



Announcing Richard Van Duizend: 2020 Recipient of the Cornish “Living the Mission” Award

*By Rev. Roger Bertschausen,
UUPCC Executive Director*

The UUPCC’s Board of Directors is honored and pleased to announce that it has chosen Richard Van Duizend as the recipient of the 2020 Louis C. Cornish “Living the Mission” Award. The award is given annually to honor a person who has worked tirelessly to foster the mission of developing and sustaining mutually beneficial congregational partnerships between Unitarians and Unitarian Universalists around the world. The award will be joyously presented to Dick at the UUPCC’s virtual Annual Meeting on June 19 at 12:00 PM Eastern. We also look forward to honoring Dick in person at the 2021 General Assembly in Milwaukee.



Dick served as UUPCC Board Chair with dedication and distinction twice. As a Board member during his first stint, I had the privilege of seeing his many gifts in action. He kept the Board steadfastly focused on mission and welcomed and facilitated each Board member’s involvement, questions, rough edges, and wisdom. He always remained grounded, compassionate, and non-

anxious. He focused on the big picture and was also willing to dive into important details such as bylaws. (Did you know that Dick wrote his first set of bylaws when he was a young teen?) It was a complete joy working with him!



Dick & wife Sharon with school children in Puriang, NE India.

The UUPCC is particularly indebted to Dick for his willingness to go way above and beyond by coming back into the Chair position when it unexpectedly became vacant in the midst of a transition in Executive Director. All of the skills cited above as well as steadiness and graciousness in spades were just what the UUPCC needed.

Dick's dedication to Partnership is evident not only at the national/global level but also in his deep commitment to his congregation's partnerships with Unitarian churches in Szentgerice, Transylvania, and Puriang, NE India. The UU Congregation of Fairfax (VA) and their partners have all benefited greatly from Dick's gifts. His embodiment of Partnership is evident in the Szentgerice minister nominating Dick and his beloved wife/Partnership partner Sharon for a Steward of Partnership Award last year—the first time an overseas partner has made such a nomination.

Barbara Beach who nominated Dick for the Cornish Award, lifted up four qualities that are central to Dick's tireless work to foster the UUPCC's mission: Partnership, Community, Integrity, and Commitment.

Barbara noted that Dick is "a mover of individuals and organizations." He is exceptionally skilled at guiding people and organizations through change and transition. Dick's integrity, she wrote, establishes "a baseline of trust" that helps the goals and ideal of Partnership come alive. Barbara wrote that Dick exemplifies commitment—a commitment so deep that it "has startled and guided me." Many of us can say the same thing!



Dick and Sharon sharing a communal meal in Szentgerice, Transylvania.



Dick in Szentgerice, Transylvania.

Here are some reflections from Dick about Partnership and all he has learned from experiencing up close the magic of Partnership:

"The theological questions that propelled Unitarian clergy and congregations in Transylvania 450 years ago, propel the Unitarian religious leaders and congregations in Kenya and Indonesia today. Social justice and human rights drove Toribio Quimada on Negros Island (in) the Philippines, James Reeb in Alabama, and Fulgence Ndagijimana in Burundi."

"I have learned that if we allow it, ours is a faith not just an agreeable intellectual exercise; it is a force that can sustain people through hardship and even oppression, and that teaches that we can change ours and our family's lives for the better in this lifetime rather than hoping for better in the next life."

"Partnership is not always easy. But, applying UU values to work through cultural and language differences, develop personal friendships and congregational relationships, engage in joint efforts, and celebrate our common humanity has been the way I have found to internalize the words of the UUA covenant statement and begin to understand my faith."

Dick shared that his efforts on behalf of the UUPCC and his home congregation's two partnerships have been the most fulfilling work he has done. He writes that this work has brought him:

- “The joy that growth comes from engaging with partners;
- The knowledge that despite all the polarity we see all around us, there are thousands of people from different cultures who share UU values;
- The understanding that partnership is a long-term commitment, not just a passing fad; and
- The recognition that a small group of people can make a difference.”

His partners and the UUPCC are richly blessed by his life work in Partnership.



Dick and Sharon in Puriang, NE India (*left*); Dick with Szentgerice's minister Rev. Varró-Bodoczi Barna and Santa-Boros József (church organist) during their 2019 visit to Fairfax (*right*).

Barbara Beach beautifully summed it all up when she wrote, “The results of (Dick’s) gentle guidance are the breaths of life that sustain us now...I celebrate what I have grown to expect and count on, and the surprises that will embrace our traditions and will breathe new life in all our work.”

Well said, Barbara! Well done, Dick!
