

June 2012



The Christian Universalist

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TWO roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;
Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,
And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.
I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I —
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

Robert Frost (1874–1963)



The Road Less Traveled

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The Christian Universalist back with thought-provoking articles

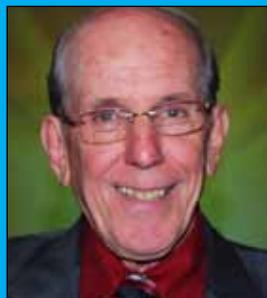
After missing the May issue of The Christian Universalist newsletter (because of an experiment with a different communication vehicle), we're back with this June issue. While preparing this issue, I received an email from a reader, **Richard Thornton** of Meadows of Dan, Virginia, who said his last saved issue was April, and asked about the current issue.

"I do look forward to the newsletter, as I am alone in a non-Universalist community, so have to rely on outside things for CU discussions. Thanks, Dick."

Thank you, Richard, for asking about the publication, and thanks for your comment. With such a wide diversity of members, with beliefs and ideas ranging from the ultra conservative to the ultra liberal, it's not always easy knowing what articles and items to include in each issue.

Do you still prefer to receive this newsletter each month, or would you like to see a longer, journal-type publication every two months, or six times a year? Since I started as editor in May 2011 (this is my 13th issue) I have done my best to provide articles that appeal to both conservative and liberal universalists. However, if there is something else you would like to read about, please let me know. You can email me at patmor123@gmail.com. Thank you!

This issue has some great reading and thought-provoking articles. Check out *CUA* Coordinator **Rich Koster's** *From the Coordinator* column on page 4, where he writes about **Robert Rutherford**, pastor of the Bridge Church of Eatonton, Georgia. This pastor has caused quite a buzz lately on the *CUA's* Facebook



From the Editor

Pat Moauro

Pat Moauro, Editor of The Christian Universalist, can be reached at patmor123@gmail.com

page for his universalist views and how Jesus' death on the cross has made a "full and final restitution" for all, saving them from eternal punishment in a fiery hell.

In his *From the Board Chair* column on page 5 *CUA* Board Chair **Kalen Fristad** writes about how spiritual journeys can bring enriching experiences.

David S. Sielaff, Executive Director of the Associates for Scriptural Knowledge, writes about **Pope Benedict the 16th** and his apparent support for universalism. See David's article on page 6. An article by **George W. Sarris** on page 7 answers the question, "How could a good God allow anyone to suffer consciously forever?"

Hope you enjoy *Holy Humor!* on page 8.

Pat

The Christian Universalist

The Christian Universalist is a digital newsletter published monthly by *The Christian Universalist Association (CUA)*, with news, information and commentary for anyone interested in Christian Universalism. Editorial reports, letters to the editor and photos are welcome.

Deadline is the 24th of the month preceding the month of publication. Reports and photos may be emailed to the editor at patmor123@gmail.com. Please send all photos and illustrations as separate JPEGs at high resolution of at least 300 dpi.

Opinions expressed are those of the writers and do not necessarily reflect those of *The Christian Universalist Association*.

The *CUA* is an international movement of persons, groups, congregations, and ministries, spreading the Good News of the grace of God for the salvation of all people. The *CUA* holds conferences, publishes literature, and sends out this monthly digital newsletter to members and others.

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Stan Seidner

Spiritual Journey began with a bloody crucifix

Writing his personal spiritual journey, **Stan Seidner** says it began in a motel room, when he was three years old and saw on the wall a “large and bloody crucifix” – quite a shock for a child born into a heritage of orthodox rabbinic Judaism! Stan recalls, “I remember feeling terrified and began to cry.”

That little boy has lived an astonishingly rich and varied life that took him from being ordained a rabbi, back to another encounter with the Latin Rite of the Catholic Church and their icons like that crucifix, and thence into the Maronite Catholic Church which is now his spiritual home. Along the way, of course, he had to deal with all the deep emotions and life issues stemming from a personal history that saw 95% of his family perish in the Holocaust.

CU folks and friends coming to our conference at Murray Grove will be richly blessed by the intriguing personal witness and academic giftedness of **Stanley Samuel Seidner, Ph.D.**, as he presents our Keynote Address on “The Judaic Foundations of Christian Universalism”.



