UU Sangha

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Humanistic Buddhism

By Sam Trumbore

Little did I imagine thirty two years ago when I wandered into an introductory meditation class near the Rockridge BART station in a pleasant neighborhood of Oakland, California, that Buddhism and mindfulness practice would become as popular as they are today. I can't turn on the TV, listen to the radio or open the newspaper or a magazine without some reference to mindfulness popping up. Strong interest in Jon Kabat Zinn's skillful translation of Buddhist meditation techniques into the Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction program (MBSR), the popularity of Buddhist leaders like the Dalai Lama, the austere elegance of Zen and the colorful complexity of Tibetan Buddhism, have all fueled the Western fascination with Buddhism that continues to grow and doesn't show any signs of slowing down.

Back in those days, though, learning to meditate wasn't on anyone's bucket list. I was raised as a Unitarian Universalist in a small fellowship in Newark, Delaware in the1960's. Those of you who were around back then might remember the humanist climate in our congregations. Most of the membership cared about this world, and didn't worry much about any next one. They were guided by science and reason, rejected the supernatural, and sought truth and deeper meaning they found in the here and now. Certainly no one was doing any spiritual practices, meditation, prayer or any religious ritual. Heaven forfend anyone might burn a candle.

So coming from that secular humanist background, I approached my first meditation class in 1984 with a little caution. What surprised me right away in that first class, was the humanistic orientation of the Vipassana or Insight meditation. The psychologically oriented methods were extracted from Theravadan Buddhism and brought back from Southeastern Asia by Americans like Jack Kornfield, Sharon Salzberg and Joseph Goldstein in the early 1970's.

Here is a little background for those who may be new to Buddhism. Siddhartha Gotama, an Indian Hindu prince who lived 2500 years ago, abandoned his luxurious life in the palace

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Editorial Insights

I must first **begin with an apology** to our loyal UU Sangha readership and the members of the UU Buddhist Fellowship. We strive to publish between two and four issues of the UU Sangha each year. We are painfully aware we have not published an issue in the last two years. There is a story about why this happened - but it is not appropriate for publication here. I am stepping in as the guest editor to pull together an issue while the editorship is in transition.

The Board of the UUBF want to offer **heartfelt thanks to our outgoing editor, Robert Ertman**, for his excellent work as our UU Sangha editor. His focus on prison ministry and his interest in street retreats that have been showcased in these pages have stimulated many of us. As a former editor myself, I know how difficult it can be to solicit material for our issues. Bob was unfailingly creative in accomplishing that goal.

The most important event in the last two years for the UUBF was our **Convocation 2015** at the Garrison Institute with our theme presenter, Stephen Batchelor. The event was an excellent one with great appreciation for Batchelor's presentations. If you are interested in seeing his presentations, they are available on our web site as YouTube video links or as downloadable MP3 files. You'll find those links and downloads at our web site http://www.uubf.org/

That Convocation was partly the inspiration for our lead article by me titled Humanistic Buddhism. Wayne Arnason reviews Batchelor's book that came out after our Convocation. This issue also includes an essay by Catherine Senghas describing a recent sesshin experience.

What got us moving to get this issue out was the arrangements for our **Convocation 2017.** This time we'll be going to the West Coast to the Menucha Retreat Center outside Portland, Oregon. The Convocation will be between March 31 and April 2, 2017. Our theme speaker will be James Ford.

—Sam Trumbore, Transition Editor

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because of his intense concern for worldly suffering. He wanted to find a way to relieve the agony of sickness, old age and anticipating death. He sought instruction from the gifted gurus of his day, mastered their methods of practice, but found them all unsatisfying. Under the famous Bodhi Tree in Bodhgaya, he discovered the middle path to bring suffering to an end. He taught that middle path for the rest of his life, about forty years, taking the name Buddha, which means the awakened one, and calling himself the Tathagata, a being liberated from the wheel of greed, hatred and delusion.

