

**UUA Candidates Audio Forum  
UUA Headquarters  
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**Participants:**

Paul Rickter, UUA Secretary, Moderator  
Rev. Dr. Laurel Hallman  
Rev. Peter Morales

**PAUL RICKTER:** We're gathered here with the two candidates for UUA president. And we're gathered actually in the office of the president at 25 Beacon Street on the third floor, so it's sort of appropriate that Bill Sinkford sort of graciously cleared out for the afternoon and let us hold this forum in his office. So joining me here are the two candidates, Laurel Hallman and Peter Morales. I flipped a coin before the start of the forum and Peter will go first and have his opening statement first, and Laurel Hallman will follow. And at the closing Laurel will get to do the closing first.

Let me just introduce the two of them. Peter Morales is senior minister at Jefferson Unitarian Church in Golden, Colorado. He is the UUA's former director of District Services. Peter served on the UUA board as the trustee from the Mountain Desert District; he also served on the UU Ministers Association Executive Committee as the first person to carry the new anti-racism, anti-oppression multiculturalism portfolio. Before entering the ministry he worked as a newspaper journalist in Oregon. He was a Knight International Press Fellow in Peru, and is a former Fulbright lecturer in American Studies in Spain. He and Phyllis Morales have been married 41 years.

And the Reverend Dr. Laurel Hallman has been the senior minister of the First Unitarian Church of Dallas, one of our largest churches, for 22 years. Some may know her as the co-author, with Harry Schofield, of **Living by Heart** and a DVD and workbook on **Engaged Spirituality for UUs**. She has recently published **Reach Deeper**, available at [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com). Now, for opening, Peter will go first and you'll have five minutes.

**PETER MORALES:** Thank you Paul, and I thank everyone who's dialed in. Our Association is at a time of amazing possibility, and some pretty stunning challenges as well. I want to outline four key areas, and emphasize my own background and qualifications to deal with what I believe are the four key challenges that we face.

But before we do this, let me say something about the situation we're in. At one level it's a time of tremendous possibility for our faith. We have something like a quarter of a million people coming visiting us every year through our churches, people are hungry for liberal religious community and spiritual depth. And at the same time, unfortunately since merger, we have not kept up with the growth of America's population. We would need a hundred thousand more adult members to simply stay, be where we were as a portion of America back 48 years ago, and this year, for the first time in 16 years, our adult membership has actually dropped.

So the first of the great challenges before us is to grow this movement, because everything we do and want to do depends on our ability to do that. But I think we need to reframe growth and think of it not as an institutional imperative, something that we ought to do to be healthy as an institution. Instead we need to see it as a moral and religious imperative. This is the moral equivalent of feeding the hungry and housing the homeless. Because people are coming to us all the time hungry for connection and authenticity, and hungry to join hands with others who share their values. We need to do a much, much better job of engaging those people and bringing them into our communities.

I bring extensive background and practical low cost effective growth initiatives, it's been my passion throughout my ministry. I have not only led one of our fastest growing churches, but I've done things all over the country including UU University, a video that's been sent all over the country.

The second great issue that we face is the economic crisis that we're in, because it's affecting our Association the way it's affecting your congregation and all nonprofits. We've just come from budget meetings here at the UUA Board meeting in Boston. We're looking at a 15% cut in next year's budget and could very likely face cuts beyond that in the future. This is a time that demands a management discipline and background in leading and managing large complex organizations. I bring background in working in California state government, being involved in a significant reorganization and welfare program operations. I have taught public administration for the University of San Francisco. I've worked for a large media company. I bring a lot of background in working in large organizations.

The third area I would highlight is that of public witness and social action. And especially public witness, because that falls largely to the President. And one of the things that Bill Sinkford has done as our President is raise our visibility to a new level. I want that to be a foundation for moving forward and to do even more. I don't want that to be the high water mark. Again, I have before coming into the ministry, I was a newspaper editor and publisher. I am comfortable speaking out on public issues. I have done that in Colorado as part of the Colorado Interfaith Alliance. It's something that I believe is a great strength of mine, and I'm anxious to do that.

And the fourth great issue is looking into the future. We need to transform our culture and our movement. We need a new ministry for a new America. Seventy percent of Americans, 75% of Americans who are 70 and older are white. But if you look at Americans in elementary school, a small minority of them are white. We are becoming a new country. As a person who's bicultural and bilingual, I have a real passion and experience about issues of multiculturalism, and I want us to lead our movement into a multicultural future. Those are the four main issues that face us.

