



# UUU REVUE

Summer 2017

## **Rooted in the Prairie: Introducing Rev. Luke Stevens-Royer**

**Racial Justice Task Group  
Sophia Lyon Fahs Library  
Clara Barton Guild**



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Universalist Church**

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## Church Mission

To create a compassionate, welcoming community that nurtures spiritual growth and practices justice

## UU Revue

The *UU Revue* is produced quarterly by the First Unitarian Universalist Communications Committee. Articles in *UU Revue* focus on the positive work done by First UU members and friends, demonstrating our congregation's commitment to the Seven Principles.

Much of the volunteering by our members is behind the scenes and, unless you are closely involved with these efforts, you may not be aware of the time and dedication, the challenges, or the joy experienced by those involved – not to mention the impact on those who benefit from their work.

By telling the stories of our wonderful members, we hope to inspire others to volunteer, become active, and find the reward of working with the church.

# *Rooted in the Prairie: Introducing Rev. Luke Stevens-Royer*

*By Robin Taylor*



*Rev. Stevens-Royer has been married for 10 years to his high school sweetheart, Jenna, an elementary school teacher. They have two daughters—Louisa, age three and a half (and named for Transcendentalist Unitarian Louisa May Alcott), and Clara, age one (named for Universalist Clara Barton). (Photo, September 2016.)*

On May 7, 2017 (after a grueling week of meetings, coffees, lunches, dinners, and “meet & greets,” bookended by giving two sermons on each Sunday of Candidating Week), the Rev. Luke Stevens-Royer was unanimously called to be the 32nd minister at First Unitarian Universalist Church of Rochester.

When the Search Committee telephoned to offer him the position, he didn’t hesitate to say yes. “I found First UU to be an even better fit than I expected,” said Rev. Stevens-Royer, who currently serves as Associate Minister at White Bear UU Church in Mahtomedi, Minnesota. He and his wife, Jenna, both Mankato natives, felt an immediate connection to Rochester, and are delighted to have family within driving range as they raise their two young daughters.

Although the 32 events on his 10-day Candidating Week schedule might have exhausted most of us, the 32-year-old still had the grace to offer ample gratitude to the congregation after his extended visit. “I have felt well shepherded by each of you, and have so enjoyed the depth and openness and curiosity of the conversations that have been held this week.”

And there were plenty of conversations! “Rev. Luke,” as he is happy to be called, fielded questions from the church youth over pizza in the Murray Room on the first Sunday, before challenging them to an air hockey game. He talked business at staff and board meetings. He discussed the history of the church at a past presidents’ luncheon. And he chatted with various committees throughout the week about their hopes, dreams, and agendas, earning praise from many. Design Committee Chair Richard Hutton observed, “He is a really good listener.”

On his last night in Rochester, Rev. Luke was interviewed by the Search Committee before an audience of 70 or so friends and members of the church who were anxious to “Meet the Candidate.”



*Sermon during candidating week.*

### *Luke’s Lutheran Roots*

Rev. Luke explained that he grew up a moderately conservative Lutheran. His maternal grandfather was a Lutheran pastor and a major role model for him in the way he lived his life with love and compassion, maintaining a lifestyle that revolved around the church. A self-described “church nerd,” Luke felt called to the ministry as early as middle school. By the time he graduated from Gustavus Adolphus College with a bachelor’s degree in religion (and a minor in music), his theology had become fairly liberal.

After getting married that summer, Luke entered Wartburg Theological Seminary in Iowa still intending to become a Lutheran pastor. However, Wartburg didn’t hold Sunday services, and encouraged its students to explore local congregations and get involved.

Jenna and Luke took advantage of this and attended the UU Fellowship of Dubuque one Sunday, where Luke described his “Oh, no!” moment. “Oh, no. I really like this!” he admitted.



*Bluebell walk with members of the congregation.*

“The pluralism of the tradition spoke to me.” After much reflection and discernment, he transferred to the United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities the next year, even giving up an ELCA scholarship. “There, I studied in an ecumenical setting rooted in justice, inclusivity, and love.” Making the switch to Unitarian Universalism allowed his heart to grow, but was a difficult move for his family to accept initially. “I left Wartburg Seminary with well wishes and good humor from colleagues and professors, and continue to carry with me a love of the Lutheranism that taught me humility, a love of communal singing, and a calling to love and serve the neighbor --which is all people.”

“His story resonated with me immediately,” said Laurie Helmers, a longtime church member and former music director. “I would think that many of our congregation, like me, grew up with a pretty traditional Christian background, and contemplated that there had to be a broader picture.”

“His story is my story,” agreed church member Kim Edson, who grew up Lutheran until her religion “became like an old shoe that just didn’t fit anymore.”

While pursuing his Master’s of Divinity at United, Luke and Jenna joined Unity Church-Unitarian in St. Paul, where Luke

worked as Coordinator of Youth and Campus Ministries for three years. He led the Coming of Age program, took the youth on a religious heritage trip to New England, and developed a campus ministry program to connect with students at Macalaster College.

He then did his internship at First Unitarian Society of Minneapolis in order to further develop his understanding of religious humanism. After receiving his Masters of Divinity., he was hired in 2012 as assistant minister at White Bear, where he was ordained a few months later. Although his parents and minister grandfather struggled with their decision to attend the ordination, in the end they all did. “Grandpa Rev. Sucher even sang a blessing he had composed, and he, along with Grandma Sucher, Grandpa Royer, and my parents, participated in the laying on of hands,” recalled Rev. Luke. “It was a beautiful moment.”

At White Bear, he has focused on leading worship, preaching, rites of passage, Lifespan Spiritual Development, social justice and public witness, developing curriculum for small group ministry, developing a young adult ministry, and creating a vision for communications and publications. As his responsibility there expanded, he was promoted to Associate Minister in 2015.

