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Church of the Larger Fellowship

Unitarian Universalist

Scott W. Alexander
Senior Minister

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September 24, 1997

Todd A. Summers
White House Office of National AIDS Policy
808 17th St. NW, Suite 820
Washington, DC 20006

Dear Todd,

First, thank you for spending a few minutes with me at the U.S. Conference on AIDS in Miami last week. I know it was a very busy time for you, with a whole lot of people requesting "a quick word" with you, I appreciated your attention.

Just to refresh your memory, I'm the Unitarian Universalist denominational executive and leader (and Officer of the AIDS National Interfaith Network) who is exploring a possible sabbatical leave with your office within the next year. In consultation with my Board and staff since I returned to the office on Monday, it now appears that the ideal time for me to take such a sabbatical leave would be next Spring -- say March through June of 1998. I do have some flexibility, so the timing and length of such a sabbatical could be honed in further conversation with you and Sandy.

As promised, I have enclosed a variety of materials that tell you more about me -- my professional experience, skills, accomplishments, and interests -- as well as my long standing and consistent involvement with the HIV/AIDS pandemic. As you can see, my work at the present time is as a senior manager, editor, writer, program developer and widely-traveled public speaker and workshop leader. I am sure that my skills and experience could be put to good use by your office on a sabbatical leave, and we would surely want to discuss in further conversation how I could most effectively be blended into your professional team. Suffice it to say I would want my sabbatical work shaped to conform to your needs for the Office of National AIDS Policy.

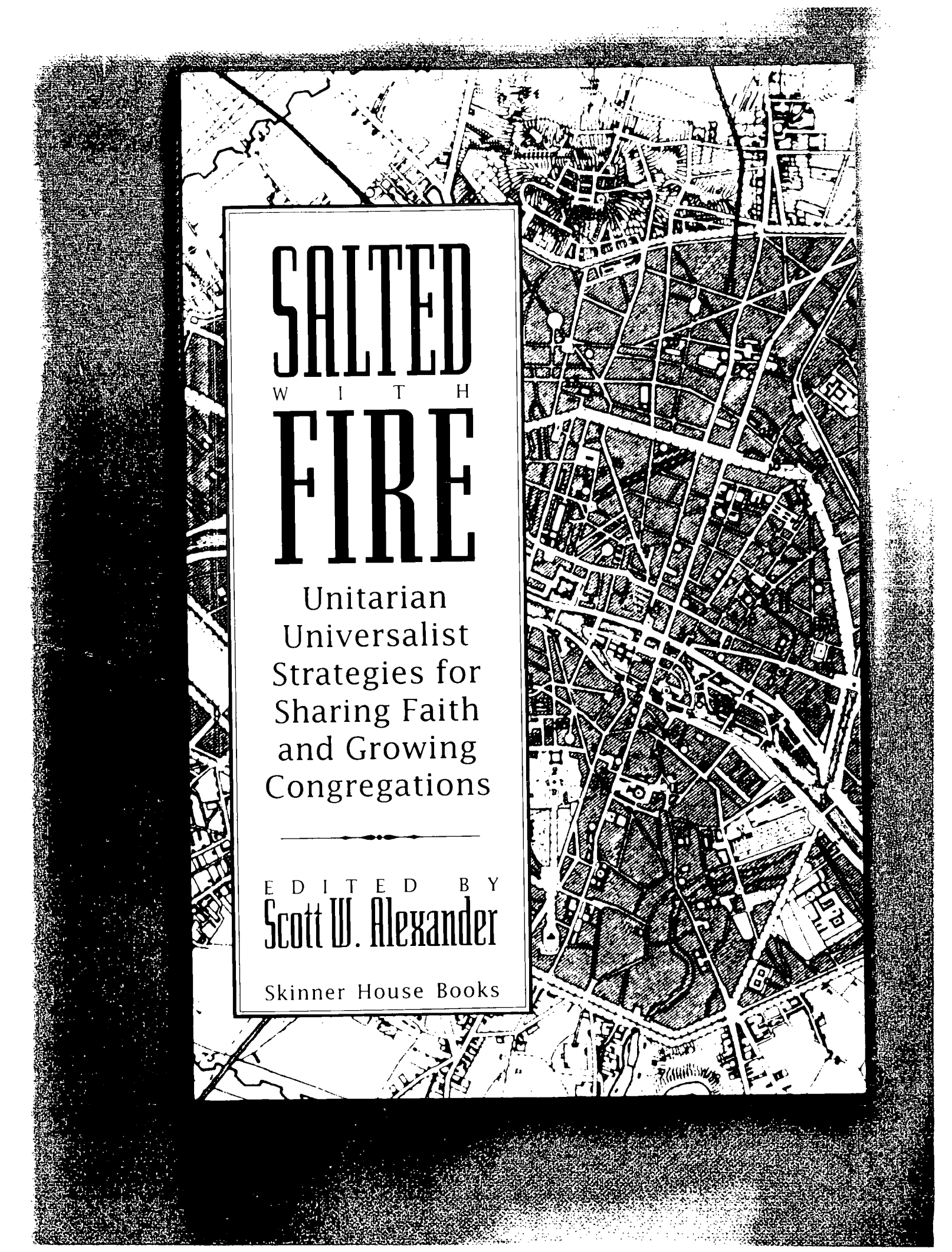
As I shared with you in Miami, I will receive my professional salary while on my sabbatical leave, but would hope for some sort of stipend to help me with the expenses of transportation to and housing in Washington for the period of the sabbatical. You mentioned that there might be several avenue for such stipend help, and I will await communication from your end about such possibilities.