What I found immediately attractive in this first meditation class was the lack of any doctrines or deities I needed to accept if I wanted to meditate. The Buddha frequently challenged those skeptical of his teaching to sit down, watch their moment to moment experience, and validate those teachings for themselves. Everything he taught could be and should be recognized in the experience of the practitioner. Nothing should be taken on faith – though confidence that the practice was fruitful and valuable was helpful. Confidence is especially helpful when encountering one of the most difficult hindrances of any training method: **doubt**.

The second aspect of the Buddha's teaching I appreciated was his silence on metaphysics and his reserve speaking about the paranormal. As you heard in the reading, he didn't like to speculate about things that could not be validated in human experience.

Vairochana Buddha is the central figure of the *Avatamsaka Sutra*, which discusses Indra's Net. Like the jeweled net, Vairochana symbolizes ultimate reality.

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I suspect he had ideas about the nature of creation, eternity, the existence of God, and what happens after death. What he would say was having answers to these questions would not be useful in the process of liberation from suffering. He cared primarily about teaching the reality of suffering, the cause of it, the reality of an experience of cessation of that suffering state, and the way to live and practice that moves a person to that experience of cessation.

It wasn't long, though, before I encountered some problems with Buddhism. Much as I enjoyed the physiological, emotional and psychological benefits of meditation practice, I learned Buddhism was embedded in the traditional Asian view of reincarnation. And the ticket to a better reincarnation, in that system, is accumulating merit.

I learned about how the importance of merit in Buddhist cultures when I visited Thailand in 2006. During that visit, and a visit to Sri Lanka in 2014, I saw a number of beautiful Buddhist temples. In each one, there were statues of the Buddha with boxes for donations in front of them. One could also light candles, say prayers or place a lotus flower on the altar. It felt like going to a Catholic church! Lay Buddhists can earn merit for a better rebirth through offering donations in the temple and offering food and support to the monks.

Reincarnation has other problems too. The Buddha, on one hand, said that we don't have an eternal soul. Our personalities are constructs of our past actions. That constructed self has no substantial reality. That sounds humanistic to me – the idea that there is no homunculus, no little being inside us that is eternal and survives our death. On the other hand, the Buddha clearly thought something or someone moves between lifetimes. It may not be an eternal soul but it does have some kind of existence.

The other problem, more specific to the earliest forms of Buddhism, is the self-serving emphasis on monks applying themselves so they could escape the wheel of birth and death. This focus on individual practice to cultivate individual liberation was controversial after the Buddha's death and led to the first big division in the Buddhist tradition. The concept of the bodhisattva who postponed their final liberation until everyone was liberated came out of that split.

These are a few of the problems scholars have been working on as Buddhism has become the subject of increasing study in academia. Stephen Batchelor is one of those scholars who studies the words of the Buddha looking for the wisdom and insight encoded in the language and symbols of the oldest Buddhist texts, striving to translate it in a way a secular, Western audience may hear it and appreciate it.

Batchelor, born in Scotland in 1953, grew up in a humanist household north west of London. He traveled to India in 1972, finding his way to the Tibetan exile community in Dharamsala, home of the Dalai Lama. He ordained first as a Tibetan monk in 1974, then later practiced Zen in South Korea before disrobing in 1985.

In the thirty years since that time he has been an independent scholar studying the Pali Canon, the oldest Buddhist texts, and writing

many books. The one that brought him to the attention of many in the Humanist community was his book, *Buddhism Without Beliefs* published in 1997.

> [Batchelor says he] considers Buddhism to be a constantly evolving culture of awakening rather than a religious system based on immutable dogmas and beliefs. In particular, he regards the doctrines of karma and rebirth to be features of ancient Indian civilization and not intrinsic to what the Buddha taught. Buddhism has survived for the past 2,500 years because of its capacity to reinvent itself.

I had the good fortune to spend a weekend with Batchelor. He was our featured presenter at our March 2015 convocation of the Unitarian Universalist Buddhist Fellowship. In 2005, the UUBF organized its first convocation at the Garrison Institute in Garrison, New York on the Hudson River. It brought together Unitarian Universalists practicing many different traditions of Buddhism. Video and audio recordings of these convocations, especially the last one with Batchelor, can be found on our web site uubf.org.