### *Personal Philosophy and Approach to Worship*

Today Rev. Luke describes himself as “a mystic and a Christian Humanist, drawing on the poetry, metaphor and call to justice of ancient scriptures, but primarily as a Unitarian Universalist. It comes down to a few core things: This life, including all people and the natural world, are sacred. Wisdom comes from many sources, both ancient and modern, including text, art, science, and personal experience. And our faith, at its best, calls us to radical and humble acts of justice, compassion, and courage for a more beautiful world.”

“I have grown and stretched over the years, and taken myself a little more lightly, so that

I can connect with my family and those who helped shape me, even as we hold very different beliefs," he said.

Likewise, he acknowledges that UU congregants also hold different beliefs. There will always be some who bristle at the mention of God, and others who long for more "God Talk," making it difficult to please everyone. "Unitarian Universalism calls us to a deep pluralism, and an expansive and wide lexicon, to use many images and metaphors and ways of speaking about the biggest questions of life, death, justice, and love."

People also come to church on Sundays from very different places along the spectrum of joy to sorrow. When creating worship, Rev. Luke said he strives for "resonance, relevance, and reverence. The experience should be relatable to your life and the wider world, but leave you feeling challenged and nourished in the deepest sense—held and cherished—rooted and ready to face next week."

Perhaps that is why, when the Search Committee announced its candidate for settled ministry in early April, there was immediate excitement from many congregants who remembered the young Rev. Stevens-Royer from his guest appearance in our pulpit in the fall of 2012.

"I'll never forget the Sunday he preached at our church and then sang for us (from the pulpit)," longtime member Jean Hanson wrote to the Search Committee. "Amazing! We stood and clapped—I'd never heard of such a thing, but we couldn't help ourselves."

Longtime church member Elaine Case emailed, "I remember him because I LOVED that sermon and repeated it multiple times to many people."

Perhaps Rev. Luke sensed those good vibrations, as he describes his interest in First UU Rochester as "feeling a call" to come here. He first learned about our church from our former minister, the Rev. Dr. Carol Hepokoski, who was one of his professors at United. He became intrigued by our 150-year history of progressive religion on his beloved prairie.



*Luke and Louisa's first Maypole.*

"I love your mission of welcome and inclusion, nurturing spiritual growth and practicing justice—a holistic and balanced vision of how church can speak to our whole selves," he said.

Board Vice-President Gail Bishop, who has served on the Minnesota Unitarian Universalist Social Justice Alliance (MUUSJA) with Rev. Luke for three years, was rendered temporarily speechless when she learned he would be our candidate. "I had no idea he was applying," she said. "We are so, so lucky!"

To the Search Committee, one of the most important requirements of the job was to find someone "who wants to be with us," yet would not allow themselves to burn out by overextension. "I can't do my work without deeply knowing and appreciating my congregation," Rev. Luke assured us. "At the same time, when I am with any member of the congregation, I will be open and compassionate, friendly, and always aware of my particular role, first and foremost, as their minister."

Although Search Committee members are confident they have struck gold with their selection, longtime staff member Connie Schuelka reacted protectively: "He's only human: he's allowed to make mistakes!"

Rev. Luke is also allowed to have a life outside of church, and as a busy dad of two young daughters, he will need plenty of time with his family. As Interim Minister Rev. Fritz Hudson reminded the congregation in our April Shared Ministry Workshop, “He can’t do it ALL. Think about what you can do to support this Shared Ministry.”

Rev. Luke is set to start August 1, and will preach his first sermon on August 13. Meanwhile, he and his family have already sold their home in St. Paul and will soon close on one in Rochester.

“Jenna and I are excited for our family to set down roots in Rochester—a city with good people, great food and drink, and a beautiful southern Minnesota prairie landscape—which we have always called home,” he said.

“I am so hope-filled for the future of First UU Church, built on a solid history of people committed to pluralism in spirituality, and justice and service in the wider community. From that foundation, what the church can build now, as a strong and vibrant multi-generational community, is filled with possibility. This church can thrive as a beacon of love and justice on the prairie.”

*I am a seeker of wisdom,  
an activist for justice  
a minister, a husband, a father, a poet, a musician,  
I am a child of earth, sky, god, spirit -  
all things that illuminate and draw us toward love and justice.  
I am a Unitarian Universalist  
and a believer  
of calling down heaven to earth  
in the moments of the common day.  
~ Rev. Luke Stevens-Royer*



*Marching at Twin Cities Pride.*

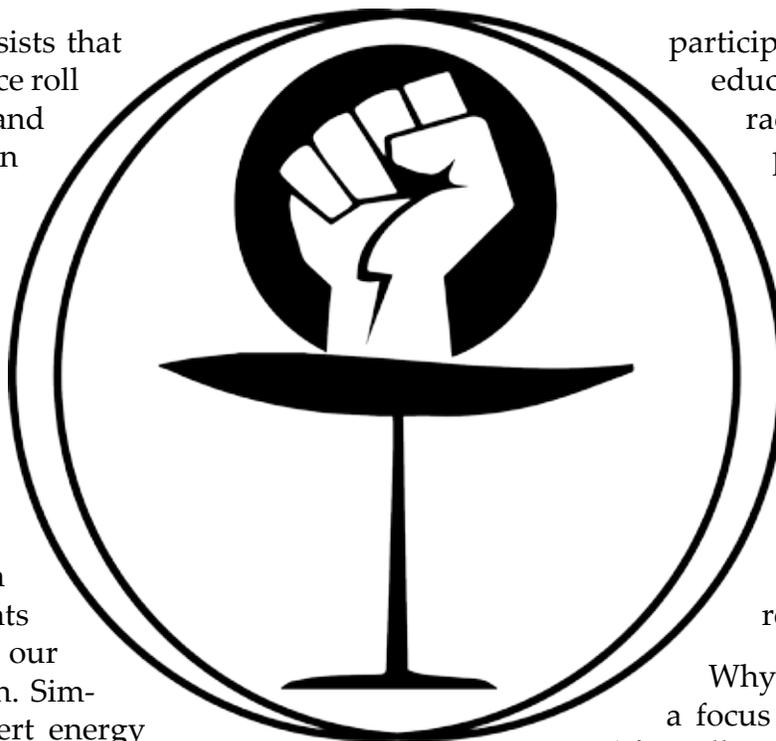
*Robin Taylor has been a member of First UU Rochester since 1992,  
and served on the Search Committee for the past 12 months.*

