

The Unifier

Guest speaker at spring
retreat in Dijon,
the Rev. Barbara Prose



President's reflections
in the month of Janus

ICUU delegates gather
in Kathmandu

Come to Burgundy
in the spring

Torda450
in Europe



The Seven Principles of Unitarian Universalism

1st Principle:

The inherent worth and dignity of every person.

2nd Principle:

Justice, equity and compassion
in human relations.

3rd Principle:

Acceptance of one another and encouragement to
spiritual growth in our congregations.

4th Principle:

A free and responsible search for
truth and meaning.

5th Principle:

The right of conscience and the use of the
democratic process within our
congregations and in society at large.

6th Principle:

The goal of world community with
peace, liberty, and justice for all.

7th Principle:

Respect for the interdependent web of all
existence that we are all part of.



In this issue

President's letter: Reflections in the month of Janus	4
ICUU conference in Kathmandu now underway	5
Come to Burgundy in the spring	6
Torda450 in Europe: Celebrating the Edict of Torda	8
Engaging the Heart: Ways to Spirit	10
And where on the spirituality spectrum are you?	12
Facing the challenge of Faith without borders	14
Collections at Spa...thank you all	15
Social Action! What are you up to?	15
EUU teens in free and responsible search for meaning	16
Spa workshop notes:	
Opening the welcome tent wide	17
Heaven and Earth meet in the heart	18
Yoga (also) for beginners	19
Living with the Other and with one another	20
Music director says 'thanks'	19
European Unitarians Together Again!!!	19



MASTHEAD

Senior Assignment Editor
Matt Gilsean

Social Action Editor
Jodi van Stolzenbach

Senior Copy Editor
Shulamit Levine-Hellman

Senior Production Editor
Derek Suchard

(c) 2018. European Unitarian Universalists. All rights reserved. Really. No, seriously. We're not kidding.



Graphic designer wanted

To help design and execute editorial graphics for The Unifier. Familiarity with vector and raster graphics would be gr8!

Remuneration: undying gratitude of the EUU community and the pride of a job well done.

Contact: djsuchard@gmail.com



Players wanted

We are always looking for musicians to share their talents in our worship at retreats. To join us as a soloist or part of an ensemble, please contact Marcie McGaughey, Music Director, when you register (or before).

We especially need pianists who can play hymns during services and accompany the choir for worship and on Saturday night.

Contact: mcmouse54@yahoo.com

president's letter

Reflections in the month of Janus

by Carolyn Burlingame-Goff, President, EUU



As January begins, I make a ritual of examining Janus's two faces—one looking back at the year that just ended and one looking forward to the year ahead of us.

One hopes to look backwards with a feeling of accomplishment and look forward with a feeling of purpose. Happily, when it comes to EUU, that is exactly my frame of mind.

The retreat in Spa this past fall, while not as well-attended as we had hoped, was well-planned and executed by the Netherlands Fellowship. I'm sure that you share in my gratitude for the hard work they put into ensuring that we had a place and time for fellowship and growth.

It was also a wonderful opportunity to meet our new UUA Ambassador, Diane Rollert. Diane will be travelling to Europe approximately twice a year and trying to see three Fellowships each trip. We are in the midst of planning her next trip, which will kick off with a service in Stuttgart on March 4. In future, we are hoping to set up a pattern whereby Diane's visits will coincide with CC meetings, allowing us another opportunity for fellowship between retreats.

At the CC meeting in Paris this January, we plan to begin tackling a number of issues that should strengthen EUU moving forward.

1) Key is getting our new website up

and running so that we can promote cooperation between our fellowships. It has long been a dream of mine to create an EUU calendar that would include all our Fellowships' services, discussion groups and activities.

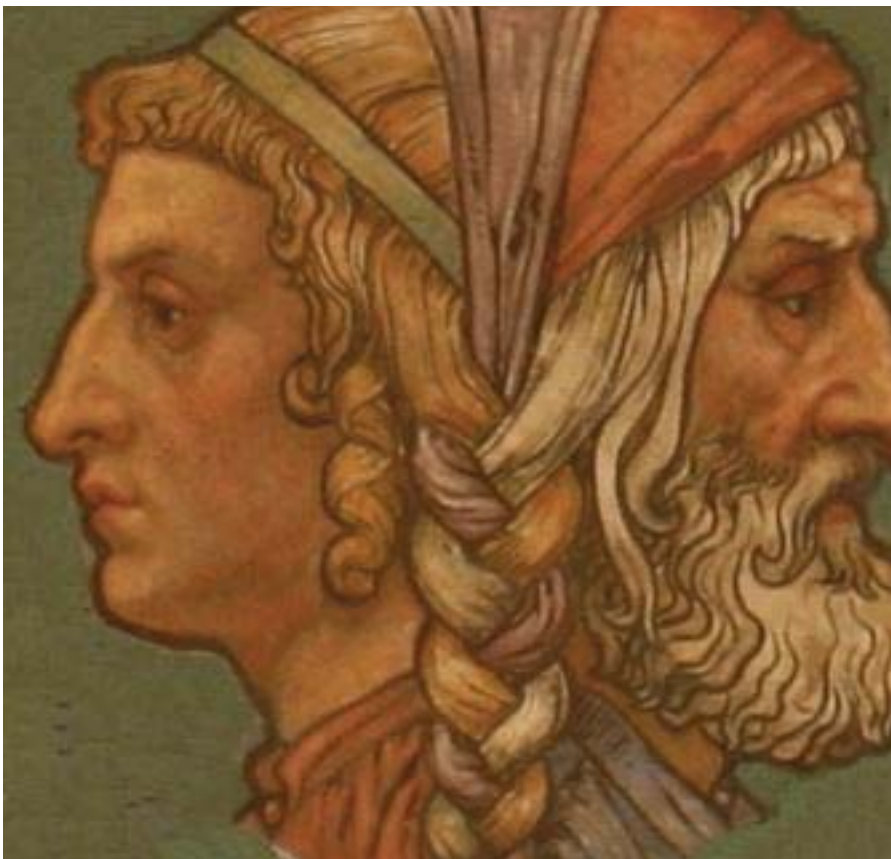
2) I also want to encourage the Fellowships to develop tent-pole events—special events around which their yearly worship is organized and that will attract visitors from other groups. While our Retreats will continue to be the focus of our coming together, many members welcome the chance to visit and worship with other EUU members in between.

3) R.E. continues to be a challenge for our organization, and we need to renew our commitment to our young families.

4) Music is an essential part of our worship, and we have been blessed to have so many talented musicians amongst our members. We need to continue valuing what we have and exploring new opportunities (like inviting choirs to retreats.)