One of the most engaging insights Batchelor presented to us, addressed the core of the Buddhist tradition, commonly referred to as the Four Noble Truths. Over the years they have become, for many Buddhists, like doctrine and dogma.

The first is the assertion of the unsatisfactory nature of being itself. To take form and be born is one day to have to die and lose our bodily form. Rarely do any of us escape the misery of sickness. And no matter how long we live, we cannot escape the unpleasantness of the aging process. That is the first truth.

Sad as our finiteness is, we make it far, far worse by behaving badly when confronting the dilemma of being alive and knowing we must die. We react by craving diamonds, fast cars, pleasant music, good sex and great drugs, by rejecting wrinkles and sagging body parts, smelly cheese and neighbors, flies, rodents, and paying our taxes, and by being confused about how to approach life in a way that doesn't increase our unhappiness. That's the second truth – we mal-adapt to the finiteness of our existence. That's the bad news.

The good news is we can experience life in a way that brings balance, peace, joy and happiness. Not only can we stumble upon this experience, we can intentionally cultivate it using what he called the eightfold path comprised of ethical living, developing the power and clarity of the mind, and using that mindfulness to cultivate wisdom and compassion. Those are the third and fourth truths.

In some forms of Buddhism these four truth claims are embraced as beliefs. Because the problems of suffering, craving, hatred and ignorance are almost self-evident, the real problem is the third truth claim. Just what does it mean to be enlightened? The goal of the eightfold path is to free oneself permanently from wrong views and attitudes, from behaviors, thoughts and habits that keep us bound and reactive. Such a fully awakened, enlightened person is called an arhat.

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The Buddhist teachings describe these arhats as people who no longer experience greed, hatred and delusion. They no longer create suffering for themselves or other beings. Yes they experience both the pleasantness and the unpleasantness of human existence like the rest of us, but unlike most of us, they are able to respond in non-harmful and non-destructive ways.

Rather than concerning himself with the metaphysics of Four Noble Truths, Batchelor's study of the early Buddhist texts leads him to think the Buddha was less interested in creating a belief system and more interested in identifying four ***tasks***. The first task is to witness the stress that arises from direct encounters with the unpleasant aspects of existence. For example, imagine how getting a shoe wet in a puddle on a cold, rainy day feels and creates a moment of stress. In other words, unpleasant stuff just happens and there isn't much we can do to stop it every single time.

The next task is to investigate closely how we make this encounter with unpleasantness all the more miserable by resisting it and pushing it away or by distracting ourselves with pursuing the pleasant. Berating ourselves for not noticing the puddle doesn't help.

Probably the most important task is noticing the moments that arise when craving, hatred and delusion are completely absent. It might be possible to get one's shoes wet and not be bothered – think of little children who do it on purpose. That state is a compassionate, peaceful, and joyful state of equanimity and balance. Once recognized and replicated, this experience of cessation guides the awakening process, supported through following the last task set, the eightfold path.

Thus the Four Nobel Truths become a path or a program rather than a belief system.

Batchelor wants us to know that if we get our shoes soaked, God didn't will it. We are not puppets of the Gods who determine what happens next. Buddhism recognizes no supernatural forces manipulating the levers of reality. It follows the impersonal laws of cause and effect. We have yet to discover any divine hand that disobeys the laws of chemistry, mathematics and physics.

While Batchelor rejects the idea of an eye in the sky watching us and intervening on our behalf, we need not face a harsh, impersonal universe alone.

The Buddha's attendant, Ananda, once asked him if admirable friendship, companionship, and camaraderie was half of the holy life. The Buddha responded, "I don't say that, Ananda, admirable friendship, companionship and camaraderie is **the whole** of the path."

To relate to others in a way that protects them from harm, to treasure and to value them cultivates loving kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity, known as the four sublime states or the Brahmaviharas.

