

**The Eulogy for Edwin "Ed" Lane  
"Director's Cut"**

Rev. Catie Scudera

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First Parish in Needham

When I bring Ed to my mind's eye, there are three moments I remember most clearly:

I remember laughing with Ed and two other retired ministers in our church about sermon-writing, that today I can Google everything, and back then they really left their work at the church when they went home at night, for there was no email and parishioners only called home during dire emergencies. I remember our camaraderie.

I remember chatting with Ed as we drove to and from his peer Rev. Carl Scovel's sixtieth ordination anniversary event, for they were both ordained the same year and Ed had many thoughts on sixty years in the ministry. I remember being in awe of his commitment to our faith, his persistence in matters of justice, and his lack of fear of change.

And, I remember sitting next to Ed here on the chancel steps as he delivered one of his favorite poems from English writer A.A. Milne to the assembled children of our church as a Time for All Ages:

"Halfway up the stairs  
Isn't up  
And it isn't down.  
It isn't in the nursery,  
It isn't in town.  
And all sorts of funny thoughts  
Run round my head.  
It isn't really  
Anywhere!  
It's somewhere else  
Instead!"

I remember him asking the children if they had a special place to think, what sorts of things they thought about, telling them how he had been thinking and learning in such a quiet way his whole life since he was young. I remember that Ed loved children, and literature, and thoughtful discussion, and always wanted to nurture Unitarian Universalists of all ages.

Edwin Arthur Lane was born at home on the outskirts of the tiny town of Kingman, Ohio, on June 19, 1928, to somewhat surprised parents Lester Lane and Bertha Lewis Lane, who went by her middle name, Vera. Vera and Lester were born into farming communities in rural Ohio in the late 1800's, marrying in 1915. Uniquely, they were *both* graduates from Ohio State University — Lester in agriculture and Vera in home ec. Their one-hundred-seventy-acre pig farm was adjacent to one relative's farm and two miles away from another relative's farm, so they could share equipment like combines, crowbars, and a telephone line. The American electric grid hadn't been built up yet, and much farming and farm living was still done "the primitive way," as Ed described it.

Ed was the youngest of Lester and Vera's four children: Florence, Wanda, and Howard were much older than he, by eleven, nine, and seven years, respectively. All very evenly spaced before little Eddie came on the scene, unplanned after the difficult birth of the very large Howard, who weighed in at twelve pounds.

Perhaps due to the circumstances of his birth, Ed was later inspired to say at a Ferry Beach conference, "The universe into which we were born, this planet on which we walk, are unearned gifts... Life itself is a gift of grace. We didn't 'earn' the right to be born. We didn't have to ask to be born. We didn't have to do anything about it. Birth came to us as a gift... If you would appreciate grace, look for it in ordinary places."

With so many much older siblings, Ed would joke that he had five parents growing up, but the kids had fun together, too: Howard, desperate for a little brother as playmate, and Wanda, reading to him, making up stories for him, and sometimes with Florence even decorating Ed's face with their big girl makeup. Their mother Vera struggled physically after Howard's birth, and the family employed a black helper named Daisy Nash, who stayed in the elder Lanes' employ until they were admitted into nursing care. Daisy and Ed loved each other, and early on Ed recognized the unfairness that Daisy could not live wherever she wanted and have the same opportunities he did for education and work.

Though Ed could remember Christmases when he and his siblings only received oranges as stocking gifts, the Lanes weren't hit as hard as others during the Great Depression. Pork was a relatively profitable product, and everyone helped on the farm with the animals, garden, hay, and the cabbage and corn crops; Ed helped to gather eggs and bottle-feed orphaned lambs and piglets, and, because he was not allergic to poison ivy, was typically given the most-hated job of clearing weeds from the fence rows. The family was also helped when his father successfully applied for the director position of the local branch of the federal land bank, one of President Roosevelt's

New Deal programs; Ed remembered this job and this program saved his family farm and many others... Not that Lester Lane ever liked FDR; he was an anti-union Republican. Ed would often argue politics with his father, but Lester wouldn't budge.