# Racial Justice Task Group

By Phil Wheeler

The Prophet Amos insists that we should "... let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream." Here in Rochester, we get most of our water from the Jordan Aquifer, which is roughly 400 feet below the surface. Before our water can roll down, it has to be pumped up. It requires the exertion of substantial amounts of energy to make our literal water roll down. Similarly, we need to exert energy to make justice flow. That is the work of the Racial Justice Task Group and the other groups reporting to the Social Justice Council. We are justice-pumpers.

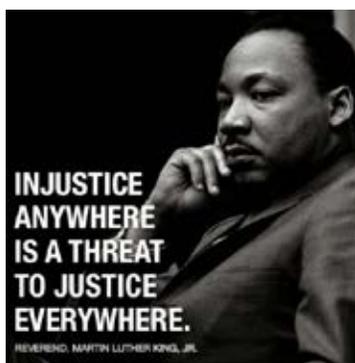
The first Racial Justice Task Group was one of the original task groups formed following the Social Justice Empowerment Workshop in 2008. Three of the current members of the re-activated task group were members of that original group, which focused on educating our congregation (and the numerous community members who



participated in the task group's educational efforts) about race, racism, and white privilege. That original group also maintained a presence at Rochester School Board meetings in an effort to address racial achievement gaps. I can't address the question of why that group quit being active; the focus of this article is on the re-activated group.

Why should racial justice be a focus of a faith community?

After all, many of us in this congregation have been involved in the moral issue of racial injustice for decades. We have acted through membership in and donations to national groups like the American Civil Liberties Union, the Southern Poverty Law Center, and the NAACP as well as through involvement in local organizations like the Rochester Branch of the NAACP, Rochester for Justice, and the Diversity Council. Why isn't that enough? Why should the UU Church become directly active as a distinct collective entity? My answer to this question is this: our call to direct involvement derives from the fact that moral issues are religious issues. Because injustice based on race is a moral issue, racial injustice is a religious issue. When we speak as part of a faith institution, especially in collaboration with other local groups, we emphasize the moral and religious dimension of the issue. We are not an interest group, we are simply pumping justice.



## *Maybe You Should Join the Task Group*

We currently have fourteen very active members of our Task Group, which may seem like enough, but we have ambitious goals for the coming years, so your participation would be welcome. I asked the current members of the task group to tell me why they decided to join this effort. Here are some of our perspectives:

**Phil Wheeler** For my part, when the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) released its report on the pervasive racial disparity in discipline and opportunity in Rochester Public Schools, I found a clear local focus for racial justice activism. When the District’s leaders responded with defensiveness and denial, my moral hackles rose further, and with it my inclination to direct involvement. The fact that race disparities in education are both a moral and religious issue and a local issue make it important to me that the faith community I belong to address it.

**Kathy Miner** participates “... for one simple reason—it would show some humaneness to a society that can be very unkind. I admit I am an idealist, but justice for all is important. If people don’t believe in justice, they believe in a world where some get more than they deserve and a lot more than they need, and others get less. We are all interconnected and I believe it is our moral duty to speak up for what’s right, what’s just, and what is humane. Participating in the Racial Justice Task Group has opened my eyes to the injustices that occur on a daily basis right

in my backyard. The Racial Justice Task Group has allowed me to work with a group of people that cares about the injustices as much as I do and wants to work towards making a difference.”

**Kim Reid** joined the racial justice task force because “I was concerned about the things that are happening in an increasingly divisive world. I was interested in working together with like-minded people to support and find justice for all members of our community.”

**Ray Phelps-Bowman**, one of the members of the former task group, is chair of the Rochester Chapter of the NAACP Education Subcommittee and co-initiator of the NAACP reading program, which involves many in the congregation both within and outside the current task group. Ray joined the Racial Justice Task Group because “... it is ACTIVELY working on the racial justice issue that is most important to me: removing the long-standing, racially based impediments to the education of minority children in Rochester. Specifically, I am pleased with the Racial Justice Task Group’s providing volunteers at Riverside and with its efforts to get discipline data from the school district. I view the fact that minority children in general come out of our educational system much more poorly educated than their majority counterparts as an emergency. It is an emergency because there is no do-over for the individual child who comes out of our education system poorly educated. There is no way the minority child who emerges from the K-12 system this spring reading at an 8th grade level or lower is going to catch up. That child is permanently harmed, permanently handicapped. If that harm



*Members of the Racial Justice Task Group: Phil Wheeler, Marty Alemán, Jodi Edmonson, Julie Gilkinson, Aleta Borrué, Sue Wheeler, and Patricio Alemán. Photo Courtesy Post Bulletin*

were physical, such as a process that gradually maimed one of their legs over the time they were in the K-12 system, the emergent nature of the harm to that individual child would be obvious. The harm being done to individual minority children is much more severe than a maimed leg, but much more easily ignored. The Racial Justice Task Group is working to stop the harm being done to individual minority children. That's why I am a member."

**Jodi Edmonson** joined the Racial Justice Task Group "because it offered the opportunity to work towards an important goal of racial justice while spending time with like-minded church friends. I never question whether or not my time is being well-spent."

**Paulette DeMers** joined the church "because of the importance we put on social justice—and working for racial justice and equity is vital. MLK taught, 'the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice.' The arc doesn't bend on its own. It takes effort, it takes action."