> They provide, writes Nyanaponika Thera, the answer to all situations arising from social contact. They are the great removers of tension, the great peace-makers in social conflict, and the great healers of wounds suffered in the

struggle of existence. They level social barriers, build harmonious communities, awaken slumbering magnanimity long forgotten, revive joy and hope long abandoned, and promote human brotherhood against the forces of egotism.

As Buddhism comes to the West and finds a home with secular people who think rationally and scientifically, we are witnessing its evolution and change. Batchelor is by no means the only person asserting this position. If you'd like to listen to a collection of these voices, look for the podcast, the Secular Buddhist. (I was interviewed on this show a few years ago.)

What some humanists are finding in Buddhism is a method to stimulate their growth and development toward being healthier, happier, wiser, and more caring human beings. In Buddhism they are finding an affirmation of life that stimulates an interest in and commitment to alleviate the suffering of others as well as themselves. They find no need for any supernaturalism or worship of any deity. And they find a community of caring people from whom they can receive mutual support.

BATCHELOR'S LATEST: HIS SECULAR BUDDHIST MANIFESTO?

By Rev. Dr. Wayne Arnason

A Review of Stephen Batchelor's After Buddhism: Rethinking the Dharma for a Secular Age (Yale University Press 2015)

Participants in the UU Buddhist Fellowship's 2015 Convocation have eagerly awaited the publication of the new book by our teacher for that week, Stephen Batchelor. Although the talks he offered that week ranged widely across his body of work, many of the teachings presented are found in this text. Batchelor offers both a scholarly and pragmatic argument for Buddhism as a this-wordly way of life, intended by Gotama from the beginning to be a response to the challenges of a public life in the world, rather than a guide to private enlightenment that leads you to another world.

Unitarian Universalists who have been intrigued by the search for the historical Jesus and the work of the Jesus seminar will find Batchelor's approach to Buddhist texts appealing. With his own knowledge of Pali and with a simple standard for identifying texts that support his view of Buddha's teaching, Batchelor ranges widely across the earliest sutras to present the dharma as it was before there was "Buddhism", as a practical method of living "after Buddhism" in the contemporary world.

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Batchelor's standard for identifying texts worthy of our deeper study is to sift through the "voices" he hears in the texts. Setting aside the voices he describes as "poetic, dramatic, dogmatic and mythic", Batchelor looks for voices in the text that stand apart from the conventional Hindu and cultural wisdom of the time in which Gotama lived. The unique teachings of the Buddha he finds in the "skeptical" and "pragmatic" voices, that withhold judgment, avoid broad metaphysical pronouncements, and reflect on everyday life. The skeptical and pragmatic Buddhism he finds in the text expresses the familiar Four Noble Truths, not as metaphysical dogmas, but as practical and daily tasks:

> "To comprehend suffering
> To let go of the arising of reactivity
> To behold the ceasing of reactivity
> And to cultivate an eightfold path that is grounded in…mindful awareness and ..self reliant..practice. " (P 27)

Interspersing the chapters of the book that are reflections on these four tasks are historical case studies based on the lives and interactions with Buddha of five members of his inner circle, all of whom were lay people (rather than monks) throughout or through much of their lives. Batchelor's decision to tell the stories of these little known lives is to further draw out the value of the dharma for the life we know, by describing Buddha's impact on followers who had no desire to enter full-time religious life.

As our last UUBF Convocation concluded, many who attended expressed their enthusiasm for supporting a new secular Buddhist movement in America. While Batchelor's new book, and his previous work, provides a scholarly, spiritual, and psychological grounding for such a movement, those who are looking for an organizational manifesto here will be disappointed. Speaking to these impulses as we concluded the Convocation, Mr. Batchelor expressed his reluctance and personal disinterest in being the leader of any new institutional community within (or after) Buddhism. If there are those who wish to carry that flag, he might be willing to walk in the front ranks of the parade. But he's not going to be organizing it.

Whether a secular Buddhist movement ever takes any formal shape in this country, there are many identified Buddhists, particularly within Unitarian Universalist congregations, who find Stephen Batchelor's scholarship, insights, and ethical teachings to be a breath of fresh air blowing through the many rooms of our contemporary Buddhist house. They will be eager readers of this newest work.

