



# THE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST HISTORY AND HERITAGE SOCIETY BULLETIN



## Happy Birthday, Henry—and Conrad!

It is perhaps a sign of the delightful links in Unitarian Universalist history that Henry David Thoreau and Conrad Wright were born almost exactly one hundred years apart—Thoreau on July 12, 1817; Wright on February 19, 1917. Thoreau enriched Unitarian Universalism by defiantly following his own drummer to Walden Pond and to a jail cell in protest of war and slavery. Wright served our movement with his steadfast loyalty to First Parish Cambridge, to Harvard Divinity School, and to our historical society, as well as with his many volumes of historical research. In this centennial and bicentennial year, the UUHHS remembers both men for their distinct contributions. On September 14, we celebrated the Thoreau bicentennial with an event at Harvard Divinity School featuring Laura Dassow Walls, author of *Thoreau: A Life*, and Richard Higgins, author of *Thoreau and the Language of Trees*. Barry Andrews and Terry Tempest Williams offered thoughtful responses to the two speakers. Those who missed the event may watch a full video available at <https://hds.harvard.edu/news/2017/09/14/video-thoreau-bicentennial-celebrating-thoreaus-200th-birthday>.

Every year we remember Conrad Wright through the annual Conrad Wright Lecture. In 2017, the lecturer was Professor Emily Clark, who spoke at General Assembly about the Afro-Creole Spiritualist tradition in New Orleans. In honor of Wright's centennial, we are seeking contributions to ensure the perpetuity of this lecture series. We'll share more information about this campaign in the months ahead, but now is the time to be the first to donate! Donations, with "Conrad Wright Lecture" in the subject line, may be directed to Membership Clerk, UUHHS, 670 High Street, Dedham, MA.



**Left:** Walls and Higgins, speakers at the Thoreau Bicentennial celebration co-sponsored with Harvard Divinity School.

**Right:** Clark, presenter at the 2017 Conrad Wright lecture at General Assembly



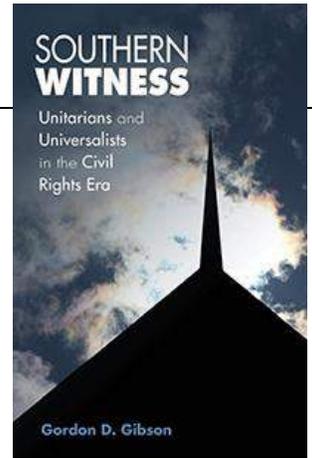


### **UU Women’s Heritage Society Library**

Last spring your UUHHS Board discussed the disposition of the UU Women’s Heritage Society library collection for a second time. The first time was in 2011 when the entire collection of books, articles and manuscripts was given to Andover Newton Theological School to become part of their permanent collection. The discussion surfaced again last spring in the wake of the sale of the Andover Newton campus, and the embedding of the school into Yale Divinity School. After some discussion of whether some items might be transferred elsewhere, the Board of UUHHS elected not to try to intervene into the transfer of the entire collection to Yale, but to support the transfer of the collection to New Haven. It will remain available to scholars and researchers as the Andover Newton collection at Yale.

### **UUHHS Publishing – *Southern Witness***

In 2015 Gordon Gibson, former president of UUHHS published *Southern Witness: Unitarians and Universalists in the Civil Rights Era*. This was a joint publishing effort by Skinner House Books and the UUHHS, and if you look on the title page you will see our UUHHS name imprinted there. This is an important book, and the UUHHS is justly proud to have played a role in supporting the wider disbursement of this important material. Gordon has virtually given us an entire history of Unitarian and Universalist congregations in the South. It is fascinating and informative to see the reactions of each of these communities to the painful, yet hopeful odyssey of confronting racism in each location and in society at large. We see how in many places such as Birmingham, Charlotte, Jackson, and Huntsville, local congregations become safe havens of support and refuge for those who chose to act in these trying times. Who chooses to live out the values of their faith, and who does not? Racial conflicts continue to challenge us to reflect on our faith, and see if we will act in the difficult times through which we are living. Gordon’s book is a good history lesson in grappling with such challenges.