**RICKTER:** Thank you, Peter. And now we'll go to Laurel.

**LAUREL HALLMAN:** Thank you. I want to talk about three major pillars for my presidency, things that have helped me perform in my own formation, and I believe will be very important in the formation of our Association moving forward.

The first is engaged spirituality. We've often talked about spirituality as being one thing, and engaged action in the world as being another. And over my time in the parish and in the community I've come to believe that this is very important to carry out as a yoked understanding, so that our work in the world comes from a core of strength that we are as individuals and as communities very clear in discernment about what it is we are called to do and how we are to use our gifts and talents for the betterment of the world, for good in the world, and that will come through engaged spirituality.

I have developed, as Paul said, developed a program called "Living by Heart," which is especially for your use, because it does not take people away from the world. It is especially crafted so that you understand that while you're participating in it, it is to help you move back into the world with clarity and strength and discernment, and from your very core of your being taking that into your congregation and making your congregation also be faithfully strong.

The second core, the second pillar of my platform and covenant, is relationships. When people come into my congregation in Dallas, we ask them to sign the book which many of you do in your congregation. And we tell them by doing that, it was a deceptively simple act, that they are bringing their whole being to the community and to the faith. They are also promising that they won't leave, they will be in relationship with the people in the congregation for as long as they are either living there, or living or able. They are in relationship with each other.

Now, they may not know when they come into the congregation what that means, and perhaps only see themselves as being part of a wonderful community. But as time goes on I'm sure many of you have experienced in your congregations how deep these connections lie. They are covenanted connections in really the understanding from the old Hebrew tradition that being part of a group bonded together in relation to something much larger than themselves. So what I am calling us to do, and will call as President, is for us to take very seriously our covenants with each other, and our covenants with a larger faith, a larger history, a larger power which we embody for just a brief time during our own lifetime.

This leads me to the third principle that I carry with me into this campaign, and into the Presidency, and that is faithful stewardship. It sounds like passing the offering plate, and it's much, much, much more than that. It is understanding and knowing the history of where we have come from, claiming that history in this time, and moving it forward, passing it forward into the next generation so that in fact we will live on. The numbers which have just come out from the UUA have a drop in our census count of 74 members total, and it's worth being concerned about. It's not a huge amount, but the number that I'm paying attention to these days is the number of

children. That number has also dropped, not substantially but enough to cause me pause, because if we are faithful stewards of our tradition and our faith we are in danger, and this is, I think, a very real danger, of not passing our faith forward to live to the seventh generation beyond us. This is a very large concern. I want to be your President so that we all can practice engaged spirituality, strengthen the UUA and the churches. I want to encourage us all to be in relationship with each other, relationships of transparency and openness, and be faithful stewards of what we have been given so that we can pass it forward into the next generation.

**RICKTER:** Thank you Laurel. We'll now go into a series of questions. I've gathered questions from UUs over the last several days and I've grabbed a selection of them. There's no way to pose all of the questions that have been asked, I have too many of them. But I've grabbed a few, and you'll each have up to three minutes to respond to the question. We'll alternate and Laurel will go first, will get to respond to the first question first. So the question is, what do you consider to be the most pressing issues for the UUA today, and what do you intend to do about them?

**HALLMAN:** Well there are pressing issues certainly. The one that is at the forefront of everybody's mind is the economic crisis. This issue affects us individually. I want to focus on congregations and on the UUA. We are not sure yet, no one is sure yet where this is taking us, but we want to be prepared, we want to be frugal, we want to contain our institutions in ways that are responsible, lead them in a responsible way. And so this is a pressing issue. It's an issue that wasn't on the horizon at all when we began this campaign, but now has taken certainly a front row seat in the row of concerns. I believe that the Board and the current administration has been responsible, very responsible, in the way that they've carried this issue into day-to-day monitoring of their resources and programs. I would continue that.

I would also encourage our people to rethink their resources and what is most important to them, and perhaps this is a time that we cannot just cut but can re-evaluate who we are and where we are, and what we're doing in a new and vital way. With little time to really save all the concerns, I would only speak of one other, and that is, the question of our faith. I as president have faith in our faith; I would not commit my life and my energy to this faith if I didn't, but it's at my core, it's a very deep understanding of who we are, and who we are in the world and how we live and move and have our being in the world. And so as President I would want to model not only a faith which is effective in the world but which deepens and strengthens people's lives. I believe we are at a crossroads where we're not quite sure where our faith fits into our action and I believe that I would be one to be able to lead us both in faith and in action to be effective in our world, and to have lives that have meaning and strength.

