



The Christian Universalist

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New ministers ordained

These men and women were ordained as ministers by the *Christian Universalist Association* during a Service of Ordination on St. Simons Island, Georgia, September 10, 2011. From left to right, holding their Certificate of Ordination, are: the **Rev. Mikal N. Rasheed**, Chicago, Illinois; the **Rev. Mary Helen Keller**, Cortez, Colorado; the **Rev. Deborah Lynn Peterson**, Prescott Valley, Arizona; the **Rev. Blake S. Murray**, Lake Mary, Florida; and the **Rev. Judith Coleman Sheriff**, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. More photos and reports on pages 6 to 14. - *Photo by Pat Moauro*

Special issue: **CUA Board Retreat, Ordination**

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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 **Pat Moauro** 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.

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Kalen Fristad, Logan Geen, Marquis Hunt, Todd Huston, Mary Keller, Sharon McCauley, Steven Rowe, Susan Smith, David Spatz, Eric Stetson, Doug Torkelson, Mikal Rasheed, and Judy Sheriff

Word of mouth

... with Pat Moauro, Editor

CUA gathering: an exercise in unity

For more than a year after joining the *Christian Universalist Association*, my contact with the co-founders, members of the Board and other members consisted primarily of email correspondence. And, of course, through this monthly digital newsletter, which I started editing and producing last May.

This past September I had the opportunity and pleasure of attending a **CUA** gathering on sunny, balmy, and picturesque St. Simons Island, Georgia, near the Florida border. The **CUA** held a Board retreat, an ordinand seminar and a Service of Ordination.

Thank you to **CUA** Coordinator and minister **Rich Koster**, Board Chairperson and minister **Kalen Fristad** and other Board members for inviting me to attend the five-day gathering, which gave me the opportunity to meet key people behind the **CUA**. In turn, **CUA** Board members and others were able to meet and get to know this Canadian spiritual student and editor a little better.

After driving more than seven hours from my home in London, Ontario to Cincinnati, Ohio, I met up with **Kalen Fristad**, who had travelled many miles from his home in Iowa.



Pat Moauro

We stayed overnight in a private home. Early the next morning, I joined Kalen in his vehicle and we picked up one other passenger - a **CUA** member and mentor, **Donne Hayden**, Minister and Public Friend at *Cincinnati Friends Meeting (Quakers)*. The three of us shared the driving as we drove 10 hours on the last leg of our journey to St. Simons Island, arriving in the early evening.

No sooner had I arrived and stepped into the condo home of Board Treasurer **Sharon McCauley**, that **Rich Koster** gave me a warm welcoming hug and promptly issued orders for me and two other members to start making hamburger patties for the evening meal. Hamburger? As a long-time vegetarian, I felt less than excited about molding pieces of meat into patties.

However, overlooking my vegetarian convictions, I joined in with the hamburger-making brigade. No, I did not have any hamburger for our first meal together! But I did have a veggie burger, with all the trimmings, which our hosts kindly provided.

Of the 18 who attended the gathering, 10 of us stayed at *Epworth By The Sea*, a 43.55-acre Methodist Center, where the ordinand seminar and Service of Ordination were held. Most of the others stayed in Sharon's nearby condo and her sister's condo - one for the men and one for the women.

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Christian Universalist Association

117 Barkentine Court
St Simons Island, GA 31522

Treasurer's Report for September 2011

Beginning Balance	
September 1, 2011	\$5,452.96
Income	\$3,703.00
Expenses	\$4,241.16
Ending Balance for September	\$4,668.16

Sharon McCauley
Treasurer

The Board Chair's Message

... with Kalen Fristad

Christian Universalism: "greatest Spiritual movement of our time"

Hello Friends. Recently, 18 of us in the **CUA** had the pleasure of gathering at St. Simons Island, Georgia for an Ordinand Seminar and a Board Retreat. It was a wonderful experience as together we considered the magnificent message of *Christian Universalism*, the importance of the ministry in which we all share, and how we might be as effective as possible in carrying out that ministry.

We ordained three women and two men as *Christian Universalist* ministers; made new acquaintances, built strong friendships, and made plans to move forward in continuing to bring together and support people who believe in *Christian Universalism*, and to spread that teaching around the world.

