

April 2023

Dear Reader,

Welcome to the first edition of The Liberal Beacon, a monthly publication of the North American Unitarian Association (NAUA). The purpose of this publication is to keep members informed about NAUA, to present articles of interest concerning liberal issues and concerns, and to provide a space for feedback.

Our first issue begins with a brief article from me as both its editor and a founder of NAUA, explaining what the NAUA is about and, since we are just beginning, what it is going to be about. THE NORTH AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION: AN INTRODUCTION, says more about what I imagine NAUA will accomplish in the near future than it does about what we're able to do right now. Thankfully, patience is one of our liberal virtues. For now, just knowing we have a truly liberal religious home again is abundantly satisfying.

In MAKING SPACE FOR DISSENT: A PERSONAL REFLECTION ON THE PROPOSED CHANGES OF ARTICLE II OF THE UUA BYLAWS, Rev. Terry Cummings shares her concerns about the current direction of Unitarian Universalism from her unique perspective as a Transwoman and ordained UU Minister. Discussing her response to a controversial 2019 article in UUWorld about transgender issues, along with her concerns regarding the Unitarian Universalist Association's unexpected proposal to eliminate the seven principles that have long epitomized the values common among all UUs, Rev. Cummings reminds us tolerance and kindness lie at the heart of our liberal religion.

Unitarian Universalism has entered a period of internal conflict unlike any other in its history. In GADFLY: GROUND ZERO - ONE MEMBER'S REFLECTION ON WHAT HAPPENED AFTER ALL HELL BROKE LOOSE AT HER CHURCH, Unitarian Universalist Church of Spokane member Lynn Jinishian writes about the turmoil her congregation went through because of such conflict and how it has endured and grown stronger in the aftermath. She does so with the hope the story she tells might be an inspiration to members of other congregations that are going through something similar.

This issue also includes briefer articles and reports along with notice of coming events. We hope you find what has been shared meaningful and informative.

Todd F. Eklof – Editor

THE NORTH AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION: AN INTRODUCTION

What NAUA is About and Becoming

By
Todd F. Eklof

Unitarians and Universalists have long enjoyed and benefited from supporting each other through national organizations like the American Unitarian Association (est. 1825), the Universalist General Convention (est. 1886), the Universalist Church of America (est. 1942), the Unitarian Universalist Association (est. 1961), and the Canadian Unitarian Council (est. 1961). Throughout the years, their members have insisted that these organizations must remain democratic, noncreedal, and without authority over their individual members, their local congregations, and the ministers who serve them. These associations, conventions, and councils, rather, were instituted to help their members share resources, advance liberal religion and its causes, and be part of a historic religion that is far reaching and has deep roots.

It is now 2023 and the need has emerged anew for religious liberals to bolster our support of each other and our purposes in the wider world. The North American Unitarian Association (NAUA) has recently been established as a new service and support organization for its members. Its members include Unitarians, Universalists, and other religious liberals, and it may be joined by both individuals and congregations. NAUA is meant to be of support to members throughout the North American continent (and elsewhere) in their practice and promotion of historic liberal principles—freedom, reason, and tolerance—which are the practical outgrowths of our more fundamental commitment to the inherent worth and dignity of every person, everywhere.

As such, NAUA should be viewed strictly as a member service and support organization: never as a Church authority, central office, or denominational headquarters. NAUA, rather, works as a clearing house for liberal ministers and congregations in search. NAUA fosters a culture of tolerance and friendship among those with diverse opinions and lifestyles. NAUA organizes events that bring its members together for conferences, conventions, and community. NAUA facilitates organizational worship services, seminars, classes, and groups. NAUA promotes its commitment to democracy by using modern technology to enable every eligible member to participate and vote on important matters regarding its leadership and direction. NAUA provides reliable communication resources like newsletters and other publications to keep members informed about what the

NAUA should be viewed strictly as a member service and support organization: never as a Church authority, central office, or denominational headquarters.

organization is doing, about opportunities and events, and offer articles of interest to liberals everywhere. NAUA will never censure anyone. NAUA's publications are free of propaganda and encourage robust input from readers who may agree or disagree with their contents. NAUA keeps its members tethered to our centuries-old liberal religious history and values that are needed as much today as ever.