**Sara Felts** "joined as a rather spontaneous move after participating in a round table discussion of a UU response to Black Lives Matter. It quickly became obvious to me that I could no longer sit on the sidelines. Race issues and racism permeate every 'right to' that I believe in (the rights to an education, decent housing, clean water, and health)."

**Aleta Borrud** "felt the urgency to respond to police killings of young African Americans, especially those close to home in the Twin Cities over the past two years. It was not enough to be sympathetic. I needed a core of white folks who could act in solidarity with people within and outside our church to work with to make more than symbolic gestures. I have found a committed, serious group who are honest, yet generous with each other to begin this necessary work, important to me to feel an integrity with our UU principles."

**Julie Gilkinson** says "I feel a desperate need to learn more about white privilege and work to



*In March the RJTG proposed a congregational resolution on Immigrant Rights and Sanctuary. They embarked on an education and discernment plan that included finding answers to questions posed by congregants.*

right the wrongs in this area. Especially having a mixed race grandson and a black son-in-law brings the issue of racial justice closer to home."

**Patricio Alemán** really values "the focus on social justice issues that the UU church has. Race is an artificial construct and we need to help people understand this."

**Marty Alemán** "... needed to put my energies toward both social & racial issues in our community. I have seen and experienced how fear and dehumanizing certain people can cause incredible harm to not only individuals but whole communities as well."

**Molly Dingel** "... joined the Racial Justice Task Group because racial inequality is pervasive in our society, and I believe inaction—not being active to fight against that inequality—is part of what allows it to flourish. ... I was especially interested in working on issues of racial disparity in discipline in schools. The Racial Justice Task Group seemed like a good fit, and I'm pleased to be a part of it."

There are other members of the Task Group, whose reasons for participating are at least as diverse as the ones in this sample. As one member put it, "There is a huge need for well-planned actions and collaboration with other organizations to address the issues." Although initially our goals were simply to combat racism

and its variant forms and to hold local institutions accountable for eliminating institutional racism, the breadth of the challenges that racism presents have led us to an expanded vision that incorporates the issues of xenophobia and Islamophobia.

Some of our major undertakings for next year include:

- ❖ Lead discernment activities to prepare congregation for a vote on the Immigrant Rights and Sanctuary resolution
- ❖ Begin implementation of sanctuary support activities, if approved, and advocacy for undocumented immigrants and other marginalized members of our community in any case;
- ❖ Involve more congregants in the NAACP volunteer reading program;
- ❖ Collaborate with area organizations on achievement gaps, discipline disparities, and school integration;
- ❖ Educate the congregation about the Olmsted County Racial Attitude Survey results and issues of white privilege; and



*Members of the Rochester Muslim Community Circle showed us how to make Pakistani Vegetable Palau, Lebanese Moussaka, and Tabouli. Co-sponsored by Fellowship and RJTG*

- ❖ Support the Standing Rock Water Protectors' efforts to attain environmental justice.

## What We Do

When the task group reaches a consensus that a community or regional issue is at least in part a matter of racial justice, we respond with a five-pronged approach, including, where appropriate:

- ❖ Service to the community;
- ❖ Education of ourselves and the congregation;
- ❖ Witness (pointing out to the community at large that a moral wrong is being committed);
- ❖ Advocacy (seeking moral improvements, for example, through changes in legislation); and
- ❖ Community organization (working with other groups to empower the marginalized).

This last element is important. Focusing on it has engaged us much more closely with other organizations in the community working toward racial justice, which has been of significant benefit to us and which, arguably, has leveraged our energy.

How does the proposed resolution on immigrant rights and sanctuary fit into our efforts?

We consider immigration law and its enforcement to be a matter of racial justice because of the racial basis of the marginalization of the populations affected. The proposed resolution incorporates all of the approaches listed above. We urge the congregation to approve the proposed resolution because, while the task group can do many things without direct congregational approval, offering sanctuary support is a larger commitment than we have the authority to make.

*We have concluded*

- ❖ That the issues of immigration law and the treatment of undocumented residents are a moral issue of enduring significance,
- ❖ That egregious harm is being done to individuals and families that are part of our community,
- ❖ That inaction in the face of this injustice and this harm is inconsistent with our Unitarian Universalist principles, and
- ❖ That the participation of this UU Church as part of a community effort is an important element of our religious witness for justice.



*Racial Justice Task Group Forum on Immigration Rights and Sanctuary*

We can help (as Paulette DeMers put it) to bend the arc of history toward justice.

*Phil Wheeler has been a member of this church since 1983. He has been active in justice work within the church and the broader community for many years.*



# Sophia Lyon Fahs Library

By Kathy Brutinel



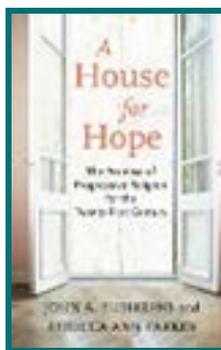
When I began coming to our UU church in 1985, the “library” was located on shelves—boards held up by brackets on metal strips—on the south wall of the Hearth Room. At that time the room was paneled in dark wood and for the most part the books were old, dark, and dusty. It never occurred to me that I might want to read one. There was no check-out system; probably no one was expected to read them. Other books that supported the RE curricula and UU parenting were scattered around the church, in classrooms, the chapel, and staff offices.

In the fall of 1993 several reasons to expand our educational and spiritual resources coalesced.

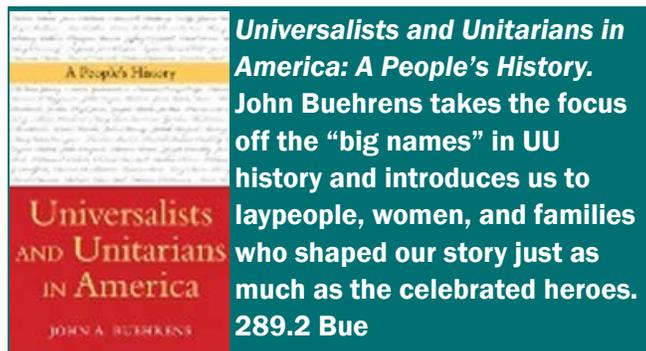
We wanted to support our revitalized adult RE program, patronize the UUA book store to keep it afloat, create a catalyst for shy people’s conversations during coffee hour, introduce visitors to UUism, and make resources readily available to the congregation. To meet these various needs—with no allocation in the budget—Linda Horton, Kathe Yoss, Beth Atkinson, and Beth Plaetzer put together a plan for a book store.