Though Ed spent much of his time with his siblings and local cousins, many of Ed's memories from that time were about the scores of animals on his farm and in the wilds nearby. Ed's favorites were: first, his setter-shepherd mix named "Pooch," with whom he would skillfully "rat" the house and barn, but who he would leave at home when he played "hide and seek" with the local wild foxes in the wintertime; second, a pigeon with temporarily-clipped wings called "Pidge" who eventually grew back his freedom; and, third, his father's quick and long-lived buggy horse, Major Grady, on whom Ed once failed to properly secure his saddle and thus ended up riding upside down below Mage's belly for a few strides. Ed was an animal-lover even back then, and had mixed feelings about raising prize-winning pigs, operating on animals without any anesthesia, and animal agriculture more broadly. In an early sign of spiritual heresy, Ed never quite understood why the Bible was so hard on pigs, and never quite forgave Jesus for casting a Legion of demons into a large herd of swine. He felt fortunate they did not slaughter the pigs on his parents' property. But, Ed was also a skilled hunter with the family rifles and shotguns, killing farm pests like sparrows and bringing home rabbits, squirrels, and pheasants to eat. This was well before his activism for urban gun control.

The Lanes attended a small Methodist church, where a preacher would only come half of the Sundays but where there was always Sunday School for all ages. Ed's parents provided him with crayons and comforting hands so he could make it through the occasional worship services. Ed referred to his parents as "ethical Christians" who cared more about Jesus's teaching than simply who (or what) he was. Ed became very involved in the Methodist Youth Fellowship, including some early activism circulating a petition at a 1945 district meeting in opposition to giving veto power to the United Nation's Security Council's five permanent members; Ed regretted that didn't work.

Ed attended the K-12 Kingman School. Wanda and Vera had done such a good job reading to him that Ed was skipped ahead from first to second grade, which didn't suit him well because he was always physically smaller and less mature than his classmates, though he was certainly just as smart. His most cherished school memory was when he was selected to play Tom Sawyer in the seventh grade operetta, sparking a lifelong involvement and interest in theater.

In his high school years, Ed played on all the sports teams, including an integrated basketball team, for there weren't enough black students in this part of rural Ohio for there to be a separate school. He remembered his commitment to Civil Rights formed

early, observing racist behavior toward his black teammates — and sticking up for them. Ed was best playing catcher in baseball, and was scouted by the St. Louis Cardinals; but, he wasn't quite good enough. Ed graduated in 1945, not yet seventeen years old, as valedictorian out of his class of eight students.

Ed took a job at the Dayton Frigidaire factory so he could earn money for college. In an interview years later, Ed reported he had pride in a job well done there, given the precision necessary on the assembly line. Not only did Ed successfully save up for college tuition, he also had the good fortune of regularly seeing a lovely woman from seven miles down the road, Ann Mitchner, who was working as a telephone operator. Beginning in the summer of 1946, Ed and Ann often found themselves outside the same grocery store as their separate carpool companions went shopping on the way home. Though it took some time to convince Ann, they dated while they both attended college, Ed at Wilmington and Ann at Ohio's Miami University, despite her father's disinterest in paying for a girl to go to school. As Ed was not to become a pro baseball player, he entered college as a pre-law student with an interest in politics, and his love of theater deepened as he acted in seven plays and was awarded "actor of the year" as a senior... But a different call would draw him in...

While in college, Ed became a circuit-riding student minister of three rural churches, typically preaching on social concerns; Ann would help him edit his sermons on the drive between worship services. When Ed graduated in 1951, the pair were married and moved to New Jersey so Ed could attend seminary, hoping to become a religious journalist or minister of social justice. Their first son, Michael, was born out there in 1953.

While at the Methodist Drew University, Ed realized, in his own words, that he "was a Methodist only by accident of birth." Michael described Ed's spiritual departure from Methodism as one part of his rebellion from Ohio: "he went out east, left his religion, and grew a beard." Ed's spiritual life began to be shaped not as much by the Bible and the Wesleys, but by a different set of theologians, authors, and poets: Dostoevsky, Eliot, Emerson, Keating, Melville, Sölle, Sexton, Thoreau, Tillich... Nobel Peace Prize theologian and humanitarian Albert Schweitzer gave Ed language for his ethical foundations and commitment with his "Reverence for Life."

Schweitzer wrote, "Ethics consist in my experiencing the compulsion to show to all will-to-live the same reverence as I do my own. [People are] truly ethical only when [they] obey the compulsion to help all life which [they are] able to assist, and shrinks from injuring anything that lives. If I save an insect from a puddle, life has devoted itself to life, and the division of life against itself has ended. Whenever my life devotes itself in any way to life, my finite will-to-live experiences union with the infinite will in

which all life is one." Ed's family members all report that Ed took Schweitzer to heart, often "Schweitzer-ing" spiders and bees from their home back into the great outdoors... Ticks and mosquitoes, however, remained subject to the death penalty.