Not only was it enjoyable to be a part of that group, but it was a profound spiritual experience, not to mention that our time together also included walks along the beach and swimming in the ocean.

Now, don't you all want to join us the next time we have a **CUA** gathering? By the way, we are beginning to plan for the next **CUA** conference (Celebration 2012) which will be held in the fall of 2012.

I came away from our time together with many special memories and strong impressions, not the least of which is the quality of people who are joining the **CUA**. People from all walks of life are choosing to join the **CUA**, including; doctors, ministers, lawyers, professors, social workers, business executives, students, etc.

I continue to be more and more impressed with our members, not only because of the impressive credentials of many, but because of their common sense, leadership abilities, compassion for others, and commit-



Kalen Fristad

ment to the cause of sharing with the world the good news of God's unconditional love and unlimited salvation. Each member, with or without impressive credentials, brings much to the organization and has much to contribute to the cause.

The quality of our members gives me great hope for the future of the **CUA**. With people joining at the rate of nearly one per day, I have confidence that by God's grace, love and empowerment, we will together make a profound difference in the world as we do all we can to contribute to the cause of *Christian Universalism*.

As impressed as I am with the quality of our members, it is ultimately not our own abilities that give me the greatest hope. As I have said many times before, we are not the leaders of this movement. If we were, it wouldn't amount to much. Instead, it is Spirit-inspired and Spirit-led, and we are merely participants in the greatest Spiritual movement of our time.

We are like surfers who are trying to comprehend the magnitude of the Spiritual wave that is spreading across the world; we are ones who have caught the wave and are trying to maintain our balance as we ride the wave that continues to build; and we seek to faithfully ride the crest of the wave, holding high the banner of universalism.

By God's grace, love and power, may we do that always.

With best wishes,

Kalen

See page 15 for more about the **CUA**.

Kalen Fristad, a minister and Chairperson of **The Christian Universalist Association Board of Directors**, can be reached at kkfristad@hotmail.com



Moss-draped live oak trees on St. Simons Island, GA

Mother gives up life so her new-born child might live

It seemed to surprise my colleagues when I said a while ago that I too want to write a book about **Christian Universalism**. I do wonder how I am going to get the time to do it!

If I did write a **CU** book, though, mine would be somewhat different than most of those published recently. While I acknowledge the strong Biblical support for the idea that we all have the same ultimate destiny – heaven, presence of God, the new creation, however you want to term it – my book would focus on people.

People who suffered intensely and unjustly in this life but never heard about Jesus. People who excelled in loving and compassion but who never heard about Jesus. And most of all, people who willingly and gladly gave up their own life so that another might live.

Chose not to risk unborn child's life
I just read about such a person, a pregnant woman who accepted certain death rather than risk the life of her unborn child. Her name is **Stacie Crimm** of Ryan, Texas.

When Stacie learned that at age 41 she had a baby growing inside her, she was ecstatic, filled with joy. But a few months later she was diagnosed with cancer in her head and neck. As time went on, the doctors told her that chemotherapy might risk the life of her baby; Stacie never hesitated or took time to weigh her options.

From the start she was determined to have her baby girl and so refused to have chemo or any other medical procedure that might harm the child.

As Stacie's health began a severe decline, and the tumor began to wrap around the brain stem, her oxygen levels decreased and the baby's heart rate plummeted. A decision was made, finally, and **Baby Dottie Mae** was delivered by C-section weighing only two pounds and one ounce. She was rushed into neonatal intensive care but it looked like her mother wasn't going to



Rich Koster



Stacie Crimm

live long enough even to see her baby's face. But after a few days, Stacie did get off the ventilator that was keeping her alive and for a moment there was hope.

Baby held for first and last time

On September 8, Stacie stopped breathing and was technically dead. After Stacie was resuscitated, one nurse decided that this mother needed to see her baby before she died, since they had been separated after Dottie was born and had never been together. So baby Dottie was brought into Crimm's hospital room for the first and last time to meet her mother. Three days later **Stacie Crimm** died.

Can you imagine? Holding your baby, your own flesh and blood, in

your arms, knowing it is the only time and the last time? Would you make the same decision Stacie did?

