In the Interim…

Rev. Fred Muir, UUPCC Interim Executive Director

Looking at the picture that accompanies this newsletter column might prompt you to ask me: “Have you ever wanted to be a high wire walker?” My answer is definitely, “No!” But there have been times in my ministries when maintaining balance was a high priority, those periods when falling or even tripping was not an option. One of those times is now. I can’t help thinking that with the virus, virtual schooling, an election, and virtual Sunday worship (not to say anything of U/U international partnering), that you too, in all likelihood, are doing all you can to keep your balance, making sure you just put one foot in front of the other.

Right now, maintaining my balance with the PCC means having one eye on the present and another on the future. Most of you have heard or read about the International Collaboration Group, which is composed of three representatives from the UUPCC and three from the International Council of Unitarians/Universalists (ICUU). After five months of balancing conversations with decision-making, we recently issued our “New Vision” document that describes the promises of a new U/U international organization that will emerge as a result of the PCC and the ICUU merging/dissolving and being reimagined. But there is still a long way to go before we start to see something more than a broad outline of aspirations.

With all the good people lending their interest, the exciting and energizing vision that’s going into the discussions, and so much promise and hope for what our organizations can look like and do as one, the act of balance comes in getting from point “A” (the present) to point “B” (the future). How well this happens depends on your continued acts of kindness and generosity. As we move into the Fall, you can expect to receive messages about our Annual Appeal. Like past appeals, this one will ensure a strong commitment to our international U/U partnerships; but unlike past appeals, this time we are asking you to give to the future of UU’s international efforts and dreams. Watch for more details in your email and in your postal boxes.

Stay safe, keep your balance, and take care.

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Miss the Zoom meetings about the 2020 UUPCC-ICUU Collaboration Report?
To view a PDF of the report click "A New Vision"
Listen to the meeting recording here:
091520 "New Vision" discussion 2.mp4
“Cosmic Sage” Fills a Gap in Unitarian History
by Zizi Gellert, former UUPCC Executive Director and 1990’s cofounder of the Partner Church movement

Zizi shares George Williams’ recently published book, which took three decades of intense research and writing.

COSMIC SAGE: IMAOKA SHIN’ICHIRŌ, PROPHET OF FREE RELIGION
– by Prof. George M. Williams

Cosmic Sage is the first historical biography of one of Japan’s most important liberal religious figures: Dr. Imaoka Shin’ichirō (1881-1988). It is also the first comprehensive history of 34 years of American and Japanese Unitarian connections: the Japan Unitarian Mission (1888-1922), the Japan Unitarian Association, and the Japanese Free Religious Association.

Imaoka studied at the Imperial University of Japan and Harvard Divinity School, received two Imperial Awards for his contributions to the modern Japanese educational system, and was a cofounder of the World Conference for Religion and Peace.

The book presents Prof. Williams’ encounter with an enigmatic human being who Buddhists thought to be a bodhisattva, Shintoists a living kami, and Christians a virtual saint. Some Unitarians considered him the Emerson of Japan. He was an example of how multiple religious identities could be integrated while preserving the integrity of each. “There is no graduation from the university of life. I am only learning, growing,” he would say. His free religion passed on nothing to imitate so that others could find spiritual liberation through their own paths. His “egoless” personality—as mere teacher—masked the extraordinary role he played on the national and international stage of progressive movements and institutions in twentieth century Japan.

Both e-book and paperback versions are available by clicking here. (Discounted pricing was available as of 10-01-2020.)

Connection Opportunities During Covid
Rev. Andrew Weber, Travel Program Director

Greetings UUPCC Members! This is an odd time, especially for the UUPCC and our work in international partnerships and travel.

As you probably have guessed, UUPCC sponsored travel has not been happening since March of this year. Even so, people and congregations remain dedicated to their partner relationships. When flights and trips for 2020 were being called off, many congregations and groups decided to “postpone” rather than “cancel” their travel. Core groups remain committed to their relationships and hopeful about future travel. There are two groups in particular who are still very excited and optimistic that their trips will

(Left to right) Andrew with Barishisha (Bari) Mukhim and Nangroi Suting from January 2020 trip to NE India.
Now More Than Ever…

Rev. Fred Muir, UUPCC Interim Executive Director

I hope this finds you well and staying safe! It goes without saying that we continue to live in challenging times.