### **Channing Memorial Dedication**

On October 1, 2017 William Ellery Channing’s grave at Mt. Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge, Massachusetts was rededicated after its beautiful restoration following a joint fund raising effort by the Friends of Mt. Auburn Cemetery, and the UUHHS, the fiscal agent for the project. We raised over \$9,000 thanks especially to a fund raising campaign on Faithify, put together by Stephanie May, minister in Wayland, MA. The committee that worked on this project included Stephanie, Rosemarie Smurzynski (a docent at Mt. Auburn), Mark Harris (the UUHHS representative), and Helen Cohen, all UU ministers, who are also pictured in the Fall issue of the *UU World*. At the rededication several speakers welcomed people, including staff of Mt. Auburn and its CEO David Bartlett, and representatives of the firm responsible for the restoration. Mark Harris spoke on the significance of Channing saying, “He was a child of America when people literally ached to build a nation that was obsessed with moral perfection. His significance was that he urged us to be better in all ways. We honor his legacy in preserving this monument because he reminds us that if we hear his words again today we can bring our moral potential to bear on a world that increasingly needs us to build communities of love and justice.”



**PRESIDENT'S POST**

The Annual Meetings of the Board and the Society were held as usual in July. With one important exception, which I shall reserve for last, we looked back on a very satisfying year.

It was highlighted by the third triennial Convocation (co-sponsored again by Collegium) held in the Twin Cities last October. The quality of the papers and programs was notable, and many of these will be featured in next spring's Journal. Kathy Parker, our sine qua non Editor, has had a bounty to choose from and says we should expect a very substantial volume in 2018. The Board approved allocation of \$500 from the Convo grant to finance an expanded special issue. Preliminary planning for the 2019 Convo is already under way.

The Conrad Wright Lecture was held again this year during General Assembly in New Orleans. More than a hundred people turned out to hear a well-received lecture by Emily Clark, professor at Gonzaga University, on "Afro-Creole Spiritualism and Social Justice," focusing on the practice of Spiritualism among a small community of Afro-Creole men in 19th century New Orleans. Preceding the Lecture, Board members Dr. Nicole Kirk and the Rev. Mark Harris introduced Unitarian Universalist connections to spiritualism.

Some members of the Society were deeply involved throughout the year in the successful fund-raising for the renovation of the Channing Memorial at Mt. Auburn, for which the Society served as financial agent. Details of this project are included in this issue. Thanks to the many of you who contributed to this effort.

Now for the bad news. We learned that our membership has declined significantly in the last year. This was a surprise. As you know (or should know) the work of UUHHS is supported primarily by membership dues. The Board voted at our annual meeting to convene a membership team, but you can help us immediately by 1) making sure your membership is up to date and 2) helping us find potential new members among your friends who you think may be interested. A membership form is included in this Newsletter.

Thank you for your support of the UU History and Heritage Society.

Earl Holt  
EarlHolt@aol.com

**Unitarian Universalist History and Heritage Society  
Board 2017-2018**

- Earl Holt, *President*
- Mark Harris, *Vice-President*
- Dan McKanan, *Secretary*
- Stephen Cook, *Treasurer*
- Kathleen Parker, *Journal Editor*
- Phoebe Cos, *Newsletter Editor*
- Barbara Coeyman, *UU Women's History Society Board Member*
- Patrice Curtis, *Board Member*
- Colin Bossen, *Board Member*
- Nicole Kirk, *Board Member*
- Rali Weaver, *Board Member*
- Mark Hicks, *Board Member*

**RETIRING UUHHS BOARD MEMBERS**

At the Board's Annual Meeting we bade fond farewell to two board members who are stepping down after many years of faithful service to the Society: John Marsh and Helen Zidowecki. We are grateful for all they have contributed to the Society, and we will miss them.

**NEW UUHHS BOARD MEMBERS**

We also elected to the Board three new members:

- The Rev. Patrice Curtis, Minister at UUs of Clearwater, Florida
- Dr. Mark A. Hicks, Angus MacLean Professor of Religious Education, Meadville/Lombard Theological School, Chicago, Illinois
- The Rev. Rali Weaver, Minister of First Parish, Dedham, Massachusetts

We thank them for accepting our invitation to join us and look forward to their future contributions to our work.

