
Historical Overview of EEUU

and its current Fellowships
30th Anniversary 2010

Compiled by Martha Hicks and Gevene Hertz
• April 13, 2010



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European Unitarian Universalists

Affirming the inherent worth and dignity of every person

FOUNDED APRIL 13, 1980



Leon E. Spencer Rev. O Eugene Pickett Rev. Steve Dick Dudley Strasburg

European Unitarian Universalists (EUU) is a support network and community for Unitarian Universalists (UUs) and UU fellowships in Europe. Approximately half of the more than 200 members belong to local lay-led fellowships that share resources and programs (including Religious Education). The remaining members, known as "at large" members, are spread over most of the countries of Europe but are not affiliated with a particular fellowship. EUU publishes a quarterly newsletter, the UNifier, and sponsors twice-yearly retreats in various locations. Recent retreats in Belgium, France, the Netherlands and Germany have each attracted up to 150 Universalists and Unitarians from across Europe. EUU is a founding member of the [International Council of Unitarians and Universalists](#) (ICUU) and an affiliate of the [Unitarian Universalist Association](#) (UUA).

Wiesbadenfellowship, Cradle of EUU

The Wiesbaden group (dating from 1964) was the only survivor of a number of UU organizations that had been founded in Europe by UUA and CLF in the late sixties; a network that had included groups in four European countries : Germany, France, The Netherlands, and Belgium. was now reduced to a handful of folks keeping the tradition alive in Wiesbaden .

One of these people was the remarkable woman, Joan Breen, who died in 2009 in her late 90's. According to Dudley Strasburg, long time member and former president of that fellowship, the Wiesbaden fellowship would not have existed without Joan Breen. Joan was the director of the largest American library in Europe at that time. By the mid-sixties Joan was leading weekly Sunday meetings of a group called "The Unitarians" in a large room at the library. Dudley's memory recalled well the Sunday morning meetings, remarkable for their variety of programs and participation of about 20-25 loyal members coming every week.

In the late 60's, when Dudley was serving as president of the group, the Vietnam War was, in many ways, a key element in the lives of the scores of thousands of Americans in Germany.

Somehow the word got out that the Wiesbaden was against the war. After a short time, many young soldiers started coming to the Sunday morning meetings in Wiesbaden. There were up to 80 young men coming by car and train, sharing their thoughts and feelings with the Wiesbaden fellowship. Once the war ended the numbers shrank again.

Around this time, Dudley Strasburg and several others had the idea to start having annual or semi-annual weekend retreats for the Wiesbaden Fellowship in beautiful areas. The idea was that this could bring together Unitarian-Universalists, of which there were quite a number, who did not live in the Wiesbaden area or even in that area of Germany.

For several years, the first retreats were held in American Recreation Centers in Berchtesgaden and Garmisch-Partenkirchen. They were very successful and well attended. Then the Wiesbaden fellowship expanded its vista and began holding retreats in such remarkable places as the Swiss Alps, the Rhein valley in Oberwesel, Koblenz, favorite places in Belgium and Holland and the marvelous Alsace area with Strasbourg and Albert Schweitzer's childhood home.

An "eighth UU retreat" was held in Berchtesgaden in 1976, at which time there were 3 fellowships still active in Europe. At one time or another there had been fellowships in Munich, Brussels, Amsterdam, Paris, Heidelberg, and Ramstein. The Wiesbaden fellowship was the only group that was still in existence in 1979.

EUU, the early days

The Story of European Unitarian Universalists (EUU) begins in 1979 when two new faces, Ron Diehl and Steve Dick (who arrived in Europe only a few months apart), became active in the Wiesbaden Fellowship and decided to make a difference.

A mini-retreat of American UUs met in the conference room at the Frankfurt (German) Unitarian Church on April 13, 1980. This date enters the record as the birth of EUU, although numbers were not large enough for a formal organization until 1982. At the very first meeting of what is now known as EUU, the keynote speaker was Dr. Eugene Pickett, the presiding UUA President at that time, who was in Frankfurt for a meeting of the IARF Council. The assembled group was also addressed by Dr. Carolyn Howlett, then President of IARF.