5) Retaining our identity as Unitarian Universalists in Europe, while at the same time finding new structures that bind us to other Unitarians and like-minded folk in Europe.

I hope all who can will join us at our next Annual General Meeting in Dijon, where we can review our accomplishments and start to take concrete steps towards our future goals. I have been told everyone hates meetings, but I am determined to make this meeting a dilly. Anyone who wants to know what that means will have to show up!



नेपालमा स्वागत छ

ICUU Conference in Kathmandu now underway



“And it shall come to pass – true to the once heretical manner in which our ancestors evaded repressive authorities, blessing hidden meeting places with their persistence – that global representatives of humanity's communities, hoping to broaden pluralism and tolerance and beacons of light in their own communities, met in Kathmandu, under extraordinary circumstances, nay, at a time of great turmoil everywhere in the world, and I shall have been part of it.”

Reverend Tet Gallardo, Unitarian Universalist Church of the Phillipines

By Matt Gilsenan

The International Council of Unitarians and Universalists had a setback this autumn. The success of their biennial global conference scheduled for February 2018 was threatened.

In a time of great global change and uncertainty, a change in visa requirements for visitors to the planned destination of

India threatened to exclude many ICUU members. The event, which promised to be historic, was to have been held in a particularly significant location, the Khasi Hills of northeast India, where the Unitarian faith that is practiced there emerged from an indigenous movement in the region more than 130 years ago.



Fortunately, the fast-thinking and fast-moving ICUU leadership was able to secure a last minute location and venue in a multicultural, multiethnic, and multi-religious alternative – Kathmandu, Nepal.

Their goal of ensuring that the

greatest number of participants from as wide a range of countries as possible could attend was now once again attainable. ICUU counts many other locally inspired movements that embrace our liberal expression of faith among its members, and Kathmandu is a more accessible location for them to meet.

EUU is a member group of the ICUU. Several EUU members are en route or have arrived in Kathmandu as this issue of *The Unifier* is released, including EUU representative Eva Kortekaas from the Netherlands.

Along with the more than 100 people from more than 20 countries, they will explore the multifaceted nature of our global faith and, based on the theme “The Heart of Unitarianism/ Universalism,” hope to better realize the core of our shared faith. The conference takes place from February 11- 16.

Come to Burgundy in the spring

Keynote speakers will speak not only to the unique expression of Unitarian/Universalism in their faith community, but also about how we bridge the differences in our expressions of faith to become a stronger, more united voice for religious freedom around the world.

Four speakers from unique locations and perspectives will anchor the conference: Rev. Diane Rollert, Canadian Unitarian Council and UUA Ambassador to EUU, Mr. Rupaia Lamar, Unitarian Union of Northeast India, Rev. Rácz Norbert Zsolt, Hungarian Unitarian Church, and Ms. Dorothea Kaufmann, Unitarian - Religious Society of Free Faith, Germany.

In addition to this programming, the meeting will provide a forum for elections and the opportunity to work on topics relevant to the ICUU Vision for 2020. These topics are: to empower & sustain member groups and regions, to create opportunities for exchanging knowledge, resources and support, to build effective & adaptive organizational structures, to commit to U/U international organizational collaboration, to establish & maintain effective internal and external communication, to train and support U/U leaders, and to ensure financial stability, accountability & transparency.

Kathmandu, a 200-year old settlement that is the gateway to the Nepalese Himalayan mountains, is the capital city of the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal. It is the site of historical palaces, mansions and gardens and has been the center of Nepal's history, art and culture. It has a multiethnic population with a Hindu and Buddhist majority.

We salute the ICUU leadership for rising to the challenge and finding an excellent location to host this historic ICUU Global Conference.

The text above the headline says: "Welcome to Nepal" in Nepalese.

The UU Fellowship of Paris will host the EUU's Spring Retreat 2018 on April 13-15 in Dijon, Burgundy, in eastern France.

An important time to connect with other Unitarian Universalists living in Europe, biannual EUU retreats offer a unique combination of spirituality and fun. With everything from worship to city strolls to late-night jam sessions, attendees can participate in the activities they prefer.

As with other EUU retreats, this one will take place over a weekend (Friday dinner through Sunday lunch), when Unitarian Universalists will come from all over Europe to converge on Dijon's Centre de Rencontres Internationales, staying together and sharing meals and spiritual and cultural activities over two action-packed days.

Our Speaker

Originally from Boston, Massachusetts, Barbara moved to Tulsa in 2010, for a 10-month residency with All Souls, at the end of which she was offered a full-time

position as Assistant Minister. She has since become the congregation's Executive Minister.

Ministry is Barbara's second career. For 25 years she lived in Maine with her husband and two daughters and managed a homebirth midwifery practice.

A citizen of France and the United States, with a B.A. in Russian Studies from Brown University, Barbara brings a unique perspective to the conversation about the future of our faith and its potential to respond to the spiritual call of our times. You can find videos of Barbara's sermons on the All Souls YouTube channel.

Schedule

Following the Saturday morning theme talk, a number of workshops will be offered for which ideas are eagerly invited. The workshops will be what retreat-goers make them and can range from history to



We are all looking forward to meeting and hearing from our theme speaker, Reverend Barbara Prose, Executive Minister at All Souls Unitarian Church in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

She'll be developing the theme "Identity & Spirituality: Living Love Beyond Belief".

Our faith proclaims that we are one human family. At the same time, each one of us embodies a plurality of identities. In our tradition, we encourage one another to bring all of who we are into community. Then we rely on our liberal faith to help us navigate the complexities born of our personal and collective contradictions and conflicts, without denying or minimizing the pain or the paradoxes of our challenges and choices.

What if our faith can lead us beyond coexistence to meaningful engagement with each other, despite our many differences? Using the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS), we will explore the competing cultures, world views and belief systems we carry internally and navigate externally. What differences do we deny? When do we fear our differences? Why do we minimize them? What helps us accept and adapt to the differences among us? We'll use our experiences of Love Beyond Belief to give us courage and confidence as we ask the question – is living together as one human family an impossible dream or a reality that we can contribute to?



culture to music or any combination thereof. Of course, the evening cabaret and socializing are always highlights! The weekend culminates in Sunday morning's service and concludes over lunch.

Religious Education

All groups will explore thematic topics while enjoying a fun, relaxing, interactive, creative and dynamic weekend with other young people. There will be a full program all day long on Saturday, culminating in a presentation to the full retreat on Saturday evening. Younger children will also have a Sunday morning time to-

gether during the Sunday service.

