



THE BEACON

PANIC IN PLENARY!

*Mild-mannered World Editor Attacks Audio
Transcriptionist*



General Assembly was disrupted Thursday when UU World Editor Chris Walton suddenly and violently rushed the stage, overturning the news coverage table, knocking over chairs, and interrupting moderator Jim Keys'

interpretive dance synopsis of Roberts' Rules of Order.

Witnesses report that Walton grabbed Aloysius Crane, responsible for the closed captioning, and began beating him about the head,

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Morales Breaks New Ground in Social Media

Early in his tenure, UUA President, the Rev. Peter Morales signaled his intent to move out into virtual community as a way to extend the public ministry of the faith. In a column in *The UU World*, he invited people to follow him on Twitter, and to "friend" him on Facebook. And they did. But, having invited the timid into those deeper waters, Morales's social

media strategy has been challenging the faithful further.

A typical Facebook post for Morales came last month, when he wrote, "Stuck in O'Hare again. Thanks for nothing, United!" Another post says, "Off to Columbus, Ohio, again. Looks like rain. Kill me

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*"Si tamen acta deos numquam mortalia fallunt,
a culpa facinus scitis abesse mea."*

Newsletter Editor Shocked to Learn Their Name Not Unique

Lois Ann Sturdivant, member and volunteer newsletter editor, was surprised and distressed to learn that her church's newsletter, *The Beacon*, shared its name with not one, but many other Unitarian Universalist church newsletters.

"But ... ours has had this name for decades," she protested. She expressed her concern that church members might confuse other *Beacons* with the "truly serious and dedicated" newsletter she puts together. "I mean, what if someone reads that this Sunday is Flower Communion ... but it's not at our church? People might bring flowers to church on Sunday for no reason," she direly predicted.

Because of this and other concerns, Sturdivant has written to President Peter Morales to recommend that a clearinghouse for all newsletter names created in the future.

"Congregations should be able to trademark their brands," she explained. "By having a clearinghouse, we can make sure this unfortunate and potentially catastrophic situation can be avoided."

As for the current situation, she is resigned but hopeful. "At least I know we're the only Emerson Unitarian Universalist Church," she said.



"I mean, what if someone reads that this Sunday is Flower Communion ... but it's not at our church? People might bring flowers to church on Sunday for no reason."

In Bold Move on Climate Change, UUA Severs Ties with Veatch Program

At its May meeting, the UUA Board of Trustees voted to sever ties with the Veatch Program at Shelter Rock, so as to free the UUA from the taint of what Trustee Mavis Darning called, "polluted money."

As many Unitarian Universalists know, funds from the Veatch Foundation enable many programs throughout Unitarian Universalism; these funds are even credited with helping the UUA remain solvent during the lean years of the early 1970s. What is often forgotten, however, is the source of this wealth: oil and natural gas. When Caroline Veatch included the Unitarian Universalists of Manhasset, New York, in her bequest, giving the congregation the royalties from untold underground energy resources in Germany, no one could have

guessed how much the gift would affect Unitarian Universalism. But now, that gift, says Unitarian Universalist minister and activist Ferguson Lollard, comes "at too high a price." Lollard asks, "What of our values? What of our commitments to be stewards of this earth?"

The UUA Board was swayed by this argument, and others like it from environmental activists around the country. "They were so passionate," says Trustee Monty Fulcrum. "Who could argue with them?"

Representatives of the Veatch Foundation, unsurprisingly, have opposed this move. Linda Hopkins, a member of the Board of the

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UU Historical Association: All U.S. Presidents are UU's

(Boston) The Unitarian Universalist Historical Association today announced a major milestone. After years of research, they have, at long last, collected enough documentation to prove that everyone who has ever held the office of President of the United States was a Unitarian, Universalist, or a Unitarian Universalist.

"It was a long slog in the stacks," said a smiling John Fowler, retired minister and member of the UUHA. "I've sacrificed a lot in this effort." Since early 2002, Fowler has lived on a cot at the Andover Theological Library. He believes that his long-time partner may have left him in 2009. "If Roger is out there," says Fowler, "would someone please tell him I'm finally done?"

According to the UUHA, demonstrating the

Presidents' respective UU identities was no easy task. "Oh sure you've got Taft," says Timothy Featherwell, of Meadville-Lombard. "And the two Adams men. Jefferson, yes, not a doubt, at least in his heart. But for many of the Presidents, understanding their proud Unitarian Universalist heritage requires some scholarly nuance."

Woodrow Wilson, for instance, posed a challenge. He was the son of a Presbyterian pastor, and--by all appearances--a lifelong practicing Presbyterian. But documents reveal that, during the 1912 Presidential campaign, Woodrow's train stopped in sight of a Universalist Church near Akron, Ohio. "What is that pretty little church?" Wilson reportedly asked one of his local hosts. Told it was a Universalist church, Wilson nodded approvingly. A nod, according to the UUHA, that speaks volumes about his private

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Presidents (Continued)

views. "Definitely one of us," Fowler says. "No question on Wilson."