If I can provide you with any further information at this juncture, please don't hesitate to contact me. I look forward to hearing from you soon, in the meantime be well, and enjoy the onset of your Washington autumn.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Scott W. Alexander", written in a cursive style.

Scott W. Alexander
Senior Minister



SALTED WITH FIRE

Unitarian
Universalist
Strategies for
Sharing Faith
and Growing
Congregations

EDITED BY
Scott W. Alexander

Skinner House Books

SALTED WITH FIRE

For every one shall be salted with fire. Salt is good; but if the salt has lost its saltiness, how can you season it? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another.

—Mark 9:49-51, NRSV

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A Breakthrough in the Battle Against Homophobia

THE WELCOMING CONGREGATION

Resources for Affirming Gay, Lesbian
and Bisexual Persons

THE REV. SCOTT W.
ALEXANDER
Editor

Unitarian Universalist Association

"The Welcoming Congregation provides an excellent checklist for recognizing structural and individual homophobia—perhaps the most deeply rooted prejudice in our society. It addresses the mystery of sexuality and demands an honesty about ourselves that we are not always willing or able to maintain."

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The Rev. Scott Alexander serves the Unitarian Universalist Association as director of the Office of Lesbian and Gay Concerns, director of the AIDS Action and Information Program, and administrator of the Church of the Larger Fellowship.

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USA TODAY PROFILE: THE REV. SCOTT ALEXANDER

Minister preaches gay acceptance

By Craig Wilson
USA TODAY

THE REV. SCOTT ALEXANDER: The openly gay minister leads the Unitarian Universalist Association's largest congregation.

BOSTON — At a time when most mainstream denominations are struggling over what to do with gay clergy, the Unitarian Universalist Association is charging full speed ahead to embrace them.

Leading that charge is the Rev. Scott Alexander, a whirling dervish in a crisp suit, or as one congregation dubbed him, the "cheerful tornado."

Alexander's installation in June as senior minister of the 2,000-member Church of the Larger Fellowship (the largest of UUA's 1,020 congregations) is further proof of the liberal denomination's continued support of gays.

But though Alexander is one of those insufferables who eagerly bound out of bed in the morning — even his eight-mile, lunchtime runs along the Charles River don't seem to sap his energy — he admits it will take all of his energy and more to convince other denominations to accept homosexuals in the clergy.

The Presbyterians this summer, for instance, voted outright against gay clergy, while the Episcopal Church recently postponed for three years a decision on ordaining gays.

"We're the only ones going in the other direction," says Alexander, 42, one of the 65 openly gay clergy among the UUA's 1,150 ministers. But as Alexander likes to say, "I'm not a gay minister. I'm a minister who happens to be gay."