Teens will explore how we respond to the challenge of differences in beliefs, in people both close and not so close to us. They will also help to develop the plan for the retreat weekend, making choices from a variety of options presented to the teen group.

The Site

We will be meeting for the first time at the Centre de Rencontres Internationales in Dijon. The CRI-Dijon is part of the same Ethic Etapes network as previous EUU retreats in Mittelwihr and Melun.

Members of this network are all eco-friendly, committed to sustainable development, local products, and accessibility. Here is a virtual visit of the site: <http://cri-dijon.com/Ethic-Etapes-Dijon-your-hotel-in-Burgundy>

Travel Information

Dijon is easily accessible via many transportation options around Europe. There are direct trains from Paris, Strasbourg and Basel. Several bus companies also service the city. The nearest airports are in Paris with train and bus connections to Dijon. If you arrive at Charles de Gaulle airport, there is a train to Dijon, and there is a bus from Orly airport. The retreat site is located just inside the ring road, so no need to drive through the city center if you travel by car. Full details on transportation options will be posted on the EUU website: www.europanuu.org.

Watch for registration details in February on the EUU website: www.europanuu.org. In the meantime... Questions? CONTACT: retreat@uu-paris.org

We look forward to seeing you in Dijon!

We are especially excited about holding a retreat for the first time in Dijon, one of France's most appealing cities. It was the capital of the powerful dukes of Burgundy from the 11th to the 15th centuries. Today it is the capital of the Bourgogne Franche-Comte regions. Dijon is also a culinary capital renowned for its fine mustard, crème de cassis, and wine.

A walking tour of the old town is being offered for a small fee as part of our retreat program. Places are limited, so you will have to sign up on the first evening of the retreat. To visit on your own, you can easily come early or stay after the retreat by booking additional nights on the CRI-Dijon's website.

Among the must-sees which retreaters can visit is the Palace of the Dukes and States of Burgundy. Once home to the region's rulers, this is an elaborate complex in the heart of old Dijon, with a neoclassical façade dating back to the 17th and 18th centuries, when it was the seat of Burgundy's parliament.

Dijon has a rich, well-preserved religious heritage in both historical and architectural terms, notably the Notre Dame church, built between 1220 and 1240. The façade's three tiers are decorated by leering gargoyles, separated by two rows of columns and the 14th century Jacquemart Clock. Also to visit are the crypt of Saint Benigne cathedral, in which many of Burgundy's great figures are buried, and the Renaissance façade of Saint Michel.

Those among you who have the courage and physical ability to climb the 316 steps of the 46 meter-high Tower of Philip the Good, located in the Medieval Palace, will be rewarded with an exceptional panorama of the city of Dijon and its surroundings.

And you can stroll around Dijon's stunning noble residences and medieval streets lined with antique shops and designer boutiques. Learn more here: <http://www.destinationdijon.com/en/>



Torda450 in Europe- Celebrating the Edict of Torda

By Sheryl Wallin Abrahams, UUFB

Unitarian Universalists take pride in our faith's legacy of acceptance and freedom of conscience. This year, we celebrate the 450th anniversary of the promulgation in 1568 of the Edict of Torda, one of the world's first declarations of religious tolerance and the first official recognition of Unitarianism as a faith. The current global climate of religious conflict, military tensions and debates over the proper treatment of immigrants and migrants and the religious elements that contribute to that climate seems a good opportunity to consider the legacy of the Edict and reflect on its role in shaping all our futures.

January 13, 2018, marked the 450th anniversary of the Edict of Torda. Unitarians,

UUs, Freethinkers, and others -- from many countries on nearly all the continents -- will join together throughout the year to celebrate and reflect.

Issued in Transylvania, in what is now Romania, the Edict of Torda was the result of years of religious debate overseen by John Sigismund Zápolya, King of Hungary.

Transylvania of the 1500s was a place of religious, ethnic and linguistic diversity. Part of the Kingdom of Hungary, it housed populations of Hungarians, Romanians and Germans, with religious communities of Roman Catholics, Calvinists, Lutherans, Eastern Orthodox Christians, Jews and Muslims. The region also occupied a precarious position between

As a member of the UU Fellowship of Brussels, Belgium, I had the chance to attend a special Torda450 event here at the European Parliament on January 23. The event -- featuring talks by U*U clergy and historians and the unveiling of a new exhibition in the Parliament building -- was hosted by Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) Csaba Sógor, László Tökés, and Iuliu Winkler in cooperation with the Hungarian Unitarian Church.

two Empires- the Catholic Hapsburgs and the Muslim Ottomans. Within this context of religious plurality, King Zsigmond convened the Diet of Torda and appointed his court preacher and religious



Francis David speaking at the Diet of Torda in 1568. That emotions ran high can be seen in this dynamic painting. At David's right (for the viewer) is Gaspard Heltai, turning the pages of a Bible in Hungarian, which he had translated himself. A Catholic priest and a Calvinist minister are shown looking somewhat concerned about how things are going. One of David's supporters, Gaspard Bekes, is shown jumping up enthusiastically to support a point just made.



John Sigismund Zápolya, King of Hungary (and later, Prince of Transylvania)

reformer, Francis David to lead it. In 1568, the Diet issued its Edict, which King John then signed.

The Edict of Torda was still a far cry from what we would today recognize as religious freedom. It provided no protection for non-Christian faiths and stressed freedom of the pulpit rather than freedom of individual conscience. It officially recognized only four "legitimate" denominations: Catholicism, Lutheranism, Calvinism and Unitarianism. Nevertheless, the Edict was radical for its time.

In an era of violence against religious minorities, it chose tolerance over bloodshed. The Diet of Torda preceded by only a few years the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre in 1572 in France, which saw the murder of an estimated 10,000-70,000 minority French Protestants, according to Rev. Level Molnár, archivist of the Hungarian Unitarian Church. Dr. Enikő Rűsz-Fogarasi further pointed out that the Edict of Torda laid the groundwork for religious freedom, even before the ideals of the Enlightenment led people to see religious freedom as a moral and philosophical issue rather than a merely political one.

The Edict marked an important milestone not only in the history of our UU faith, but in the history of Europe. For a continent historically torn apart by war and now united by the EU, the Edict can be seen as a powerful symbol of the power of peaceful coexistence. At the

Brussels event, MEP Sógor reminded guests of the Edict's important place in European political history, quoting German Chancellor Angela Merkel's declaration that "...tolerance is the soul of Europe." The Edict of Torda was Europe's first official declaration of religious tolerance, preceding both the Union of Utrecht (1579) and the Edict of Nantes (1598), both of which also moved the dial on religious freedom in Europe. We could make the case that the Edict which created our faith also gave birth to the modern soul of the European continent.