Valerie Vaughn

Valerie Vaughn: the New Jersey Troubadour

Valerie Vaughn will be the **CUA** Conference Friday Night entertainer. Heather Pharo of the Southern Ocean **County Sandpaper** writes: “Vaughn is a fluent and enthusiastic storyteller as she speaks before she launches into song with her creamy smooth and even angelic voice.”

Valerie lives in the South Jersey Seaport town of Tuckerton. A songwriter and performer since her teens, she is celebrated in South Jersey for her numerous compositions about New Jersey history and folklore.

In 2008 she was nominated for the Governor’s award for promoting New Jersey tourism, and she has often toured and performed in England and Ireland. In 2000 she was nominated by **Senator Frank Lautenberg** to represent New Jersey and perform at The Kennedy Center, where she performed her many songs about NJ. In 1999 she sang in concert with folk legend **Pete Seeger**. Valerie was a featured alumna in the 1998 issue of **Rutgers Magazine**.

We are honored and delighted to have Valerie sing and spin some Southern New Jersey tales right after dinner on Friday evening. Don’t miss it!



From the Coordinator

... Rich Koster

Universalist pastor quotes Savior's words on the cross: "It is finished"

Here is a sweet video featuring **Robert Rutherford**, pastor of the Bridge Church of Eatonton, Georgia: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c0SfzPeMzxY&sns-fb>

Robert has a neat way of expressing the Gospel, and he is so easy to listen to, but what I especially like about him is his theology. "It is finished," he repeats our Savior's words on the cross, and then he brings the grace on – grace upon grace. "There's nothing more you need to do," he declares with almost an impish smile on his face. "Christ has done it all," he says with his voice rising, his smile wider. A "full and final restitution," he calls it on The Bridge web site. "Hallelujah, what a Savior!! You want to shout it out!"

God's ways are not our ways, sings the prophet, but still we want to "do it our way". We balk at the notion of imputed righteousness, and we just can't figure out how to say with John the Baptist, "Behold the lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world." Jesus told Nicodemus, "You gotta be born from above, my man." And for some reason we think that means that WE gotta do it. Nope, Pastor Robert says, "There's nothing more you gotta do." Christ has done it all. "It is finished." Amen.

In its phone call meeting on a recent Saturday the **CUA** Board talked about our plans to revise our Bylaws and our Articles of Incorporation. Right now we are a membership corporation but we don't come right out and say that in the current Articles. So we could change and say we're a non-membership group, and then the Board would have all the power and the members couldn't do anything about it. In fact, we could stop having members altogether, just have donors. There are some benefits and advantages to having a non-membership corporation; I was the only staff person (Coordinator, would you believe!) on one and so I have some idea of what that would be like.

Thankfully, the Board seems sure now that it wants to stay a membership corporation, and that means our members will have the right and the opportunity to vote on who gets on the Board, and maybe some other things too. More than that, we are saying that we want, not just an organization, but a community. We want to relate to one another as sisters and brothers in Christ, as people who share a dream and a common cause, as a vessel of healing and love with a message of "Victory In Jesus".

Are you familiar with this song? Like Pastor Rutherford's sermon, this good old gospel hymn bears witness to the completed work of Jesus on the cross:



Rich Koster

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*O victory in Jesus,
My Savior, forever.
He sought me and bought me
With His redeeming blood;
He loved me ere I knew Him
And all my love is due Him,
He plunged me to victory,
Beneath the cleansing flood.*

And finally, one of my favorite hymns, *The Strife is O'er*:

*Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!
The strife is o'er, the battle done,
the victory of life is won;
the song of triumph has begun.
Alleluia!*

*Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!
The powers of death have done their worst,
but Christ their legions hath dispersed:
let shout of holy joy outburst.
Alleluia!*

*Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!
The three sad days are quickly sped,
he rises glorious from the dead:
all glory to our risen Head!
Alleluia!*

*Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!
He closed the yawning gates of hell,
the bars from heaven's high portals fell;
let hymns of praise his triumphs tell!
Alleluia!*

And again, let all the people say, AMEN!

From the Board Chair

... Kalen Fristad

Spiritual journeys lead to enriching experiences

Hello Friends. When I was young, I yearned to travel. That was amplified each time we were cutting and baling hay in a field that was along Highway 16, which was the main highway across South Dakota upon which people traveled on vacation to the Black Hills. I wished so very much that I could join the travelers to the Black Hills and beyond.