This was a period of serious spiritual crisis for Ed, as he was drawn to ministry but had no denomination to serve. By some providence, Ed took a part-time job at Proctor & Gamble down the street from the Unitarian church in Summit, New Jersey, where Rev. Jacob Trapp was minister. Ed had never heard of Unitarianism before that time, and found it was exactly what he was looking for. He was blessed to hear Unitarian minister Rev. W. Rupert Holloway's *The Sacrament of the Shared Life* at his very first service, encapsulating his belief of why and what for people gather for worship. Jake Trapp immediately saw Ed's potential, and served as his mentor in Unitarian ministry until Trapp's death in 1992.

At first, Ed was rebuffed by the American Unitarian Association's credentialing director, so he continued to pursue a career in religious journalism. He secured an editorship at *Church Management*, based out of Cleveland; the family moved there in 1955, the same year Ed and Ann's second son, John, was born. However, because of Ed's controversial Unitarian affiliation, he had to leave *Church Management*, and then he lost the editor position of the Unitarian *Christian Register* to a different applicant... And, so, Ed found himself ordained and going into parish ministry in May 1957. And, thank God for that, for Ed was well-loved as a minister and he loved to serve as one.

Ed's first church was in Winchendon, Massachusetts, a small congregation near the border of New Hampshire. The family could see Mount Monadnock from their home on clear days. Ed got involved immediately in denominational affairs. He began attending General Assembly annually, as well as UU Ministers Association events nationally and locally, which he kept up until his retirement. Ed and Ann would travel to General Assembly together, dropping Michael and John off with grandparents in Ohio on the way. Ed also joined the prestigious Greenfield Group, a Unitarian ministers study group founded by the great twentieth-century Unitarian/Universalist Rev. James Luther Adams; Ed remained active in the group for over thirty years.

Ed recalled being quite happy at that little church, before a mistake led him elsewhere: by accident, members of the search team from Cherry Hill, New Jersey, attended a service in Winchendon thinking that Ed was in search for a new congregation, which he was not. Regardless, it turned out he was the best match for the South Jersey Fellowship, and he left Winchendon in 1958.

The Lanes moved to Cherry Hill, where Ed became the first called minister of that church; it had only been founded as a lay-led Unitarian fellowship two years prior as

part of a popular nationwide church-plant effort. When Ed arrived, there were ninety-nine members worshipping in a local community center... When Ed left nine years later, there were over 400 members with ownership of twelve acres of land and four buildings. Their congregational history reports that under Ed's leadership, the "church became known in the area for its adult education program, lecture series, dramatic productions, musical programs, an annual art exhibit... [and] children's education."

It was a fascinating time to be a Unitarian, not just because of the Fellowship Movement, but because we were on the cusp of consolidation with the Universalist Church of America; votes were taken on the matter in 1959, 1960, and 1961. Ed was initially skeptical of the merger, but his mentor Jacob Trapp won over his vote and in retrospect Ed knew it was the right choice for the denominations. He had a soft spot for the consolidation hymn, *As Tranquil Streams*, ever since.

Ed's denominational service expanded while at Cherry Hill. During that time, he chaired the editorial board of the *Register Leader* (a predecessor to the *UU World*), served as a Ministerial Consultant to the UU Service Committee, and began both a three-year term on the Ministerial Fellowship Committee and a ten-year term on the Board of our denominational publishing house, Beacon Press. Ed was also honored with the denominational Skinner Award for the "most significant sermon of social concern" with a sermon on gun control in 1967. As a professionally ethical person, Ed was appointed by New Jersey Governor Robert Meyner to a commission "to study forensic diagnostic services in New Jersey agencies and institutions," and then was appointed to the Board of Managers of the New Jersey Diagnostic Center.

Early on in Cherry Hill, Ed became acquainted with a lapsing Presbyterian minister, Rev. James Reeb. Jim Reeb and Ed became friends, and Ed helped connect Jim with Rev. Duncan Howlett, minister of All Souls in Washington, D.C., where Jim took his first Unitarian pastorate in 1959. As many know, Jim was murdered by white supremacists after the second attempt of a Selma-to-Montgomery Civil Rights march. In March 1965, Ed took part in the third and final Selma march, both in support of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s vision of a world without racism, militarism, or poverty, and in memory of his friend Jim. Ann wept when Ed left for Alabama, fearing he'd face the same fate as Jim. Ed remembered the local Alabama officers behind him in a line of other white clergy members, ominously whacking their billy clubs against their hands. Ed did return home safely to a relieved family and a proud church.