The Board approved the creation of a committee to oversee what came to be called the “Book Table” and an advance to cover an initial book order from the UUA Bookstore, with the expectation of repayment from the proceeds of a future used book sale. An order was placed in February 1994, and the Book Table officially opened that same month. Located in the Commons, the Table was open between services and for one half hour after the second service.

In January of 1995 the “First Annual UU Used Book Sale” was organized by Beth Plaetzer and Kathe Yoss. To obtain donations they placed the following advertisement in the *Venture*: “You say your kids are now in college or high



***A House for Hope: The Promise of Progressive Religion for the Twenty-First Century.* Former UUA President John Buehrens and Rebecca Ann Parker, President of Starr King, envision the theological and spiritual foundation for the future of liberal religion. 289.1 Bue**



**Universalists and Unitarians in America: A People's History.** John Buehrens takes the focus off the “big names” in UU history and introduces us to laypeople, women, and families who shaped our story just as much as the celebrated heroes. 289.2 Bue

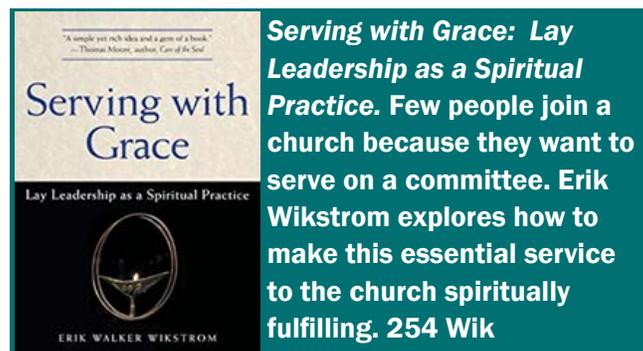
school? Then you won't need all those copies of *Cat in the Hat* or the 27-book series of *Spot the Dog*. Dust off the art volumes Aunt Jo gave you years ago for the coffee table; ones with titles like *Sixth Century Paleontologists I Have Known* or *Composting in the Middle Ages*. We also welcome diet books with recipes never sampled.” Good to know our budding librarians had a sense of humor.

With the help of 27 volunteers, as well as Clara Barton Guild members who posted flyers, the sale raised just over \$1,000. The committee paid off the advance and had ample funds left over for future purchases. In the 1994-95 annual report, committee chair Tom Weber reported that the Book Table had sold \$1,114-worth of books in its first full year.

At some point the group ditched the “table,” which required moving all the books in and out of the Commons each Sunday morning, and replaced it with a “cart.” The cart was essentially two large cupboards held together with hinges, such that it could be swung open to resemble a book case or folded shut to be locked. It was on wheels so it could be pushed into a corner when not in use. When the church was closed for a massive renovation project at the beginning of

the summer in 1999, the cart was rolled into the furnace room. When the church re-opened after construction, the Book Table did not.

Exciting things were starting to happen in the RE wing, however. In 1999-2000 the Religious Education for Children Committee organized the cataloging of almost 2000 books, which were a combination of the books previously scattered among different rooms and a sizable donation of children's books from DRE Beth Plaetzer that supported UU values and encouraged children and parents to read together.



**Serving with Grace: Lay Leadership as a Spiritual Practice.** Few people join a church because they want to serve on a committee. Erik Wikstrom explores how to make this essential service to the church spiritually fulfilling. 254 Wik

Under the direction of Linda Horton, an RE Committee member, and Jolyn Thompson, a librarian in the Rochester elementary schools, the group identified cataloging software and a Dewey Decimal-based cataloging system published by the Church and Synagogue Library Association. The call numbers and subject headings were modified a bit for our use and cataloging information was recorded on slips of paper. Sandy Ramage, Sue Wheeler, and Ella VanLaningham took the written information and entered it into our database. In addition, the books were centralized in the RE wing.



**We Pledge Our Hearts: A Treasury of Poems, Quotations, and Readings to Celebrate Love and Marriage.** Edward Searle has collected writings that “give voice to love’s many expressions.” The book contains selections from ancient and modern sources, from the famous to the obscure, and from many cultures and faith traditions. 265 Sea



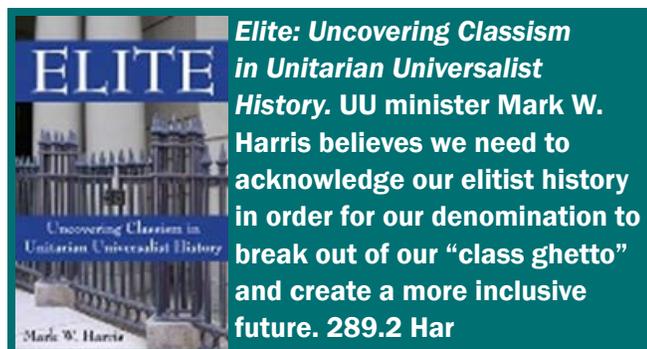
In 2001 board member Bruce Jordan asked me to start up the Book Table again, but to turn it into a library instead of a store. A new Library Committee put together a model for a library. Over the next few months the decision was made to use the cataloging system already in use in the RE library and I catalogued the books. A rudimentary check-out system was established, and volunteers staffed the library on Sunday mornings. The core of the collection was the remaining books from the Book Table, but the committee added to the collection through purchases from Beacon Press and Skinner House Books (UUA-affiliated publishers) and the solicitation of donated books.