Later that year, a new UU Fellowship in Zweibrücken, West Germany was organized by Leon Spencer and the new group continued sponsoring semi-annual retreats at German Holiday Camps. From the start, Wiesbaden UUs also attended these gatherings, as did members of CLF living in Europe. The retreats grew in size and our first keynote guest speaker at a full retreat was the Reverend Dusan Kafka, head of the Unitarian Church of Czechoslovakia, in April of 1981.

The EUU Coordinating Council had its first meeting at the Zweibrücken Spring Retreat in the Odenwald, May 29-31, 1982. Retreat participants from Frankfurt, Heidelberg, Giessen, Zweibrücken, Wiesbaden, Berlin, Munich, and Kaiserslautern, as well as from Belgium, France, and The Netherlands met and decided that an organization should be formed to serve as a contact point and to organize group activities in Europe.

The second meeting was held in Wiesbaden, July 10, 1982. Participants were Laura Crites (KL), Dave Deitch (F), Steve Dick (NL), Mary Diehl (WI), Clark Hanley (ZW), Tim Keck (KL), Celia Soth (Berlin), Leon Spencer (ZW), Stephanie Spencer (ZW). The participants

decided to start a quarterly newsletter, *Die Gedanken Sind Frei* (Your Thoughts Are Free). The first issue would be published in August 1982 with Steve Dick as its editor and head of publicity.

The third meeting was held August 14, 1982 in Wiesbaden. Present at the meeting: Laura Crites (KL), Dave Deitch (F), Steve Dick (NL), Linda Dugger (ZW), Bill Dugger (ZW), Pat McDaniel (Belgium), Leon Spencer (ZW). The newly formed Coordinating Council decided that two retreats a year would be organized and quarterly business meetings were planned. Temporary officers were elected: Chair: Leon Spencer and Dave Deitch, Clearing House: (to research and coordinate resources) Laura Krites and Tim Keck, Treasurer: Celia Soth.

The Fourth Meeting was held in Frankfurt on October 16, 1982. Present were Dave Deitch (F), Steve Dick (NL), Leon Spencer (ZW), Ron Diehl (WI), Shirley Marshall-Deitch (F), Frederick Spencer (ZW). A \$13,000 budget was proposed (including \$4000 for the retreat). Ron Diehl was named head of Ways & Means Committee.

Thirty people attended the fifth meeting held at the Fall Retreat 1982 in Odenwald during the Thanksgiving weekend. No minutes were taken.

The Sixth Meeting, which also included a service and a community dinner, was held in Brussels on January 20, 1983 and twenty attended. Brussels was chosen as the gathering location because it was discovered that an increasing number of our members came from that area. As a result of the beginning made with this meeting and with assistance from EUUCC, the Brussels UU Fellowship was reborn into its "second life". In attendance were - **Brussels**: Peter and Cherrie Danos, Pat & Hal Fuller, Robert and Christi Heston, Linda and Warren McLaine, Pat Mc Daniel, Kate Walker; **France**: John Eichrodt; **Germany**: Frankfurt: Tony and Terry Prudlo; Wiesbaden: Ron and Mary Diehl; Zweibrücken: Linda and Bill Dugger, Mary Osterman, Judy Sampson, Leon and Inge Spencer; **The Netherlands** Steve Dick. Presidents of the fellowships were named as a nominating committee, and Celia Soth was replaced as treasurer by Hal Fulkler (Brussels). EUU sought to affiliate with the Joseph Priestly District (JPD). And it was decided that the newsletter would be published bimonthly. A Spring retreat was planned for May 5-7, 1983 in the Odenwald.

In the May of 1983, the new Brussels Fellowship organized the Spring Retreat. Forty people from nine places in Europe were in attendance. The theme of the weekend was "*It's About Time*". Steve Dick wrote, "*The Spring Retreat/Advance* can be seen as an opportunity to *retreat* from the city to the country and to return to nature... but, to me, it is more of an *advance* - a recharging of the spirit through growth, enjoyment, stimulation and relaxation. There are opportunities to be alone and there are many chances to experience, in the flesh as well as in the spirit, the *Living Community* of UUs in Europe." An election of New Officers took place: President: Mary Osterman (Zweibrücken), Treasurer: Hal Fuller (Brussels), Secretary: Steve Dick.