Whether Rutherford B. Hayes enjoying thoughtful conversation with his tailor, the Unitarian Benjamin Hodder, or John F. Kennedy's late-night phone call to Unitarian Adlai Stevenson during the 1960 campaign, which by all accounts turned to questions of meaning, ascending to the Presidency of the United States has meant a certain pathway into the arms of the liberal faith.

"It is truly remarkable," reflects Featherwell. "To think that every single president was a Unitarian, a Universalist, or a Unitarian Universalist. It does give one pause. Why is it that our faith is so attractive to such powerful, meaningful figures of history? And if we are the heirs of such a lineage? Well!" And, at this point, Featherwell wipes a tear away. "It does make a person proud, to be in such company."

The UU Historical Association estimates that its researchers are almost halfway through a project seeking to prove that the founders of all world religions were Unitarian Universalist. Fowler says, "Can't you just see Jesus and the Buddha at coffee hour?"

Veatch (Continued)

Foundation, said in a statement released to Beacon editors, "We have long valued our creative partnership with the UUA, and hope they will reconsider. Veatch is a socially responsible investor, and shares the same vision of an 'earth made fair' as every Unitarian Universalist. Further, we are concerned about the operational impact on the UUA itself."

The UUA Board had no response. Layoffs are said to begin in July.

Submissions to *The Beacon* may be emailed to: fakebeacon@gmail.com. Authors will receive no compensation, no credit, and no blame. Articles may be edited for length, content, or because Game of Thrones is over for the season.

THE BEACON IS PROUD To offer another issue of our hard-hitting news. In the universe of Unitarian Universalist news, we have a special relationship to facts, one that our competitor cannot claim. We value our readership, and, so, want to apologize for our experimental May 2014 issue. We believed that writing and publishing an issue entirely in white-out, on white paper, would give us the stylistic edge in the market. Unfortunately, as we discovered upon publication, when we distributed *The Beacon*, residual white-out gummed up most of the internet in the central Midwest. Those who did receive a copy of the May "white" issue let us know, in no uncertain terms, that they could not do what they wanted to do with it: read it. In our focus on style, we had neglected to retain our journalistic commitment to legibility. While we on *The Beacon* staff may always look back fondly on those days of sniffing white-out and dreaming of a brighter future—one in which automobiles will finally fly—we are even more gratified to provide to you this, our special GA issue.

Thomas Beacon, Editor

Morales Breaks (continued)



now.”

Martha Jenks, of the University of South Carolina’s School for New Media, studies the intersection between social media and public faith. She says that the Morales social media strategy is unlike any she’s ever seen, especially from so prominent a leader. “Many leaders,” she says, “will share a quote from scripture, or give thanks for some part of their day. But with Morales? Well,” she pauses. “It’s as if we are on a journey.”

If Jenks is right, the journey would seem to include frequent flights, flight delays, and other inconveniences of modern travel.

“People want to skip Maundy Thursday,” says David Mann, who writes on contemporary religion, “And go right into Easter. Everybody wants to praise. But Morales takes us into the realm of suffering.”

In January, there was a particularly creative outburst from the UUA President. “If they knew they were going to hold us on the tarmac,” says one Facebook post, “why the hell would they load us on the plane?” The next day, he tweeted, “Off for three days to Toronto. #theircoffeesux.”

Mann is currently working on a paper that proposes a reading of Morales’s social media strategy. “My thesis,” he says, “is that, whereas Pope Francis uses his social media platform to focus attention on the suffering of the marginalized, Morales’s voice focuses attention on the suffering of the ordinary traveler. Mostly, himself. It really is a new vision of

hell, and, more than any other voice in contemporary religion, Morales takes us there. I call him our ‘Virgil.’”

World Editor (continued)

shoulders, and torso with a battered copy of *The Associated Press Stylebook and Briefing on Media Law*. “I couldn’t understand all that he was saying,” said eyewitness Lindsay Greenbush, “it didn’t really make any sense. He just keep shrieking ‘Only one space after a period!’”

Others near the incident corroborated Greenbush’s testimony. The Rev. Ellen B. White added that even after being forcibly restrained, Walton continued yelling at the Assembly. “Really, it was just gibberish,” she said. “Something about M dashes and N dashes ... he just wasn’t making any sense.”

Walton was removed from the Rhode Island Convention Center and taken to a nearby hospital for treatment. Crane was treated on location for paper cuts.

The attack was a chilling reminder of General Assembly 2002 when then-editor Tom Stites barricaded himself in a room with typographic engineer Vincent Connare, who was facilitating the workshop, “Open a Window on Whimsical Church Newsletter Design.” Stites blamed Connare, inventor of the popular “Comic Sans” font for the “indignification” of print media. The hostage standoff was resolved several hours later. After serving time in a minimum security prison, Stites was released on the condition of never working in print media again.