I know some **CU** folks have a hard time with the cross, because of how the Church at times has wrapped it around a portrait of an angry, blood-thirsty deity. But I always see the cross first and foremost as a man choosing to die so that others may live.

"This is how we know true love, that Jesus gave up his life for us, so we too should be ready to give up our lives for our brothers and sisters." (1 John 3:16)

I feel something deep inside whenever I hear or read about a person dying so that someone else might live. And it happens everywhere, all around the world. People imitating Christ, doing what Jesus did. And they may be Christian, they may be Buddhist, they may be Muslim, or they may be nothing at all. But still they are expressing that supreme love which is willing to die so that someone else might live.

People on the other side believe that the destiny of every human being depends on whether they have accepted Jesus as Savior and Lord.

So they think that if **Stacie Crimm** did not accept Jesus before she died, she is going to burn in hell for ever. And even some **CU** people seem to be saying that she may still have to suffer some loving judgment and remedial punishment until she comes to accept Jesus.

And what do I think? I think **Stacie Crimm** is already in the presence of the God of all creation, and with a special mark on her that sets apart those human beings who, like Jesus, gave up their lives so that others might live.

Rich Koster, a minister and Coordinator of The Christian Universalist Association, can be reached at richkoster.cua@gmail.com

How big should the CUA umbrella be and for whom?

By Donne Hayden

In early September this year, a gathering of **Christian Universalist Association (CUA)** ordinands, mentors and board members met over a weekend at a lovely place on St. Simon's Island, Georgia, to accomplish several things:

Provide an opportunity for ordinands and mentors to get acquainted with each other and with **CUA** Board Members; ordain five new **CU** ministers; and give the board feedback from attending **CUA** members on various issues, among them, ways to improve the ordination process.

The thorniest issue we discussed, however, was the question of who and what the **CUA** "umbrella" should cover.

On Saturday morning, we sat in a large circle to respond to a prompt about the **CUA** umbrella. As we shared viewpoints, it became clear that even within the relatively narrow category of "Christian Universalism," a range of belief and differences might result in division almost before the **CUA** is fully formed.

Some had a concern that "being a true Christian" should be necessary. Others felt that defining only one way to be Christian would eliminate many who hold less traditional views but still believe they are Christian. (Who gets to define "true Christian"?)

At one point, when the tension was palpable, we fell silent; finally one person said, "If you have a really small personal umbrella, you're going to have trouble in an organization that has a big umbrella."

Clearly, a Christian Universalist umbrella cannot cover some believers—Buddhists, Hindus, and Taoists, for instance, would not even wish to be under that umbrella.

A Christian Universalist umbrella should, however, cover "Christians," i.e., those whose spiritual path follows the rabbi from Galilee, and it should cover "Universalists" who—in the original sense of the word—



Donne Hayden

keep a spiritual focus on Jesus and his teachings, but reject dogma that claims 1) endless torment in Hell for those who do not acknowledge him as part-and-parcel with God and 2) that his death was necessary before God would consider forgiving the imperfect creatures He created.

So the question is this: Just how broad should the **CUA** umbrella be? Big enough to cover Christocentric Quakers with unorthodox beliefs, such as "Christ has come to teach his people himself" (i.e., the inner Christ/teacher), meaning that Christ has already returned, which changes the entire "Second Coming" scenario?

Should it cover Evangelicals, who believe in the saving grace of the cross which eliminates Hell as a final destination but doesn't affect the need for God's judgment and some punishment? What about those who follow the *Course of Miracles*, new revelations channeled by Jesus a few decades ago, which assert, among many other things, that "There IS no hell. Hell is only what the ego has made OF THE PRESENT"?

All of these views were represented in the group that met on St. Simons Island in September, and proponents of each view believe themselves to be "Christian."

Two questions about criteria occur to me:

1) If a person self-identifies as "Christian" because her spiritual path is that of Christian love and compassion, and if she self-identifies as "universalist" because she does not believe a loving God would send people to hell, wouldn't a "Christian universalist" umbrella be obliged to cover that person?

2) If a person lives according to the teachings of Jesus, believes him/herself to be Christian, and claims to be Christian, surely somehow that person has been claimed by Christ! And wouldn't a "Christian universalist" umbrella be obliged to cover anyone so claimed?