**\*\*HAVE AN INTERESTING HISTORIC UU FIND THAT YOU WANT TO SHARE WITH UUHHS?\*\***  
Please send any submissions about your local UU history and heritage to the UUHHS newsletter! Send all submissions to the newsletter editor, Phoebe Cos, at [phobekates16@gmail.com](mailto:phobekates16@gmail.com) by January 1st. We look forward to hearing your stories!

## GET TO KNOW YOUR BOARD

Ever wonder who is behind the events and publications of the UUHS? With the beginning of a new year and an addition of three new board members, allow us to introduce ourselves!



**Kathleen Parker** has been a member of the UUHS Board since 2009; she became editor of our *Journal of Unitarian Universalist History* in 2010. This coincided with the UUHS goal of expanding the journal content to include a geographic range of authors, and to offer book reviews of recent publications in UU and liberal religious history. She is author of *Sacred Service in Civic Space: 300 years of Community Ministry in Unitarian Universalism* and *Here We Have Gathered: The Story of Unitarian Universalism in Western Pennsylvania, 1808-2008*. Holding a PhD in American Studies, she lives in Pittsburgh, PA where she teaches university-level American history. She has two grown children (with spouses) and three grandchildren, all of whom live in other states.



**Nicole Kirk** is the Schulman Professor of Unitarian Universalist History at Meadville Lombard Theological School in Chicago and a Unitarian Universalist minister. She has served congregations in Ohio and New Jersey.

Nicole has a D.Min. and a Ph.D. in American Religious History from Princeton Theological Seminary. Her book *Wanamaker's Temple: Business and Religion in the Wanamaker Department Store* is forthcoming from NYU Press in 2018.

**Rev. Rali Weaver** has served as the Parish Minister for the First Church and Parish in Dedham since 2007. Dedham was founded in 1638 as the only Puritan church between Boston and Providence and splintered in 1818 at the call of Alvan Lamson, a Unitarian, resulting in the 1820 Dedham Decision. When not redressing that history Rev. Weaver has been active in promoting Human Rights and to defend the environment within the town of Dedham and State of Massachusetts. Rali serves as the program coordinator for the Mass Bay District of the UUMA, on the Board of the Sophia Snow House, and as a Director for the Chickering Foundation and the Mass Convention of Congregational Ministers.

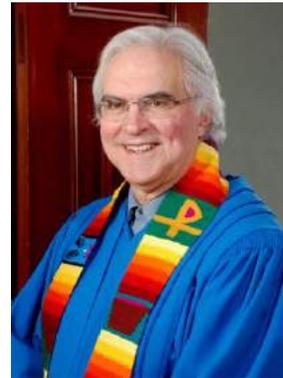
**Dan McKanan** holds the Emerson Chair at Harvard Divinity School, which was created to uphold and renew the Divinity School's historic connection to Unitarian Universalism. He is the author of five books, most recently *Prophetic Encounters: Religion and the American Radical Tradition* (winner of the UUA's Frederic G. Melcher Book Award) and *Eco-Alchemy: Anthroposophy and the History and Future of Environmentalism*. He also led the editorial team that created the new *Documentary History of Unitarian Universalism*. Dan and his family are proud members of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Medford, Massachusetts.





**Patrice K. Curtis** currently serves the Unitarian Universalists of Clearwater in Florida. She is part of the Worship Team for General Assemblies 2017-2019; was a presenter at Collegium; and contributed to the two-volume *Documentary History of Unitarian Universalism*.

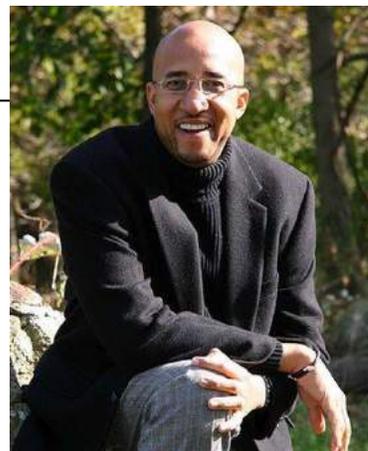
**Mark Harris** has been vice president of UUHHS since 2006. He is a former president of the UUHS. He is the minister of the First Parish of Watertown, MA, where he has been since 1996. Mark has just finished a second edition of his *Historical Dictionary of Unitarian Universalism*, which will be published next year. He is also an adjunct professor at Harvard Divinity School.