**RICKTER:** Thank you, Laurel. Peter.

**MORALES:** Thank you, Paul. I outlined in my initial remarks, the four key issues. So let me amplify a little bit a couple of them. The first one, which again affects

everything, is our need to grow this movement, to share it with other people, to learn to shift our culture to be more open, more welcoming, more engaging. And it's again a matter of love reaching out and embracing those people who share our values and share our concerns, and want to be part of us. Practically, what do we need to do? We need to focus on congregations and partnering effectively with individual congregations. We build churches, we will build this movement one Sunday at a time, one relationship at a time. There is no magical technical bullet for this, there's no answer at 25 Beacon Street in Boston. This is a matter of learning to partner with our churches, to be good consultants with them, to come and see where they are, provide resources for them to move to the next level. If we do that well we can nurture growth, and a part of that would be to actually use the resources of our many driving churches and engage them in helping us to grow this movement.

Second one, let me amplify a little bit on the whole area of this economic crisis. We need to bring to our movement a new discipline and a new focus around evaluating the programs that we have, focusing on what is absolutely essential during this difficult time, and also maintaining a focus on those things which will enable us to thrive in the medium and long range future. So for example, we absolutely have to support the framing and mentoring of ministers, ministers who are passionate and entrepreneurial, and who are much more diverse than the ministry that we have now, to prepare ourselves to be a relevant religious force in the America that has already been born, and is the America of the future.

**RICKTER:** OK. Our second question which, Peter, will be yours. This time you'll get the first crack at this one. What is your vision for youth ministry within the denomination on local, district and national levels?

**MORALES:** Youth ministry. One of the things that, and we've just received the report, a couple reports on, pretty thick ones too, so they need a little more study, is on youth ministry. And I concur with their thrust, which is that we need to push down services again to the congregational level and local cluster levels in order to engage our youth in our religious communities. One of the things that's tragic about our movement, and really tragic about much of upper middle class America, is its failure to engage young people in a multigenerational community. Our churches are one of the very few, if not the only, multigenerational institutions left. And a healthy community includes people of all ages. So what we need to do again is provide resources and encourage and share best practices so that our congregations can build up their ministries to youth, and include them in the fabric of the life of that congregation.

That'll include things in religious education, but also all kinds of activities in the church. At the district and national level we need to provide resources and training so that people at the local level can develop the skills that they need to do a better job of engaging their youth. This is going to be tremendous challenge for us in the coming years, but it's something we can do, and something that we can learn from other cultures on. Other cultures are much better, the culture I grew up in, in south Texas in San Antonio, was a very naturally Latino culture, multigenerational culture. And

I've always been perplexed at how the churches I've been part of struggle with that much more.

**RICKTER:** Thank you, Peter. Laurel, it's your turn.

**HALLMAN:** OK. I did receive the same reports that Peter did, and we are reading them and digesting them, and seeing what the recommendations are going forward. I am especially interested in our young people, our youth, and our young adults as religious people, as moving into a time in their life when they are probably going to change more than ever in any other time of their life. They're going to examine their religious beliefs, their spiritual depth, their action in the world, their values. They need adults with them to mentor them along the way, to help along the way, within which to be in dialog. So one of the first things that I would do as President was to make sure that the people in our congregations understand their responsibility to work with our youth, not only to provide program and community and a safe place for them, but to challenge them religiously and spiritually. To help them find practices which nourish their spirit in a way that is in keeping with who they are, and help them develop a core of strength that they will need going forward after they've left our churches. I want to provide covenanted relationships with our youth and among the generations in the churches and beyond our churches. I want them to meet people who live our values or have made life choices. Because they are Unitarian Universalists they are unique and impactful in their community, and I want them to have experiences of service and faith perhaps outside of their congregation going to UUSC work camps or other kinds of programs which have them meet other youth from other congregations.

I also want them to learn about our faith, learn about the heroic actions of people that have given them the gift of the free church, because this is a unique place for them to be, and sometimes they don't realize how unique it is, because we don't tell them. I am eager to meet with our youth when they come to Boston because I know that the youth in our church in Dallas, whenever they come to Boston, come back transformed, come back with a new understanding of the history and the dynamic power of their faith. I want our churches to be places where our youth want to go, want to find when they move to another city, want to be part of the structure, want to sustain when they are adults. These are a few of my goals for our youth and young adults.