The 1983 Fall Retreat took place in Venwoude, Lage Vuursche in The Netherlands (aptly named *Dutch Treat*) from Sept. 23-25. The retreat featured an enriching encounter with Dutch religious liberals, excursions to Naarden and Utrecht, and the late night organizing meeting of the new UU Fellowship of The Netherlands. UUs from as far away as Stuttgart, Paris and California turned up. Four Dutch liberal religious guests swelled the total attendance to 90 persons. Our name became European Unitarian Universalists at the General Meeting Saturday morning. EUUCC, our previous title, is felt not to fully reflect the community nature of our growing and extending family.

The 12th Century German Castle Ebernburg was inhabited by seventeen EUUs, January 13-15, 1984 as they planned the upcoming Spring Retreat. This charming and historic fortress, perched on a mountainside overlooking Bad Munster, proved to be an excellent retreat site. (Euu is returning here for its Fall 85 Retreat)."

Spring plants, flowers, and EUU were all in bloom at *Dutch Treat II*, the 1984 Spring Retreat in the Netherlands. The sixty people, who came together from six countries, proved the community called the EUU was not an illusion. A special highlight of the weekend was EUU's first Dedications. Some participants drove for more than 12 hours to attend from as far distant as England, France, and Switzerland. At the General Meeting the election of Officers again took place: President: Ron Diehl (Wiesbaden), Treasurer: Warren McLaine (Brussels), Secretary and Newsletter Editor: Steve Dick, Member-At-Large: Michael Gill."

On May 14-17, 1984, EUU Secretary Steve Dick participated, as a UUA guest, in the *New Congregation Organizers Training Session* at the UUA Headquarters in Boston. There was also time for Steve to meet with the UUA Vice President Rev. Bill Schulz and staff of other departments to strengthen and enrich the working relationships between EUU and UUA. Steve also conducted the weekly UUA Headquarters Worship Service, sharing the EUU story in a sermon titled "Love Letters From Europe" featuring letters from EUU members revealing how important EUU was to them.

At the August EUU CC Meeting in Brussels, Steve reported that the list of EUU members/contacts had grown past the 200 mark and files were being converted to computer by Ed and Dorothy Zeiser. The Newsletter, *Die Gedanken Sind Frei*, was mailed to twenty countries including USA, Belgium, France, Germany, Great Britain, Netherlands, Hungary, Liberia, Greece, Denmark, Norway, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Finland, Switzerland, Canada, South Africa, Spain, and Northern Ireland. " "

On the weekend of January 25-27, 1985, members of the CC made a pilgrimage to Gunsbach, France and the home of Albert Schweitzer for their CC meeting. It was a fitting remembrance of this man whose theology and ethics has so much to offer liberal religionists in 1985, the 20th anniversary year of Schweitzer's death. The weekend closed with Sunday morning worship at the Munster church with Schweitzer's own sermon in which he introduced *Reverence For Life*. Steve Dick wrote in the DGSF "We returned to our homes with his ethics in our heart and the knowledge in our minds that he is not a myth but a man who can speak to us today!"

In the spring of 1985 a letter from UUA President Gene Pickett was received that UUA Board voted unanimously to recognize EUU as the *European Conference* of the UUA. Steve Dick wrote, "After five years around the movement as a "foster child" we have now been adopted by friendly and warm "loving Parents" -UUA. Perhaps "parents" is not the right analogy because we still control our own destiny. Our new relationship might better be described as a partnership... One important caution though: This achievement should not be seen as an end or as a peak - it is but a beginning. Our new connection, which also might be seen as a "marriage", is the genesis of an opportunity to make our dream of a strong and lasting Unitarian Universalist community in Europe a reality! UUA is demonstrating its concern and support for our efforts with this "bond". It is up to us to respond to this gesture not with just requests for "hand-outs", but rather with the lifting of our hands, minds, and hearts in earnest work in response to the challenges that we now face." Since 1983, EUU has regularly run two retreats a year. with attendance staying steady, averaging between 80 close to 140 with a mailing list of over 300



Netherlands Unitarian Universalist Fellowship

Affirming the inherent worth & dignity of every person



Rev. Lenora Montgomery



Cathy Tinsley



Jane Greer

History

Regarding the early history of NUUF, long term member Bert Companjen writes:

“Through the International Religious Fellowship, I got to know Steve Dick, who at the time was serving in the US Army near Frankfurt/Main. At the same IRF conference where I first met him, he had become acquainted with Jenneke Schol, a Dutch girl. The two later got married. Steve first became a voluntary worker at the IARF secretariat at Frankfurt (D), later moved to Huizen (NL) and then studied for the Unitarian ministry at Manchester College Oxford (GB). 1985 he became minister of Croydon Unitarians and later London District Minister.