**The Rev. Earl Holt** is Minister Emeritus of the First Unitarian Church of St. Louis, Missouri, where he served from 1974 to 2001, when he accepted a call to King's Chapel in Boston. Retired in 2009, he and his wife Marilyn moved to Sun Lakes, Arizona, to live near young grandson David and family. A fifth-generation Unitarian and native New Englander, he is a graduate of Brown University and Starr King School for the Ministry, which also awarded him an honorary doctorate in 2004. He joined the UUHHS Board in 2014 and has served as its President since 2015.



**Mark A. Hicks, Ed.D.** is the Angus MacLean Professor of Religious Education at Meadville Lombard Theological School in Chicago. Formerly a professor of educational transformation, he holds a doctorate degree in philosophy and education and a master's degree in adult development in higher education, both from Columbia University in New York City. Mark is a member and lay leader at All Souls Church, Unitarian in Washington, DC, and The Riverside Church in New York City.





Barbara Coeyman was ordained to Unitarian Universalist ministry in 2005 in Austin, Texas. She has served a variety of parish and community ministries in central Texas, and most recently has been an interim minister in New England, Long Island, New York, and Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Prior to ministry, she was a faculty member in music history at West Virginia University, where her research included French Baroque opera, women's studies in music, and early music performance.



**Colin Bossen** is a preacher, scholar and social justice organizer, currently working on his doctorate at Harvard University where he studies the relationship between theology and populism. Twice a month he preaches at the First Parish Church, Ashby, Unitarian Universalist, where he serves as the parish minister. Prior to returning to academia he served as a parish minister for six years.

**Phoebe Cos** is a support educator at the Smithsonian Early Enrichment Center at the National Museum of American History and supervisor at Carlyle House Historic Park in Alexandria, VA. Currently residing in Washington, D.C., she is a recent graduate of Mount Holyoke College with a focus in eighteenth and early nineteenth century American history and an advocate for the role of museums to educate and engage the public of all ages with history.



We look forward to sharing a great year with you!

**Thoughts from our Journal Editor...**

We hope you are enjoying the most recent issue of our Journal of Unitarian Universalist History (vol. 40). We are happy to say that a certain reader has written to describe it as a “spectacular” issue, reflecting the continued “excellence, outreach, and mutuality” of our journal. We are gratified to receive this kind of support and we hope that all of you share these sentiments! Indeed, feel free to send us your feedback on any of the articles or book reviews you find in the pages of the journal.

Work on our next issue of the journal is well underway! All articles are being taken from the papers presented at the 2016 UU History and Heritage Convocation: “Beyond Boundaries: Controversies, Frontiers, and Growth in Unitarian Universalism,” held in Minneapolis, MN in October 2016. As you will see, the theme of the Convo offered an opportunity to explore and reflect on the extent to which Unitarian and Universalist expansion in the nineteenth century overlooked, or was complicit in, the expropriation of land and culture among indigenous peoples and people of color. How did our levels of privilege affect the assumptions we made? What inequalities did we choose to ignore? In what ways were we complicit in carrying out social reforms that were ultimately self-serving?

If you were not able to attend the Convocation, the next issue of the Journal will allow you to read some of the very good work that was presented there. In addition to these articles, the next journal will also include twenty-one book reviews! We are confident you will enjoy vol. 41, to be published in spring 2018. Be sure to keep your membership up to date so you won’t miss out on the next journal mailing!

**Join us in the work of UUHHS, receive our Journal and Newsletter, and be part of our growing community of research and celebration.**

Annual Membership for 2017:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Student or Low-Income- \$30
- \_\_\_\_\_ Regular/Household- \$50
- \_\_\_\_\_ Three Years-\$125

\_\_\_\_\_ (name/s)

\_\_\_\_\_ (address)

Memberships expire in June after General Assembly.

\_\_\_\_\_ (city,state,zip)

Please send this form with a check to:  
UUHHS  
670 High Street  
Dedham, MA 02026

\_\_\_\_\_ (email)

Or: Use PayPal at [uuhhs.org](http://uuhhs.org)  
(under the “About Us” tab

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