**RICKTER:** Thank you. Thank you, Laurel, you get the first shot at the next question. And the question is, knowing that money is a critical factor in what the UUA can and cannot accomplish, please describe your experience in fundraising.

**HALLMAN:** I do have experience in fundraising. Being at a church for 22 years is one of the essential places where one learns fundraising because you have to build relationships of trust with people who have the resources to support you, and to support the church, and the goals that you tried to embody. I have learned by doing and learned by training how to manage fund drives both in the congregation and

beyond. I have secured gifts for UUWF [the Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation- *ed.*], and for the Washington office [the UUA Washington Office for Advocacy and Witness – *ed.*], and for other programs which the UUA has wanted to underwrite.

I know how to be bold in asking for what is needed, and how to be a recipient of funds that is faithful, and does what she says she will do in relation to the gift that she's asked. I believe that the credibility of any person who dares to ask for the resources of another person for our faith, the credibility and authenticity of that person is what is at stake, and the relationship between the people and the people who are asking the donors, and the people who are asking. Over 30 years I have worked within and outside of churches doing fundraising, and consider it actually something that I enjoy doing. Other people often say that it's not so enjoyable, but I find it a privilege to ask people to give their resources large and small, to give of their resources to purposes which are larger than we are, and which will carry on beyond their own lives. It is a privilege and a joy, and I would look forward to doing more of it as President.

**RICKTER:** Thank you, Laurel. I think we're ready for the next question. Oh no actually, I'm sorry, Peter, you have to, you get to answer this question. I knew I would make that mistake once. OK, go ahead Peter. Tell us about fundraising.

**MORALES:** OK, thank you, Paul. I enjoy it. The key to fundraising, let me say I've been successful, my church has grown, our giving has grown, it's a very healthy church, and before that I was actually involved as a publisher of newspapers where I had to sell advertising to major accounts.

I want to shift this a little bit to talk about the long term key to fundraising in our Association is going to be learning to be far more effective with the gifts that we're given. To take money for certain purposes, for example, growing our movement and then actually using those so wisely and so efficiently that we can go back and show our generous donors the results of what that has done. Nothing succeeds in fundraising for churches and universities and other nonprofit organizations like a compelling vision and then being effective in carrying out and implementing that vision. That's really where my concentration is going to be.

I'm pleased now to have developed a relationship with some of our most major donors on the President's Council, several of them I'm happy to say have endorsed my candidacy, and they've done so because they see in me someone who has the leadership and management experience to be effective in implementing our programmatic ideas. So the long term key to our being financially healthy is to grow our movement and to be effective in those things for which we raise money.

**RICKTER:** Thank you, Peter. OK, Peter, now you're ready to get a new question. That question is on growth, what specific measures will you use to create growth in our congregations within four to eight years?

**MORALES:** There are some programmatic things and there are some cultural shifts. We know that organizations, whether they be a small church of 20 or 30, medium sized church, a large church, or the UUA, organizations do not change and move unless they have the emotional engagement of the people in that organization. We need to develop and sustain a sense of urgency around what is possible for us. I firmly believe that what is possible for us is simply breathtaking, it's exciting because people are already, we don't have to pull people in. They're coming to us every week. What we need to do is get much better, much more aware and better at engaging them, and engaging the people that we already have.

Now how does that play out programmatically? We have too often tried to create resources at headquarters and then send them out and apply them in the field in ways that are not nearly contextual enough. What a mid-size church in the Pacific Northwest needs in its given community might be quite different from a church in Georgia, a church in Texas, a church in Colorado, or a church in Maine. We need to develop the capability of our staff, and we've done some of that. To develop the capability of our staff in the field to come in as effective consultants and partners, and to also use the resources that are all around us in our different districts and areas of our thriving congregations. And have a unique solution for every single one of our congregations, and to not come in and do a workshop and then leave, but to partner over months and years with congregations to help them, coach them, bring resources that they need. That kind of thing will have a tremendous cumulative effect on our ability to grow the movement.

**RICKTER:** Thank you, Peter. Laurel, your turn to answer that question.

**HALLMAN:** I'd like to answer this question by talking about who comes to us, because if we are clear about who is coming then we'll have a better sense of what it means to grow. First of all I believe people who are coming to us are looking for connections, they're people who have perhaps moved to a new town or for a whole variety of reasons are finding that they are disconnected, and they want to be connected to their community more than in their job or in some of their other connections. So they come looking for connections, and the church has to be able to make that easy for them, make it a place where connections can be made, in simple ways, not in deep difficult probing kinds of ways, but just in the usual social ways. Then beyond that and I believe actually that we need to be much more attentive to the depth of our churches so that people will come and will stay.