Perhaps you have heard or read, as I have, that the pandemic has pulled back a curtain so we can plainly see the hurts, disparities, and isolation that affect so many, especially the historically marginalized (in the United States, that means “Black people, Indigenous people, people of color, as well as LGBTQ individuals, people living with limited economic means, and people living with disabilities”**). How we grow in solidarity with all in our communities and beyond becomes an urgent priority as the virus brings us closer (this might sound counterintuitive) rather than more separate. The pandemic has been one more reminder that we really do live in “the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.” We won’t be OK until everyone is OK.

An appreciation for this web has always been at the core of who and what the UU Partner Church Council is all about: a love for our Unitarian/Universalist faith and values in its many expressions worldwide. As the pandemic rages (and reports from our partners remind us that they too struggle to meet daily challenges) and shows only a few signs of diminishing, we keep searching for ways to connect and sustain what makes the UUPCC unique—our partnerships. A recent conversation with a friend reminded me of the new reality we’re living in. The Zoom conference call we were sharing was their first of four video calls for the day! I can hear many of you groaning. It’s likely that most of you have attended at least one Sunday morning service via video. I know it’s not the same as being physically present, but it’s the best we can hope for right now.
And, there is an upside to this new reality. Maybe you saw this report from the end of June’s UUA General Assembly: “With more than 4,900 virtual attendees, the 2020 General Assembly had the third highest attendance in UUA history since GA began in 1962.” Wow! For years, the UUA has wondered how to increase participation at GA, most especially, how to make GA more demographically representative. The pandemic may have forced an answer—go virtual! For now (and the foreseeable future) virtual connecting may be the only way to explore the interdependent web of our partnerships. In this spirit, there are several opportunities outside the usual PCC avenues for you to sustain your U/U international interest and commitment. One special note regarding the “Colonial Legacy” webinar: it features a panel of four that includes me and former PCC Executive Director Roger Bertschausen (also International Council of U/U Executive Director Rev. Sara Ascher and UUA Director of International Programs Rev. Alicia Forde).

Take care, stay well, and do what you can to remain connected to the beautiful web of which we are all a part!


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**Partnership Thrives Even During the Pandemic**

*Despite thwarted plans for visits, fundraisers, and meeting face to face, our UUPCC members are finding innovative ways to stay in touch. We hope you are inspired to try some of these ideas with your partnerships and share your own successes.*

**Donna Starr, Blaine Free Church UU, Blaine, WA**

Water can be a blessing, but too much in the wrong place is a real problem. Two years ago, my husband and I went to Firtosvárálja to help celebrate the first time the congregation returned to their church after a 7-year project to put in drainage and restore their church. We recently shared this picture of our new Blaine water protection drainage system being built with our Transylvanian partners. While our Blaine drainage project was not a 7-year project, it was almost as expensive. It’s nice to be able to share our similar projects as a way to connect during this time of Covid-19 distancing.

**Dick Van Duizend, UUC Fairfax, VA (2020 Cornish Award Winner)**

While the pandemic has closed off, at least temporarily, the opportunity to travel to our partners or welcome them to our homes, it has opened-up the possibility of meeting with them virtually on a regular basis. The Partner Church Circle of the UU Congregation of Fairfax has been meeting via Zoom and now extends Zoom invitations to our partners in Szentgericse (Transylvania) and Puriang (Khasi Hills) to join in. These conversations have grown to include members of each congregation who have visited one of the others or hosted visitors, thereby broadening, enriching, and deepening our bonds of friendship.
Doug Strombom and Barb Clagett, East Shore Unitarian Church
Folks at East Shore were worried about how the pandemic would affect our ability to raise money for teacher salaries at our partnership’s Friendship School in Kharang, Meghalaya. In normal times, East Shore runs a Trinkets and Treasures rummage sale. This year, we decided to put on an online fundraising event called “PartnerPalooza” and invited the whole church and friends. John Chmaj created entertaining and informative short videos about our partnership and what it means to us. John also hosted the event on a Saturday afternoon. It was very well attended, and we reached our goal of raising $7,000! For those interested in learning more about the PartnerPalooza event, click on this YouTube link. Our gratitude goes out to John and all who contributed in so many ways!

Tom Getz and Janet Taylor, First Unitarian, Providence, RI
June 2020 was to be a great month because our Partner Church members were going to visit First Unitarian Church of Providence to help us celebrate our 300th Anniversary as a congregation. This visit was postponed because of the pandemic and is being rescheduled. In September 2020, our partner church in Szentegyháza will be hosting the Odorhei Secuiesc Unitarian Women’s Association of all women’s associations throughout their county. In August, our congregation and the First Unitarian Church’s Women’s Alliance sent greetings to our partner church that was translated and will be included in the meeting program. Our greeting also provided a description of the activities of our Women’s Alliance and shows how they support the mission of our congregation.