What a gift!

By Catherine "Enkan" Senghas

In December, I returned from the perennial Rohatsu sesshin I have attended for the past ten years with Boundless Way Zen. Members from our various BWZ sanghas gather for several sesshins each year, now held at Mugendo-ji, our temple in Worcester, Massachusetts. Each year I contemplate not going. It's always at the most inconvenient time of year, a point my spouse, family members and work colleagues underscore. This year I made a list all the reasons not to go: I am in a new job and arranging coverage for my on-call role would be challenging. We are down to one car in my household and I'd need to make arrangements to carpool with a sangha-mate. I'm gluten-intolerant and it's a nuisance navigating substitutions for certain predictable meal components—I know the menu by heart for our customary oriyoki meals. I haven't been sitting at home or with my local sangha as much as I'd like and I worry that the 24/7 discipline will be ever more challenging. I haven't even thought about my Christmas shopping.

But I make all the arrangements. And I go. The barriers fall away. I arrive and see my younger sister listening in orientation. She lives two hours west of me and is also a Zen practitioner from a different lineage and I've talked her into attending this sesshin with me. But by the time I settle into my spot in the women's bunk area, her newcomer orientation is over and we have all already entered the silent mode. No greeting! No chance to play big-sister host! No introductions to my sangha-mates! And that disappointment also falls away.

I sink into the familiar form and schedule of Boundless Way Zen sesshins—the liturgy, the dharma talks, the interviews in the dokusan rooms, the work practice (samu), rising at 4 am and sliding into my bunk at 10 pm, all of it. Rushing falls away. To-do lists fall away. Keeping up with email, text messaging, and voicemail falls away. I put my watch away, as we are called by bells and by the striking of a mallet on wood. And I just sit. I sit with all the "stuff" of my thinking mind—watching how it just swirls and swirls with all the attention and energy I usually give to it. I let go of liking and not-liking, tired and not-tired, thinking and no-thinking. The sun follows the arc of the day. The pattern is predictable and at the same time challenging.

At times it is hard. Stiffness comes and goes. Itching comes and goes. Annoyance comes and goes. Bliss comes and goes. I miss my own bed and my own pillow. A bad sesshin is a good sesshin. What a gift! I take refuge in Buddha. I take refuge in Dharma. I take refuge in Sangha. And after a few days I am ready to return to my new and busy job, changed and unchanged. I hug my sister goodbye—promising to call and debrief. We never do. It is enough.

Why the Hyphen?

By Terry Sims

I have heard many Unitarian Universalists use hyphenated labels to describe themselves and their spiritual understandings, e.g., UU-humanists; UU-Christians; UU-Jews; UU-Buddhists and perhaps others. What interests me about those descriptions is that they combine what I have understood as independent and purportedly complete religious systems. I also believe those religious systems, historically, have understood themselves to be complete, separate from other systems of religious thought and/or practice, and not needing supplementation from such other systems. Why is it not enough for some UUs to be either UU or Buddhist?

I do not doubt that many UUs have a great and serious interest in Buddhism. I, too find many commonalities between Unitarian Universalism and Buddhism, including reliance on personal experience rather than creed as the ultimate authority; avoidance of the issue of theism; compatibility with reason; and focus on the here-and-now, everyday universe we know. But interest and shared characteristics do not fully explain why one would feel it necessary to identify as both a Unitarian Universalist and a Buddhist. That implies to me that UU-Buddhists, if they are thoughtful about identifying themselves as such, deem each religious system to be insufficient in some way, and believe each must supply something not found in the other. If either religion is complete in itself or encompasses the other, the UU-Buddhist label is redundant.

As I thought about why UU-Buddhists might claim both traditions, it seemed possible that some would use the hyphenated label without much thought. They might just be attracted to elements of Unitarian Universalism and to elements of Buddhism, and so claim both names. They might not mean to claim the identification as an important statement of their theology or practice, complete or otherwise. The name might merely express two affinities. It also occurred to me that some UU-Buddhists might use the hyphenated identification only as a statement of personal history, claiming an earlier affiliation with, or training in, the UU tradition, which was later modified or replaced by Buddhism.