In 1983 he got in touch with some American UU's living in the Netherlands and invited some of his Dutch IRF friends to a meeting of these people, September 1983 at one of their private homes in Rijswijk. So Dieuwke van Dorp, Engeliën de Jong, my then new friend Els van Essen and I joined in at one of their first get togethers. I heard about an earlier meeting in August of that year, but not of any earlier ones, apart from those of the American Unitarian group that existed in the Netherlands in the nineteen seventies. That group had dissolved. I think Karen Coster, living in the Frederik Hendriklaan in The Hague, was the only member of that group who joined the newly started one in 1983.

Shortly after the September Rijswijk meeting, a number of us went to a weekend of American UU's living in different countries in Europe, held at Venwoude Conference Center at Lage Vuursche. A great experience, not only for me! A number of meetings of this "American

UU's in the Netherlands house group" followed and so did the European retreats, held twice a year as they still are up till this day. At the second retreat at Venwoude, Spring 1984 I think it was, the participants from the Netherlands had a meeting of their own and decided about aims and purposes of their group which they then gave the name Netherlands Unitarian Universalist Fellowship.

Meetings at members' houses all over Holland at monthly intervals always included talks, sometimes a slide show (I remember Bill Britt about his Peace Corps activities in the Malaysian part of the island of Borneo, at Penny's at Wassenaar) and, of course, always a delicious potluck lunch, brought from all over the country. I do not remember many names, but still know how we set off to Den Haag, Pijnacker (Bill & Jane) and Zeist (Anne Marie & Charles), to name only a few of the many. The group changed every year, new people arrived, old members went back to the States. Nevertheless we knew one another rather well due to the relatively small size of the group. Els and I saw quite some Knifers on our wedding in 1985. The Sunday meetings started to include some form of service, but not every time. For the eldest of our two sons, Ben, I remember we had a special dedication service, December 1986 at our home at Arnhem. Every year we had to elect new officers - only the Treasurers stayed on for a number of years. NUUF in its first years only counted a very small number of Dutch participants, mainly from liberal religious backgrounds. From shortly after the start, small ads were published in the International Herald Tribune to make the group known and attract new members. I believe we even advertised in one of the in-flight magazines. In making NUUF to what it is today, we had great help from **Rev. Lenora Montgomery**, widow of an oil executive from Houston, Texas. Her daughter **Cathy Tinsley** and her family lived in Blaricum and Lenora visited her rather often, from which we benefitted an enormous lot. In the beginning, Lenora practiced her training for the Ministry on us, with help of UUA and Veatch Fund stipends for starting congregations.

As the group grew, NUUF decided to look for a fixed place to meet once a month. We found the International House on the Leiden Rapenburg and spent many Sunday mornings at the beautiful old building, celebrating the service in the back room, whilst the kids had their RE in the front room. We did not have a lot of ministers leading the services, mostly did it ourselves, but from time to time we welcomed visiting ministers on holiday from the States or traveling through, on their way to or from an EUU retreat. For that we in NUUF always have had our Welcome Persons to organize private hospitality and, of course, we always invited them to do some workshops e.g. with members of the Fellowship. Those visits I recollect as very inspiring meetings