Cathie Brown, Unitarian Society, Northampton & Florence, MA
We are celebrating our 30th year of partnership this year. Last summer, 7 youth and 2 adult chaperones toured parts of Romania and visited our partner village in Homoródkarácsonyfalva. John Dale and Csilla Kolcsar were our guides for this life-changing trip. We cherished our time in the village where everyone was welcoming and so generous. We met families as well as toured the village and surrounding salt mines, springs, and camp. We also had a wonderful hayride and many delicious dinners in the parish hall. Mihaly and Eniko Benedek crafted a service where we shared thoughts and many songs from our congregations. It is hard to believe that a year has gone by, and we have been communicating via email and Facebook. The villagers revitalized their youth camp into a beautiful space and hosted campers in August.

Rick Brandt-Kreutz, Olympia UU Congregation, Olympia, WA
Our partner church ministry team is active. We were able to raise funds to support the beginning of the renovation of the historic organ in the Kissolymos church, as well as fund purchase of video and sound equipment for local school children and the local funeral home. Our ministry team is meeting monthly on zoom and planning a service for November in lieu of the cancellation of the Balázs scholar this year.
Joel Schrag, River Road UU Congregation, Bethesda, MD
River Road Celebrates their 28th Annual Partnerfest, Streaming LIVE, Sat., Oct. 24 at 7:30 pm EDT. Join RRUUC’s Partner Church Committee for an unforgettable evening of musical entertainment featuring a concert by virtuoso pianist Shuai Wang, with special guest Dr. Clif Hardin. They promise to thrill us with both solo and duet performances live streamed from the RRUUC sanctuary! The program is FREE, with suggested donations to benefit RRUUC’s decades-long partnerships with Unitarian congregations in Fiatfalva, Transylvania, and Mawblang, NE India. In both places, RRUUC supports vital educational programs benefiting disadvantaged communities.

To receive the link to the performance, register by Friday, Oct. 23rd at http://bit.ly/PartnerFest28. For more information, contact partnerchurch@rruuc.org.

Jani Monk, Monte Vista UU Congregation, Montclair, CA
About a dozen stalwart MVUUC members gathered outside the church on Saturday morning, September 12th to pack donations for our Calapayan partners. We filled 5 jumbo Balikbayan boxes with gifts, including new and gently used clothing, shoes, children’s books, toys (including a Karaoke machine), school supplies, toiletries, and canned protein. Some of the boxes were so full we had to sit on them to get them taped shut! Despite the smoke from fires that continue to rage here on the West Coast of the United States and the need to maintain social distancing due to Covid-19 concerns, it was wonderful to see one another in person and to know that support for our partner congregation continues stronger than ever. We hope our gifts will arrive in Negros Occidental in time for our friends in the Philippines to celebrate a festive holiday season.

(Left to right) MVUUC group shot, gathered around the peace pole; Jack Little, Jeannine Ganzen-Little, and their rescue pup; Lyn Shaible and Jani Monk; Lyn with Julie Steinbach, working to seal the deal!

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Do You Have a Covid Partnership Story to Share?
We’d love to hear from you especially during this time of physical distancing.
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

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# UU Partner Church Council 2020 - 2021

## Board of Directors

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<tr>
<td>Rev. Morgan McLean</td>
<td>Chair</td>
<td>2016 - term to 2022</td>
<td>Davis, CA</td>
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<td>Anne Greenwood</td>
<td>Vice Chair</td>
<td>2016 - term to 2022</td>
<td>San Pablo, CA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rev. Eric Meter</td>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>2015 - term to 2021</td>
<td>Concord, MA</td>
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<td>Rick Irwin</td>
<td>Treasurer</td>
<td>2013 - term to 2022</td>
<td>Atlanta, GA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rev. Alicia Forde</td>
<td>(UUA Appointee)</td>
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<td>UUA International Office Boston, MA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Carol Cook</td>
<td></td>
<td>2014 - term to 2023</td>
<td>San Mateo, CA</td>
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## Staff

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<tr>
<td>Rev. Howard Dana</td>
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## VOLUNTEERS

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<td>Sharon McCarron</td>
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