

THE SALAAM NETWORK

ANNUAL REPORT, 2022

Since the start of COVID-19, *The Salaam Network* (TSN) has been conducting most of its activities virtually via zoom. Given below are descriptions of the 14 **PROGRAMS AND PRESENTATIONS**, sponsored by TSN in 2022:

- 1) **DISTINGUISHED GUEST LECTURE SERIES** hosted by *The Salaam Network* (via zoom) was held on January 19, 2022: **PRESENTER: REV. DR. SUSAN RITCHIE** (She has served as minister of North Unitarian Universalist Congregation in Lewis Center Ohio since 1996. Additionally, she is Director of the House of Unitarian Universalist Studies at the Methodist Theological School in Ohio, where she also teaches UU history, theology, and polity. Previously she was Associate Professor of Church History at the Starr King School for the Ministry). Rev. Ritchie made a presentation on salient aspects of her book “*Children of the Same God - The Historical Relationship Between Unitarianism, Judaism and Islam*” in which she made the groundbreaking historical argument that, long before Unitarianism and Universalism merged in the United States, Unitarianism itself was inherently multireligious. She demonstrated how Unitarians in Eastern Europe claimed a strong affinity with Jews and Muslims from the very beginning and how mutual theological underpinnings and active cooperation undergird Unitarian history but have largely disappeared from the written accounts. With clear implications for the religious identity of Christians, Jews, and Muslims as well as Unitarian Universalists, and especially for interfaith work, Rev. Ritchie’s book illuminates the intertwining histories and destinies of these traditions. **DR. MARCIA SEGAL**, *The Salaam Network* Core Member, Professor of Sociology and Dean for Research Emerita at Indiana University Southeast, responded to Rev. Ritchie’s review of Unitarian-Jewish historical relationship from her own Jewish perspective. Her presentation was titled: “*Unitarianism and Judaism: Connections Actual and Desired.*” A stimulating discussion followed the two presentations.

- 2) **MORGAN ATKINSON's** documentary film "*Statues: What Do We Stand For?*" was shown at St. Andrew United Church of Christ, as part of the Black History Month Series, on February 6, 2022. This program was offered both in-person and via zoom. **JIM AALEN** from *The Salaam Network* moderated the program. This film is about race and public art in contemporary Louisville and explores its racial culture in general and a history of local public statuary including Barney Bright's Derby Clock in the 1970s, the ill-fated Ohio River Fountain in the 1980s, and the installation of a statue of York in 2003. The central study richly narrates the heated and polarized debate regarding John B. Castleman on Horse in the Cherokee Triangle. The distinguished Louisville-based documentary filmmaker Morgan Atkinson was present at the meeting to answer questions and take part in the general discussion.

- 3) **DISTINGUISHED GUEST LECTURE SERIES** hosted by *The Salaam Network* (via zoom) on February 9, 2022: **PRESENTER: REV. JUSTIN OSTERMAN** (He served as a Unitarian Universalist Minister for 20 years. He learned Arabic and was a U. S. Army interpreter in Egypt and at Guantanamo Bay. In 2021 he founded Breaking the Surface on-line platform for equipping people to lead meaningful lives outside the framework of institutional religion. The title of his presentation was "*Reclaiming the Core of Islam: How Myth, Misunderstanding, and Disinformation Prevent Bridge Building to Peace in the 21st Century*").

- 4) **DISTINGUISHED GUEST LECTURE SERIES** hosted by *The Salaam Network* (via zoom) on March 9, 2022: **PRESENTERS: REV. TERRE BALOF** and **REV. J. MARK WORTH**. (Rev. Balof is Minister at the Unitarian Universalist Church at Lynchburg, Virginia, and is also a Member of the Sufi Ruhaniat International, Dervish Healing Order. She began her presentation with a Sufi meditation, later focusing on the contents of her sermon on "*Reflections on Islam*." Rev. Worth is Minister Emeritus of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Ellsworth, Maine, who served UU churches in Maine and Massachusetts from

1991-2017. From 1994-2012 he taught Unitarian Universalist History at Bangor Theological Seminary. In his presentation he elaborated on his sermon on “*What’s Right with Islam*”).

- 5) **DISTINGUISHED GUEST LECTURE SERIES** hosted by *The Salaam Network* (via zoom) on March 23, 2022: **PRESENTER: REV. SUMMER ALBAYATI** (She is an Arab Iraqi Muslim Unitarian Universalist Minister, serving as Congregational Life Field Staff in the Pacific Western Region of the Unitarian Universalist Association. A musician, a published author, in serving congregations, she concentrates on transformation, emphasizing that a mission-focused congregation increases vitality, membership, commitment to justice and love). Rev. Summer Albayati’s presentation was entitled “*Answering the Call: A Muslim Unitarian Universalist Minister Reflects on the Journey.*” She shared her story of growing up as a Muslim American, playing sacred Arabic Sufi rhythms, creating Islamic healing experiences for Muslims and others, and working for justice.

