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!

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!

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.

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!

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Do You Have a Partnership Story to Share?

We’d love to hear from you. Please email your stories and pictures and we’ll try to feature them on our website or in our newsletters.

Email to: office@uupcc.org
UUPCC Financial Update

By Rev. Roger Bertschausen, Executive Director

Like many organizations, the UUPCC has been hit by the economic downturn this spring. The total shutdown of our travel program for the rest of 2020 and possibly 2021 is a large impact. We aim to cover our staff costs related to our travel program and are able to do that with a below average travel year. We are not able to do that in a year in which there is no travel. The possibility of financially strapped individuals and congregations cutting back on membership dues and donations could further compound the impact.

I am very pleased to report that the UUPCC has received a Paycheck Protection Plan loan. This enables us to avoid laying off or reducing hours. We expect to meet the criteria for having the loan forgiven. Our travel program work will shift into planning for 2021 and 2022. We also received a small Economic Injury Disaster Loan grant. Many thanks to our longtime Bookkeeper, Libby Hanna, for her amazing work to help us get this assistance and check the boxes to make sure the PPP loan is forgiven.

Some employers that have received PPP loans are planning to lay off employees after they meet the criteria for getting the loan forgiven. **Thanks to the incredible response of UUPCC supporters who are in a position to make an extra donation, this is likely NOT the case for the UUPCC.** The generous response to our email request and hopefully to our snail mail request that just was mailed is making a huge difference for the UUPCC. With our staff intact, we will be able to continue the mission of supporting mutual partnership across the U/U world. We need that kind of life-giving, life-changing Partnership now more than ever! I am deeply grateful to all who have been able to make a contribution.

You will have an opportunity to find out more about the UUPCC’s financial situation at our Annual Meeting on June 19. (See elsewhere in the newsletter for more details.)

The UUPCC’s Annual Meeting is Going Virtual

**Save the date: Friday June 19, 2020, 12:00pm Eastern / 9:00AM Pacific**

**By now you have heard that this year’s General Assembly has been moved to a virtual gathering. To avoid potential conflicts, the UUPCC Board has decided to move our Annual Meeting date to the week before virtual GA.**

Look for Zoom information closer to the date. We anticipate the meeting will last an hour or so and all are welcome to attend! The meeting will include the presentation of our 2020 Cornish Living the Mission Award and Steward of Partnership Awards. We also look forward to honoring these 2020 recipients in person at the 2021 GA in Milwaukee.

**The Nominating Committee (Richard Van Duizend, Barbara Weber, and Eric Cherry) is pleased to nominate these people for terms on the UUPCC’s Board of Directors:**

- **Joel Schrag** (Washington, DC) for a first three-year term on the Board of Directors. Joel has been a member of the River Road Unitarian Universalist Congregation in the Washington, DC, area for almost fifteen years. As a result of his friendship with
several of the founding members of RRUUC's Partner Church Committee and a chance conversation at a social justice interest fair, he became involved in RRUUC's partnerships with Unitarian churches in Fiatfalva, Transylvania, and Mawblang, NE India. These long-standing partnerships date from 1992 and 2007, respectively. For the past seven years, Joel has served as chair of the RRUUC Partner Church Committee. In addition to making several trips to visit both of RRUUC's partner congregations, Joel has organized groups of River Road members to visit both places, and he worked with the other members of his committee to organize a visit to Washington by a delegation of lay members and the minister from the Unitarian Church in Fiatfalva. One of Joel's favorite activities during the year is helping out with the cooking at his committee's annual Partnerfest celebration, which has honed his expertise in cooking a variety of Hungarian and Indian foods and raised funds to support educational and other programs in RRUUC's partners' communities. In his professional life, Joel is an economist at the Federal Trade Commission.