Whose umbrella do we prefer?

Back home, on the Sunday following the **CUA** gathering on St. Simons Island, one of the lectionary readings was the last chapter of Jonah. As I prepared my message for that Sunday, I noticed some interesting parallels between the story of Jonah and the discussion of the "**CUA** umbrella" at our conference in Georgia.

The LORD's command for Jonah to go to Nineveh to warn them is an early version of the New Testament message to "Love your enemies, [and] do good to those who hate you" (Luke 6:27). The Ninevites are enemies of the Israelites; Jonah doesn't want the Ninevites to have a chance at "salvation"; he doesn't approve of them and would happily see them destroyed.

Knowing that the LORD is "gracious and compassionate," however, Jonah fears that, if warned, his enemies might actually be forgiven and thus escape divine punishment . . . Which is, of course, exactly what happens in the story, and when it does, Jonah is furious.

The story of Jonah ends with an image of an umbrella of sorts - Jonah builds a shade for himself, and the LORD causes a vine to grow over it, a natural umbrella, if you will, to provide more shade. (Interesting tidbit: Bas relief carvings discovered in Nineveh show umbrellas used to shade the king there some 3,000 years ago.)

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Service of Ordination for new CU ministers held



The Rev. Kalen Fristad, standing at left, CUA Board Chairperson, officiates during the Laying on of Hands and Prayer for Blake S. Murray, marking his ordination as a CU minister. Other ordained ministers place their hands on Blake's shoulders and close their eyes in prayer. Below, the Laying on of Hands and Prayer is performed for Mikal N. Rasheed.

- Photos by Pat Moauro



Service of Ordination

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Above, the Laying on of Hands and Prayer for **Deborah Lynn Peterson**. At far left is **Logan Geen**, CUA Ordination Committee Chairperson, who presented a Certificate of Ordination to each Ordinand. Below, Laying on of Hands and Prayer for **Judith Coleman Sheriff**.



Service of Ordination

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The Rev. Kalen Fristad officiates at the Laying on of Hands and Prayer for Mary Helen Keller, while the Rev. Rich Koster, the Rev. Donne Hayden, the Rev. Eric Stetson and the Rev. Fred Howard also place hands on the newly ordained minister and join in prayer.

Sermon: Discerning the Call

By the Rev. Fred Howard

15 When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my lambs." 16 A second time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Tend my sheep." 17 He said to him the third time, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" And he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep. - John 21:15-17 NRSV

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is an edited version of a sermon, Discerning the Call, that the Rev. Fred Howard, a former CUA Board member, delivered during the Service of Ordination for five new CUA ministers on St. Simons Island, Georgia, September 10, 2011.

I wanted to reflect for a few minutes - not on labor or work - but on vocation. Some of you may be asking yourselves, "What's the difference?" I sincerely hope that ministry is your vocation, but for some of us, it may not be so.

The word vocation comes from the Latin vocare, "to call." It means the thing that we are called to do by God. There are a lot of different voices giving call to us in our lives. Our bodies call to us. The call of biology. We

must provide our daily bread. We must make a living for ourselves and our progeny.

There is the voice of reason. Then there is the voice of our family. And the voice of responsibility. This is often heard as the voice of ought. I "ought" to go to church, or I ought to go into Christian service. And a big one, guilt. Perhaps I can make up for some of the wrongs I have done by doing this thing or that for God.

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Service of Ordination

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The call of the ego. I'm sure all of us have come across someone on TV or in real life who seems to have been called into the ministry more by their ego than by God. Perhaps this sounds harsh and judgmental, but in all honesty it does occur to me sometimes as I see some of the gross distortions of energy and resources that goes into some of the ministries of some of our celebrity ministers.

Discerning the call of God from the call of these other things is not always so easy. Ministry as a vocation is a holy call. It is a call from God, who only calls us to holiness, wholeness w-h-o-l-e-n-e-s-s. Healthiness.

All these words share the same root as holy. It means that our motivation to do this thing comes from that innermost part of our being that some refer to as "soul." Finding our true call in this sense is one of the most joyous things that can happen to a human being.