Alexander believes the UUA

This church doesn't go by the book

Who are these Unitarian Universalists? Since they were founded in 1793 and the Unitarians in 1825, both denominations have celebrated a philosophy of tolerance and acceptance of every human being. They merged in 1961. The 190,000 Unitarian Universalist Association members believe personal experience, conscience and reason should be the final authorities in religion; that in the end religious authority lies not in a book or person or institution, but in themselves. The UUA has no creed — members say theirs is a free faith. "We have chosen to renounce altogether the drawing of lines between people on the basis of belief," says the Rev. Ed Atkinson, a UUA minister. "We know people differ in their opinions and lifestyles and believe those differences generally should be honored. Our religion is a way, instead of a what," the Rev. Scott Alexander says. "Our Bible, as we like to say, is 'loose leaf.'"

is a generation ahead of most other denominations. (The 1.6 million-member United Church of Christ is the only other mainstream church to ordain openly gay people.)

Actually, the UUA is way ahead of most denominations. Since 1970, the UUA has enacted seven resolutions in support of gays and their interests. Its ministers are also encouraged to officiate at gay and lesbian services of union.

"In 30 years the Methodists will be where we are today," Alexander says. "They're going to see that this doesn't divide the church. That gays and straights can nourish each other. That gays don't eat dogs and

we don't molest Sunday School children."

He's not as optimistic about the Roman Catholics.

"Maybe we're three generations ahead of the Roman Catholics," Alexander says. "They have so many gay clergy, but so many of them are self-hating and tormented. It's going to take a long, long time. But every time the Roman church clamps down, more people come in our door."

Alexander is sympathetic toward the plight of fellow gay clergy in other denominations, but "I often say, 'Why don't you come over to a place where you aren't going to get beaten up all the time?'" But on another

level, I also have to admire those who have decided to stay and fight."

In an effort to promote a better understanding of gays, Alexander edited *The Welcoming Congregation: Resources for Affirming Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Unitarian Universalists* (UUA, \$24.95), a widely used manual to help congregations look at themselves and homophobia.

"Most other denominations have their own programs now, following Scott's lead," says the Rev. Ken South, executive director of the AIDS National Interfaith Network. Alexander serves on its board. "And Scott's in a unique position, because he's one of the few people with an AIDS portfolio."

In addition to writing extensively on AIDS, Alexander has also taken his fight to the streets and to school boards. While minister of the First Unitarian Society of Plainfield, N.J., he successfully fought to include AIDS education in the public school curriculum.

Claire Fazackerley of Joplin, Mo., a member of the UU Women's Federation, says she thinks Alexander's strength is that "he's more a minister of the emotions. . . . Not only do I like his ideas, but I love his enthusiasm. He's refreshing."

As for Alexander's homosexuality, she can't imagine it will be a problem in his new post, although she admits there are small pockets of homophobia, even in the UUA.

Alexander came out of the closet 10 years ago when he was heading the Plainfield con-

gregation. His flock accepted the news "and it prospered," he says, not into a gay congregation but a congregation that "affirmed" gay Unitarian Universalists.

Today, such revelations by Alexander are commonplace. He discussed his life and lover in his first pastoral letter this month to his new congregation.

"I decided back in Plainfield it was time to fish or cut bait," he says, admitting he wanted to live with his lover, Collins Mikesell, now a senior computer specialist at MIT. "And I wanted to have a close relationship with my people. If they rejected me, well, I'd just go somewhere else. I went into it with a certain calm. I figured the wolves only attack the caribou if the caribou look wounded. They sensed the calm in my spirit."

He says it was the best thing that ever happened to him. Now, 10 years later, Alexander and Mikesell share a 250-year-old house in Salem, Mass., with a new condo in Provincetown for weekend getaways.

Alexander says he's "generally quite contented with my life," and as a third generation Unitarian Universalist who grew up "happily in the arms of liberal religious thought and practice," he feels very much at home with his church's well-let's-talk-about-that approach.

"And if we're wrong, we'll change our mind. We can look at ourselves and see we're wrong. We can grow and change. We've made mistakes, but we're able to change," he says.