- **Carol Cook** (San Mateo, CA) for a third three-year term on the Board of Directors. Carol has served on the UUPCC Board since June 2014. She is a retired librarian and resides in San Mateo, California. She is co-chair of UUs of San Mateo's partner Church Committee, and has served UUSM as Membership co-chair, Treasurer, Financial Secretary, and Board member. Carol has traveled to the Philippines six times to meet UUSM's partners in the Ulay congregation on Negros Island, and in March 2013 organized a large collection of theology books donated by Dr. Richard Beal to the UU Church of the Philippines library in Dumaguete.

The Nominating Committee is also happy to nominate for service on the Nominating Committee:

- **Gwyn Reid** (Boise, ID) for a three-year term on the Nominating Committee. As a lay leader dedicated to partnership, and a seasoned traveler to Transylvania, Gwyn enjoys visiting Boise's Mészkö partner church in the Alabaster Village. Gwyn's Steward of Partnership Award in 2017 recognized the depth and quality of her work for the partnership at the Boise congregation. Gwyn is deeply committed to sharing all aspects of partnership along with our Unitarian Transylvanian roots. After reviewing letters from Christine Morgan (wife of Ferenc Balázs) to her family members, Gwyn created and wrote a one-woman show called *Letters from Christine*. The play was performed by a member of her congregation at GA in 2008.

A UUPCC member who is not included in the above slate may be nominated for the Board of Directors or the Nominating Committee by a petition signed by ten or more voting members of the UUPCC and delivered to the Board of Directors Secretary, Rev. Eric Meter ([ericm@firstuu columbus.org](mailto:ericm@firstuu columbus.org)), by June 6, 2020, along with a statement by the candidate stating the candidate's willingness to accept the nomination.

In partnership,

Rev. Morgan McLean
Chair, UUPCC Board of Directors
www.uupcc.org
Quarantined: In Search of Long-Distance Relationship

By Rev. Andrew Weber, UUPCC Travel Program Director

The world is in the midst of determining the best response to COVID-19, including restricting community gatherings. The question existed before, but is now more pressing than ever: How do we keep up relationships with our partners in faith across geographic boundaries or in the face of unknown threats to our own communities?

See Andrew’s virtual sermon for Main Line Unitarian Church here: https://mluc.org/services/quarantined-in-search-of-long-distance-relationship/ or access it through the UUPCC ‘Sermons’ webpage here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wxZjMwljYKg

Gagy, Transylvania Visit Reinvigorates Partnership

By Michael Friedman, First Parish UU Church, Arlington, MA

Note: First Parish UU was a recipient of a UUPCC Cathy Cordes Travel Grant.

Five visitors from the Unitarian Church of Gagy, Transylvania, visited their partner congregation, the First Parish UU Church of Arlington, MA, from August 28 through September 4, 2019. This was particularly exciting because it was the first-time congregational members from Gagy visited Arlington; the only other visit, which was in 2012, included only the minister Rev. Zoltán Gál and his wife Magdika.

The multigenerational group, led by Zoli and Magdika, included the ex-President of the Gagy congregation, Mihály Pál, his wife Edit, and youth group leader Árpád Fazakas. No one from the group had flown on a plane before, much less visited the United States.

Initial welcome at First Parish UU.
The groundwork had been laid much earlier the previous year when the realization dawned that a visit could really happen. As the retiring Partner Church Committee Chair, I led a planning committee that included Holly Herring, John and Carol Chamberlain, Ellen Leigh, Julie Dunn, Jo Anne Preston, John Burt, and Julius Pereli. Even so, given First Parish’s large congregation (approximately 450 members) and many social justice and other projects, it was no sure thing that we could engage enough people and raise enough money to make it happen.

Because having a partner is a congregational-level commitment, our goal was to engage and get support from as many First Parish people and groups as possible, especially since our visitors represented a cross section of the Gagy congregation. Through the hard work of the committee, we were able to obtain financial support from the Parish Committee (who made a $1,000 pledge contingent on us raising a certain amount first), the Women’s Alliance (it helped that both Edit and Magdika are key members of the Gagy women’s group), visitors to Gagy from previous trips, and dozens of individual First Parish members. Using the Realm congregational membership software made individual contributions easy since First Parish members could donate directly online. We were also grateful to be awarded a $500 grant directly from the UU Partner Church Council.