It is my hope for all of our ordinands today that this is the nature of the call they have received to ministry. And that it is and will continue to be one of joy for you. That doesn't mean that it will always be a source of happiness. I can assure you, and some of my more seasoned colleagues here can also attest that it has its moments, and sometimes unhappiness comes with it.

But there is something called joy that goes beyond happiness, and becomes a slow burning rapture within you, and there is a satisfaction in doing that which God would have us do that transcends mere superficial pleasure.

The theologian **Frederick Buechner** says vocation is where our deep gladness meets the world's deep need. Where our deep gladness meets the world's deep need.

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The Rev. Fred Howard delivers the sermon, Discerning the Call, during the Service of Ordination for five new **CU** ministers on St. Simons Island, Georgia, September 10, 2011.

Discerning the Call

... By the Rev. Fred Howard

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In other words, for our work to be our vocation it must meet two requirements. First, it must be that which brings us the most joy. Second, it must be that which the world most needs us to do.

When these things are one and the same, you have a vocation. Now most of us have done work at some time in our life that meets a need in the world. Whether its flipping burgers, or driving a truck, or teaching, or running a business – it meets a need in the world. But if you find that job tedious and boring, then it does not meet the first requirement – being joyous.

On the other hand, if you are doing a job, say, like writing jingles for beer commercials, then it may be work you really enjoy, but it is probably not meeting requirement two, that is, it is not meeting a deep need in the world.

The mysterious conversation between Jesus and Peter that Rich read to you earlier has been interpreted in many ways. Many scriptural authorities make much of the fact that Jesus said “Feed my sheep,” or something similar to Peter three times, as if Jesus is intentionally berating Peter by referencing that he had denied Jesus three times.

Be that as it may, I think there is a deeper significance to the conversation. Remember, Peter is a sort of leader of the disciples. He was in the inner circle of those disciples that were there for events of particular significance. Peter was there, as were James and John, for the transfiguration, an event mentioned in all three of the synoptic gospels, where Jesus went up on the mountain and appeared in his glory with Moses and Elijah.

Peter is the one who wanted to stay there in this holy place, and he asked Jesus if they could make three tents for Jesus and the two prophets. Peter is the one who, at the last sup-



Lovely Lane Chapel in Epworth By the Sea Methodist Center on St. Simmons Island, Georgia, where the Service of Ordination was held.

per, initially refused to have his feet washed by Jesus.

When Jesus told him that unless he allowed him to wash his feet then Peter could have no part in him, then Peter wanted Jesus to wash not only his feet, but his hands and head also. Peter seemed to always be the one who relished being in the special moments and in the special, holy places. Peter, if you will, is much like (an old man in a story recounted earlier), who wanted to go on to Jerusalem, to be in the holy place.

Now, it is an admirable thing to set off on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, or want to be in a holy place or office, and I do not mean to disparage that effort or intention, necessarily. But Jesus wanted Peter to recognize that there is more. That there is a higher calling. That it can count for joy. Peter, if you love me, feed my sheep.

As if to say, love for me is in the care and concern that you show for my flock. Feed my sheep. If love for me is your deep gladness, then you will find yourself meeting the world's deep need.

By feeding me when I am hungry, and giving me drink when I am thirsty, and welcoming me when I am a stranger, and clothing me when I am naked, and taking care of me when I am sick and visiting me when I am in prison. Feed my sheep. In that service you will find yourself in a holy place.

When you find the place within yourself that experiences deep gladness in these acts, that is when you will have found your true calling.

And so may it be so for you, my brothers and sisters in Christ. May you find your deep gladness in service to others and as you go forth to give the world – not hell, but hope and courage – and spread the good news of God's great love for all.

May you shine forth as the second old man in the story did as you find the holy place within yourself that is gladdened by the work before us. Find it, then you can't help but meet the world's deep need. Feed my sheep. Amen.



This group photo shows CUA Board members, newly ordained ministers, and other CUA members who attended the Board retreat, seminar and ordination on St. Simons Island, Georgia, September 8 to 12. Photo was taken on the beautiful landscaped grounds of Epworth By the Sea Methodist Center.

Pat's Word of Mouth

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It wasn't all work and no play. **Rich Koster**, our coordinator and host extraordinaire, also likes to have fun. He made time for our group to play and relax. Our recreational breaks included a number of trips to a nearby beach off the Atlantic.