The Brussels event also reminded us of the work still in store to assure the legacy of Torda - work to ensure tolerance, radical acceptance of all peoples in our communities and in our places of

worship, and the search for common ground despite differences. May we all take this year to reflect more deeply on this legacy and on our own role in its future.

"In every place the preachers shall preach and explain the Gospel each according to his understanding of it, and if the congregation like it, well. If not, no one shall compel them for their souls would not be satisfied, but they shall be permitted to keep a preacher whose teaching they approve . . . no one shall be reviled for his religion by anyone . . . and it is not permitted that anyone should threaten anyone else by imprisonment. . . . For faith is the gift of God. . ."

Engaging the Heart: Ways to Spirit

Reverend Diane Rollert's address in Spa

By Nancy Klein



As UUs, we have the freedom to chart our own spiritual paths," said Rev. Diane Rollert. "We draw from many sources, but we get caught in our heads. We question, and we analyze. We think a lot about our seven principles, but our hearts cry out for deeper spiritual experience."

"I am always seeking," Rev. Rollert shared. Like many other UUs, she said, "I thirst for a spiritual practice, and there are times when prayer and meditation hold a significant place in my daily life."

There are times when I feel truly connected to the holy or the sacred, when I still feel that connection to God that I felt

as a child. There are other times when I struggle and lose connection to the sacred. That's when I have to get out of my head and back into my heart."

*-What mattered
was what you
did in this
life...-*

Rev. Rollert's background did not predestine her to be contemplating spiritual practice of any kind.

"I come from what you might call a faithless, non-religious family," she said. "My parents identified as ethnically Jewish, but they were adamant atheists. Still, they

raised me with an incredibly deep, religious faith in humanity." Rev. Rollert's parents were working-class kids from Brooklyn and the Bronx with a passion for social justice. They had discovered Com-

EUU Spring Retreat April 13-15, 2018

Identity & Spirituality: Living Love Beyond Belief



Theme Speaker:

Rev. Barbara Prose

Executive Minister, All Souls Unitarian Church
Tulsa, Oklahoma, USA #



Location:

Centre de Rencontres Internationales

Dijon, France #

The capital of Burgundy, Dijon is renowned for its fine mustard, crème de cassis, and wine!



europeanuu.org

Hosted by the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Paris

uuparis.org



munism without the guidance of their parents.

After they were married, “they were sent by the Party to ‘liberate the masses’ in Cleveland, Ohio,” Rev. Rollert joked.

“For ten years, they were part of the underground Communist movement, and I was born a red-diaper baby. By the time I was four years old, my parents had become disillusioned with Stalin and the party.

“Their dream had been to improve life for the people they had come from, the poor and marginalized. It was a dream they never abandoned. I was taught that what mattered was what you did in this life, not just how you treated others, but what you did to bring justice to the world.”

Later on, after Rev. Rollert married and had a child, she discovered the Unitarian Universalist Church in Montclair, New Jersey. There she found her religious home.

“I stuck one toe in the door, and that congregation pulled in my whole body. It was a place that allowed me to hold on to my humanist upbringing and gave me room to explore other sources of religious inspiration.”



Three readings on Spirituality

On Becoming Spiritual

ME:: What’s the best way to learn to be spiritual?

OLD WOMAN: Pack light.

ME: What do you mean?

OLD WOMAN: Carry only what you need for the journey.

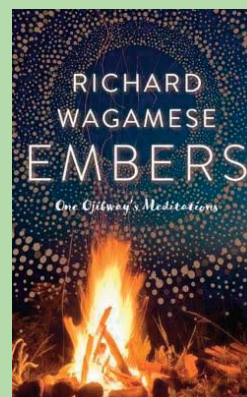
Don’t tire yourself out with unnecessary stuff.

ME:: Like what?

OLD WOMAN: Like your head. Like your talk. Spirituality isn’t found in your head. It’s found in your heart. It isn’t found in big, important sounding words or long speeches. It’s found in silence. If you travel with your heart and you’re quiet, you’ll find the way to be spiritual.

Extract from *Embers: One Ojibway’s*

Meditations by Richard Wagamese



Spiritual practice through discipline

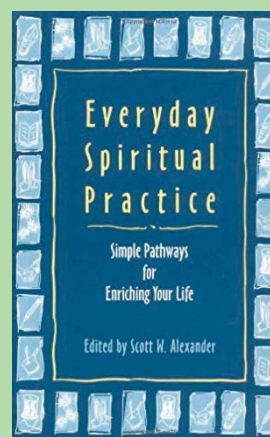
In the second story, she read from Rabbi

Amichai Lau-Lavie, who wrote about his own spiritual practice, which includes meditating and writing in his journal. Rabbi Lau-Lavie leads Lab/Shul, an “artist-driven, everybody-friendly, God-optional, pop up, experimental community for sacred Jewish gatherings.” He wrote that having a spiritual practice is about “daily discipline. It’s a workout for gratitude. And it’s a workout of radical amazement and wonder.” He wrote that it can be an exercise in meditation in silence, where you can just “Sit for a few moments and cultivate love.”

Many roads to spiritual practice

Then Rev. Rollert shared ideas from a book that showed clearly how very many ways there are to develop a spiritual practice, for those inclined to do so.

Everyday Spiritual Practice: Simple Pathways for Enriching Your Life, (Scott Alexander, Ed.) includes essays from 40 UU ministers and lay leaders on spiritual practices. The essays cover the wide panoply of types of spiritual practice, including silent retreats, learning from adversity, finding sacred moments everywhere, meditation—mindfulness and Zen, sacred reading, prayer, movement, martial arts, yoga, running, vegetarianism, relationships, parenting, loss and grief, social justice, anti-racism, simple living, recycling, quilting, cooking, and art. This is not a limitative list.



LAB/SHUL



And where on the spirituality spectrum are you?

After telling us about who *she* was, Rev. Rollert said she wanted to know who we were. As part of that process, she had us respond to the following questions about our spiritual temperature by standing between two points on a line in the back of the room.

I am very spiritual <—> I am not spiritual at all.

I have a spiritual practice <—> I don't have a spiritual practice.

I wish I had a spiritual practice <—> I don't need a spiritual practice.

These were thought-provoking questions, and it was interesting to see people shifting about on the line depending upon how they felt about these issues.

Rev. Rollert shared her favorite definition of spirituality, taken from Roman Catholic Brother David Steindl-Rast, "He says the word 'spirituality' comes from spiritus that means life, breath, aliveness. Spirituality is aliveness on all levels. When we say 'spirituality,' we mean aliveness to interrelationships, aliveness to our confrontation with that great divine mystery with which we are confronted as human beings. We come alive to it. And that is spirituality. Science has discovered that when people are grateful, they come alive."