More than that, people need to know that they're not crazy because they think the way they do religiously. I've seen people come into the church who weep because they thought they were crazy and they suddenly discovered there's a whole group of other people; that if they're crazier, this group is just as crazy as they are, because they have open minds and open hearts about what religion means, both to their lives and to the larger community. So it's to find not only social connections but then

connections with people who are like-minded and who are willing to be openhearted in their discussion of religion.

And then thirdly, we have people coming to us who have deep spiritual needs, and need to have a voice, to find their voice. These people will stay with us if they find that they are changing, they're growing, they're becoming deeply centered in their lives, and are challenged to move out into the world and make a difference. I believe that if we do all of these things that there won't be a question about growth, that people will know where they are, who they are, what they need to do, and why they need to do it, and will have grounded their lives in the church, and then in their work in the world.

I have people in my church who have been there 50 years, who wouldn't miss a Sunday, and I believe the reason they are there is because they've learned, they live in communities, they live in faith, they live in power, they live in the heritage of who we are, and they do it with strength and love. And that is when our church will grow.

**RICKTER:** Thank you, Laurel, you're first for the next question which is, what is the role of the UUA President in relation to the international organizations the UUA belongs to, and to the Unitarians and Universalists in other countries?

**HALLMAN:** Thank you. This has been a very interesting question in recent months because Bill Sinkford has, the current President of the UUA, has worked hard on this question, and actually the actual question that you just asked, what is our relationship and how can we sustain relationships across the continents and across the world. In recent years we've come to know new groups that consider themselves Unitarians and Universalists, and we're just discovering them and they've been around for hundreds of years. So we have a lot to learn about who is out there, and who belongs in our same faith tradition if not in the Association of Free Congregations that we have here.

I believe the President first of all is a partner with the other groups. We are not the sole, it's a little bit like our relationship, the United States with other nations. We are not the all and end all of Unitarianism in the world. We are partners with other groups, and Bill Sinkford has done an excellent job in recent years to make that point clear. We have resources, we have things to offer, and we will, and we will partner with groups that want to be with us in the faith. The creation of the office that has ambassadors, various ambassadors going to churches in other countries that are ours, is also a very good use of our resources. The President's role is to of course represent us in relationship to other faith traditions that want to be in alignment with us, and also it is to help us understand what our role is as a brother and a sister faith community with groups all across the country with different cultures, and to learn from the cultures what we need to know, and as we move forward together in a world that's now very different from a world that existed 10 or 20 or 30 years ago when some of these groups were created. I look forward to reacquainting myself with people that I've known in Japan, in Pennsylvania, in England, in other places of the world that are expressing our Unitarian faith within different cultures. I look forward

as President to reenergizing those relationships and working together with people who have common cause with us in our faith.

**RICKTER:** Thank you, Laurel. Peter, it's your turn with that question.

**MORALES:** This is an area that I'm really excited about. Our faith is inherently and intrinsically international in nature. We're open to gifts from many different traditions; we don't privilege any one background, any one culture. It's a global faith orientation that we have.

What we need to learn to do is to break out of our Yankee upper middle class cultural packaging that has so often unintentionally creates barriers to people from other cultures. I have experience in this having taught in Spain, having spent months, five months, as a consultant to newspapers in Peru. I understand the dynamics of creating a relationship which is a rich partnership with people from other backgrounds and other traditions. It's a matter of entering into that relationship with humility, and listening, coming in with the attitude that we want to be a partner. And then in those conversations with those people in other countries, and there are pockets everywhere, they're pockets all over, for example all over Latin America, of emerging small UU communities.

We need to engage them in such a way that we seek mutual partnerships heading forward, where we ask the question, "what is it that together we can create that we both want, to which we can both contribute, and which would make a very real difference." And we also have a lot to learn from these people. Again, so that spirit of partnership and humility is critical. The role of the President is to help set that tone, not only by modeling it and being in relationship with these people, but by also making it the tone of our entire association. We happen to be the largest Association of Unitarians and Universalists in the world, but we should never let that turn us into elitist or incentive kind of bullies in our relationships with other people.