As a service and support organization, NAUA also respects the autonomy, wisdom, freedom, and responsibility of its members. For example, its own values and purpose are clearly stated and presented so others know what it stands for. But it remains up to NAUA members and member congregations to articulate their own kindred values, principles, and purposes for themselves. Telling our members what they must believe, say, or promise to each other is not the business of NAUA.

NAUA does not dictate the ideology of its membership but strives to uphold and demonstrate its own. Nor does NAUA require a specific membership fee but relies upon the voluntary financial support and goodwill of its members. This always puts the onus on the Association to provide true value so those benefiting from its services remain eager to contribute with no need to ever wonder why they should.

Rather than acting as a gatekeeper between ministers and congregations in search, NAUA relies upon the intelligence of its member congregations to vet candidates for themselves, just as it is solely their exclusive responsibility to ordain, call, and even dismiss their ministers. NAUA builds and maintains an inventory of ministers committed to liberal ministry and liberal values and may suggest best practices for congregations in search (i.e., background checks, reference checks, standard agreements, etc., etc.) but leaves it up to congregations to determine the specific credentials and levels of experience wanted. NAUA members can also access this inventory anytime they need, not merely at a specific time each year. This process is more aligned with our free religious tradition than some may be accustomed to but will save congregations lots of time and money when searching for new ministers.

Finally, NAUA recognizes it is but one organization that is meant to offer specific kinds of services and support. Therefore, it welcomes and encourages its members to join while

remaining part of any other associations and organizations with which they wish to affiliate. The NAUA is still a work in progress and hopes to build quickly upon the trust and support of its growing membership. For now, the intentions and examples presented herein are indicative of the commitment to liberal values and respect for the freedom and autonomy of its members that lie at the heart of this budding Association. If you wish to join us in serving, preserving, and promoting liberal religion throughout North America and the world, please contact us by visiting our NAUA website at www.NAUnitarians.org.

MAKING SPACE FOR DISSENT

A Reflection on the Proposed Changes to Article II of the UUA Bylaws

By
Rev. Terry Cummings

The Spring 2019 issue of *UUWorld* magazine included an article entitled, “After L, G & B,” a personal essay about one family’s experience with a member of the transgender community. The article was written through a lens of kindness, empathy, and grace, and was supportive of the transgender community. The author, however, was neither transgender nor non-binary, and because of this the article received immediate condemnation.

Instead of the ground-breaking article being welcomed, it was accompanied by outpourings of condemnation and indignation. The UUA’s leadership fell on their swords and quickly apologized. Had the author of the article been a fellowshipped UU minister they would likely have been publicly shamed, officially censured, or worse.

The *UUWorld* editor issued a public apology explaining, “My intent was to model, through a personal essay about one family’s experience, ways for the majority of our readers to engage respectfully with trans and nonbinary people ...” As a transgender minister, I welcomed that and

was grateful and consider the article to have well met these expectations.

The apology also identified three “mistakes” made in connection with the article, none of which merit the public shaming and condemnation that ensued:

Publishing the article “without enough input from people who identify as nonbinary or trans.”

“We did not model respectful engagement.”

“It was hurtful to put a straight, cisgender person’s experience in the foreground, especially as one of the first major articles in the magazine on this topic.”

I disagree that these three claims were mistakes and, even if they were, they still didn’t deserve the public outcry that followed. Cisgender people should have the right to express support for the trans/non-binary community without prior approval. At the time, this seemed like one more example of an innocent, well-meaning gesture that was needlessly overblown into a major drama.

I was ordained into UU ministry by two great congregations. I took a vow to affirm and promote the seven principles that were drawn from six sources and are currently contained within Article II of the UUA bylaws.