During the second session, Rev. Rollert had people think about and share with others

what keeps them from developing a spiritual practice.

For example, is it just the demands on one's life that keep us from developing spiritual practices or is it rather a discomfort with the concept of "spirituality"?

She asked us to write down what spiritual practices we do or wish we could do and what barriers keep us from doing them. Then we were to share this with another person or a small group.

This got us thinking and sharing and hopefully helped people along the road to developing or deepening their own spiritual practices.

Of course, not all UUs feel the need to develop spiritual practices, and that's okay. We are all different and that's the beauty of our religious faith.

ICUU Chalice Lighting for February 2018

We light this divine chalice to enlighten our souls and all our thoughts.

We light this chalice to inspire, to feel its warmth and brighten those who have received it.


We light this chalice to spread its spiritual seed to those who have not found it.

We light this chalice to bring close connection and strong relationship between us humanity and with the Divine Spirit.

Let this light empower and strengthen us to move ahead and to attain the ultimate goal of a contented life within ourselves.

Amen

The Reverend Nangroi Suting, Minister and General Secretary of the Unitarian Union of Northeast India



*I am a circle, I am healing you.
You are a circle, you are healing me.
Unite us; be one.
Unite us; be as one.*

Opinion:

Facing the challenge: Faith without borders - the discussion continues

At the European Unitarians Together (EUT) gathering in New Ulm in June 2017, we started a discussion of what 'faith without borders' does or can mean. Wolfgang Jantz shows us that the discussion continues, long after we said goodbye in Bavaria.

It was an exiting journey on a small train, stopping quite often on the way from Aachen to Spa. I realized that we were passing the Ardennes, which is on a border in language and culture between Germany and France. That's why it was good to hear EUU President Carolyn start the retreat in in Spa in French as well.

But is this the future? Is it good to step into the cultural and linguistic diversity of Europe? The question must be answered internally by the EUU. It depends on the self-definition of the EUU and its members. Shall the EUU be a big family in Europe with randomly passing-by friends, or shall it be an open circle for everybody in Europe who follows free religious / Unitarian ideas? For a

more open EUU, it would be a good possibility to start putting every retreat first of all under the focus and patronage of one country. For example next time is in Dijon. Let's add to the special mustard some more culture/ books & music / Jean-Paul Sartre, Jean Luc Goddard (masculine, feminine, or the children of Marx and Coca Cola.)

I often come to retreats for practical reasons. I was in Berlin to visit friends, so I combined the visit with the retreat in Schmöckwitz, where we got in contact with the Reverend Schröder of the Berlin Congregation and some local Islamic leaders. But most often, it is because of

the keynote speaker. This time the reason was Diana Rollert whom I know from the Negros Island in the Philippines.

Her morning devotion there fits perfectly with what I and some of my friends understand about Unitarianism. We arrived during and after a local earthquake, and she created an atmosphere of participation and understanding.

We can learn from the way she managed her life and her way to religion,

"What is the 'hope' in your bread?"

which started in a left wing family and left wing philosophic university circles and brought her, after long discussions, to become Reverend at the bilingual congregation in Montreal. Yes, using another language means finding out more about the variety of the world.

In Spa we learned in morning service on the second day a moving story where everybody could participate. What is in the bread, from sowing to harvest? I remember this in the context of "Harvest Hope." Let's find out together what kind of hope is in our bread.



About Wolfgang

Wolfgang Jantz was born in the eastern part of Germany and spent his early years as a member of the Lutheran church. The dismantling of the Berlin Wall in 1989 inspired him and his wife Dorothee to become very active Unitarians.

He became active with the International Association for Religious Freedom (IARF) where he learned that religion is a call to action.

Since 1992, he has been a member of the national board of the German Unitarians. He served as a delegate of the German Unitarians to the ICUU and was a council member of the IARF from 2008 – 2012.

In recognition of his contribution to the ICUU, he was called "an enthusiastic supporter of the international U-U network" when he was awarded the ICUU Founders Vision Award in 2011. The award text continues, "Wolfgang helped strengthen the ICUU by fostering communication with the International Association for Religious Freedom, building relationships between German and Transylvanian Unitarians, and organizing and hosting several ICUU gatherings in Germany."

A look back at Spa

Collections at Spa... thank you all

Jodi Ellen Stolzenbach,
Social Action Coordinator

We would like to thank the retreat attendees in Spa for their generosity, and send a special thank you to those who supported the collection of items and money at the retreat!

The Sunday collection and book exchange revenues amounted to a total donation of €989,15. This amount has been donated to VluchtelingenWerk Nederland, a refugee support service that has received EUU support in the past. You can read more about this organization in the Sept/Oct 2017 issue of the Unifier.

Laura Keller-Wilke received over 100 stamps, which will be sorted and sold by a local organization in Hamburg. The funds will support social projects.

Members of the Brussels Fellowship took half a dozen backpacks back home with them and will donate them to a refugee center. No children's glasses were collected for an Egyptian charity this time around, but this collection will continue into the future.

The Paris Fellowship collected 43 pairs of adult glasses and 25 cases which will be passed along through Optic2000 to be repaired and sent to Burkina Faso. You can read more about this program in the Winter 2015 edition of The Unifier.

An overwhelming number of books were collected as part of the Book Exchange. The large number of books that were not bought were distributed to an American Belgian military base or otherwise locally in Spa. There were still two boxes remaining, which will be set out for the Book Exchange in Dijon in Spring.

The Social Action Co-Coordinator kindly ask our generous retreat participants who wish to bring a large amount of material donations to contact us at least two weeks ahead of the retreat. This way we have time to coordinate the distribution of these items or advise accordingly.

Social Action! What are you up to?

What Social Action Projects would you or your Fellowship like to promote? The EUU Social Action Team is currently updating its European social action network and webpage and would like to know who is interested or already engaged in any social action or justice projects.

Please contact the team about any social action projects that you or your Fellowship will be embracing in 2018. We would like to share best practices and inspire one another to be a force for positive change.

For example, Diana of the UUPF participates in several "greening of Paris" gardening and recycling groups and would like to exchange best practices with others.

Composting in cities is becoming more common due to the City of Paris and district collections or building composters distributed upon request. What about your neighborhood? New buildings in Paris are required to plant gardens on their roofs. What innovations are occurring around you?