**RICKTER:** Thank you, Peter. Peter, you have the first shot at the next question, which is, thinking about anti-racism, anti-oppression and multiculturalism, how will this important work be carried forward during your administration?

**MORALES:** Well, it must be carried forward because it's not only religiously the right thing to do, morally the right thing to do, but we are moving in to a future that is going to be tremendously different from America's history. So we need to learn to be effective in a multicultural, multiethnic, multiracial world. However, I think we could do this work much better; much, much better than we have.

I've been involved in this work since early on in my career in seminary. The very first sermon I gave was actually to eight people, in Spanish in San Jose, California. I was involved, as my introduction said, as the first person to carry the antiracism multicultural anti-oppression portfolio into UUA Ministers' Association, and yet, what I've seen sadly in living and being a senior minister in a congregation, is how

again programs that have been designed and developed at headquarters, have not been flexible enough or contextual enough to truly engage in our congregations the way they should be in this work, and so what we've had is a lot of effort at the central office level, and a lot of training and a lot of resources going into this, but it hasn't been as effective as it could be.

I think we need to reevaluate what we've done, again not backing off one inch on our commitment to being anti-oppressive and antiracist, but to rethink in this new America now where we're going to be more effective doing that. And as in other areas I think the key to that is going to be to tailor things to the passions and needs in real lived contexts of people. What's going to work in Seattle isn't going to work in Tucson; isn't going to work in Bangor, Maine. Those are very different kinds of places, the issues that those people face are quite different, and what we need to do is help our congregations be effective agents for change where they are.

**RICKTER:** Thank you, Peter. Laurel, it's your turn to answer that question.

**HALLMAN:** Thank you. I've been involved in antiracism work for years and years, and I have gone through many of the programs, the Jubilee one and two program, and the Early Crossroad program, and do understand what Peter is saying about our need to tailor the programs to the needs of the congregations. The congregations are in many different places and have many different needs, and that is what we have done, and I believe I have the experience to help other congregations do the same. We examine many programs from both within and outside our Association, and settled on first visions and then other programs in our adult programming, even having a film series at our church in regular intervals where families could come and watch movies that were just interesting and helpful, and have discussions on the issues that were highlighted in the films in relation to racism and poverty, and classism and all of the other things that we struggle with and try to help bring new light into the world.

In the year 2000, four of us from the UUA were invited to the Clinton White House to be part of a discussion with the President about antiracism, and projects from all over the United States were highlighted. It was a fabulous experience, and I gained a new understanding of some of the things that are going on around the country, and the struggle that we have in this country to find a new way to talk about our story together as a people, as one of many people together.

Recently we had Morris Dees come to the church and people from the Southern Poverty Law Center worked with our children and our youth, and our adults, sometimes altogether, sometimes separately, for a weekend called Embrace, and it was a highly successful weekend. We gained some new insight from Morris Dees about the projects that they're undertaking, and the kinds of things that they're doing. I believe we're coming into a new generation of programming; one possibility, one new way for us to program is for each of us to tell our story, to examine our origins and to think of how we have participated in the history that has brought us to this

place, because whether white or brown or a mixture of many different traditions, we all have a story, and hearing each other's story is important.

Finally, I will say that we found that working in community organizing was not only an effective way to do organizing, but it also helped us with our antiracism work because we were working together side by side with people from all over our city and many different classes, and accomplishing things together that we agreed needed to be accomplished. I'll take all of these experiences into the presidency and into the ongoing work which cannot stop, but will always change.

**RICKTER:** Thank you, Laurel. Next question you get first, and this is, do you believe that the UUA has responsibility to UUs who are not members of congregations?

**HALLMAN:** It's a wonderful question. Because of a disconnect, the projection that there are many, many more people who will answer that they are UUs than we are actually seeing in our pews. And this disconnect of course is a responsibility of ours. Many of those people I believe have passed through, they have been the visitors we've talked about, they've been the ones that have stayed for a while and then perhaps because they haven't been nurtured or sustained, they've left, and they'll still use the name, they'll still call us when they have a death in the family. But they will not consider themselves part of our congregation.

We certainly have a mission and a mandate to build the kind of community that will be important for them. And other people who will call themselves Unitarian Universalist because they actually know our history, but have not found a congregation that embodies the traditions that they've read about. The best way I know to say it is my colleague, Daniel Kanter, who says, in the middle of a Sunday service, "Please come back to see if we are who we say we are." We have an obligation, a moral obligation, to be who we say we are, and I believe that if people will find that that is true, that they will be much more likely to come to our congregation.