It is noteworthy that the very same issue of *UUWorld* include another article that was submitted by Trans-persons. This second article included claims that our UU congregations are not spiritually welcoming to transgender and non-binary people. This claim does not correspond with my own experience as a transwoman, and I was offended by it. Up to that point I had found UU clergy, leadership, and congregants to be supportive and affirming of trans/non-binary people.

A couple of months after the article was simultaneously published and condemned, I found myself attending a workshop at 24

Farnsworth Street and had a brief encounter with the editor of *UUWorld*. I offered to write a piece defending the article in question from the perspective of a member of the transgender community. I figured that, being transgender, I at least had the “street cred” to write something in response. I was informed, instead, that such responses are not being accepted for publication. Apparently, only people who identify as transgender/non-binary *and* who represent a particular point of view would be permitted to write about their experiences in *UUWorld*.

As a recently ordained UU minister I didn’t have the confidence to take on the powers-that-be over this issue. By then I (and another transwoman minister) had fallen from favor with the transgender group that had been adopted as semi-official by the Unitarian Universalist Association’s leadership. It didn’t occur to me then that I was witnessing an incident of censorship that was part of a broader suppression of dissent. A suppression that could potentially undermine at least one of the seven principles I hold dear.

I was ordained into UU ministry by two great congregations. I took a vow to affirm and promote the seven principles that were drawn from six sources and are currently contained within Article II of the UUA bylaws. I have been steadfastly faithful to that vow and will continue to hold it and my ordination as sacred and holy.

With this in mind, I can’t help but question the motivations underlying the recently proposed changes to Article II that would eliminate them. I wonder whether these changes are meant to “throw the baby out with the bath water.” Stated differently, will replacing Article II as proposed be equivalent to stripping the Bill of Rights from the U.S. Constitution? On what foundation will the right to dissent rest, a right that I contend is enshrined in the existing seven principles, if Article II is replaced with the proposed new language? Are the proposed revisions to Article II a solution in search of a problem?

Our denomination has been severely challenged over the last few years as it has struggled to come to terms with some of its flaws and its past. It is

doubly challenged by the post-COVID reality of having to find new ways in which to “do church.” These struggles and uncertainties, and the times in which we live, have affected the way in which we treat one another. Public shaming by those in power and authority has become commonplace and is a matter of official policy in some instances, e.g., issuing a public notice when a minister is removed from fellowship.

I worry that the intent of the new language of Article II, an unspoken desire to call out, not call in, those who dissent from the official party line. It feels to me that forgiveness and reconciliation are currently lower priorities than shouting the loudest. Perhaps our denominational leadership should focus more attention on the work of encouraging mutual reconciliation and forgiveness than on changing the words of the UUA bylaws.

While it is praiseworthy to emphasize love, as the proposed revisions to the UUA Bylaws attempt to do, and to include language that specifically identifies people with marginalized identities, these ideals are already there in the seven principles and the six sources of inspiration from which they are drawn. Do the Beatitudes, one of the sources of our faith, not capture everything in the proposed new language, and more?

Treating one another with civility, and being fair to one another, including to our ministers, is central to our faith. Allowing space for dissent is the cornerstone of collegiality.

Without love in the heart of our systems of governance, centered around mutual accountability and openness to dialog and civility when we disagree, it won't matter what words are used in Article II of the bylaws.

If *UUWorld* will not publish the voices of dissent, they will be published in another setting. History is filled with examples of how efforts to silence dissent have been unsuccessful. Dissenting voices will always find a way to be heard. Always. Changing the UUA bylaws won't make a difference in the end.

GADFLY: GROUND ZERO

One Member's Reflection on What Happened After All Hell Broke Loose at Her Church

By
Lynn Jinishian

On February 17th, 2023, the North American Unitarian Association's (NAUA) Articles of Incorporation were recognized by the state of Washington and our new organization was officially born. A celebratory day to be sure, but also a reminder of the significant pain and loss many have suffered as we've navigated our way to this point in a continuing storm.

This piece is intended for two types of curious people: 1) Those who wish to know more about why we believe the NAUA is necessary even if all seems well in your home fellowship and 2) Those who are sensing something is not quite right and asking yourselves “What the heck is going on with our liberal religion?”