Come to the Social Action table in Dijon to share information on your social action partnerships. You can also contact Social Action Co-coordinators Jodi Ellen Stoltenbach and Diana Smith directly at SocialAction@europeanuu.org or through the Social Action Facebook page, where you can post directly. [<https://www.facebook.com/groups/EUUSocialAction/>]

Fellowships are encouraged to reach out with grant proposals for social action projects. Email SocialAction@europeanuu.org to find out more.



"Community gardens serve us in a number of ways, not only by providing a point of contact for community members, but also by helping to alleviate the food desert effect and combat climate change." Image courtesy of Pixnio.

A look back at Spa

EUU teens in free and responsible search for truth and meaning

By Martha Hicks and John Hicks

If you are looking for a really rewarding interaction with new perspectives and ideas about the world, just spend a day with the teens. John and I found that not only did we learn from the teens in our group, but were also inspired as much by them as we would have been by hearing a theme speech or participating in a workshop. We can highly recommend it!

It's been a while since we volunteered to take a teen group at a retreat. Like them, we were not quite sure what to expect from the weekend in Spa.

We spent the first session getting acquainted. Everyone was asked to write down five things that he or she felt identified themselves when asked the question "What are you?"

There was an amazing variety of responses, with contributions including human, woman, musician, optimistic, horse rider, Hungarian, reader, story writer, boy, actor, future dentist, singer, game programmer... to name a few.

Everyone had about 10 minutes to talk to another person about their list, and that person then introduced their partner to the others in the group. In a short time, we not only knew each other's names, but also each person's passions, talents and aspirations.

Along with Adam, Kai, Marino and John, we were fortunate to have four students from Transylvania join us: Attila, Mátyás and our only two girls, Izabella and Mária.

I think the most remarkable thing about our group was the willingness to try new things.

All of our Transylvanian guests were very fluent in English and were able to participate fully in discussions, games and the skit for our RE presentation. They were also very willing to share experiences and tell us about their lives in Transylvania.

Among their concerns are the Romanian government's reaction to the secession attempt by the Catalonians in Spain,

and whether, in the future, they might have to take exams in Romanian instead of Hungarian, their native language.

In the second session after the break, we watched an excerpt from the interview: Simon Sinek on Millennials in the Workplace. It gave us some insights into our addiction to social media and ideas on how we can use our devices in moderation in order to relate to our friends and work colleagues better. Then we had a look at the EUU principles in a search for material for the presentation on Saturday evening.

In the following discussion, what seemed to come up most often was 'how can we know what is "real" and what is "fake" regarding the information that media platforms give us?' and 'What is exaggerated and manipulated to politicize events?'

We all agreed that it is very difficult, so we chose EUU's 4th principle: "A free and responsible search for truth and meaning.."

The rest of the session was spent playing trust games such as Zig-Zag circle, Secret Signal, Group/Outsider, and Fall Back. (Get in touch if you don't know what those are and would like to know.)

After lunch, we acted out some of our ideas and decided for the RE presentation to show reactions to the unsettling U.S. presidential election last year and how increasingly polarized the relations between Republicans and Democrats have become.

With "a responsible search for truth" becoming increas-

ingly difficult in our lives, we were finding it difficult, if not impossible, to find a happy ending to our skit. Fortunately, during her visit to our group, Rev. Diane Rollert gave us a very good tip when she suggested that we present an ideal version of helping each other find the truth and then acting out the division and controversy when everyone insists on their own biased view of things. Thanks Diane!

In the fourth session, the young people braved the elements (some without coats) to take part in a workshop by Dutch Druid Taco Ijzerman who explained how Druids use ancient rites and ideas to connect to their environment and balance their lives.

At the end of our performance for the RE presentation, we invited the audience to guess which principle we were depicting, and only one person guessed what we intended (although one person did say "Use of democratic process" and that is actually right, too.)

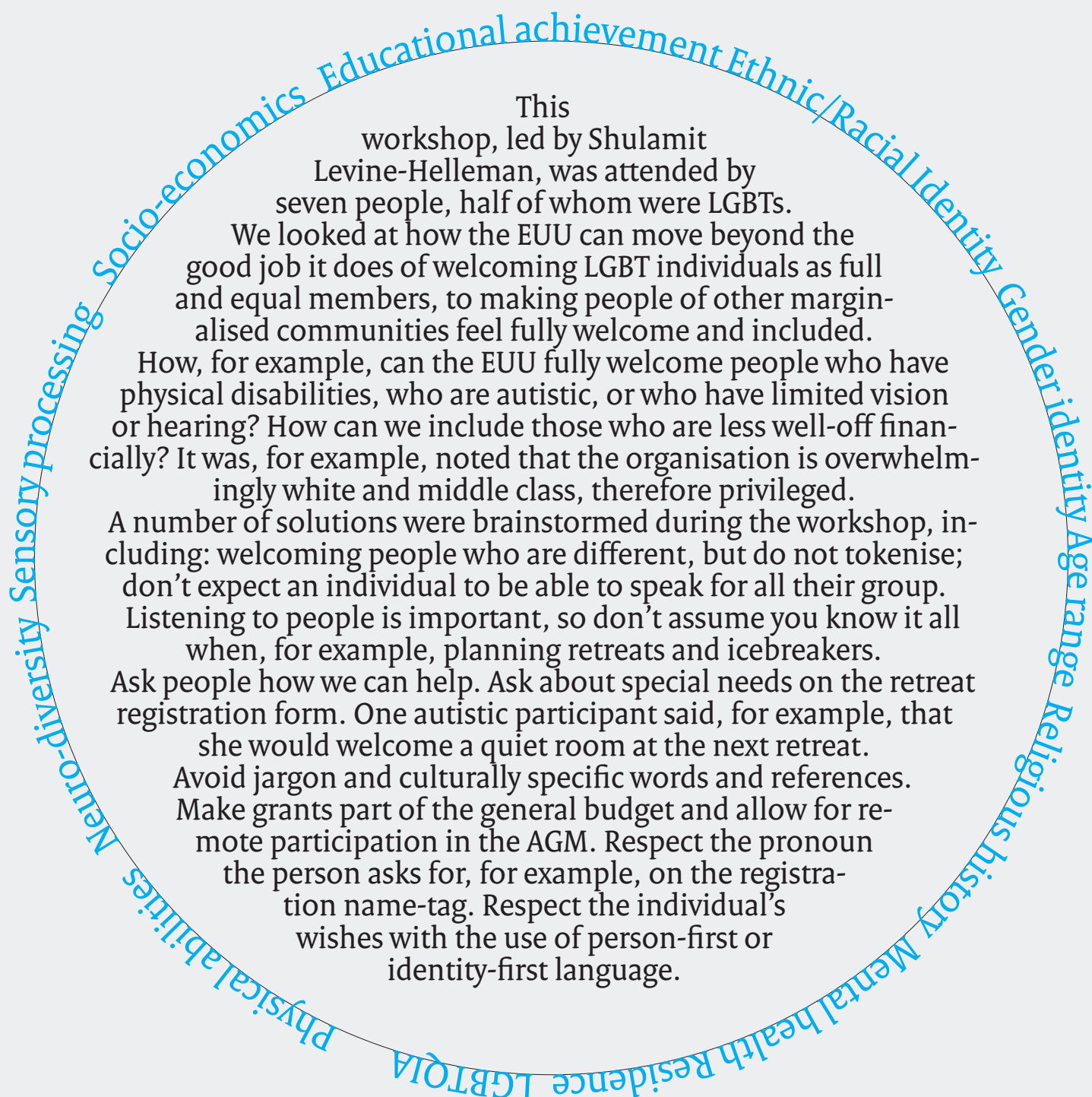
It was exceptionally gratifying to work with this wonderful group of bright young people. They all brought their special gifts and personalities to the writing, production and performance of our skit and success of the day.