One evening we visited the Village, a retail strip, to sample some of the many flavors of yogurt available; walked to the island's nearby waterfront and pier where people were fishing; and on the last evening together before we returned home 10 of us enjoyed dinner on the open porch of a restaurant.

A highlight of our long weekend together was the Service of Ordination, held in the quaint, historic white clapboard Lovely Lane Chapel (the original structure was built in 1774) on the grounds of *Epworth By the Sea*. Three women and two men – all coming long distances from different states – were ordained as **CU** ministers.

Another important highlight was a Sunday morning gathering for worship in



a circle on the beach where we shared personal and spiritual thoughts and experiences.

During a formal class session a hot discussion resulted in some brief tension, which eventually resolved itself (for the most part). By the time we left, it was hugs and best wishes all around. This gathering illustrated how former strangers from different

backgrounds and belief systems can soon become good friends. It reinforced an eternal truth that, despite different beliefs, ages, colors and lifestyles, we truly are One - people whom God loves with an Everlasting Love. *cu*

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



Under sunny St. Simons skies

Beneath sunny skies, with lush vegetation and balmy temperatures, newly ordained **Christian Universalist (CU)** ministers (at left) pose for the camera after their ordination on St. Simons Island. From left to right are: the **Rev. Blake Murray**, the **Rev. Mary Keller**, the **Rev. Mikal Rasheed**, the **Rev. Deborah Peterson** and the **Rev. Judy Sheriff**. - Photo by **Brian Peterson**

CUA Board members outdoors

Below, **CUA** Board members at the St. Simons Island gathering are, from left to right: **Steven Rowe**, **Mary Keller**, **Sharon McCauley**, **Eric Stetson**, and (at far right) **CUA Board Chairperson Kalen Fristad**. **Rich Koster**, second from the right, is **CUA** Coordinator. **Logan Geen**, Chairperson of the Ordination Committee, didn't make it into this photo; however, he can be seen in other photos in this issue.



CUA Board votes to revise SOF, Ordination policy

The **CUA** Board of Directors has voted in favor of revising the the **Christian Universalist Association's** Statement of Faith and its policy governing the ordination of new ministers.

Six directors met in September during the Board retreat at St. Simons Island, Georgia and agreed to wording and other changes in the Statement of Faith (SOF). Two new directors appointed later and five other directors who didn't attend also voted by email.

The revised SOF, entitled *What We Believe*, says, in part: "Every spiritual organization should have a clear statement of what it believes and teaches, to guide its mission to the world and help people decide whether it is worth supporting. If a religious organization is to exist at all, it should stand for something about important questions of life, faith, God, and the world beyond.

"In the **CUA**, there are several important spiritual and moral beliefs that we as an organization agree upon and proclaim. This list is short and simple, leaving much room for diversity of thought, personal opinion and conscience, while upholding the basic essentials of the Gospel".

SOF summarized

Following is a brief summary of what *The Christian Universalist Association* affirms in its statement of faith:

Who is God?

We believe in God, who is Love, Light, Truth, and Spirit, the Creator of the universe, whom we are called to seek, know, and love; and whose nature was revealed to the world in the person and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth.

The Golden Rule

We believe that the universal commandment is to love and serve one another as we love ourselves.

Divine Justice and Life After Death

We believe in the law of justice by which actions generate consequences, whether to be manifested in this life or the life to come; and that love, grace and forgiveness ultimately overcome the law of justice.

Universal Salvation

We believe in the full and final triumph of the grace of God over the powers of sin and death: that the mercy and forgiveness of God are victorious; that this victory of redemption is revealed in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus; and that, therefore, no human being will be condemned or allowed to suffer pain and separation forever.

Human Nature and Destiny

We believe every person is the divine offspring of God, created in the image of the Heavenly Parent of all; and that every person is destined to be raised up from imperfection to maturity according to the pattern of the archetypal Christ, the Son of God, the Perfect Human in

whose image all humanity shall be transformed.

The Mystery of Faith

We believe in mysterious spiritual phenomena, such as the resurrection of Jesus Christ, which transcend materialistic views of reality.