We were able to get away from home very little when I was growing up but, as an adult, I have had the good fortune of being able to travel extensively. Journeying to places, near and far, has been for me like seeking a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. And the amazing thing is, I have found it. Of course, I haven't literally found a pot of gold but, with every journey, I have found treasure/great enrichment none the less.

Finding enrichment as a result of journeying is a long standing tradition for people of faith. Abraham, feeling led by God, journeyed to a land where his descendents could live, multiply and flourish, and through whom all the families of the earth would be blessed.

Moses led the Israelites from slavery in Egypt on a forty year journey, which ultimately led them to a land flowing with milk and honey. Mary and Joseph journeyed from Nazareth to Bethlehem which ended in the birth of Jesus, who gives meaning to all the journeys of life.

John Murray, after experiencing some serious difficulties in his life, journeyed to the American Colonies in search of a new life. In anticipation of that journey by Murray, a man in New Jersey named **Thomas Potter** embarked upon a type of journey of his own.

Ten years before Murray left England for America, Potter journeyed a short distance from his house to build a chapel, then began the search for a minister who would preach the good news of universal salvation in his chapel.

When John Murray arrived on the New Jersey shore as a result of the wind blowing them off course from their intended destination of New York, Thomas Potter, who was convinced that Murray had been sent there by God, convinced Murray to preach the wonderful, liberating message of universal salvation in Potter's chapel.

As it turned out, preaching in Potter's Chapel was



Kalen Fristad

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the beginning of another exciting and fruitful journey, through which Murray helped to spread the wonderful message of universalism across the American Colonies.

I invite all of you to join me on a journey to *Murray Grove*, Lanoka Harbor, New Jersey (at the site of **John Murray's** first sermon on universalism in America) on Sept. 21-23 for our "Celebration 2012". As with all great spiritual journeys, I know it will be an exciting, enriching experience for all of us who are able to attend.

With best wishes,

Kalen

"a Principle ... pure" found in all nations

"There is a Principle which is pure, placed in the human Mind, which in different Places and Ages hath had different Names; it is, however, pure, and proceeds from God. It is deep, and inward, confined to no Forms of Religion, nor excluded from any, where the Heart stands in perfect Sincerity. In whomsoever this takes Root and grows, of what Nation soever, they become Brethren."

- *John Woolman on Universalism* (d. 1772) *The Essays of John Woolman* (London, 1922), p. 180.

"Arouses my deepest amazement"

"If others go to Hell, I will go too. But I do not believe that; on the contrary, I believe that all will be saved, myself with them - something which arouses my deepest amazement." - *Søren Kierkegaard*

Pope Benedict supports doctrine of universal salvation

By David S. Sielaff

Pope Benedict the 16th, the current Pope Benedict, presented an unusual message on BBC Radio to the people of the United Kingdom in particular, although its message was intended for all English speaking peoples around the world on December 24, 2010. Read the transcript of his message, and hear his words at the BBC webpage: "Pope's Radio 4 Thought for the Day message in full."

This was not the Pope's annual message of blessing the peoples of the world. That came the next day from a balcony at the Vatican in Rome. Nor did he take the opportunity of this broadcast to discuss the scandals that confront the Catholic Church. Neither did he discuss points of the doctrines of how to live as Christians.

What is unusual about his message was that Pope Benedict the 16th taught the doctrine of universal salvation of all mankind through Christ. This indicates a continuing radical shift in Roman Catholic teaching, as the institution stumbles toward at least one biblical truth. Of course, he gave only a 2¾ minute message, but the little he said demonstrated an unmistakable promotion and understanding of universal salvation through Christ.

Note this: "God is always faithful to his promises, but he often surprises us in the way he fulfills them." This is certainly a true statement, but this sets the stage for more:

"The child that was born in Bethlehem did indeed bring liberation, but not only for the people of that time and place — he was to be the Saviour of all people throughout the world and throughout history.

And it was not a political liberation that he brought, achieved through military means: rather, Christ destroyed death for ever and restored life by means of his shameful death on the Cross."

This is fascinating, and it is a very strong statement of universal salvation through Christ. Note the important points he makes, that Christ was:

- "the Saviour of all people"
- [the Saviour of all people] "throughout the world and ..."
- [the Saviour of all people] "throughout history."
- "Christ destroyed death for ever and ..."