We began with a small nest egg of several hundred dollars raised from previous events, such as the annual winter Transylvanian folk dancing event organized by Ellen Leigh. The main event that turned out to be a crucial milestone was the Hungarian-themed congregational dinner in June, organized by renowned chef Julius Pereli, which turned out to be our largest fundraiser. The admission was free for this event, but a basket for contributions was passed around and donations were accepted live (online) using Realm. Once everything came together in June, we knew our faith and hard work had paid off. Of course, the visit itself went way too fast, filled with home-cooked meals hosted by various members of the First Parish community (including Rev. Marta Flanagan), a dessert reception hosted by the Women’s Alliance, a sightseeing trip around Cambridge and Boston (including major UU sites, a duck boat tour, the Aquarium, and a trip to the top of the Prudential Center building), organizing and facilitating a Partner Church-themed service, a relaxing
weekend at Michael and Holly’s home by the beach in Rockport (with a visit to the UU Society of Rockport), and, finally, a well-attended community potluck dinner before they returned.

The visit was a much-needed boost for the partnership project, strengthening and reinvigorating both sides. We got to share our lives here with our dear friends in the Gagy congregation and return their generous hospitality from First Parish’s previous two trips there. Now that mutual visits have occurred, we’ve gained a fuller understanding and appreciation of this special relationship. Discussions have already started as to what we can do together next, with a youth work exchange at or near the top of the list.

A Legacy of Education for Khasi Children

By Doug Strombom, East Shore Unitarian Church, Bellevue, WA

We are blessed to have extremely earnest and effective partners in the UUNEI and UUPCC. With their help, we can directly support real, on-the-ground efforts with our India partners.

When we lose a loved one, it can be difficult to regain one’s bearings and to cope with the changes left in their absence. My mother, Dona Strombom, died in December 2018. My own healing has been aided by a gift we made from her legacy. Dona’s legacy funded a major expansion of the Unitarian Friendship School in Kharang, Meghalaya.
Dona always cared deeply about education and encouraged children to fulfill their goals. She was a former teacher, urban mentor, and geographer, and the dedicated matriarch of our family. She was very supportive of my involvement in our UU church’s partnership with the Kharang and Smit Unitarians. I kept her informed about our church’s help in founding and supporting the operations of the Friendship School, an English-medium primary school in the village of Kharang.

This is how the school-expansion project started. Five of us, all members of the Partner Church Ministry Team at East Shore, traveled to the Khasi Hills to help celebrate Founders Day on September 17, 2018. After the festivities settled down, we met with the Management Committee of the Friendship School. These school leaders told us about their need for additional classrooms. The teachers were facing many difficulties sharing classrooms, and they needed classroom space to hire additional teachers. We asked what resources they needed, and the committee very quickly produced a detailed operating budget and capital cost to expand the school.

Educators are the real heroes of the story. They founded the Friendship School and lead current educational efforts. See more about these former students of Annie Margaret Barr, about whom Barb Clagett has written: https://uupcc.org/sites/default/files/newsletter/10_clagett_kong_barr-final.pdf

I needed to cut short my visit to India when I got word that Mom had been hospitalized, so I arranged to get home to Seattle quickly and resume caregiving for her. We had spent most of our time together last year, and she had urged me to go on the pilgrimage to India for a break. When I got home from India, Mom’s physical condition had worsened, and she remained weak until her passing December 4, 2018.

In January 2019, I contacted the leaders in Kharang and asked if they still wanted to proceed with the school expansion project. With their approval and with the support of other members of my East Shore Ministry Team, of the UUNEI, and of the UUPCC, I donated $15,000 from the fund.