In the fall of 2002, the library opened in the former book table cart in the Commons. As reported in the August 2002 *Venture*, its goal was to have a varied collection that:

- Introduced us to or deepened our understanding of UUism.
- Reflected or addressed our seven principles.
- Included poetry or meditations for reflection.
- Educated us about UU history.
- Had been the texts for adult education offerings.
- Helped us run the church more effectively and supported committee activities.
- Increased our understanding of the world's major religions.
- Included books written by local UUs.

In addition, Sandy Ramage made sure books from the children's library were also available for check-out on Sunday mornings, rotating them based on seasonal or holiday themes or topics of special interest.

Over the next few years, the Library Committee dreamed on. High on its list were a permanent location with real shelves that could accommodate the adult library, the children's RE library, and the parenting/youth books in the Conference Room cupboards, as well as an updated, intuitive database and a portable computer to use for check-out.



**Elite: Uncovering Classism in Unitarian Universalist History.** UU minister Mark W. Harris believes we need to acknowledge our elitist history in order for our denomination to break out of our “class ghetto” and create a more inclusive future. 289.2 Har

None of those things seemed possible—until 2010 when the stars aligned and brought together two women who had seen the value of libraries in other UU churches. DRE Gwen Hendee knew that our former nursery was no longer needed for classroom space, and Hospitality and Growth Council Chair Carol Ann Wallace knew how to get things done. They resolved to handle the location issue.

During the spring and summer of 2010 major changes took place in the RE wing. Gwen Hendee and Vaz Zavaletta painted the block walls of the former nursery a welcoming shade of orange. Book shelves from the RE hallway were moved in and various members donated additional book shelves, a computer and printer, a table and chair for the computer work area,

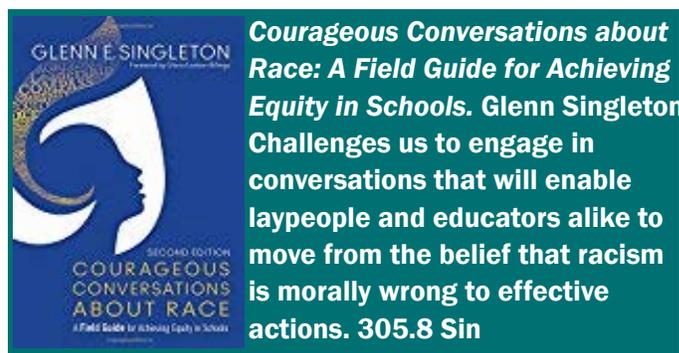


**Coming Out in Faith: Voices of LGBTQ Unitarian Universalists. Sixteen UUs tell their stories of living out sexual orientation as members of UU churches in this collection edited by Susan Gore and Keith Kron. 306.7 Gor**

a table lamp, a floor lamp, and office supplies. The Property Committee turned the former sink area into counter space and a storage cabinet. Comfortable chairs were located by the Design Committee. Books were moved, arranged, culled, and organized; librarians James Rentz and Rhonda Lorenz cataloged new books.

The Library Committee held a “grand opening” on Sunday, September 26, 2010. The new library was named after Sophia Lyon Fahs, who revolutionized Unitarian religious education for children in the early and mid-1900’s. The library has several of her ground-breaking books. Fahs wrote “It Matters What We Believe, #657 in our hymnal. The Library Committee liked to think “it matters what we read.”

In the fall of 2010 Carol Ann and I became



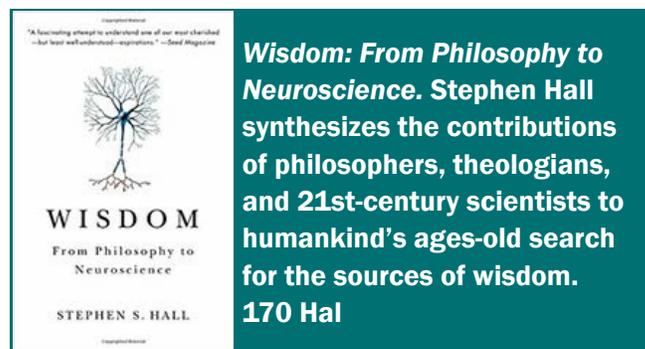
**Courageous Conversations about Race: A Field Guide for Achieving Equity in Schools. Glenn Singleton Challenges us to engage in conversations that will enable laypeople and educators alike to move from the belief that racism is morally wrong to effective actions. 305.8 Sin**

co-chairs of the Library Committee. We held another used book sale and raised almost \$750.00. As books were purchased and added to the library collection, book reviews—mostly written by Polly DeStefano, Pat Calvert, and me—appeared in the *Venture* to introduce the congregation to our collection. Volunteers staffed the library each Sunday to help patrons find and check out titles. The library participated in the Social Justice Fair by making library materials relating to social justice available in the Commons.

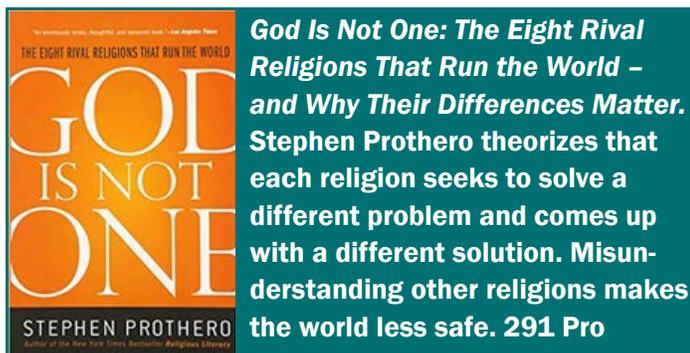
When Carol Ann died in December 2012, the Library Committee dissolved without her leadership. Nonetheless, people have continued to check out and return books on their own. Materials have gotten reshelfed and someone has straightened up now and then, but there has been no overall organization or management.

Then, as often happens in a church after a period of inactivity, new energy and leadership arrive.