Perhaps you have already inquired about some distant “controversy” in our denomination and have received a satisfactory response either from the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) or your church leadership. Read no further. We wish you the very best in your beloved community and are rooting for you to change the world for the better. We'll see you out there! If, however, you have not received a satisfactory response (or any response at all) to your questions and concerns, this piece may shed some light and confirm that there are others out here just like you. Maybe you'll want to join us. The path will likely be muddy and rough, but we're just a few steps ahead, and we've got a self-proclaimed “pesky” Minister still leading the way in the effort to preserve our truly liberal religion despite what is occurring at the national level.

Versions of any story will vary depending on whom you're talking with and what bias they

cling to—including mine. For the Unitarian Universalist Church of Spokane (UUCS), this story began more than four years ago when Rev. Todd Eklof began alerting his congregation from his free pulpit to an unusual shift in ideology and practices in our denomination's only national service organization, the UUA. Some of us said "Hmmm...that's not right. We are an autonomous congregation not subject to authoritarianism from the UUA or anyone else!" Some of us said "Let's focus more on our own community and our own social justice efforts. Whatever is going on at the national level does not affect us." And some of us said "What is the UUA?"

In The Beginning ...

The UUA General Assembly (GA) took place in beautiful Spokane, Washington in 2019. For those who don't know, GA is our denomination's annual meeting where Unitarian Universalists gather to "worship, witness, learn, connect, and make policy for the Association through the democratic process," according to the UUA website.

Policy making through the democratic process! With people who believe in a free and responsible search for truth! And the right of conscience! One would expect this to be utopia for diversity of ideas, openness to questions and concerns, and respectful dialogue—debate even—about the direction of our liberal religion. One would expect—hope for even—available literature at such an event that includes challenging ideas worthy of consideration (or not) from various points of view about complex topics, maybe even controversy and dissent. This is who we claim to be as UU's: free, open, seeking, honest, broad in understanding, and ultimately respectful of the worth and dignity of each individual—even those with whom we disagree—and that means even "pesky" Rev. Todd Eklof.

This is not the place to defend or discount the content of *The Gadfly Papers* (released at GA 2019) or its sequel, *The Gadfly Affair* (released in April 2021). But if you truly want to understand

the concerns about Unitarian Universalism at the national level, these two books are a good starting place. If your Board of Trustees, other church leadership, or your Minister are attempting to prevent you from reading and understanding the Gadfly saga, I do not know what type of church you are attending, but it isn't Unitarian. Unitarians do not ban books, censure ideas, or demonize and dehumanize people they disagree with. We don't order people into re-education or "public restoration" meetings. We *can't*—even if we want to. It's antithetical to who we claim to be. Freedom of conscience is our golden rule.

Controversy at UUCS

And so began what became for me our head-spinning conflict at UUCS. To better cope with the situation, I found myself categorizing those I discussed the issues with into one of four factions: 1) The Supporters—This group believed Rev. Eklof was doing exactly what we expect of our minister—keeping us aware of happenings at the national level of our denomination, why we should care, and how to respond if we want to remain a truly liberal religion. 2) The Hurt/Angry—This group was upset with Todd for sharing his book at the General Assembly. They claimed to have been blind-sided and embarrassed as the hosts of GA (though he had been talking about these issues from the pulpit for months and shared his plan for release of *The*

I was stunned. How was it possible that people who call themselves Unitarians could not exist in the same sanctuary with a diversity of views?

Gadfly Papers in his Annual Ministerial Report to the congregation.) Some of these people claimed the book's content was "harmful" and should not have been written. I am inclined to believe many in this group were frustrated with Todd's ministry for reasons I'm not aware of and the *Gadfly* release was just icing on their cake—He had to go. I say this because "feeling blindsided and embarrassed" by the distribution of a book at a UU event is a forgivable offense to

most reasonable people. 3) The “Todd is Great, He Just Needs to Recognize the Importance of _____ (insert pet project, social justice issue, church appearance concern here) Group.” These are lovely people who do wonderful things within the church and in the wider world. They are less concerned with whole denominational topics and wish Todd would stop talking about the UUA. They view this controversy as buried in the past and should just stay there. And last, but not least 4) The “What is this UUA-Bylaw-Article 2-Seven-Principles-Gadfly-Democracy-Liberalism stuff you speak of? Group. This group can be further divided into the Blissfully Unaware or the Willfully Uniformed. No judgment here—they either just don’t know, just don’t care, or both.