Ed's family life was peaceful and joyful during the Cherry Hill years. Ann was at home with Michael and John, and she often volunteered in libraries and at Ed's churches, and Ed's church office was at their home, too. Both boys were strongly encouraged to

be readers, like their parents. Michael remembers it was not uncommon to find the family of four in a room together, silently reading their separate books and then discussing them. The family would also often play bridge and hearts together and watch baseball games; Ed's love for football and the New England Patriots was a later life development. They lived close to Atlantic City and would travel there to beach comb for pebbles and shells in the early mornings. The Lanes always had cats, often including mothers and their kittens; Ed would have cats as pets his whole life long.

Ed taught both his sons to play chess, though Ed struggled to accept it when Michael became such an accomplished player that he'd beat Ed more often than he'd lose. Ed was more comfortable when John started acing him at table tennis, perhaps because that was a game of physical instead of mental prowess. Ed also shared his love of woodworking with his sons, and John remembers Ed's rare temper most often directed at wood or tools. Despite some bursts of frustration, in an interview once, Ed said he "prefer[red] the hand tools" for woodworking, because with power tools "technology makes the groove, not me... being primitive means it is all me. By my hand, it is only me at work." Ed appreciated the personal challenge to make something beautiful and useful.

Summer vacations were always spent with at least with some time visiting family in Ohio; on the way to and from, they would often visit Shaker museums and colonial homes — as Ed loved handmade furniture and simple living — and they'd go to caves and caverns, as that was John's great childhood love. Michael and John both remember fossil hunting with their father in Ohio rivers, finding small geodes and once even a beautifully preserved trilobite fossil.

In 1967 at the farewell dinner from Cherry Hill for Ed and his family, the chair of his search committee remarked that "when Ed Lane was called to this church... he was young and inexperienced. I feel sure he had never even met Satan at that time. Our fledging Fellowship was also young and inexperienced, and Ed and the Fellowship made a good match because we both had plenty of youthful exuberance, high hopes, big plans, and a bit of youthful idealism." Ed is fondly remembered at that congregation, returning to Cherry Hill in the spring of 2016 for their sixtieth anniversary celebration.

In 1967, Ed became the third settled minister of the Unitarian Church in Westport, Connecticut, which had grown to 600 members from only a dozen lay people in 1949. The congregation's membership stayed steady during Ed's years, though during his time they founded a singles group that unbelievably boasted over four-thousand members. Ed's years in Westport were quite creative. There were many artists and musicians in this congregation, so Ed's theater background merged with his

ministerial call as he and the congregation developed dramatic worship, perfecting the art of "chancel drama." Ed once sent a group from Westport to General Assembly to perform a musical written by a member. Ed once wrote that in the "nature" of "liberal churches," our shared worship offers "the center out of which all the rest evolves." Worship and preaching were always the heart of his ministry.

In Westport, one of the local artists Ed pastored was the actor Paul Newman, who lived near the Westport church and would occasionally attend. Stories about Paul made Ed a hit with women members of future ministerial search committees. Ed also began serving on the denominational Religious Arts Guild Board and briefly chaired the Stauffer Committee, a local organization that gave grants totaling up to \$80,000 a year to Westport youth projects.

Ed still had time to spend with his wife and children, as Westport had a parsonage on the church grounds; unlike many of the fathers in town, who would take the train to New York City very early in the morning and not be seen until dinner, Ed was present. (Though, to have committee meetings, Ed would sometimes have to hop the morning commuter train with church members, and then take the train back solo.) The family would often go hiking together; John remembers when they returned to Mount Monadnock after many years, they reached the top of the mountain and (supposedly) there was no water available — only a Kool-Aid stand. Ed noticed the staff fetched new water too quickly to be bringing it from the bottom of the mountain, and eventually found the spring from whence the Kool-Aid was made, securing cool fresh water for his boys. The Lanes also had a special summer in Birmingham, England, where in 1969 Ed served as a summer exchange pastor. Michael staged some rebellion during these years, refusing to sign the membership book of the church, not getting into politics because Ed was, and various other common 1960's teenaged antics. In contrast, John was happy to be driven by Ed and Ann in their VW microbus full of other young teens to the various protests, such as against the Vietnam War and for women's rights and abortion access; Ed would often speak at such events. Ed was always concerned and involved in social issues throughout his life, including environmental justice, prison reform, and marriage equality.