- 6) **DR. SALEEM SEYAL**, Distinguished Cardiologist, Islamic Scholar, acclaimed Calligrapher, Core Member of *The Salaam Network* participated in a program with **REV. BRUCE BEISNER**, Minister, All Peoples Unitarian Universalist Congregation (A. P.), Louisville, on April 3, 2022. The A.P. website stated: “Our Sunday service on April 3 will be an opportunity to go deeper into our understanding and experience of one of the world’s great religions. Many of us may be somewhat familiar with the central tenets, writings and history of Islam, but we don’t often think about how this faith is actually practiced and lived in many diverse ways by people all over our world. We will welcome Dr. Saleem Seyal who will share what Islam means to him and his family on a personal and everyday basis right here in Louisville.”

- 7) Members of the **INTERFAITH STUDY GROUP** of *The Salaam Network* and All Peoples Unitarian Universalist Congregation Church, as well as other interested

persons, were graciously invited by **REV. TERRE BALOF**, (Minister, First Unitarian Universalist Church at Lynchburg, Virginia, who is also a Member of the Sufi Ruhaniat International, Dervish Healing Order) to hear her sermon on Ramadan at her Church on April 10, 2022. It was possible to access it virtually through the website of the First Unitarian Universalist Church of Lynchburg, Virginia.

- 8) **DISTINGUISHED GUEST LECTURE SERIES** hosted by *The Salaam Network* (via zoom) was held on April 13, 2022: **PRESENTERS: REV. KRISTEN PSAKI** and **REV. DR. LUCY HITCHCOCK**. (Rev. Kristen Psaki is affiliated community minister with the Unitarian Universalist Church of Boulder in Colorado. She received her Master of Divinity from Union Theological Seminary in NYC in 2014, with a focus in Psychology and Religion and a concentration in Depth Theology, a Jungian-rooted approach to unlocking the mysteries of psyche and soul, an approach which informs her life and work as a minister and a psychedelic guide. She also holds advanced training in Mindfulness-Based Psychedelic Therapy through the Center for Medicinal Mindfulness. Trained as an end-of-life and crisis chaplain, she also specializes in Psychedelic Therapy through Death, Dying, Grief and Loss). Rev. Kristen Psaki's presentation focused on her sermon entitled "*Listen for Islam.*" (Rev. Dr. Lucy Hitchcock is a leading activist for economic and environmental justice. She serves on the Board and leads a Green New Deal task force for Unitarian Universalists for a Just Economic Community. She served thirty years of extension, new congregation, and settled ministry in Fargo and Bismarck, North Dakota, Washington County, Oregon, Seattle, Washington, Miami, Florida, and the Extension Department of the UUA in Boston. She was married from 2000-2011 to Ibrahima Seck, a Muslim, and lived for 1-2 months at a time on their farm in Djogo and with his family in Thiès, Senegal, a predominantly Islamic nation in West Africa. They share a commitment to global sustainable agriculture and remain good friends). Rev. Dr. Hitchcock was interviewed for thirty minutes and responded to questions

about her sermon entitled “*Daring to Comprehend the Attraction of Islam,*” and about her experience of being married to a devout African Muslim.

- 9) **INTERFAITH STUDY GROUP** (via zoom) meeting of *The Salaam Network*, All Peoples Unitarian Universalist Congregation Church, and Invited Guests, was held on April 27, 2022. (**DISTINGUISHED GUEST SPEAKER: REV. KATHLEEN OWENS** made a presentation on “*Embracing a Larger Truth: A Path to Deeper Wholeness.*” (She has worked for seven years as the Lead Minister of the First Unitarian Universalist Church of San Diego. She has had a long-time commitment to interfaith collaboration. She has also always emphasized the role of faith in the public square. As a person of faith, she believes that faith must be a catalyst for change - in oneself and in the larger community, with the goal of becoming more compassionate, more open-minded, and acting for and creating more justice)
- 10) **WRAP-UP SESSION** by **DR. JOSEPH BRENNAN** and **DR. RIFFAT HASSAN**: On May 11, 2022 the Special Program in the Distinguished Guest Speaker Series in which eminent Unitarian Universalist Ministers Rev. Rev. Susan Ritchie Ph.D., Rev. Mellen Kennedy Ph.D., Rev. Justin Osterman, Rev. Terre Balof, Rev. J. Mark Worth. Rev. Summer Albayati, Rev. Kristen Psaki, Rev. Lucy Hitchcock Ph.D., and Rev. Kathleen Owens spoke about Islam (January 19, 2022 - April 27, 2022) will be **WRAPPED-UP** by **DR. JOSEPH BRENNAN** and **DR. RIFFAT HASSAN** who will go through the Document entitled “*Calling Upon All Peoples UU Congregation of Louisville to Vote on May 15, 2022, in Support of Including Islam in the UU Sources of Inspiration.*” All presenters in the Special Program had been invited to take part in the deliberations.
- 11) **INTERFAITH STUDY GROUP** (via zoom) meeting of members of *The Salaam Network*, All Peoples Unitarian Universalist Congregation Church, and Invited Guests, was held on September 21, 2022: The review of *Muhammad, the*