But at least some UU-Buddhists identify themselves as such out of a desire to syncretize Unitarian Universalism and Buddhism, either on a personal or a wider basis. That possibility suggests larger issues for Unitarian Universalism: Is our prized UU diversity just an easy eclecticism, or is there something more at work in the UU movement? Are we working toward a new syncretic understanding of religion, or are we just unsure of the one we claim now? Is Unitarian Universalism a potent compound, or merely a weak mixture of disparate elements? Is it only a catchall for the disaffected of other religions and belief systems, who nevertheless yearn for something a religion or belief/practice system provides? What does each group have to offer the others, and can such qualities be usefully and authentically borrowed from one and incorporated by others? These were the questions I wanted to begin to investigate through the lens of UU-Buddhists in the Unitarian Universalist Buddhist Fellowship. To that end, I began reading publications by Buddhist-identified UUs and corresponding with people involved in both Buddhism and UUism.

In the Unitarian Universalist Association Commission on Appraisal survey, two percent of Unitarian Universalist respondents claimed Buddhism as their primary theological perspective. However, the percentage of UU's for whom Buddhism is *a* rather than *the* major strand in their theological thinking may be much higher, suggesting that Buddhism may be reshaping western religious thought in general and Unitarian Universalism in particular.

My research indicated that while many Unitarian Universalists are becoming Buddhists, Western Buddhists are also becoming Unitarian Universalists. There were two overwhelming reasons given for the attraction to Unitarian Universalism: a supportive community, and common beliefs/theology, especially the interconnection of all life, the universality of religions, and the paradox or ambiguity of life.

Individuals who were UU's first were frequently attracted by Buddhism's "superior spiritual technologies" or practice of meditation. Other attractions included Buddhism's "pragmatic view of life"; "deep body of wisdom teachings, art, and culture that cannot be found in UUism"; and the nature of Buddhism as "non-theistic, flexible, and far less opposed to science than many other religions."

If one were to generalize on the basis of the limited research I carried out, it would be fair to say that both UU's and Buddhists are attracted to the other by common worldviews or beliefs. Beyond similar views and beliefs, Buddhists are mainly attracted to Unitarian Universalist churches because of the community the latter provide, whereas UU's are attracted by Buddhism's spiritual prac-

tices.

The nearly universal and primary reason given for the importance of identifying as a Buddhist was Buddhism's spiritual practice and discipline. For those people for whom identification as a UU was also important, three themes were evident: the UU orientation toward social justice; its sense of community; and practical adaptation of Buddhist thought and practice to Western culture.

In my limited understanding of the history of Buddhism, Westerners were not the first to introduce social justice and broader community concerns into Buddhism. However, it seems a fair assessment that Western practitioners have emphasized and encouraged the continuing development of those concerns within Buddhism. In that sense, social justice and broader community may be seen in part as Western adaptations to Buddhist practice here.

I cannot answer the broader questions that inspired much of my interest in the research. However, my research did confirm my intuitive assumption that thoughtful UU-Buddhists would not feel a need to identify with both of those traditions if they found either one complete in itself. The UUs who practice Buddhism, both those who have written about Buddhism and the survey respondents, were clear in identifying elements lacking in each tradition that they felt the other tradition supplied. Speaking broadly, these American Buddhists missed a community that their UU congregations could provide, while they found in Buddhism a spiritual practice that was missing from Unitarian Universalism.

My research also confirmed another basic intuitive assumption with which I started the project: that UU-Buddhists were not just looking for another religion to replace the one they practiced first, or to practice the two separately and simultaneously, but instead wanted to syncretize Buddhism and Unitarian Universalism into a more satisfactory "whole" or "complete" religion, at least for themselves personally. As I anticipated at the beginning, that desire to syncretize two religions, neither one of which is seen as entirely satisfactory or complete on its own, raises many of the broader questions and concerns about Unitarian Universalism for me.

