

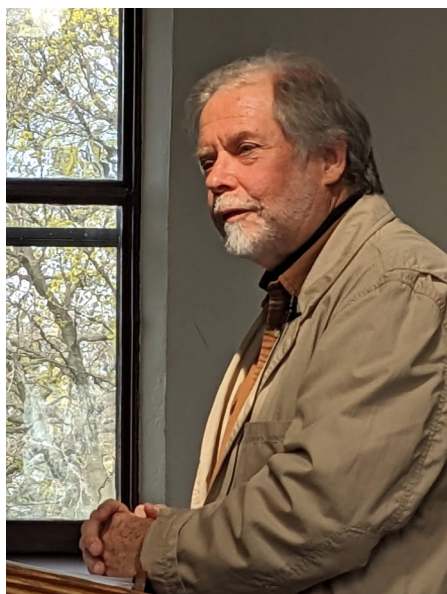


UU Sangha

Journal of the Unitarian Universalist Buddhist Fellowship

Winter 2023

From the Editor: For this edition, we feature writings and photos from the 2023 UUBF Convocation with philosopher, author, Zen teacher and climate activist David Loy, as well as other UUBF news.



POETIC REFLECTION ON CONVO 2023 by Lenny Edgin

What an amazing, welcoming community exists among us. I went alone to Convo, only knowing one other person there, and immediately felt at home, with family.

Although I'm no poet, I wrote a poem during our sunrise sit on Friday morning :

To be a duck, swimming in cold water, not feeling its chill

To be a gull, flying over the lake and not fear drowning

To be a goose, pecking on the ground for food, not worried when it will eat next

To be a starling, knowing, even when you're alone, you will find your flock

To be a crane, knowing when the weather gets cold, you know how to get to where it's warm

To be a warbler, singing out loud, for the joy of the song



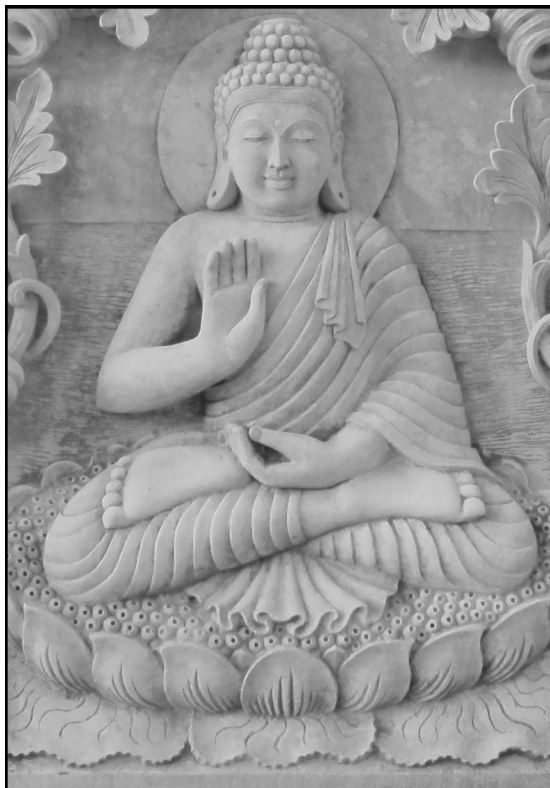
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Have you renewed your UUBF membership this year?

Subscription to the UU Sangha is based on a calendar year donation of \$25.

Your membership dollars support the printing of *UU Sangha*, which is sent to members who request a paper copy, as well as those who are incarcerated. Printing costs are increasing. We also use membership dollars to help support scholarships to our bi-annual convocations.

Please consider an additional \$25 donation (or a donation of any amount) to help us continue to print this journal and share it with those without access via the internet, as well as for other UUBF activities. To donate, go to the [UUBF Donations Page](#) on [UUBF.org](#).



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Submissions

We are always interested in submissions! Please send all material for *UU Sangha* to the editor, by email, or if you do not have access to email, to Richard Swanson by mail. Submission implies permission to publish in the print and digital editions.

Thoughts from our UUBF President

UUBF members and friends gathered April 27-30 in Racine, Wisconsin and online across the United States and Canada. UUBF has held convocation biannually for over 25 years. This year's was UUBF's first hybrid meeting.