David S. Sielaff

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- [Christ] restored life ..."

The Pope said that Christ did this "by means of his shameful death on the Cross." This is only partially true. Jesus' crucifixion alone did not destroy death, nor did it restore life. The resurrection of Christ did both. True, the crucifixion played an important role in removing the sin of mankind individually and collectively, but removing sin is not enough.

Christ's resurrection, His righteousness during His time on earth (in flesh and after His resurrection), His role as High Priest and Mediator before God the Father on behalf of every individual, all together form a more complete reason death will be destroyed and life restored for "all people throughout the world and throughout history."

This public statement to the English speaking world reinforces Vatican statements, actions, and publications over the past several decades. It particularly reinforces the book *Jesus Christ: Salvation of All* by **Archbishop Luis F. Ladaria**. Within the Catholic Church the Archbishop holds the position of Secretary of the Congregation of the Defense of the Faith, an organization known in prior times as "the Inquisition."

When he was elected as Pope, **Cardinal Ratzinger** was Prefect of the Congregation of the Defense of the Faith. The Pope appointed Archbishop Ladaria to his present position in 2008 and they agree on universal salvation, as evidenced by the Pope's own words.

The question every Christian asks

How could a good God allow anyone to suffer consciously forever?

By George W. Sarris

In *Seven Days in Utopia* – an excellent film based on David L. Cook's best-selling book, *Golf's Sacred Journey* – Robert Duvall's character makes a very profound statement about his beliefs:

"I respect tradition. But, I have a passion for the truth!"

I wish I had thought up that line, because it expresses so well the reason why I initially looked into the issue of ultimate destinies.

Seek Truth Wherever It Leads

As a third-year seminary student in the late 1970s, I was wrestling with the question every Christian asks at one time or another – How could a good God allow anyone to suffer consciously forever?

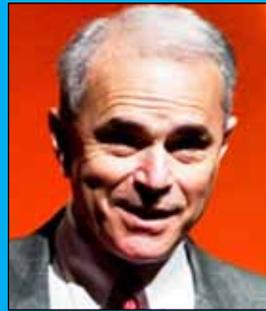
A number of years earlier when I was in college, God's love had captured my heart and transformed my life. Prior to attending seminary, I served on the staff of a large campus missionary organization for four years.

I wanted to tell others about this wonderful Being who had done such marvelous things in my life, but there was something deep inside of me that kept saying something was wrong with the prevailing teaching about Hell within the Christian community. It just didn't seem consistent with what Scripture seemed to reveal about God's character.

For one of my theology courses, I decided to address the issue in a straightforward manner as the subject of a research paper. God graciously provided a professor who was an honest scholar. I felt he would look at the paper objectively to grade it based on its merits and not just give me a failing grade because I didn't agree with his theology.

I had previously written a research paper on the reliability of the Bible and concluded that a deep confidence in the trustworthiness of God's Word was the foundational doctrine upon which all the other doctrines of the Christian faith must be built. I wanted to find out for sure what the Bible actually taught about Hell.

One of the most surprising discoveries for me as I began my research was to learn that a significant number of sincere and dedicated Christians throughout history actually believed that God will one day restore all of His creation to the perfection He initially intended. This was especially true in the early centuries follow-



George W. Sarris

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ing the coming of Christ when the Church was closest to the Apostles, its influence and impact on the surrounding culture was the greatest and its growth was unmatched.

Many of those believers were respected leaders in the early church who were instrumental in laying the foundation for God's new work in this world. Many were known for their exemplary lives in the face of intense trials and persecution. Many were martyred for their faith.

I wondered, Is it possible that they got it right, and we have forgotten an important truth that they understood correctly?

Hell: Has It Always Been Forever?