UU-Buddhists have a genuine desire to learn from Buddhism and expand Unitarian Universalism with Buddhist practices and insights. At the same time, UU-Buddhists are generally sensitive to the Western neo-colonial tendency to appropriate foreign religions, as well as to the need to protect the integrity of Dharma transmission. How do we avoid easy eclecticism? How will we be sure we have not thrown away the wheat with the chaff, "harvesting" spiritual practices without all of the tradition that informed them?

I recognize that it is American Buddhists, already in a Westernized Buddhist tradition, that this study showed are turning to Unitarian Universalism as much as UUs are turning to Westernized Buddhism. But both Western culture and Unitarian Universalism might have something genuine to offer Buddhism that is not inherent in the Eastern traditions. Western, rationalist, post-structuralist syncretist that I am, it seems unlikely to me that any one tradition in one part of the world at any one time can contain everything worth knowing, absolute and forever unchanging, for all other cultures and times. The danger lies not in looking elsewhere, anymore than it lies in looking only where one is. Instead, the danger lies in not being able to see clearly wherever one looks, and settling for what is easy, while rejecting what is difficult and demanding.

I am convinced that the UU-Buddhists' attempt to learn, adapt and synthesize is genuine. These UU-Buddhists have "turned East" and come to know Buddhism as insiders, as well as maintained their Unitarian Universalism. For me, the efforts of UU-Buddhists represent at least a worthwhile step in the right direction—right for depth, for growth, for dialogue, and right for the mutual appreciation and benefit of both Unitarian Universalism and Buddhism.

Terry Sims' essay is the outgrowth of a class research project he conducted as part of his ministry training at Pacific School of Religion. He would like to thank the many respondents to his survey, and especially Reverend James Ford. (This was published in 2002)

Mark your calendars now!

CONVOCATION 2017

March 31—April 2, 2017

James Ford, theme presenter

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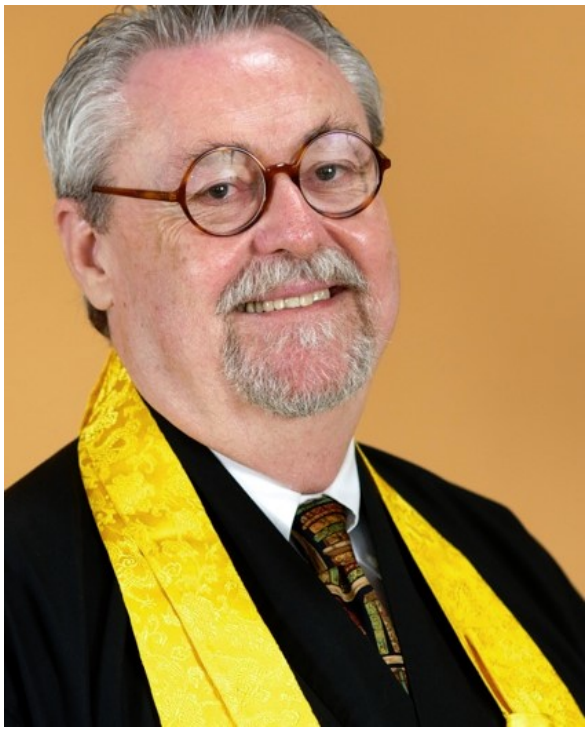

Roshi James Ishmael Ford

Unitarian Universalist Buddhist Fellowship

Convocation 2017
March 31—April 2
Menucha Retreat Center
Corbett, Oregon

Learning the Language of Dragons: Zen Meditation and Zen Koans

James Ishmael Ford, Zen teacher and Unitarian Universalist minister says that Zen meditation, both its "just sitting" or "silent illumination" discipline and "koan introspection" are in fact the language of dragons. In our time together we will be introduced to the grammar of dragons, a bit of the vocabulary, and with that to throw ourselves into a little dragon language immersion.
Menucha Lodge overlooks the beautiful Columbia River Gorge, designated as a national scenic area with the greatest concentration of waterfalls in North America.

For more information and registration visit:
http://uubf.org

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