Our new DRE Joyce Rood had been frustrated by our old cataloging system whenever she wanted to find a book to illustrate a lesson. When she met with the DRE at the White Bear Unitarian Universalist Church for advice last fall, Joyce



**Wisdom: From Philosophy to Neuroscience. Stephen Hall synthesizes the contributions of philosophers, theologians, and 21st-century scientists to humankind’s ages-old search for the sources of wisdom. 170 Hal**



**God Is Not One: The Eight Rival Religions That Run the World – and Why Their Differences Matter.** Stephen Prothero theorizes that each religion seeks to solve a different problem and comes up with a different solution. Misunderstanding other religions makes the world less safe. 291 Pro

was amazed at how easily she was able to pull up several books on a particular topic, using a cloud-based library management application, Libib. Remember the Library Committee’s old wish list? This app and the passage of time addressed the last two desires. Libib is an intuitive, easy-to-use database and we no longer need a dedicated computer. Every registered user with a computer, tablet, or smartphone has access to the database, along with the ability to search for and check out library materials.

Joyce solicited help from Kate Thompson-Jewell to transform our library catalog into the new system. From January to March of this year Kate entered several thousand books, aided—thank heavens!—by bar codes that can be scanned

with only a cell phone. Ramona Barr helped label new books.

Next came new leadership. Alan Goldberg and Kay Udey recently joined our church and were looking for a service they could provide together. Since they love both books and community, it was only natural that they found their calling in our library. Their fresh eyes are seeing new possibilities for the collection and new ways to reach out to the congregation. They are organizing a team to help run the library and getting new systems in place. They are also planning special events to coincide with religious holidays and cultural events in order to enhance our spiritual growth and understanding of the world’s religions.

Plan to see what’s new during a Grand Re-Opening in the fall!

*Kathy Brutinel is a regular contributor to the UU Revue and is an active member of our congregation.*



# The Clara Barton Guild



*If you drink coffee, tea, juice, or cocoa during the Sunday coffee hour, you can thank the Clara Barton Guild for supplying your beverage.*

*The Guild began this hospitality at the request of Rev. Vern Curry in 1963.*

*By Sue Wheeler*

Clear evidence of an active Clara Barton Guild is all around you when you are in church. Yet most people say, “Clara Barton Guild? What IS that?”

The Clara Barton Guild is a group of church members and friends—mostly women but really everyone is welcome—that supports the church but is an independent organization. It is unique in that it has its own treasurer and bank account. A subgroup of its members decides on yearly donations to charities and causes, and other funds are approved by members on a case-by-case basis. Through the years it has raised money for these donations with rummage sales, bake sales, bazaars, harvest sales, sponsorship of concerts, and other creative fundraisers. It has always been an interesting and hard-working group.

*Association of Universalist Women—1917:  
Edith Rommel, Kittie Granger, Cora Adams,  
Jennie Case, Nellie Kjerner, Kate Sherman,  
Nellie Case, Nellie Hargesheimer, Alma Gaskill*

## *Ancient History*

The Guild in some form or other has been a part of the church for over 100 years. The first mention of a women’s organization is in the 1902 Grace Church (Universalist) Board meeting minutes—the Ladies Aid Society. By 1905 it was called the Ladies Social Circle. In 1906 that organization was “active and interested in promoting the welfare of the church,” according to that year’s Annual Report.



At that time, women generally weren't a part of the governance of the church—not trustees, officers, or even ushers! (We frequently mention Eliza Tupper Wilkes, our minister from 1869 to 1873, but fail to mention this fact. The congregation didn't elect a woman Board president until 1978.) Instead the women formed a group that fulfilled their own spiritual, service, and social needs. It wasn't long before the group became an integral part of church life.

The 1913 Annual Report proves the 1912 claim that “the church could not get along without our ladies.” A total of \$608 (roughly \$15,000 in 2017 dollars, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics) passed through their hands during the year as follows:

- Paid church treasurer - \$155 (\$3,867)
- Church decorations - \$226 (\$5,639)
- Organist - \$83 (\$2,071)
- Paid on church debt - \$85 (\$2,121)
- Flowers and paid small bills - \$41.29 (\$1,030)

In 1916 with the building of the new church, the church Board “voted to permit the use of the church basement for dancing, parties, and entertainments under the supervision of the officers of the Ladies Society.” In 1917 the group kept busy “planning for and arranging furnishings for the new church parlors and the convenient kitchen and serving room.” Membership was 35 women during that year.

At some point the name of the group became the Association of Universalist Women, which existed until it merged with the Clara Barton Guild in 1961. In the 1937 AUW Record Book, Treasurer Maude Shannon reported that there were 17 dues-paying members, and the group disbursed \$235 (\$4,074 in 2017 dollars) to the church's general budget, in addition to paying for music, flowers for services, laundry, and telephone installation and service, among other things.

## *The Clara Barton Guild*

The modern Clara Barton Guild organized in February 1937 with 24 active members, and annual reports suggest that it was made up of younger women of the church. In addition to fundraising for contributions to the church coffers and community organizations, monthly meetings always included educational lectures and reports on varied topics such as travel, religion, and social concerns of the community and world.

Members regularly volunteered at the local Red Cross and USO during the war years, and organized blood drives, donated to



*Portrait courtesy The Red Cross*

Clara Barton was a Universalist who founded the American Red Cross and worked for women's rights.

**Mission Statement:**  
The Clara Barton Guild promotes and advances justice for women, children, and families through service to the Church and the greater community. The activities of the Guild combine the spiritual, service, and social missions of the church.

**Membership:** Open to anyone in the church who supports the mission of the Guild.



*In September 1967 the Clara Barton Guild toured the new church building. Building Chair Don Layton and Rev. Curry led the tour.*

the Clara Barton Diabetic Camp, supplied flowers for Sunday services, served suppers for the Men’s Club, supplied help in the nursery, raised money for Universalist missionaries in Japan—the list goes on and on. The Guild, as did the AUW, also served as a precursor to our present-day Caring Congregation until November 1977 when members discussed “the desirability and function of a Caring Committee.” By the following September a “church-wide project—not just a Guild project—to see to the various needs of church members” had been established with Ella VanLaningham as chair.