Brussels Fellowship

Founded by Pat Fuller and Linda McLaine

FOUNDED 1983



Beginnings in Brussels

Warren McLaine was stationed with his wife Linda and his family in Brussels beginning in 1982: *When we arrived in 1982 there was no active UU Fellowship in Brussels although there were several folks in the Embassy and civilian community, including local Belgiques, who were or had been UUs. Linda and Pat Fuller started the UU Fellowship of Brussels in early 1983. We met in various homes at first, mostly at the Fuller's (Harold "Hal" Fuller was attached to the U.S. Embassy) and at the home of Bill and Beryl Barraclough. Bill was the Deputy Chief of Mission at the Embassy. We went to various retreats in Germany, Netherlands and I think France one time. We had a part-time minister later in our tour (I left in October 1985 but Linda stayed on with Michael and Meaghan until the end of the school year, returning in the summer of 1986). Our mentor was the minister of the UU Church in Kensington, MD. I remember giving several services within the Fellowship and I'm sure Linda and Pat and Hal Fuller gave many services. I remember giving one service on "Grace" at the retreat in Germany. Michael and Meaghan were 4 and 6 when we arrived and 8 and 10 when we left. Michelle was 12 and 16 respectively. Linda was the Special Education coordinator for the Belgium, Netherlands and Norway region of Europe under the DoD Schools system. Later she was also the Community Liaison Officer (CLO) at the U.S. Embassy and worked with all the Americans in the Brussels community. This gave us many connections outside the military.*

We lived in Wezembeek-Oppem, a Flemish community near the Stokkel Market, in a nice rental house with a beautiful rose garden in back and on the sides. We enjoyed the many choices of local produce and especially the farmers' market on Saturdays. Linda loved her time in Brussels. Meaghan attended the British School of Brussels and Michael and Michelle attended the Brussels American School (DoDDS school). Michelle graduated as a senior in BAS before we left. We have lots of pictures and memories.

Second Wave - (Vicki Roberts-Gassler)

When Gregory, Scott and I moved to Brussels in 1990 the Belgium Unitarian Universalist Fellowship was a small but thriving group that met monthly in people's homes, with a few other children and a variety of American and European adults. In spring 1991 the BUUF organized a retreat at Spa. But soon after that the group dwindled as several key people either retired and moved away from Brussels or were transferred back to the US; by 1992 the group was dormant, with a few of us still in touch but no one with the facilities or energy to run the group.

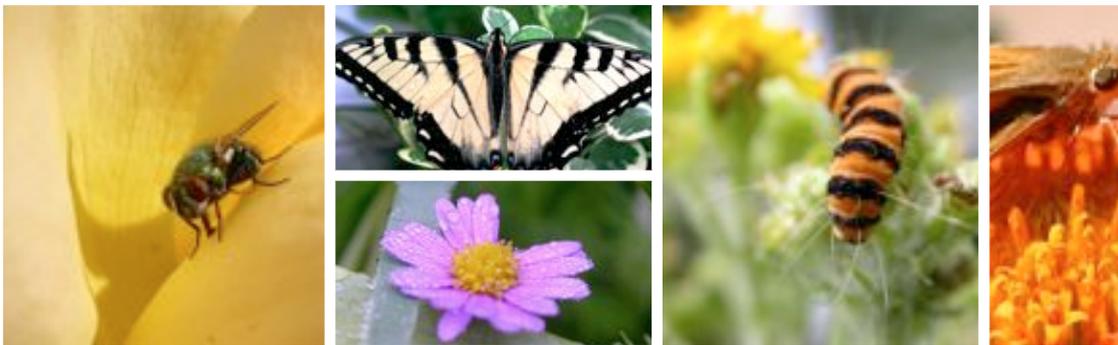
This changed in about 1994 when Alan and Gerda Keiswetter arrived for a three-year assignment and revitalized everything. Meetings in their large and lovely home were well-organized and well-attended, and fortunately by the time they too left us they had built enough of a core to keep a group together, and we have endured with only a few missed meetings since then, first with Ulrich Kröner as our driving force, now with the Roberts-Gasslers. Long-term member Herman Balig told us the group was perhaps the third iteration in the mid-1990s, that it was then 30 years or so from its original founding and that at one point there were up to 80 people attending meetings, but we have no further details.

In the past two decades we have met in the International Protestant Church and in the Scottish Presbyterian Church, but for several years now meeting in members' homes has worked the best for us. The population changes as people move away – EUU people will remember “our” Elizabeth Breedlove, EUU Vice-President for six years and now enjoying sunny Barcelona, Ulrich Kröner, now married, with a daughter, and working in Milan, Anne Coward, in South Africa for several years and now retired in Canada, and still-active EUU member Lily Reif, who left us for Richard and the UK. Fortunately fascinating new people join us too, temporarily or on a more long-term basis.



Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Paris

FOUNDED 1986



Incidunt quis, vulpulate sit amet, placerat vitae, mass amet, placerat vitae, massa.

During the '60s and '70s various small groups of UUs met informally in Paris. In September 1985, at the initiative of Lucienne Kirk, who had just been trained as a Unitarian minister at Manchester College, Oxford, a group met at the home of Bill and Beryl Barraclough. Present at that meeting in addition to Lucienne, Bill, and Beryl, were Jane and Tony Collins, Nathalie Kleinschmit, and Rita Foisie.

An advertisement was placed in the International Herald Tribune announcing a planning meeting. Through Lucienne's contacts, they were able to arrange with the Pasteur Vasseaux of the liberal Temple Protestant de l'Oratoire du Louvre for the use of a room for monthly worship service and use of RE rooms in their parish house. A publicity campaign announced the first service which was led by Lucienne in November 1985 with 26 people in attendance.

In the same month a group representing Paris attended the EUU Fall Retreat, and they volunteered to host the EUU CC meeting in January 1986. At that time they began communication with the UUA in Boston. In the fall of 1986, the fellowship became a congregation of the UUA and also accredited as a religious organization by the Paris Préfecture. After 5 years at l'Oratoire, we outgrew the space which had been generously donated to us and we began to rent space in another liberal protestant church, Le Foyer de l'Ame.

Kaiserslautern Fellowship

Phasellus ut arcu ut nulla dignissim auctor

FOUNDED IN 1990??



As a congregation, we affirm these principles:

The inherent worth and dignity of every person;

Justice, equity and compassion in human relations;

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

A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;

The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process

within our congregations and in society at large;

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

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

History

Former EUU Fellowships

Wiesbaden (1964 - 1995) Joan Breen (see page 3)

Zweibrucken (1980 - 1988) Leon Spencer

Munich (1985 - 1994?) Howard & Dodie Ruskie

Heidelberg (1992- 2006) Jan & Somner Schonike



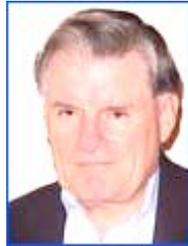
Rev. Tom Chulak



Rev. Mark Morrison-Reed



Denise Tracey



Rev. Robert Hill



Rev. Gary Kowalski



Rev. William F. Schulz



Rev. Scott Alexander



Rev. John A. Buehrens



Rev. Mark Belletini



Rev. Dr. Thjankeka



Dr. Rebecca Armstrong



Rev. István Kovács



Author Phil Cousineau



Rev. Dr. Donald S. Harrington



Denise Davidoff



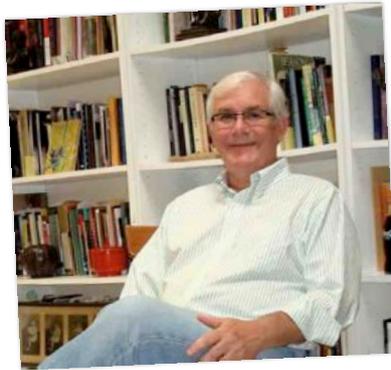
Rev. David Johnson



Rev. Barbara J. Pescan



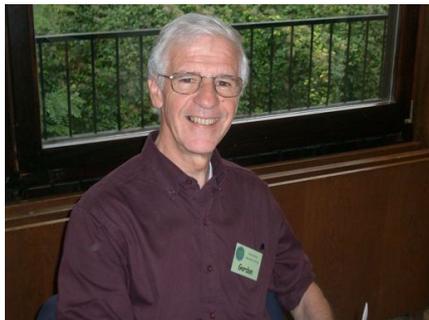
Rev. Karen Tse



Rev. Wymann Rousseau



Rev. Laurel Hallman



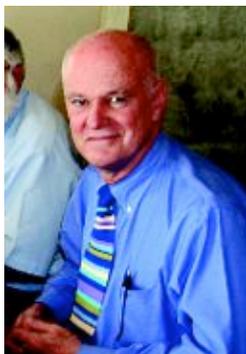
Rev. Gordon Oliver



Rev. Jill McAllister



Rev. Brian Kieley



Dr. Charlie Clements



Rev. Kate Braestrup