Dear Teens, we had a great time with you.



A look back at Spa

Workshop notes: Opening the welcome tent wide

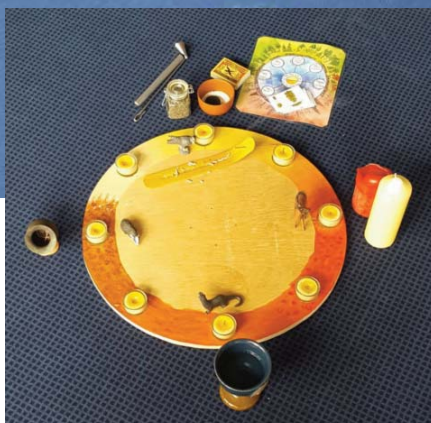


A look back at Spa

Workshop notes: Heaven and Earth meet in the heart

workshop by Taco IJzerman

By Laura Stahnke



Dutch Druid Taco IJzerman introduced 20 of us to the Druid ways with a workshop in three short parts: informative, participative and creative.

First he told us that Druids, wo/men of the oak, celebrate the Spirit, usually at a grove in a forest, eight times a year at the seasonal and agricultural turning points.

Forming a circle, they call for peace and invite the four elements from the four directions to bless the circle. Plants and animals are at each point too. Taco gave us time for questions.

We then sang a few lines about trees, extending our arms to the sky like branches and pressing our feet against the floor to hold roots going down into the earth.

Finally we created a sacred space, formed a "hug" circle and, feeling safe and warm, we shared thoughts from our hearts. It was a special moment. Thank you, Taco!

On Sunday evening, about 40 of us participated in one of the eight Druid celebrations of the year. Samhain, traditionally on

November 1, marks the end of the harvest season and the beginning of winter in the northern hemisphere. Samhain celebrates the eternal spiritual life, and the yew tree is the symbol of the mystery of life: death and rebirth.

Together we called for peace and protection. The Awen, or call for inspiration, from all of us together was very powerful. Then, we sang of trees and honored the four directions and called on the power of the four elements to bless our space. Forming a circle, we imagined we were trees in the wind, letting go of our leaves, and meditated on what we had harvested, what had ended and on what we would like to let go of and leave behind. We gave thanks for all this and vowed to stand by peace and love.

Workshop notes: Yoga (also) for beginners

workshop by Caroline van Westernhagen

By Michael Zink

"You should go to Yoga with me," said my wife. I have never joined a yoga workshop at EUU retreats in the past, so perhaps we were both surprised when I said, "Sounds good." It was a very good decision because Caroline von Westernhagen is a very experienced yoga instructor, and she led a group of about 10 of us in a wonderful session. All levels of ability were represented, from clearly experienced devotees with fancy mats and yoga clothes, to me straining on my towel in gym shorts. From breathing exercises and gentle stretching to challenging balance and flexibility poses, there was something for all of us, and Caroline gave each of us what we needed through gentle encouragement and small changes in positioning. I can highly recommend this workshop at future retreats.

Music directors says 'thanks'

By Marcie McGaughey

A great big thank-you to all who helped me unload, set-up, load the keyboard, and pack up on Sunday after the service. Marvelous! Also, to all choir members and instrumentalists: thanks for your perseverance and your wonderful music on Sunday morning.

Please keep your eyes and ears open for possible pianists for future retreats. If we can't find anyone from within EUU, we will have to look outside. So if you know of piano students or music teachers who can help us, please let me know.

Back by popular demand! European Unitarians Together Again!!!

The European Unitarian Universalists (EUU) and the Unitarier-Religionsgemeinschaft freien Glaubens (URFG) couldn't be more pleased to announce that the 2nd EUT will take place in Berlin from June 7 – 10 in 2019. It's never too early to mark your calendars.

We would like to thank all of those involved making the first pan-European gathering of UU's, Unitarians, Universalists, Free Religious and Humanists at the EUT 2017 in Ulm such an overwhelming success – according to those of you who attended.

Representatives from 17 countries came together for worship and workshops, song and celebration. Many of you let us know just how well received it was, from the Rev. Dr. William Shultz's passionate keynote on human rights to Prof. Dr. Manuela Kalsky's keynote on multi-religiosity and "The New We".

Nothing was lost in translation due to the incredible simultaneous interpretation volunteered by two of our own professional interpreters, Claudia Searle-White and Johanna Houkes.

Decisions, Decisions

In response to the EUT evaluations, the EUU Coordinating Council (CC) and URFG Board put together an Exploratory Committee to determine whether, when and how often to hold another EUT.

Rather than make decisions in a vacuum, we reached out to you and 104 people replied to our Retreat Survey. Based in large part on your input, the CC was able to determine that:

- The EUT 2017 experience in Ulm was a positive experience, with 87% of those attending rating it good or very good;
- The vast majority of those who attended would attend another EUT;
- The EUT should be held every two or four years.

In order to continue the momentum from EUT 2017, it was decided that EUU would once again co-host the EUT, this time in the "City of Freedom," Berlin. <https://www.visitberlin.de/en>

Already hard at Work

An Organizing Committee has been formed and teams of Unitarier and EUU

volunteers are already hard at work securing a venue, planning a compelling theme and recruiting speakers.

They are making improvements based upon your feedback and taking inspiration from what you said you enjoyed at EUT 2017.