World-Changer: An Intimate Portrait by Mohamad Jebara, began with a preliminary review of PART 1 which includes Chapter 1 (A Unique Name), Chapter 2 (The Orphan), and Chapter 3 (The Apprentice).

12) **INTERFAITH STUDY GROUP** (via zoom) meeting of members of *The Salaam Network*, All Peoples Unitarian Universalist Congregation Church, and Invited Guests, was held on October 12, 2022. There was a detailed discussion on PART I: *Roots of the Mindset* which includes Chapter 1 (A Unique Name), Chapter 2 (The Orphan), and Chapter 3 (The Apprentice).

13) **INTERFAITH STUDY GROUP** (via zoom) meeting of members of *The Salaam Network*, All Peoples Unitarian Universalist Congregation Church, and Invited Guests, was held on November 9, 2022. There was a discussion on Part II: *Forming the Mindset*: Chapter 4 (The Impresario) and Chapter 5 (The Prophet).

14) **INTERFAITH STUDY GROUP** (via zoom) meeting of members of *The Salaam Network*, All Peoples Unitarian Universalist Congregation Church, and Invited Guests, was held on December 7, 2022. There was a discussion on Part II: *Forming the Mindset* which included further discussion on Chapter 5 (The Prophet), and Chapter 6 (Boycott).

AWARDS AND RECOGNITION IN 2022

In 2022, TSN has been recognized for its excellence in quality performance and its valuable contributions toward making the Beloved Community Whole, as can be seen from the following:

The Great Non-Profits gave TSN its Top-Rated Award for 2022

The Better Business Bureau has recognized TSN as an Accredited Charity

DEVELOPMENT OF THE NEW WEBSITE

TSN's new website which was launched in 2022, has continued to grow in terms of its contents, presentation and outreach.

LIST OF DISTINGUISHED GUEST SPEAKERS

REV. DR. SUSAN RITCHIE is Director of the House of Unitarian Universalist Studies at the Methodist Theological School in Ohio.

REV. JUSTIN OSTERMAN, Unitarian Universalist Minister for 20 years, Founder of Breaking the Surface online platform for equipping people to lead meaningful lives outside the framework of institutional religion.

REV. TERRE BALOF, Minister at the Unitarian Universalist Church at Lynchburg, Virginia.

REV. J. MARK WORTH, Minister Emeritus of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Ellsworth, Maine.

REV. SUMMER ALBAYATI, Unitarian Universalist Minister, serving as Congregational Life Field Staff in the Pacific Western Region of the Unitarian Universalist Association.

REV. KRISTEN PSAKI, Community Minister with the Unitarian Universalist Church of Boulder in Colorado.

DR. LUCY HITHCOCK, Activist for economic and environmental justice; Board Member of a Green New Deal task force for Unitarian Universalists for a Just Economic Community.

REV. KATHLEEN OWENS, worked for seven years as the Lead Minister of the First Unitarian Universalist Church of San Diego.

LIST OF BOOKS REVIEWED

1. *Children of the Same God - The Historical Relationship Between Unitarianism, Judaism and Islam*, by Dr. Susan Ritchie
2. *Muhammad, the World-Changer: An Intimate Portrait*, by Mohamad Jebara

LIST OF PRESENTATIONS AND PAPERS

1. *Unitarianism and Judaism: Connections Actual and Desired*, by Dr. Marcia Segal
2. *“Reclaiming the Core of Islam: How Myth, Misunderstanding, and Disinformation Prevent Bridge Building to Peace in the 21st Century*, by Rev. Justin Osterman
3. *Reflections on Islam*, by Rev. Terre Balof
4. *What’s Right with Islam*, by Rev. J. Mark Worth
5. *Answering the Call: A Muslim Unitarian Universalist Minister Reflects on the Journey*, by Rev. Summer Albayati
6. *Listen for Islam*, by Rev. Kristen Psaki
7. *Daring to Comprehend the Attraction of Islam*, by Rev. Dr. Lucy Hitchcock
8. *Embracing a Larger Truth: A Path to Deeper Wholeness*, by Rev. Kathleen Owens

MOVIE REVIEWED

“Statues: What Do We Stand For?” (2021), produced by Morgan Atkinson