The Sunday Courier-News

A Gannett newspaper serving Central New Jersey

Bridgewater, Sunday, December 24, 1989

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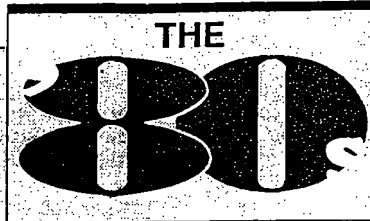
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TOM PERRY

Courier-News columnist

As we looked back on the 1980s, The Courier-News editors began putting together lists of those Central Jerseyans who made a difference. Those individuals are cited throughout The Courier-News today as people who changed our community, improved our quality of life, and our economic climate.



Some you know, some you don't. On this page and on Page B-2 are people — and even a town — who made a difference in Central Jersey during the 1980s. They were selected by Courier-News editors and profiled by Courier-News reporters.

THE REV. SCOTT ALEXANDER

Plainfield AIDS activist

The Rev. Scott Alexander, formerly of the First Unitarian Society of Plainfield, once told his congregation that the AIDS virus is not choosy.

He actively encouraged his congregation to practice safe sex and use condoms when engaging in sex outside of a long-standing, infection-free relationship.

Since the outbreak of the disease, AIDS education has progressed "just a tiny portion" near where it needs to be, Alexander said. "We have just got an incredible amount to do."

The Catholic Church is teaching that it is immoral to teach high school students about condoms, he said. We need "to keep our children alive and to teach people that this is a virus and there are ways to prevent people from getting the disease."

Alexander took his concern for AIDS education to city residents as a member of the Plainfield Task Force on AIDS. He fought the white

middle class heterosexual notion that AIDS would not affect them.

Alexander was well-known and well-liked as minister of the First Unitarian Society of Plainfield for 10 years, before deciding in the spring of 1988 to move to New England to be closer to his vacation home in Maine.

Alexander accepted an appointment with the associations Church of the Larger Fellowship, serving a small congregation that didn't have a minister in residence.

Now he is continental director of the Unitarian-Universalist Association's AIDS, Action and Information Program and director of the Office of Lesbian and Gay Concerns.



SAUL COOPERMAN

State education commissioner

Education Commissioner Saul Cooperman thinks of himself as a "cheerleader for education."

As a guiding force behind "Education Governor" Thomas H. Kean, Cooperman has spearheaded a host of changes in New Jersey's public schools during his seven years in Trenton.

The bold approach has thrust New Jersey schools into the national spotlight.

Because of Cooperman's efforts, all high school students now must pass minimum skills tests in order to graduate and teachers have to meet higher academic standards to be licensed.

The Cooperman era also has seen distribution of the first New Jersey report cards on schools, the opening of an alternate route to teacher certification and the achievement of higher starting salaries for teachers.

But rather than any single act during the past decade, the 55-year-old Cooperman is proudest of his role in changing attitudes about the state of education in New Jersey.

"One of the most important things I did was to say, 'Everything is not all right.' I said the things

people didn't like to hear: Our schools are in trouble, students aren't doing well, discipline is poor," Cooperman said.

The Rocky Hill resident believes in facing issues squarely, in "trying to do the right thing and putting the children first."

It has been his approach ever since he launched his career 29 years ago. Fresh out of the navy, Cooperman almost became a paint salesman before deciding he had "to do something with real meaning."

In 1960, he took a teaching post at North Plainfield High School. Four years later, he became vice principal of Belvidere High School and a year later, principal. After earning his doctorate at Rutgers University in 1969, Cooperman became superintendent of schools in Montgomery Township. He remained there until 1974 when he was named superintendent of Madison schools. From there he was chosen by Gov. Kean to be education commissioner in 1982.



Cooper

MILLICENT FENWICK

Former congresswoman, ambassador

During her eight years in the House of Representatives, Millicent Fenwick was often called the "Conscience of the Congress."

During the eight years since she left politics, the Bernardsville resident could be called the "Conscience of Somerset County."

During the 1980s, Fenwick, now 79, delved into a host of social and humanitarian causes when most people would be content to retire.

After an unsuccessful bid to be elected to the U.S. Senate in 1982, Fenwick was named U.S. ambassador to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization in Rome — an organization trying to end world hunger and poverty.

Shortly after leaving that post, this is what Fenwick had to say about poverty in Third World countries:

"I think that every human being in the world has common needs and when it gets to poverty in the

Third World, when the suffering is so intense, when needs such as food, clothing, shelter, primary needs, are not met, no decent society can stand by without trying to help. It's not a question of rights, it's a question of needs and our proven desire to help."