It takes many hands to plan a gathering of this size, and volunteers will be warmly embraced and contributions large and small greatly appreciated. Suggestions are always welcome. Please feel free to contact the Organizing Committee at eut@europeanuu.org. Alternatively, you can contact your Fellowship Representative, who will forward the information to the Organizing Committee.

A Gathering with a Purpose

The Boards of both the EUU and URFG are convinced that a gathering of like-minded yet different European Unitarians, Universalists, UU's, Free Religious and related groups can bring out the best in all of us, helping to spark contagious inspiration and provide leadership in Europe during tumultuous times.

We hope you'll join us.

Workshop notes: Living with the Other and with one another

workshop by Tony Zamparuttei & Hajib El Hajjaji

By Tina Huesing

Tony Zamparutti from the Brussels UU Fellowship had heard Hajib El Hajjaji speak about Islam and Islamophobia earlier, had been impressed with Hajib's work and, when he found out that Hajib lives only 20 minutes from Spa, invited him to come and share with us his thoughts about Muslims in Europe.

Hajib, an engineer working in the energy sector, is active in inter-cultural dialogue in Belgium. He works with The Collective Against Islamophobia in Belgium (CCIB), a non-governmental organization that fights against all manifestations of Islamophobia on the Belgian territory and on the Internet to protect fundamental freedoms and to reduce hate, xenophobia and racism. He has provided training on addressing Islamophobia to the European Commission. Thank you, Tony, for organizing this interesting workshop.

In his presentation titled *A la Décou-*

verte de l'Islam - Discovering Islam —, Hajib shared many interesting aspects of Islam with us. He started out reminding us that not all Muslims are Arabs. The largest group of Muslims can be found in Indonesia (approximately 225 million), where almost 90% of the population self-identify as Muslim, but only about 5 million are of Arab descent. Arabs comprise only about 20 percent of the world's Muslim population.

Hajib reminded us that Islam has existed in Europe for a long time and mentioned the Alhambra in Granada, Spain, as a famous example. Europeans have feared Muslims and have been suspicious of them for a long time as well. Hajib shared that especially in films Europeans have been exposed to a certain stereotype of the Arab or Muslim. He recommended the documentary "Reel Bad Arabs" (2006) that explores Hollywood's long line of degrading images of Arabs, from Bedouin

bandits to sinister sheikhs and gun-wielding "terrorists". Dr. Jack Shaheen, an Oxford Research Scholar, shows how the persistence of these images over time has served to naturalize prejudicial attitudes toward Arabs and Arab culture. I found it baffling how then by association these stereotypes are extended to all Muslims.

Muslims do not believe in the trinity but do believe in one God, two things they have in common with many Unitarian Universalists.

The Islamic faith has six articles of faith: to believe in God, the Angels (e.g. Gabriel), the Quran (and other holy books), the Prophets (including Adam, Noah, Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Jesus, and Mohammed, the last prophet sent by God), in the Day of Judgment (the Day of Resurrection), and in Divine Predestination (Al-Qadar),

The Quran has 114 chapters and 6234



Alhambra Palace, seat of power of the Nasrid dynasty of Muslim rulers of the Iberian peninsula, still fascinates visitors to Granada, Spain.

numbered verses that were revealed to Muhammad over a period of 23 years (10 while he was in Mecca and 13 while in Medina), with the first one coming from archangel Gabriel.

The five pillars of Islamic practice are:

- Shahadah: faith
- Salat: prayer (five times each day)
- Sawm: fasting (during Ramadan)
- Zakat: charity (general expectation: 2.5%)
- Hajj: pilgrimage to Mecca (at least once in a lifetime, if possible)

While Hajib did not go into the different Islamic traditions (Shia, Sunni, Sufi, Alawites, etc), he did talk about the various approaches to the revelations (the Quran): some Muslims believe the revelations need to be interpreted in the context of the time in which they were written, others believe they need to be taken literally, even today.

Hajib talked about the attempted segmentation of Muslims along two ideological lines: how literal they are in interpreting the Quran and how traditional they are in their practice of Islam. Is this segmentation helpful? I got the sense that Hajib didn't think so. He did not want us to divide Muslims into "good" and "bad".

Hajib advised us instead to distinguish between culture-specific items and general guidance. A case in point are the debates around laws making it illegal for women to wear the niqab (the full-face veil). Hajib believes those women who are in a bad place in some countries need to be helped, and Muslims in the western countries need to help them. Help needs to come from within the Muslim community. In July, the European Court of Human Rights found Belgium's ban against full face veils (implemented in 2011) not to violate human rights laws. But Hajib does not believe that the ban against the full-face veil or any form of

head dress is helpful.

Involved in building dialogue and working as a human rights activist, Hajib shared that he is collaborating with feminists who are worried about discrimination. If a woman doesn't get hired because the employer is worried the woman might later decide to wear a head dress to work, then isn't that the same kind of discrimination as when the employer doesn't offer the job to a woman because she might get pregnant? Hajib sees fighting Islamophobia as an issue for all of society, especially now that Islamophobic parties have entered parliaments in different European countries. The recent waves of migration have triggered the fear of foreigners. Xenophobic groups promote Islamophobia.

After Hajib's presentation, the thirty participants engaged in questions and answers.

My own take-aways from the presentation and the conversation afterwards are more musings: does it make sense to talk about Islam and Muslims in general, and do I agree with Hajib's statement that we should not divide Muslims into "good" and "bad" groups? I sensed that there is a desire to not have the faith community be broken up (like it has happened with Sunni and Shia), but to encourage the faith community to come together as one and change societies where the culture needs to be changed.

At the same time, there are fanatics and liberals, just like in other faith communi-



ties. Wouldn't it make more sense to get to know the various groups better and to distinguish between them? I've only met liberal Muslims whose faith I admire and whose lifestyle is not so different from mine. The workshop gave me much to think about.

This was at least the third workshop at an EUU retreat that addressed Islam. At the spring retreat in Berlin in 2007, we had the pleasure of welcoming Taufiq Mempel, who was a regional representative of the German Muslim League Bonn, Berlin and Brandenburg.

Taufiq introduced us to Islam and talked about the problems of not being recognized as a religious group in Germany. At the spring retreat in 2012, LeRoy Euvarard and I led a workshop entitled "Islam and me", inspired by Eboo Patel's book *Acts of Faith*. During this workshop, LeRoy gave a history of Islam with its expansion into Europe and other areas and then the push back. Leroy recommended two books, *The Muslim Discovery of Europe* by Bernard Lewis and *The Emancipation of Europe's Muslims: The State's Role in Minority Integration* by Jonathan Laurence, for a more in-depth look at this history.

Let's not wait another five years until we have the next workshop helping us come to terms with the changing face of Europe.