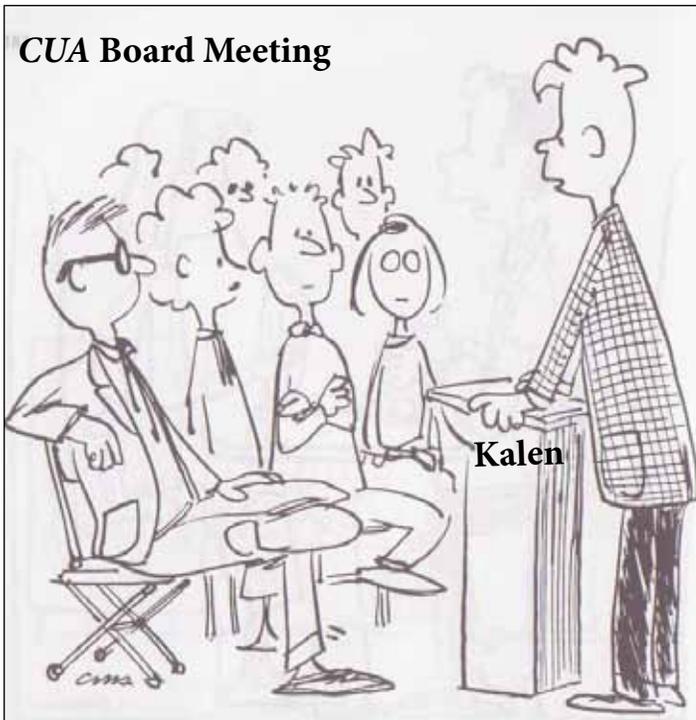
I just posted a video on YouTube that I hope people who have a respect for tradition and a passion for the truth will find interesting, thought-provoking, and perhaps even challenging.

In the beginning, God created a marvelous universe that He said was "very good." In His wisdom, He allowed evil to enter that very good creation and mar what He had made. But God is not only wise, He is also great! He did not allow evil to remain victorious. Through the cross of Jesus Christ, God defeated sin and death completely.

Will He one day restore all of His creation so that the final word will once again be, God saw all that He had made, and it was very good?

Holy Humor!

CUA Board Meeting



"All right ... a motion has been made and seconded that even though Fred, here, interprets the story of Jonah and the fish allegorically, he can still be permitted to attend our Celebration 2012 at Murray Grove, Lanoka Harbor, New Jersey in September."

New twist on old church signs

The following are actual signs found on church property:

"No God - No Peace. Know God - Know Peace."

"Try our Sundays. They are better than Baskin-Robbins."

An ad for St. Joseph's Episcopal Church has a picture of two hands holding stone tablets on which the Ten Commandments are inscribed and a headline that reads, "For fast, fast, fast relief, take two tablets."

When the restaurant next to the Lutheran Church put out a big sign with red letters that said, "Open Sundays," the church reciprocated with its own message: "We are open on Sundays, too."

"Have trouble sleeping? We have sermons-come hear one!"

A singing group called "The Resurrection" was scheduled to sing at a church. When a big snowstorm postponed the performance, the pastor fixed the outside sign to read, "The Resurrection is postponed."

Moose steak undergoes conversion at the grill – Newfie style

EDITOR'S NOTE: For the benefit of non-Canadians, we should explain that a "Newfie" is a resident of Newfoundland – on the far eastern coast of Canada. "Newfies" are often the subject of jokes by residents in other parts of Canada.

Being a Newfie, Jack would fire up his outdoor grill and cook a moose steak every Friday night after work, during sun, snow or rain. But, all of Jack's neighbors were Catholic. And since it was Lent, they were prohibited from eating meat on Friday.

The delicious aroma from the grilled moose steaks caused such a problem for the Catholic faithful that they finally talked to their priest. The priest came to visit Jack and suggested that he become a Catholic.

After several classes and much study, Jack attended Mass. As the priest sprinkled holy water over him, he said: "You were born a Protestant and raised a Protestant, but now you are a Catholic."

Jack's neighbors were greatly relieved, until Friday night arrived, and the wonderful aroma of grilled moose again filled the neighborhood. The neighbors immediately called the priest. As he rushed into Jack's yard, clutching a rosary and prepared to scold him, he stopped and watched in amazement.

There stood Jack, clutching a small bottle of holy water which he carefully sprinkled over the grilling meat and chanted: "You wuz born a moose, you wuz raised a moose, but now you is a Codfish."

Who brews the best coffee?

Q. - How do we know that men, not women, made the coffee in Biblical times?

A. - It clearly states that *He*-brews.

Shortest Shortie?

Q. - Who is the shortest man in the Bible?

A. - *Knee High Myah*.

Or maybe it was Bildad the Shoe-height.