Divine Revelation and the Pursuit of Truth

We believe that God's Holy Spirit has inspired numerous prophets, saints, philosophers, and mystics throughout history, in a variety of cultures and traditions; and that by reading the Bible and other great texts of spiritual and moral wisdom with a discerning mind, and meditating to connect to the Spirit within, we may all gain a greater understanding of truth, which should be applied for the betterment of ourselves and our world.

The complete Statement of Faith can be found on the CUA website at: www.christianuniversalist.org.

Hayden and CUA umbrella

... from page 5

The truth about human nature in Jonah's story is reflected in our honest responses to questions like this:

How many of us would go out of our way to help someone we disapprove of, someone we consider at least an opponent if not an enemy?

How many of us would refuse to associate with (i.e., "stand under an umbrella with") people we consider misguided?

Unfortunately, many Christians are almost gleeful about the possibility of people they disagree with (or disapprove of) being tossed into everlasting hell. Could this be true even of Universalist Christians who don't believe hell exists?

How many of us would rather see our opponents fail, suffer, or be punished than to see them flourish? How many of us, if we could admit it, are uncomfortable with the idea that someone we don't like may be loved by God as much as we are?

Jonah and the LORD have a conversation about how upset Jonah is when the plant "umbrella" is destroyed by a worm. God asks rhetorically if it is not right then that He should be upset and concerned about the destruction of the great city of Nineveh and all its people and animals.

Apparently, the LORD included even Israel's enemies and their livestock under the umbrella of His love and concern, a universalist notion if there ever was one.

Jonah had a small umbrella, big enough to cover only himself and his tribe, i.e., those "like" him. The LORD in this story—the Lord that Jesus taught us about—has an expansive and generous umbrella, large enough to cover all of us. Whose umbrella would we rather stand under?

Donne Hayden, Minister and Public Friend at Cincinnati Friends Meeting in Cincinnati, Ohio, can be reached at mdonne.hayden@gmail.com

Two new ministers appointed CUA Board directors

Mikal N. Rasheed and **Judith C. Sheriff** were ordained as ministers by the *Christian Universalist Association* on September 10 this year.

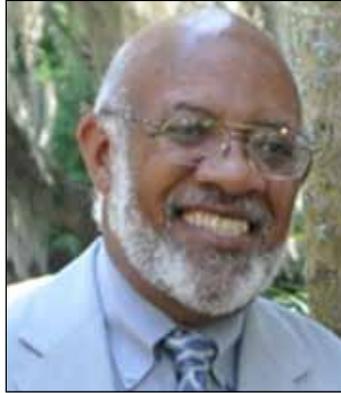
Less than two weeks later, the **Rev. Mikal Rasheed** of Chicago, Illinois, and the **Rev. Judith Sheriff** of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, were invited to join the *CUA's* Board of Directors.

Mikal Rasheed is a Professor of Social Work and Department Chair at a Chicago area University. He has his MA degree from the University of Chicago, and his PhD in clinical social work from Loyola University Chicago.

In addition to many years as a social service practitioner, social service agency and college administrator, Mikal, along with his wife, maintain a private practice in individual, marital and family therapy.

He has also conducted workshops, trainings and seminars in the areas of social work practice with men, couple and family therapy, social work ethics and cultural diversity.

Mikal has conducted specific trainings and workshops in the area of intercultural communication where he has focused on the issues



Mikal N. Rasheed

of forgiveness and reconciliation.

He has spoken on numerous occasions on the topic, "Social Work as a Ministry of Racial Reconciliation".

Mikal's spiritual journey, which began as a Presbyterian, included a sojourn though Islam and the Baha'i Faith. After returning to Christianity about 20 years ago, he later found his theological and spiritual home in Christian Universalism.

Judy Sheriff was born and reared in Tulsa, Oklahoma. She graduated from Phillips University, Oklahoma City University School of Law, and, most recently, Moravian Theological Seminary.



Judith C. Sheriff

She holds B.S., J.D., M.Div., and M.A.T.S. degrees, and earned a concentration in Formative Spirituality.

Judy has also completed two residency years in Clinical Pastoral Education in acute care, Level 1 Trauma center hospitals.

She and her husband, David, are the adoptive parents of 12 children, five of whom are still at home. Judith enjoys supporting her children in their endeavors, including marching band, dance, baseball, and soccer.