What now?

After months of conflict and confusion amongst these factions, in June of 2020, for the first time in the history of UUCS (that I know of), we held our annual election for new Board of Trustees members with *two* candidates running for each of the 6 of 7 open positions. Six of those candidates were put forth by petition supported by a minimum of 20 congregants (as is in accordance with our Bylaws)—rather than the conventional way of being recommended by our Nominating Team. All six of those petitioned candidates were elected. (I was one of them.) Shortly thereafter, the only remaining Trustee from the previous Board, who would have served as President for the upcoming year, resigned. And shortly after that a splinter group of about 50 people immediately withdrew their membership and walked out the door. (Metaphorically speaking because this was all further complicated by the COVID-19 shutdown).

I was stunned. How was it possible that people who call themselves Unitarians could not exist in the same sanctuary with a diversity of views? How was it possible we could not work this out? How was it possible that people committed to the mission of this church could not accept the results of a truly democratic election and just walk out? We lost some longtime members and some

relatively new ones. We lost some big donors and some little donors. We lost some folks who fancied themselves leaders, and we lost some really admirable, respectable people I had viewed as role models for more than a quarter century. We lost some of our friends—people with whom we had attended worship services, weddings, funerals, graduations, retreats, and potlucks. Gone.

I remember an enormous sense of relief, a profound sense of sadness, and a near constant state of anxiety about the future of UUCS. The loss of this institution, established in 1887, would be an unbearable tragedy in our community. I remember looking to my new fellow Board members and to Todd and thinking “Oh my god, what now?” I do not know what was going on inside their hearts and heads but outwardly they *all* projected calm, composed, steady leadership. I wanted to “feel” like they were “being.”

And then, in August of 2020 in a sermon titled *Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow*, Rev. Eklof spoke the following words from the pulpit cautioning us about what was at risk, and despite the resignations of some, reminding us of what we had *not* lost: our common values and our shared commitment to our purpose—maintaining a truly liberal religious home and voice in our community and beyond.

“The future of Unitarian Universalism will depend on which side of history its congregations choose to stand on, including ours.” ...

“The answer to the question ‘What are we going to do now?’ is to keep doing what we always do, to be ourselves, to promote and uphold our values and principles...”

“...*To get through it we must go through it. And we must go through it as ourselves pursuing our highest aspirations, adhering to our greatest values, even if we sometimes falter and fail.*”

Fast forward 2.5 years—weary of being told by outsiders that we are an unhealthy congregation, frustrated at the unsatisfactory or lack of

responses to our concerns from the UUA, angry at the public shaming and labeling of our beloved minister as a “noncooperative abusive bully” on the UUA website, saddened to learn that other UU congregations and ministers are facing much the same, and concerned with the authoritarian direction the denominational leadership appears to be taking, it is time to lay all that aside, and take a more positive approach. NAUA is born of people from across North America who are striving to stay true to who we say we are—courageous, curious, compassionate thinkers and do-ers. Thanks to advancing technologies and new ways of “doing church,” some of these people have been welcomed into our UUCS family. Others want to preserve liberal religion in their own home congregations and are courageously helping to build NAUA from the ground up. So here we are...and here we go...and there is room on this path for you.

At UUCS, like any “family,” we still have disagreements, sometimes even arguments. A few of our members continue to question our sustainability. On the contrary, I believe this may very well be our finest hour, demonstrating that we will stand firm for what we believe in and our congregational polity despite enormous pressure to do otherwise.