Dona’s legacy to the Friendship School expansion project under the able project management of Bah Khaniwot Lamare, was able to complete the construction of three additional classrooms within a year. At the same time, they built a protective stone wall using a state government grant. This was a tremendous achievement in less than a year since funding.

On January 5, 2020, we held a massive inauguration celebration of the school expansion. Three of us from East Shore (including Barb Clagett and John Chmaj) traveled to Meghalaya. When I arrived and first saw the school, I was astounded. The new story containing the three new classrooms set atop the building—rising high above the rolling hills—marked a great day for the children.
highland landscape. It had a fresh new coat of salmon-colored paint that glistened in the sunlight.

The inauguration ceremony itself was equally exciting. The Kharang people had erected a stage with an awning and put out bright red chairs for the event. School children in plaid uniforms, school alumni, parents and extended families, as well as village and government officials started arriving for the event. There were wonderful speeches and performances. A 4th grader told a fantastical story of his own imagination in fluent English. An alum who was enrolled in a university in Shillong credited his Friendship School teachers (his “mothers”) with guiding him toward academic achievement. There was feasting and music and dancing. Many donated their time and money to hold this event. Throughout the event, the community demonstrated their tremendous civic pride and optimistic belief in the power of education to improve the lives of these wonderful children. Dona would have thoroughly approved of such civic commitments!

We had a busy week in Kharang progressing our partnership on many fronts. Barb and John led teacher training sessions, we met with the Management Committee, we paid visits to families of sponsored children, and we visited the Children’s Village. We were delighted to meet the delegation from the First Unitarian Church of Dallas, led by Rev. Dr. Daniel Kanter, along with UUPCC travel director Rev. Andrew Weber. During their service visit to the Children’s Village, they provided teaching and health services, rebuilt the pig sty, and painted a beautiful mural in the new boy’s dormitory.

This school expansion project complements the other educational efforts of East Shore’s Khasi Hills Partnership Ministry Team. We raise money for teachers' salaries through an annual “garage” sale.

We also recently initiated a direct student sponsorship program for East Shore members to give directly to local families to enable them to keep their children attending school. It takes many hands to maintain
our partnership, and I am always surprised by the generosity and dedication of so many East Shore members.

I believe it is up to each of us individually to create meaning in our own lives. Like any important family relationship, mine with my mother was a complex one. By choosing to honor her in this way, I’m clearer now about what she really cared about and stood for. In that way, this gift will continue giving back to me and to my family for years to come.

Dona Strombom (in 2016)

False-Consensus in the Age of Physical Distancing
By Rev. Andrew Weber, UUPCC Travel Program Director

Our global connection could not be more evident when the entire world is responding to the global pandemic of COVID-19. We are being asked to stand together, by standing apart. The public health response of avoiding personal contact and limiting physical interaction is not just in our hometown, not just in our country; it is a call for all people across the globe. We are all in this together; we are all connected. This virus has brought very specifically to our minds just how small our world is, just how connected we are to each other, and just how much our lives impact those around us.

Everyone is living a different life. No surprise there. And yet it is a surprise. Realizing that people are different from us is counter to who we are as humans. We have an inherent tendency to assume that other people think and behave like us, as well as have the same tastes, same responses, same thoughts, and same values. I’m not just making this up or passing on hearsay; this is a research-established tendency called the false-consensus effect. The American Psychological Association defines the false-consensus effect as “the tendency to assume that one’s own opinions, beliefs, attributes, or behaviors are more widely shared than is actually the case.” My tendency to assume consensus means that not only do I assume shared experiences, but also shared reactions. When I experience self-isolation, I assume that everyone is having the same reaction as me. Someone else in the exact same circumstances may have a very different reaction and outlook. The false-consensus effect comes to light whenever we make assumptions about each other, our circumstances, our lives, and our realities.