NOTE: MUSIC CHANGE

In an Action of Immediate Action (AIA) this morning, a motion was brought to the floor to replace all hymns in every General Assembly service with “Blue Boat Home.” The motion was passed swiftly and unanimously.

“Fire of Commitment” takes on New Meaning at GA

At General Assembly on Saturday, participants will have the opportunity to demonstrate the audacity of their faith in a creative new way.

“This is not a social action stance,” said Stewardship Director, Amy Parkinson. “We’re not trying to prove anything. We’re inviting Unitarian Universalists to loosen up, to challenge themselves, to try something they may not have tried before.”

The activity? Self-immolation.

Sacrificing oneself has a long history. But it was only in the early 1960s, with the advent of Vietnamese Buddhist monks who would set themselves on fire in protest of the ruling regime, that the act gained traction in popular consciousness. It has since spread.

“Self-immolation,” says Amy Parkinson, “is not something a casual church-goer would do. It is a true act of faith. And that’s what we want for General Assembly this year.”

According to a press release distributed by the UUA, the event will be called, “Take A Turn: Burn!” The text reads, “Let your faith light up the night! Be part of the bold generation that says, ‘No!’ to normal.” Participants must register by Thursday night of GA, and the event will occur on Saturday night. Once participants have seated themselves on the sidewalk outside the main entrance of Providence Convention Center, and have signaled that they’re ready, UUA interns will approach them, to douse them with gasoline. Each will be asked to hold part of a single rope that will be stretched between them. “The rope came from an exciting staff meeting,” says



Parkinson. “Someone realized we’re going to need a way to begin without hurting the interns. So, we hit upon a rope, to use as a wick. And then someone else said, ‘The interconnected web.’ Which is, like, kind of awesome, don’t you think? The room just went silent. I love our staff team. Ideas like this happen all the time.” As the rope, functioning as a wick and also symbolizing the interconnected web, begins to light one, then another, and another participant on fire, music director Shan Tanahan will lead those in attendance in singing, “Fire of Commitment.”

Besides demonstrating the audacity of Unitarian Universalist faith, the self-immolation activity seeks to raise \$100,000 for undesignated purposes in service of the Association. About a third of the money is expected to come from registration fees among participants. But two-thirds will

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Portraits at New Headquarters Modeled on Rowling Series



Emma Watson, known the world over

as “Hermione Grainger,” from her roles in the Harry Potter movies, based on J.K. Rowling’s books, caused Unitarian Universalists’ ears to perk up earlier this spring when she said that she was a Universalist.

Hearing of Watson’s revelation, UUA staff immediately held a conference call about how to respond. “We’re very excited about the outcome,” says the UUA’s new Director of Millennial Engagement, Bronson Dobbs. “It was Peter’s idea. We’re turning the portraits at the UUA into moving portraits like at Hogwarts.”

Over the past several months, as part of the move from Beacon Street to the UUA’s new headquarters in the Innovation District, all the portraits in the UUA have been scanned, animated and uploaded on to the flat screen TVs.

“They will be quite realistic,”
Dobbs

reports. The Louis Cornish portrait will moan, “The Commission on *What?*” The Buehrens portrait will cry real tears. And the Shulz portrait will wake up when a person worth seven figures walks by.

The portraits will be able to walk between TV screens. When Beacon reporters visited the installation, the Dana Greeley portrait was hosting a high-stakes poker game between Ram Mohan Roy and a scowling Sam Eliot.

Dobbs continued, “We are quite excited about how this project will help us reach out to the millennial generation. As a millennial myself, this feels so culturally relevant and affirming. If only Daniel Radcliffe would admit he’s a Unitarian!”

Fire of Commitment (continued)

come from “first responders.”

“This was another breakthrough idea,” said Parkinson. “We really wanted to make sure that everyone had a role to play. Not everyone is able to set themselves on fire. So, we decided to provide buckets of water, which will be available for ten dollars each. If those in attendance so choose, they will be able to purchase the buckets, and then approach the line of participants, where they can attempt to put out the fire. Or, they might just be de-hydrated, and want to drink the water instead.” Donations from “first-responders” are expected to generate two-thirds of the funds raised.

The planning team’s boldness did not stop there. Initially, for environmental reasons, there was the desire to use the fire for lighting. “This level of light intensity shouldn’t just be for show” was the general feeling. So, there was discussion about moving the

Ware Lecture outside to the sidewalk, so that lighting for that event could be provided by participants. “But, one problem,” says Parkinson. “Noise.” In studying self-immolation, the planning team found too many mentions of the screams of the dying. “You can’t have the Ware Lecturer up there, with people behind her going, ‘Waa, waa, this hurts,’ or whatever,” chuckles Parkinson. “If we do it again, we may book some sound booths for participants, so noise isn’t a problem.”

Immediately after GA, a plaque will be installed at the new headquarters at 24 Farnsworth in Boston, memorializing what are already being called “The Martyrs of Providence.”



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