The help of many people and fortunate circumstances made convo possible. David Loy, our teacher, offered persistent kindness and good cheer through two postponements due to COVID. Convo 2023 was originally scheduled for 2021!

Board member Terry Kinsey worked tirelessly as our liaison to David during these twists and turns. Bows of appreciation go to long-time Board member Sam Trumbore, who served as tech host. Sam brought a suitcase full of equipment from his home in New York state and shared his expertise amidst challenging conditions. Wayne Arnason, another long-time Board member, led nourishing worship to open and close our gathering. Board member Florence Caplow offered workshops and filled myriad tasks behind the scenes. Erich Moraine, our newest Board member, insured that plenty of cushions and mats were available. UUBF Treasurer Dick Swanson deftly guided registration, applying a wealth of experience as registrar of many past convos.

More bows of gratitude go to workshop presenter Lore Stevens -- and all those participating online and in-person whose graciousness helped us navigate the bumps that come with an event of this magnitude.



The DeKoven Center served as the location for 2023 Convo. Lake Michigan, which borders the edge of the center grounds, could be seen from our main meeting room. The above photo of the lake was taken one afternoon during break. The sky looks foreboding, the lake dark and flat. The lake captures the difficult

feelings we have about the climate crisis.

A theme present across David Loy's precious dharma talks was that the climate crisis is primarily a spiritual one. We cannot wait for technological advances to solve this crisis, the greatest challenge humanity has ever faced. We can be a battalion of dharma warriors and bring spiritual grounding to climate activism.

There is some faint movement on the water near the rocky shore in the photo. Each of us is like a ripple in that water, branching outward towards the sliver of orange light on the horizon. David shared the Ecosattva Vows created by Joanna Macy at his final teaching. Let us join together in making recitation of these vows part of our regular practice. May ripples become waves that reach the other shore.

In faith, love and community,
Judy Zimmerman (Thubten Drimay)

Ecosattva Vows

Based on my love of the world and understanding of deep interdependence of all things,

I vow —

To live in Earth more lightly and less violently in the food, products and energy I consume.

To commit myself daily to the healing of the world and the welfare of all beings; to discern and replace human systems of oppression and harm.

To invite personal discomfort as an opportunity to share in the challenge of our collective liberation.

To draw inspiration, strength and guidance from the living Earth, ancestors and the future generations, as well as siblings of all species.

To help others in their work for the world and to ask for help when I feel the need.

To pursue a daily spiritual practice that clarifies my mind, strengthens my heart and supports me in observing these vows.

CONVO CELEBRATES WORLD TAI CHI DAY by Wayne Arnason



World Tai Chi Day was celebrated this year on April 29, 2023 smack dab in the middle of our UU Buddhist Convocation. Practitioners all over the world were encouraged to go through their forms at the same time of day.

While our conference schedule did not allow people at Convo to join in that world-wide practice at that exact time, through the leadership of Molaan Mosell of Des Moines, Iowa, we nevertheless had our own group practice together.

Convo attenders from past years have noticed Tai Chi being practiced at different times of day, indoors and outdoors, and have taken for granted that many UU Buddhists find a Tai Chi practice to be complementary and sustaining of our meditation practice.

When Molaan invited Convo attenders to gather outside in the De Koven enter's quadrangle following the afternoon workshops, she had no idea how many people might join her. Half the conference was there!!

As we began the slow relaxed movements of the form, it was not clear whether most of us would be practicing the same way. There are many variations and schools of Tai Chi practice.

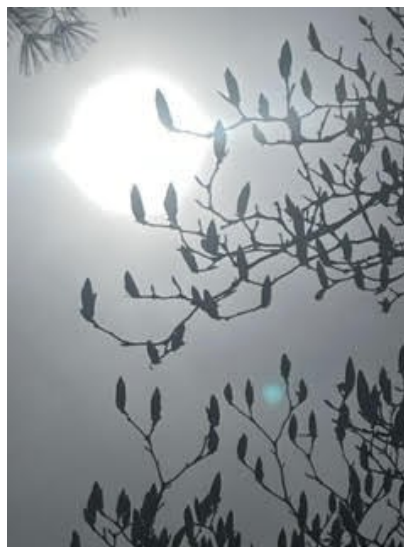
As it turned out, most of us knew the most widely practiced form in the US, usually described as the Yang Short Form. While different paces and small

variations in styles of movement sometimes gave the impression that we were doing the form differently, further conversation and form repetition helped us understand that most of us had basically learned the same form.