The phrase “we are in this together” has come up a lot lately. And in many ways, we are all in this together. And yet, we are not in this together. We are each living our own lives and having our own experiences. We are all in the same ocean and the storm is coming, but we are in very, very different boats. Some of us are in rafts, others cruise liners, and some row boats or sculls. Additionally, some of our boats are new, while others are old and battered. Some of us are experienced sailors, and some of us have never sailed before.

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The reason that the topic of physical distancing has such a parallel to international relationships is because now everyone is the same distance apart. We are all separated, whether we live on the same street or on different continents. And we are all connected via social media, video conferencing, apps for chatting or texting across boundaries, and physical letters! This is a great time to learn about other people and their realities. How is this time for your extended family? How is the quarantine going for your partner church? What does physical distancing look like and feel like in India, the Philippines, or Transylvania? When we take pilgrimages, our traveling is only a tool to a higher goal--the higher goal of learning about each other.

I end my newsletter article with a quote from Rev. Norbert Čapek, founder of the Czech Unitarian Church. “Let us renew our resolution--sincerely to be real brothers and sisters regardless of any kind of bar which estranges us from each other.”

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Transylvanian Carves Stunning Table for Follen NA Partner

*By John Lempesis, Follen Community Church, MA*

Two years ago, Follen Community Church in Lexington, MA, began planning its new community center. When Follen’s partner church in Alsófelsőszentmihály, Transylvania, learned about this, church minister Rev. Dimeny József wrote to the Massachusetts church that after many years of receiving help from Follen’s congregation, Rev. József’s congregation would “contribute something to your building project.” That “something” became sponsoring a master woodworker, providing labor and materials, to make a carved wooden table featuring traditionally Transylvanian designs.

On March 4, 2020, retired Rev. Szombatfalvi József, who is indeed a master carver, and his wife Anna arrived in the United States. The next day, Andy Dixon (a cabinet maker from Follen) and Rev. József set to work in Andy’s fully equipped woodworking shop. They quickly made the pieces that would become an American basswood table for Follen’s vestibule. Basswood, often called ‘linden’ in Europe, has been used for centuries for fine carvings, particularly in churches. Rev. József and Andy soon moved the pieces to Follen for carving.

Several days later, I went to the room where Rev. József was carving. We had met several days before and chatted at a luncheon to welcome him and his wife. When I saw the amazing designs, he had carved on the table legs and skirts, and the top he was still worked on, I dropped to my knees, bowing to him. Rev. József laughed heartily at my reverence.
Two days later, he finished his work and Andy took it to be varnished. When Rev. József saw the varnished table, his jaw dropped. "This is the best work I have ever done!" he exclaimed excitedly. Rev. József's craftsmanship is indeed extraordinary!

The 30x20x70-inch finished product now beautifies Follen's vestibule, enabling worshipers to see it coming and going each Sunday. Follen has ordered safety glass to protect the top. The legends Rev. József carved into the skirts of the table read, "Follen Alsófelsőséntmihály Partner Church 1990" and "Donated by Alsófelsőséntmihály 2020."

Follen Community Church, founded in 1835, and Alsófelsőséntmihály, founded in 1587, became partner congregations in 1990. On March 8, 2020, I introduced József and Anna to Follen’s congregation at our Sunday service and explained he was building and carving traditional Hungarian designs into a table as a gift to Follen. The theme for that service was “Unbroken.” I told the congregation in part, “Rev. Claire [Feingold Thoryn, Follen’s minister] plans to bless the finished table during a ceremony at a future service. So this is a momentous spring in the ongoing, unbroken 30-year fellowship between us and our partner congregation in Alsófelsőséntmihály!”

(Left to right) Szombatfalvi Anna, Rev. Claire Feingold Thoryn, Cathy Spang, and Rev. Szombatfalvi József chat in Follen’s sanctuary before the start of a Sunday service in March 2020.
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<th>Board of Directors</th>
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Term to 2021  
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