Our toilets may need replacing and our 30-year-old roof bears monitoring, but we now have hope that our traditional Unitarian values and liberal voice will remain strongly rooted in our local community. Our Board of Trustees recently gathered input regarding congregational interest in UUCS becoming a founding member of NAUA with 92% of survey respondents in favor of doing so. Despite the pain and loss that we have suffered, the experience of navigating our way through this ongoing storm has made us stronger. We are a growing congregation because our pulpit is still free, and we will continue to “pursue our highest aspirations ... adhering to our greatest values” despite the darkness out there.

Come, Come, whoever you are...Wanderer, worshipper, lover of leaving. Ours is no caravan of despair. We'll leave the light on for you.

WHO MAKES A LIBERAL MINISTER A MINISTER?

Remembering the Historic and Exclusive Role of the Autonomous Local Congregation in the Ordination and Appointment of its Ministers

By
Rev. Dr. Todd F. Eklof

No committee is granted the right or authority to determine who is and isn't a minister within our liberal religious tradition! This has been true dating back to the 16th Century when some Reformers began rejecting the top-down authoritarianism of the Roman Catholic Church, along with its exclusive right to ordain, appoint, and, if necessary, defrock its priests. Among these reformers were the Anabaptists, the very first to make religious freedom and individual choice their central tenant. Hence the name, *Anabaptist*, which means “to baptize again.” Sadly, they were eventually persecuted out of existence because they rejected infant baptism

There is no higher authority, no denominational headquarters, no credentialing committee, granted any right to say who is and who is not a minister.

and, instead, required willing adults to be re-baptized of their own volition, not because their religion had been forced upon them by Church authorities.

After their tragic demise, their remnants went on to become Mennonites, Baptists, and Unitarians, the latter two of which have to this day maintained their historic commitment to congregational polity and individual choice. The Baptists call this principle, “The priesthood of the

believer,” because there is supposed to be no intermediary between the individual and one’s god. In recent years, Unitarians have articulated this principle as, “The Free and Responsible Search for Truth and Meaning,” and a commitment to “The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large.”

Such freedom has also long been extended to how we go about ordaining, calling, and, if necessary, dismissing our ministers. These rights and responsibilities belong exclusively to our autonomous congregations. There is no higher authority, no denominational headquarters, no credentialing committee granted any right to say who is and who is not a minister.

This has been so almost from the moment King John Sigismund Zápolya of Transylvania declared his a Unitarian kingdom and issued the Edict of Torda, the first law in human history guaranteeing religious freedom. 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. Therefore none of the superintendents or others shall abuse the preachers, no one shall be reviled for his religion by anyone, according to the previous statutes, and it is not permitted that anyone should threaten anyone else by imprisonment or by removal from his post for his teaching.

Today this principle is most often referred to simply as “Freedom of the Pulpit,” and “Congregational Polity.” It means there can be no such thing as heretics within our liberal religion and that it is the exclusive right of the local congregation to make a minister a minister.

NAUA HOLDS FIRST CLERGY MEETING

Report

March 23, 2023 was a historic day for the more than twenty Unitarian Universalist ministers who attended the first of NAUA’s monthly clergy gatherings. Although attendees are guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality, we can report that the meeting on Zoom began with a brief introduction about the NAUA, followed by a request that attendees adhere to these traditional norms:

We share our thoughts and feelings responsibly, without rancor or scorn, and remain open and supportive of those who share theirs by listening with curiosity, humility, kindness, respect, and a professional temperament.

We maintain collegial anonymity. Who is attending and what is said remains confidential.

Courage – while we ask for anonymity and confidentiality, we realize it cannot be guaranteed, and that, these days, it takes a degree of courage just to be here.

After a brief period of worship and reflection participants were each given some time to introduce themselves and share what was on their hearts and minds without interruption. Several commented this was their first clergy meeting in many years that held the safe and supportive collegial space that had once been taken for granted at such gatherings.

NAUA ACADEMY

NAUA Academy serves an educational and networking support function for NAUA members and friends. We offer edifying programming on a variety of topics. Each class or series is designed to educate, inform, and, as importantly, provide an opportunity to make connections with other religious liberals from around the continent. We also hope its various offerings will prove beneficial to both the individuals who take them and to the local congregations and communities they are part of.