In the writings of our teacher for the Convo weekend, David Loy, in his book *Nonduality in Buddhism and Beyond*, we find a few sentence in the Introduction (pp. xxv) that clearly expresses the connections between Tai Chi and Buddhist meditation:

"Our normal experience of action is dualistic -- there is a sense of an 'I' that does the action -- because the action is done to obtain a particular result", says Loy. Once the Tai Chi practitioner has committed the form to muscle memory, the internal practice of Tai Chi can begin. Loy writes: "...without such thought-imposition, no distinction is experienced between agent and act, or between mind and body. Non-dual action is spontaneous...effortless...and empty. (It is) the meaning of *wei-wu-wei*, the paradoxical 'action of non-action' in Taoism."

What a joy it was to share *wei-wu-wei* with other Tai Chi practitioners during Convo!



INTERVIEW
by Ted Tollefson

*I went to interview
the yellow daffodils
and found that no thing was lacking
nor were they worried or lonely
for each sun-colored bell
told its Golden Good News
to this bright spring day
praising from tender roots
this sweet green Field of Be-longing
where no one is unwelcome
forgotten or unloved.*

*IF we cannot save this world
and do not wish to harm it by trying too hard to save it
we can choose to savor this world
by meeting it with love and undivided attention
one being, one epiphany at a time.
And when we receive this bounty
May we always give something back
such as Amen!
Blessed Be!
Bodhi Svaha!*



**PRACTICE GROUPS COMPARE NOTES AT
UUBF CONVO**
by Wayne Arnason

Feedback from previous UU Buddhist Fellowship Convocations encouraged the organizers to make sure that we included an opportunity for practice group teachers, leaders, and hosts to get together to compare identities, formats, and issues. Using the term “practice groups” instead of “sanghas” is intentional nomenclature in this article because some of the meditation groups that meet in UU congregations are secular.

Indeed, when our workshop for practice group leaders convened, we were pleased to have 14 people in attendance and almost as many distinct styles of practice groups.

The single dominant Buddhist school represented in practice groups is Soto Zen, but among those practitioners several lineage sanghas were represented. These sanghas also have different practices related to frequency of meeting, liturgies (some or none), zazenkai’s, or weekend retreats. These groups also have different access to or leadership from authorized teachers. One strong sangha in the Midwest has a Rinzai Zen lineage. Within the Zen traditions, some of the people present identify with the Community of Mindfulness, Thich Nhat Hanh’s sangha, which represents a unique Zen culture in North America.

Vajrayana and Vipassana (Insight Meditation) groups were a smaller proportion of people in our workshop.

The leaders identifying their groups as “secular” interpret that to mean that they are focused on sharing reading and meditation together. The reading is often from Buddhist sources but not necessarily. These groups don’t include any

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commitment to formal Buddhist commitments or teaching in their missions. The tradition least practiced among us is Pure Land.

Among the leaders of practice groups in UU Buddhism, we find several across the country with authorized teachers from within different lineages and traditions, but most are led by Buddhist students or practitioners who want to share their practice with others.

When we asked about the relationship with the local UU church, most groups meet within a UU building but with diverse relationships to the congregations. A few are fully integrated programs of the congregation, publicized through the church media and seen as one of the opportunities for spiritual practice that the congregation offers.

Others are independent of the congregation, occasionally publicized in the church media, and may pay rent or may not for the use of the space.

Some sanghas are dominated by UU church members, and in others they are a minority but form an important link to the congregation. In one case, we heard about a congregation that has a renting Buddhist sangha that welcomes everyone, and a separate UU Buddhist sangha that seeks to appeal to members of the congregation, both meeting in the same building at different times.

In future issues of *Sangha*, we hope to include articles spotlighting some of stronger practice groups in our network.