Yes, we have a deep, deep moral and religious, I would call it a mandate, to search our own hearts, search our own churches, to see why people would call themselves UU, probably in values, in faith even, and even consider themselves part of our ongoing history, and would not come into our congregations. That's a serious question that we all need to be responsible for attending to, and thinking of new ways to have them come to us. We are at a place now where technology is going to help us reach out rather than calling in, and I believe if we use this well we will reach many more people, perhaps some of those people who aren't part of our congregation.

**RICKTER:** Thank you Laurel. Peter, do you want to answer it.

**MORALES:** We have a responsibility, absolutely, absolutely. We need to draw a large, an increasingly larger circle around our faith, but we cannot be limited to

thinking about the people who are already inside. One of the leading indicators of decline in a congregation is whether it considers itself to be a close knit family. And at first blush that seems shocking, because don't we want our congregation to feel like a close knit and larger family? But in fact what it often becomes is a closed circle that is not inviting and does not let other people in. I think the fact that there are about four times as many people who consider themselves Unitarian Universalists as there are people in our congregations as members is deeply, deeply troubling, and says something about our inability to engage and include them, and is a cautionary tale for us that should grab our attention and wake us up, and help us to look beyond ourselves. Because we know that knowing these people already call themselves, but so many others are really hungry for community, and we also know that we are deeply, deeply relational beings. And that means that we only become fully human, fully sensitive, fully aware, fully religious beings in community.

Religion isn't something that one can do as a spectator or that one can do alone. It's a matter of being in relationship in a community. So our challenge, our challenge as we move forward, is to answer that call, because I feel that we are called to be far more than we are, and to engage these people who are hungry for the same things that we're hungry for in life. And when we do that effectively not only do we touch so many lives, and liberate those lives and engage them and make them richer, but we become so much more powerful a force in our communities.

**RICKTER:** Thank you, Peter. I think we have time for one last question, and, Peter, you'll get the first opportunity at this question, which is: During President Sinkford's term, many UUs have felt energized, motivated and empowered to share the good news of Unitarian Universalism. How are you going to lead our Association in such a way to harness that energy and enthusiasm?

**MORALES:** Wow, we have only begun to harness that. If we are going to be what we are capable of being, it's all about releasing the idealism and the passion and the love that's already in our congregations. Because it is there. I've seen it in every single congregation I've visited. Sometimes, however, we're not very good at tapping into that, at helping people be in touch with their deepest values and love and helping to empower them, to remove the barriers for them to act upon it. So, yeah, we need to be evangelical. I like to use the word. I taught a course once called Evangelism, co-taught it with a good friend and colleague of mine, called Evangelism and the Liberal Church. Because it means sharing good news. And anyone who has something good naturally wants to share it if it's truly good, and it gets stronger as it's shared. I want to be a spokesperson for that kind of sharing. I want to go all over the country as President, challenging our congregations and our entire movement to get outside of our sometimes clubbish nature and to really seize the moment to be a salvific and powerful force in the lives of people.

**RICKTER:** Thank you, Peter. Laurel.

**HALLMAN:** To harness the energy and enthusiasm of our people... I was thinking back on how, what are the times that I've seen that happen. It's been times -- and I carry this with me -- times when I've been in the community of hope, especially in times in our culture right now when people are discouraged and people aren't sure of what the future holds, and they come to our congregations, and they find that these are communities of hope where together, they can sing and enjoy life and be with people they love and care about. This generates energy. And that energy then goes forward.

I've found where people will leave their congregations, go out into the communities because they have something to tell another person, a friend about, that has happened to them. They're transformed by having been there. The enthusiasm and energy comes from having accomplished great things together that we can't accomplish alone. Sometimes it's a project as simple as a church that refurbished and rebuilt a steeple as a sign for everybody near and far to see that the church had been revitalized and was alive and perking along and doing great things in the community. And actually, those people actually generated more energy in the congregation than they ever dreamed was possible and also connected them to other churches in their area that they hadn't had connections with.

Enthusiasm comes when we see that we've broken through to some new understanding, some new sense of how things are in the world and who we are in that world and what we can do. I believe that the harnessing of energy and enthusiasm comes from a deepened purpose, a deepened sense of one's faith, a deepened sense of one's place, as the poet Mary Oliver says, 'our place in the family of things.' We get a sense of ourselves as part of a much larger whole. And all of that generates energy and enthusiasm, which in turn generates energy and enthusiasm. As President I certainly would bring my own energy and enthusiasm for this faith, which has transformed my life, bring it to our people, bring it to our congregations, bring it to my work, bring it to my voice in the community, bring it to everything that I do.