Fenwick's desire to help was also seen locally in Somerset County.

Last year she chaired a \$2 million fund-raising campaign for Bridgewater's PeopleCare Center Inc. which offers space at low rent to non-profit human service agencies.

Fenwick also used some arm twisting to get Morocco's King Hassan II to donate \$100,000 to the Somerset Hills YMCA.

Fenwick is in her fourth decade as a member of the YMCA's advisory board and last year the Somerset Hills YMCA in Bernards named its new day-care center after her.



Courier-News file photo

Bernardsville resident Millicent Fenwick in 1987, shortly after leaving her post as U.S. ambassador to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization.

The profiles of the people who made a difference during the 1980s were compiled by the following Courier-News Writers: Barbara Bowers, Karyn Colombo, Regina DePerti, Paul Grzella, Bernice Paglia, Pat Politano, Mary Romano, Carrie Stetler, Leslie Werstein, and David Willis.





**Church of the Larger Fellowship
Unitarian Universalist**

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salexander@uua.org

Rev. Scott W. Alexander
Biographical Sketch 1997

Education

Raised in Racine, Wisconsin, Scott W. Alexander received degrees from:

Lawrence University—B.A., Urbanology, Phi Beta Kappa, Magna Cum Laude
(also served as an Alumni Director of the University, 1980-1986)

Thomas Starr King School for the Ministry—M. Div.

Certified Advanced Clinical Pastoral Education— four quarters

He is also a member of *The Greenfield Group*, the longest-standing Unitarian Universalist theological study group which meets twice a year.

Ministry

He began his Unitarian Universalist ministry in 1974 at the *First Church of Houlton, Maine*, which he served until 1978 when he was called to become the Minister of the *First Unitarian Society of Plainfield, New Jersey*.

After a highly successful and happy ministry of ten years there, in the summer of 1988 Scott joined the staff of the *Church of the Larger Fellowship* in Boston, Massachusetts, as Minister/Administrator. In June of 1989 he was also appointed director of the *Office of Lesbian and Gay Concerns of the Unitarian Universalist Association*, as well as director of the denomination's *AIDS Action and Information Program*.

In the summer of 1991, the Rev. Alexander became Senior Minister of the *Church of the Larger Fellowship* where he presently serves over 2800 isolated UU's. He is Senior Editor of CLF's monthly publication *Quest*, and CLF's national children's magazine, *UU and Me*. Rev. Alexander is responsible for all the programs, services, and operations of the church -- including management of its operating budget and endowment portfolio.

Denomination

Scott has served the UUA and its districts in many ways over the 23 years of his ministry. Author of *The Relational Pulpit*, a book about preaching from a UU perspective, he regularly teaches preaching to groups of ministers and seminarians, and is an Adjunct Professor of Homeletics at Andover Newton Theological School in Boston.

Speaking and leading workshops around the continent, Rev. Alexander travels regularly for the UUA's *Beyond Categorical Thinking* and the *Religion That Puts Its Faith in You* programs. He also leads widely popular workshops on faith development, congregational diversity and church growth -- for both ministers and laity. Scott also conducts interfaith workshops on "sexuality and spirituality."

Scott is the Editor of the three books: *The Welcoming Congregation: Resources for Affirming Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Persons*, *AIDS and Your Religious Community: A Hands-On Guide for Local Programs*, and *Salted With Fire: Unitarian Universalist Strategies for Sharing Faith and Growing Congregations*. His latest book: *Everyday Spiritual Practice*, is at the publisher and is due out in early 1998.

Larger Community

Scott has always been active in community affairs— serving human service agencies, charities, and local government. He has served in leadership capacities for an adoption agency devoted to handicapped children, the Planned Parenthood organization, and AIDS education programs.

In December, 1989, the Rev. Alexander was honored by the editors of the Gannett newspaper *Courier News* as one of ten people from Central New Jersey "who [because of his diligence in persuading political officials to face the AIDS/HIV crisis] made a real difference" in the 1980s.

Nationally, since 1990 Scott has served as an officer and Board member of the *AIDS National Interfaith Network* (ANIN), an Washington-based non-profit organization devoted to a compassionate response to the AIDS/HIV epidemic by America's diverse religious communities. In Eastern Massachusetts, Scott serves on the board of *Interfaith Aids Ministries*, a local AIDS service agency and ministry.

