by Taco IJzerman, a Druid of the Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids (OBOD). Taco describes his ceremonial work and workshops under the theme title of The Green Chapel- Nature as Inspiration, Seasons as Metaphor.

“The cycle of the seasons inspires me to connect with the 'here & now' and offers a metaphor for professional and personal development,” Taco says, “I have been connected to OBOD, a modern druid order since 1997, walking on a wide path of self-development, grounding and connection, running like a green thread through my work and life.

“As Druids, we celebrate the seasons eight times a year and connect to what they mirror.”

Since 2007 Taco has led ceremonies in towns and cities in the central Netherlands and at NUUF Amsterdam. Complementing this work, Taco is a consultant in organic gardening and urban agriculture. He will offer an afternoon workshop during the retreat.

<https://landco.nl/2-uncategorised/859-natuur-als-inspiratie-seizoenen-als-metafoor>
(Dutch only)



Druid Taco IJzerman officiating at a summertime gathering of the Netherlands UU Fellowship in the Vondel Park, Amsterdam, in 2014.

Druidism, bards and what have you... what's all that about?

The teachings of the Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids (OBOD) offer us a portrait of contemporary Druidism: the belief in the sanctity of nature and in the Otherworld. The work of the order draws upon Celtic sources, modern psychology and the Human Potential movement, and membership is open to followers of any religion.

The Order's spiritual philosophy is compatible with many religious beliefs. Some OBOD Druids follow Druidry as their primary or only spiritual path. Many others identify as Pagan, Christian, Jewish, Buddhist, Hindu, or many other religions, including Unitarian Universalism. Some identify as animists, pantheists, polytheists, monotheists or duotheists. Others avoid choosing any one conception of Deity, believing that by its very nature this is unknowable by the human mind.

Like Unitarian Universalism, Druidism is relatively free of dogma and fixed beliefs or practices. It promises a spiritual path and a way of being in the world that avoids many of the problems of intolerance and sectarianism that established religions often struggle with.

An important characteristic of most modern-day Druids lies in their tolerance of diversity: they will happily participate in ceremonies together, celebrate the seasons, and enjoy each others' company – realizing that no one has a monopoly on truth, and that diversity is both healthy and natural.

Although there is no 'sacred text' or scripture, there are a number of ideas and beliefs that most Druids hold in common. Nature forms such an important focus of their reverence, that whatever beliefs they hold about Deity, all Druids sense Nature as divine or sacred. Echoing our Seventh Principle, every part

of nature is sensed as part of the great web of life, with no one creature or aspect of it having supremacy over any other. In this sense, Unitarian Universalism may encourage us to be more anthropocentric than is typical of Druidism, with humanity occupying a central role in the scheme of life, the inherent worth and dignity of every human being our First Principle.

Druids draw inspiration and spiritual nourishment from Nature, and they also believe that the world we see is not the only one that exists. For the Druid, the Otherworld – a realm or realms which exist beyond the reach of the physical senses, but which is nevertheless real – is a cornerstone of their belief. This Otherworld is not just a destination when we die, but a place to visit during our lifetime in dreams, in meditation, under hypnosis, or in 'journeying' in a shamanic trance.

Some Druid groups today present their teachings in three grades or streams: those of the Bard, Ovate and Druid. The three goals sought by the Druid of love, wisdom and creative expression can be related to the work of these three streams. Bardic teachings help to develop our creativity, Ovate teachings help to develop our love for the natural world and the community of all life, and Druid teachings help us in our quest for wisdom. Druidism encourages a love of each other by fostering the magic of relationship and community, and above all a love of life, by encouraging celebration and a full commitment to life.

Parts of this article are paraphrased from Wikipedia and the OBOD website:

<http://www.druidry.org/druid-way/druid-beliefs>