Finally, I think our energy and enthusiasm comes from a source that is not our own, a source that's beyond us and that's where faith abides. And our hearts are nourished and our souls are satisfied. And that, probably more than anything else sustains us, enlarges and brings us to new places.

**RICKTER:** Thank you, Laurel. We've now finished the time we have for questions. And what we'll do is give each of you three minutes as a closing. And, Laurel, you will get to go first.

**HALLMAN:** Thank you. I hope the answers today have given you a sense that I will be very involved in the nurturing and in the strengthening of our faith as President in a way that is the culmination of a lot of experience in a lot of different ways. I understand institutions and I understand them not as hindrances to the future, but in fact as the carriers of our tradition into generations to come. I am an institutionalist and I'm proud of it. And I will say that as your president I will make

sure that the institution, which is vital, life giving, healing, hope giving, will be strong and powerful for the years to come with me at the helm.

I will become a person who will model, engage spirituality, how we can come from a place of depth and have vitality in the world as we act out our values and give voice where there was no voice. I will strengthen the relationships and the covenants between and among and beyond our congregation. This is going to be vital for our vitality in the years to come.

And I will be a faithful servant, a servant leader in this time of concern for economics and concern for the health of our churches and concern for our vitality as a faith. I understand how to lead churches. I've done it in many different ways, teeny tiny, small, medium, large. I understand the difference among them and also the yearnings that are common to us all. If I am President, you can trust that the UUA will be transparent, open and faithful to its principles. I will be a faithful representative of all that we believe and can be known. There will be hope in my administration. There will be transformation in my administration. And the holy alliances we form with groups within our own association and beyond will bring us strength and power and new effectiveness as we move forward. So I ask for your vote. I ask for your faith and your trust that I can be a good leader, an effective leader, a dynamic leader, a powerful leader for our faith. I do have faith in our faith. And as President, I will make sure that it continues to be strong and vital.

**RICKTER:** Thank you, Laurel. Peter.

**MORALES:** When I came to the Jefferson Unitarian Church in Golden, Colorado, a Denver suburb, ten years ago, I told the congregation that I found the possibilities there absolutely intoxicating. It was just dizzying what was possible for us. Ten years later, that congregation is almost double the size that it was. It's gone from 400 to just under 800 members. And had our denomination done, had our movement done that, there would be like 140,000 additional Unitarian Universalists today. I would have everyone listening to this consider what you believe is truly possible in your congregation and for our movement. I believe that it is a position that that congregation in Colorado was in ten years ago. The possibilities for us are simply wonderful and intoxicating. But we are not going to realize them, just as Jefferson Unitarian Church could not realize them, by doing what we had been doing, by being the same church that we had been for the previous 20 years when we had not grown.

We had to learn to pay attention to some fundamental things about being passionate, about letting our light shine in the world, about embracing the newcomer and one another and building strength in that community. What I offer as leadership for our Association is really around a vision for possibility, a sense of what we are called to be that is bold, a passion for realizing it and a tough practicality that has been honed in decades of working effectively in organizations.

I have a track record in government, in publishing and now in church and religion of leading change, leading it responsibly, but leading it quickly and dramatically. I really believe that we can be together the religion for our time. That isn't just a slogan. It's a real possibility. The President can't do that. But together if we unleash the compassion and the idealism and the energy that we possess, we can revitalize this movement of ours. We can be something in four or eight years from now that is significantly, dramatically different from what we are today.

I ask you to join hands with me, to join hands and together, together to create that religion for our time that we all long for. I ask for your support. Thank you very much.

**RICKTER:** Thank you, Peter. And thank you, Laurel. Thank you both for the work you are doing on behalf of our association by running for President. I want to say, for people who want to know more about the election, there is information at [uua.org](http://www.uua.org) [ed - <http://www.uua.org/aboutus/governance/elections/index.shtml> ].

The election will be held at General Assembly at the end of June. And congregations who are not sending delegates to General Assembly can participate as well by sending in absentee ballots. This is the only part of our Association voting system that we allow to vote absentee. So information about voting absentee will be mailed out in a few weeks with the packet of information for GA delegates. So that information will be coming to congregations shortly, so please vote and please participate. Thank you very much.