THE LIBERAL BEACON

NAUA Academy Offerings in April & May

April 18th

The Goal of World Community with Peace, Liberty, and Justice for All: *Unitarian Universalism at the United Nations – Past, Present and Future*

This class will be led by Bruce Knotts who directed the Unitarian Universalists Office at the United Nations (UUUNO) for 15 years. The seasoned diplomat and international advocate for global human rights will discuss the 60-year history of the UUUNO and its accomplishments. He will include insight about its merger with the Unitarian Universalist Association in 2011, the UUA's subsequent cessation of international activities, and provide insights into how NAUA might reestablish International relationships with the UN and in the World Community at large.

**4:30 – 6:00 p.m. PST
5:30 – 7:00 p.m. MDT
6:30 – 8:00 p.m. CDT
7:30 – 9:00 p.m. EDT**

May 16th

What is Liberal Religion? *It's History and Values*

**4:30 – 6:00 p.m. PST
5:30 – 7:00 p.m. MDT
6:30 – 8:00 p.m. CDT
7:30 – 9:00 p.m. EDT**

In this session, Rev. Dr. Todd F. Eklof will discuss the origins and characteristics of liberalism in the Renaissance and Enlightenment periods, how liberalism manifested as Unitarianism in Eastern Europe and, later, the United States, and why it remains essential to human progress in today's troubled world.

Currently the best way to register for NAUA Academy offerings is letting us know your name

and the class you wish to attend by emailing us at:

academy@naunitarian.org

A Zoom link to the event will be sent in advance to registered participants.

NAUA Academy Survey

NAUA Academy is an evolving work in progress. In order for us to best know how to serve the needs of our members we ask that you please complete our survey by clicking on the following link:

<https://forms.gle/VUA9x3i7WTikBYsg6>

COMING EVENTS

NAUA Monthly Worship Service – May 20, 10:00 a.m. PT

NAUA worships services will occur on the second Saturday of each month beginning at 10:00 a.m. Pacific Time. Although the best format is still being determined, services will initially be both Livestreamed and on Zoom. Speakers will vary, but our first service will be led by NAUA Founder and Minister of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Spokane, Rev. Dr. Todd F. Eklof, whose sermon is entitled, "The Vibrant Future of Liberal Religion in North American and Beyond."

NAUA Monthly Clergy Gathering – April 27, 10:00 a.m – 12:00 p.m. PT

NAUA Monthly Clergy Gathering – May 25, 10:00 a.m – 12:00 p.m. PST

If you are not already and would like to be on our NAUA Clergy list, please send us a message letting us know you'd like to attend and receive

emails with meeting notifications and Zoom links.

and interesting individuals. For now, thanks so much for your interest in and support of NAUA!

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

We welcome letters from our readers for potential publication in *The Liberal Beacon*. Letters should address matters of interest to Unitarians and Universalists and other religious liberals, including current news and events.

Please email your submission no less than five business days before the end of the calendar month in order for publication in our next issue. Letters are shorter than opinion pieces and should be no more than 250 words. Form letters and letters considered libelous, obscene or in bad taste will not be printed. Anonymous letters will not be printed. The NAUA reserves the right to edit all letters for length. The decision to print any submission is completely at the discretion of the editors.

Please write “Letter to the Editor” in the subject line and email your submissions to nauaedboard@gmail.com or mail them to:

North American Unitarian Association
Letters to the Editor
4340 W. Whistalks Way
Spokane, WA 99224

Letters must include the writer’s name, full address and phone number for verification purposes. Only the name and town will be published.

EDITOR’S AFTERWORD

Like everything else at NAUA right now, *The Liberal Beacon* is a work in progress. I hope you’ve enjoyed our first edition. Our May edition will include lots more information about NAUA as well as interesting articles. We’ll tell you about one member organization that is the first NAUA Fellowship in history. And stay tuned for regular features like our “Little Liberal” column geared toward raising kids in our liberal tradition, along with book reviews, and interviews with unique