Personal

Scott is an avid runner who jogs 12 to 14 miles daily. He loves cross-country skiing, hiking, and biking. An outdoor enthusiast, he spends his weekends and much of the summer at his home in Provincetown, Massachusetts, where he is also Affiliate Minister at the Universalist Meetinghouse.

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This very moment begins a new day

The sun at high noon will touch us all soon, touch us with soft light and a summons to wonder.

Already it has swiped the foreheads of a Shoshone family in Cheyenne, the Jennings, on their way home from the little whitewashed Methodist Church at the edge of the reservation.

It beat down oppressive, hot, on Mario Benitez' *huaso* hat during the first really summery day in Temuco, Chile.

It insinuated itself into the leaves of wind-felled magnolias in Chapel Hill, and glittered on hurricane debris in San Juan.

It glared in the faces of fishermen off the coast of Nova Scotia, and warmed the sill of a woman in Reykjavik named Sigrid Karlsdottir who turns 101 today.

It poured on the *kipas* of the men and boys coming out of the synagogue, after the morning service for the second day of Rosh Hashana in Firenze. Ricardo Tedesco's *kippa* blew away in a gust of wind, and he thought for a moment its round white disc was like Joshua's sun struck still in the sky.

It painted the bougainvillea in the courtyard of the Beira Restaurant in Maputo a magenta almost too bright to look at.

It glittered on the vans of the Kurds crossing into Iran, and lost itself completely on the black hulls of stealth bombers on the airfields of Kuwait.

It brought majestic relief to the swell in the Taj Mahal's dome, even as a breeze scented of both spice and decay briefly ended the irritating drone of flies on the tourists there.

It illuminated the tears on the cheeks of Mei Lin whose son Bao Lin is in so much trouble over in Sinkiang.

It filtered through the thick clouds shrouding the harbor in Vladivostock, falling on the pale hands of young Grigorii Ivanovich Guishar as he drinks his steaming black tea thick with cherry jam.

It falls through the skylight of that new loft building in downtown Melbourne where Sculthorpe sits at his Monday morning desk, composing a little work for flute and viola.

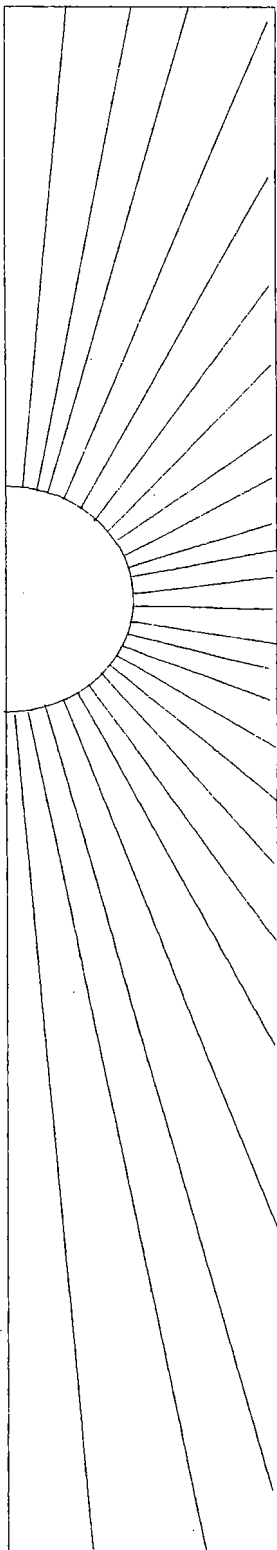
Lastly, it will fall on those who walk out of this Sanctuary in an hour, demanding no small offering of amazement.

You'll see. You'll see.

It will grab us each by the collar and speak in this way:

I was born in cataclysm only 8 minutes ago, in the heart of your nearby star, and have crossed a gulf over a hundred million kilometers in a form no physicist can yet fathom. Without me you may not live. For many centuries, I was one of the names of God. Pause for a time and wrap your heart in wonderment as even now I enfold your shoulders in my bright arms. Keep silent for a moment and wear the prayershawl, the tallit of my light. As it is for every being on this earth, Jewish or not, as my light declares every day, this very moment begins a new hour, a new day, and a New Year. May it be sweet.