We were not surprised to see these thousand flowers blooming within UU Buddhist Fellowship Groups. It does illustrate why our Convocations are run more like secular

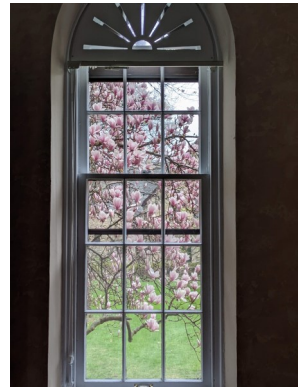
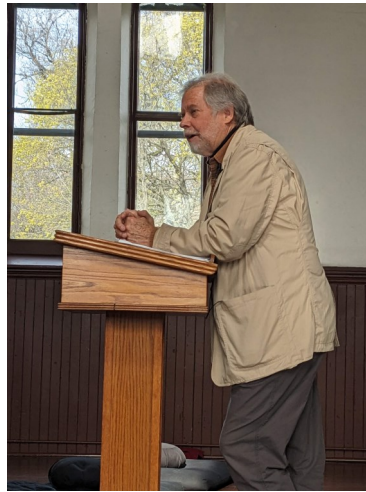
conferences rather than as formal Buddhist retreats focused on silently sharing meditation and teaching. We have so many different identities within our shared Buddhist practice, it would be hard to know how to manage a retreat format.

We speculate without any comprehensive survey data to back us up that half the UU congregations in the US and Canada host or have a relationship with a Buddhist sitting group.

That suggests there should be five hundred listings in our directory of sitting groups on the UUBF web site. Go to uubf.org and look for the directory of groups to see if yours is listed and whether the information is current. If not, help us out! UUBF exists in large part so we UU Buddhists can see each other and be seen and remember that we are not alone in our practice, that we are part of one larger sangha.



A Medley of Photos from the 2023 Convo



Photos in this issue by Florence Caplow, Wayne Arnason, Carol Frischman & Karen M. Miller

UUBF NEWS

2025 Convo Announcement!

The 2025 UUBF Convo will be held at [Bon Secours Retreat Center](#) in Marriottsville, Maryland, April 11-13, 2025. We are overjoyed that our invited teacher will be [Lama Rod Owens](#), author of *The New Saints: From Broken Hearts to Spiritual Warriors*, *Love and Rage: The Path of Liberation Through Anger* (a favorite of several UUBF Board members), and *Radical Dharma: Talking Race, Love, and Liberation*. Lama Rod describes himself as a Black Buddhist Southern Queen.

There are costs associated with holding our reservation, preparing for scholarships, and other costs. If you are as excited as we are about this Convo, and want to donate toward its support, you can [donate here](#).



Online North American UUBF Gatherings

In November we held our first North American UUBF Online Gathering in several years. Florence Caplow, one of the UUBF Board members, gave a talk on “Two Paths, One Life”, on being a UU minister and Zen priest. There were also opportunities to gather in small groups and hear from other Board members. The video recording can be [seen here](#). Stay tuned for our next gathering in mid-January. Sam Trumbore will be sharing about his experience of doing a three month silent Vipassana retreat.

Seeking New Board Members and Volunteers

If you would be interested in volunteering for the UUBF Board, we are seeking a Treasurer, Membership Coordinator, Convocation Registrar, and UU Sangha Editor. Please reach out to Judy Zimmerman at jzimmerman@uuma.org if you have an interest in one of these positions. We would love your energy and expertise.

Introducing Two New UUBF Board Members!

Erich Moraine

Erich Moraine is active in his Heartland, Wisconsin UU congregation in multiple committee roles as well as being recognized as an ordained community minister. He is active in the Buddhist community as a Roshi in the Hollow Bones Rinzai Zen lineage as well as caring for the local sangha, [Kintsugi](#). He will be supporting the UUBF with tech skills related to the website and communications.

Pamela Patton

Pamela is the Director of Congregational Ministries at All Souls UU in New York City. She founded the [Buddhism and Mindfulness program](#) at All Souls. Her own spiritual practice is in the Gelug tradition of Tibetan Buddhism, and her dharma home is [Shantideva Center](#) in Brooklyn.

Welcoming UU Sangha Submissions from Incarcerated Members

If you would like to submit to this journal, please send your submissions to Richard Swanson's address on page 2.



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