Each meeting included discussions of the business of the Guild and a program of interest to Guild members. At a meeting in May 1952,

Mary Hodgson presented her article on “The Intoxicating Discovery of Life at the Golden Age of 40.” In 1958 members sent a contribution to the local Citizens Commission for Integration, in support of housing for minority groups, and Guild members agreed to individually write letters to Rochester Mayor Smekta in support of the Commission. In November 1964 Lester Stiles from the Olmsted County Welfare Department spoke about the work of his department and suggested specific ways Guild members could participate in the volunteer program.

According to the minutes of a 1966 meeting, as the new church was being built, Mrs. Spicer warned Guild members when visiting the site to beware “... of the existence of a speed trap near the Congregational Church on the access road. She had just fallen victim to it. The warning was echoed by Mrs. Clagett, a less recent offender. Do they have a grudge against Religious Liberals? Should we change the site of our new church away from this pocket of persecution?”

Members of the Women’s Liberation Movement in 1970 “admirably presented the aims of their movement. They stressed that Women’s Lib is not anti-man, but pro-human beings.” In 1972 Phyllis Layton arranged for a forum on Women in Politics, including City Council Alderman Carol Kamper, School Board Commissioner

*Before - original kitchen when the church was built in 1968. After - In 1991, the Clara Barton Guild donated \$4,200 to renovate the church kitchen and add cabinets. In 1995 the Guild bought two new stoves and a new refrigerator.*



Karen Ricklefs, Republican Vice Chairman Betty Ryan, and DFL Chairman Elaine White. (Note the lack of inclusive language.)

## Raising Money

The work of the Guild has always included rummage sales, which were not only the biggest fundraisers of the year but also provided good fellowship and fun. In 1952, Clara Barton Guild members signed up for shifts to work at the two-day rummage sale. “Margaret Parker was appointed as donut and coffee girl for Friday and Gen Bezoier for Saturday.” In 1966 the rummage sale chair “Mrs. Karlson seeks some fresh young talent to assist her in exchange for some on-the-job training in the ways of Rummage.”

A successful one-time endeavor was the 1962 cookbook “Since Eve Ate Apples,” which the Guild sold for \$2 each. It contained 252 recipes, collected from 111 church women, with about 20 women working on creating the finished product. They boldly printed 3,000 cookbooks and by 1967 had sold all but 100, realizing a \$2600 profit! (That’s over \$19,000 in today’s money.)



*Setting up the 2017 rummage sale.*

Those weren’t the only ways to raise money—these creative women thought of numerous projects over the years: collecting “silver offerings” at each meeting; saving Rap N Wax, Gold Medal, and Fels Naptha coupons, in addition to Gold Bond and Green Stamps and Super Valu tapes, all to be redeemed for merchandise or cash; sponsoring Robert Oudal Choral concerts and Orvis Ross concerts; and organizing apron sales, book sales, Golden Elephant sales, White Elephant sales, baked good sales, boxed lunch sales, and “Crescent Moon” record sales.

Today members of the Guild continue to enjoy the fellowship of meetings and rummage sales, as well as the programs that are part of the monthly meetings. They have heard from representatives of Mission 21, an anti-human trafficking service provider, and Project Legacy, a grassroots organization to help Black youth stay in school; they have donated to both. Chalice Camp Co-Chair, Ramona Barr, talked about the summer religious education program; the Guild paid for first aid kits for the camp. Church member Stephanie Podulke gave a presentation about the process of making stained-glass windows and talked about her design for the beautiful 150th Anniversary window. A donation of \$1,620 by the Guild helped make the window a reality. And just for fun this year they listened and watched and were amazed as photographic artist Anne



*You will recognize these chairs if you have ever been in the church sanctuary. The Guild donated \$7,200 in 1971 to buy 150 chairs for the new church building.*



*You have seen these two sofas in the Hearth Room.  
The Guild bought them in 1988 and 1990.*

Black-Sinak explained how she transforms photos of everyday objects (for example, wheel covers and car washes) into stunning pieces of art. In addition to the donations mentioned above, the Guild has a Scholarship Fund that it uses to support leadership and OWL training, as well as attendance at the UUA General Assembly.

The following reflection from the 1979 Annual Report of the Clara Barton Guild holds true today: "Because of the changing lifestyles of our church women, the Guild has experienced an acute woman-power shortage and steadily decreasing participation." Women's organizations first formed as a way for women to contribute to the life of the church, since women were excluded from the church's formal organization. Now that women are fully integrated into all aspects of the church, Clara Barton Guild members are having to rethink its purpose. Current attendance is spotty and veteran members are questioning whether the Guild

*Sue Wheeler has been a church member since 1983, is a member of the History Committee, and loves to dig through all the church archives.*

should continue. The current co-chairs, Jessie Finch and Laura Lukes, sent a questionnaire to Guild members and friends asking for their thoughts on the future of the organization. Church member Margo Stich responded, "I would hope this important piece in the fabric of what First UU is, past and present, could continue at some level."

The Guild has had a long and useful history. Whatever its future may be, we are surrounded by its legacy. We are the beneficiaries of generations of generous women, dedicated to helping our congregation thrive.



*Take a drink from the new and improved water fountain in the lobby and thank the Clara Barton Guild for donating it in 2016.*

# The Seven Principles of Unitarian Universalism

We covenant to **affirm** and **promote** ...

The inherent **worth** and **dignity** of every person

**Justice, equity** and **compassion**  
in human relations

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

A free and responsible search for **truth** and  
**meaning**

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

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

**Respect** for the interdependent web of  
**all existence** of which we are a part



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