From *Prayers on the Sunday of Rosh Hashana* by Mark Belletini, minister, Starr King Unitarian Universalist Church, Hayward, California. Reprinted, with permission, from *First Days Record*



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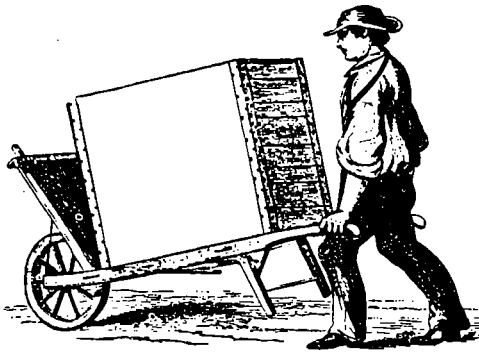
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We must be the change we wish to see in the world Gandhi

by Kirk Loadman-Copeland,
minister, Unitarian Universalist
Church of the South Hills,
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Give some thought to your work



Labor Day was first proposed in 1882 by Peter McGuire, founder of the Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners, as a day to honor laborers, the new class of workers created by the Industrial Revolution. Long associated with the start of the school year, Labor Day marks the practical end of summer. The rhythms of life change as the transition from summer to autumn begins.

When Labor Day became a national holiday, it was used by the labor movement in this country to call attention to their grievances. With the decreasing influence of unions in this country the day may have lost some of its traditional symbolism. Still, the celebration of Labor Day, with increased focus on its more universal implications, becomes ever more significant given the importance of work. It is not only a time to consider anew our work as shaped by our occupation, but the other kinds of work in which we are involved: house work, volunteer work, one's life work, etc. Our work, collectively considered, is what creates society anew each day.

In his poem, "East Coker," T.S. Eliot wrote,
*In my beginning is my end. In succession
Houses rise and fall, crumble, are extended,
Are removed, destroyed, restored, or in their place
Is an open field, or a factory, or a bypass.*

The human environment is created and maintained by incredible expenditures of human labor. We are in awe of the industry of ants and bees, those social insects with their complex organization of labor, yet we humans are similarly configured. To paraphrase Walt Whitman, "Why who makes much of work? As to me I know of nothing else but work." Work becomes a metaphor for life and the quality of our life is profoundly influenced by the nature of this work.

The largest piece of work for many is their job. This work for which we are paid money is, at one level of complexity, a form of barter—money for labor. Yet if we are not compensated in other ways, such work tends to be dehumanizing. The poet (and organizational consultant) David Whyte writes:

We spend far more time in the workplace than we do with our families, in our places of worship, or out in the natural world. If we are not asking questions of our work that are germane to our personal destiny, we are attempting to live out our lives in the 10 to 15 percent of the waking time left to us. Most of that time is in the recovery mode (recovering from work). Labor Day is a reminder to ask those questions, to take stock of our work-life.

Historically, the labor movement asked important questions about work. While unions have lost much

of their influence as work-place-critic, they did, in an earlier era, humanize work. Some suggest that the decline of unions occurred because of their excessive demands that ignored the competitive pressures faced by corporations. This is a reminder of the necessary balance required between various and sometimes competing interests (supplier, consumer, worker, manager, stockholder, etc.), one that has often proved difficult to achieve or sustain. A question today, given downsizing and related phenomena, is whether the workplace is again being dehumanized, being made unfit for human habitation.

Are we creating circumstances in which larger numbers of people, although working, will be unable to "make a living?" Such a trend would not be without significant consequences, intended or not. Saying this suggests that Labor Day should be a time of reflection for all of the workplace constituencies—stockholders and CEOs included.

Tom Chappell, founder and president of Tom's of Maine, writes: *Trying to run a business ethically and with soul brings constant challenges.... Business people often fall back on the old motto, "Keep it simple, stupid." I am afraid, however, that this piece of wisdom is no longer useful. You can keep it simple if your only goal is to make a profit. If you want to be ethical, and to run a business that demonstrates in a daily way its respect for human life, that endeavor is, by definition, complex.*

In the spirit of Labor Day, give some thought to your work. What does it expect of you? What do you expect of it? The answers are important. ■