Judy currently lives in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, where she works as a hospital chaplain.



“Spirit-led” Christian Universalist movement “exploding”

By Pat Moauro

ST. SIMONS ISLAND, GA - Christian Universalism, which was virtually ignored in religious and spiritual circles 10 years ago, today is exploding worldwide, directors of the **Christian Universalist Association (CUA)** said during a retreat here in early September.

Eric Stetson, co-founder of the **CUA**, a minister and a Board member, told fellow members that an “explosion” in interest in Christian Universalism has taken place during the past five to 10 years, and the **CUA** “has accelerated that explosion”.

Kalen Fristad, a minister, **CUA** co-founder and Board Chairperson, said the Christian Universalist movement launched four years ago is “spirit-led”. He added that the **CUA** doesn’t have a blueprint or plan; “We’re just trying to capture the wave. We’re trying to understand the wave that’s happening around the world”.

Both Stetson and Fristad were discussing *The Future of the CUA* during a Board retreat here September 8-12 which also included an Ordinand Seminar and Service of Ordination.

Stetson added that “we’re trying to build something ... consolidate the message, and share ideas ... it’s part of a larger movement.” Since the **CUA** started four years ago, its message of God’s universal love and eventual salvation for all mankind (“No one left behind”) has been “growing and growing every day.”

However, “one negative” has been the general lack of interest and response among most orthodox and traditional churches, he said. Originally, the **CUA** had hoped to network with churches that believed and practised universal salvation. Unfortunately, he said, “that hasn’t really panned out.” Some churches and individuals have come out in support of Christian Universalism, “but it hasn’t established itself”.

Fristad added: “The **CUA** is not just an ordination model. The intention is to affirm the teachings of universalism. Those of us who have written books (on Christian Universalism) weren’t aware of other books being written at the same time on universalism”. At least 30 or 40 books



Kalen Fristad

have been written on the subject in recent years, compared to only three books in the previous 100 years, he said. “We were writing books in a vacuum.”

Rich Koster, a minister and **CUA** Co-ordinator, said Christian Universalism started in the United States began around 1800s as a traditional Christian movement, with primarily Biblical, mainline Christian teachings.

Christian Universalism faded as a movement as other churches began somewhat to accept the premise of universal salvation. The declining Universalist Church of America, which by the 20th century had departed from traditional Christian theology, eventually merged with the Unitarians to form the Unitarian Universalist Association in 1961.

Koster is also editor of the *Christian Herald* magazine, described as the longest continuously published religious magazine of its kind. He said that most Christian Universalists eventually left the movement as other liberal churches adopted many of the teachings (with the general exception of universal salvation). Although vestiges of Christian Universalism can be found in Unitarian-Universalist Churches, generally the latter down play their universalist roots and focus more on liberalism, social action and humanism.

It has remained largely for the **Christian Universalist Association** (not a church yet), along with websites such as www.tentmaker.org, to stimulate and revive interest in Christian Universalism.

Eric Stetson said the Christian Universalist movement today generally



Eric Stetson

consists of “six or seven different divisions”. He added that since the **CUA** Board started four years ago, directors and members have debated and attempted to come up with “some sort of common basis that we can rally around”.

Donne Hayden, Minister and Public Friend at *Cincinnati Friends Meeting (Quakers)* and a **CUA** member and ministerial mentor, told fellow members: “I want to be included as a Christian. We can’t ignore the universalist part. Can this group be broad enough to include others?”

Jae Mills, a young **CUA** ministerial candidate, told the gathering: “You’re going to lose certain people if you don’t believe in Christ on the cross and salvation.”

Board director **Steven Rowe** quipped: “Which list of Christian Universalists do you want to belong to?”

Rich Koster added: “We need a bigger umbrella. We’re an inclusivist organization, not an exclusivist organization”.

Kalen Fristad added that some traditional Christians who are also interested in universalism still believe in teachings such as “the great white throne, the Rapture, and the prophecies in the Book of Revelation”. However, the majority of people being attracted to the Christian Universalist message today generally are not interested in such teachings.

“We are a very diverse group”, Kalen said. “The spirit of God is moving in our midst. It’s the greatest spiritual movement of our time”.

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