And, speaking of Vietnam: it was while Ed was chair of the Beacon Press Board that the classified Pentagon Papers were edited and published in 1971, detailing government secrets about the Vietnam War. Thirty-some other publishing houses had turned down Alaskan Senator Mike Gravel, but, as chair, Ed pushed Beacon Press to do the right thing and bring the truth to light. Ed considered this among the most important contributions he made in his life. The government subsequently sent agents to harass Beacon Press employees, subpoenaed denominational bank statements,

demanded records of all the denomination's members, tapped Ed's office phone, and sued the Unitarian Universalist Association which ended up paying nearly \$60,000 in legal fees; not to mention that the Pentagon Papers did not make for a profitable book. Without the financial and moral support of thousands of Unitarian Universalists across the country and a very large donation from the Shelter Rock congregation's Veatch Fund, Beacon Press and the UUA might have been bankrupted for their courage. It was only the outbreak of the Watergate scandal that took the FBI's eye off of Ed and Beacon Press.

The end of Ed's time at Westport was much harder than the beginning; it was an intense time of loss. Both of Ed's parents died within six months of each other in 1975, not long after Michael and John had both left for college. With the boys out of the house, Ann decided to pursue a Master's in Library Science. She had only just begun taking courses when she was diagnosed with colon cancer; Ann died of the disease at age 50 in January 1977, after nearly 26 years of marriage. It was an enormous loss for Ed and their sons, perhaps particularly because Michael and John were "launched" in the world and physically far from Westport. The relationship between father and sons became more distant, with geographic separation and without Ann to pull them back together. Ed was alone nearly for the first time in his life.

And, things kept getting worse. As a widower, Ed fell into a relationship with one of his congregants — Alice Bartow, a divorced mother of three teenagers. Today, such relationships between ministers and parishioners are highly discouraged, as they can cause fractures in the church community. Certain board members of the Westport church did find this relationship controversial, and had begun to tire of Ed's financially-questionable practice of sometimes lending church space free of charge to worthy causes — haven't we heard of that disagreement before, and won't we again? The Board asked for Ed's resignation, sparking outrage from the congregation at large. The church became embroiled in conflict over Ed's ministry, which he knew was unhealthy; so, shortly after he and Alice were married in 1978, Ed left the Westport church for First Parish in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Despite this tumultuous departure, Ed retained fond memories of Westport and was invited back for anniversary celebrations.

There was much Ed enjoyed about his years in Cambridge. He began a thriving ministry to those hungry and homeless; recruited the Ware Lecture speaker when General Assembly came to Boston; served undergraduates through the Harvard-Radcliffe United Ministry; and, supervised ten student ministers, as had become his practice. Alice had enrolled at Harvard Divinity School to become a minister herself, and Ed enjoyed many classes there, Harvard library privileges, and the daily morning

prayer service at Harvard's Memorial Chapel. In 1984, his son Michael had moved back to Ohio and married his wife Gerilyn, bringing two grandchildren to Ed. Ed restarted annual pilgrimages home to Ohio to see Michael and other relatives during these years. Ed also continued denominational service on the board of Unitarian Universalist Advance (which promoted UU scholarship), and community service on Mt. Auburn Hospital's Human Subjects Committee (reviewing all experimental drugs and procedures in the hospital) and on the Board of Educational Opportunities of Greater Boston (promoting community adult education).

However, the move to Cambridge did not fix Ed's deep mourning for Ann, nor his unsteady relationship with his new wife Alice. They agreed to separate in 1985, and legally divorced in 1987. And, the ministry at First Parish was hard. Ed described congregation as "complex," with four major "satellite" organizations: the Cambridge Forum; a weekly radio broadcast; a coffee house; and, a program sponsoring free social work services for the elderly. Furthermore, after a decade of innovative and creative worship leadership in Westport, Ed found it difficult to pastor a congregation that, he was told while candidating, was trying to get out of the eighteenth century. And, the church was still in love with its former minister, who had the unfortunate habit of pushing Ed to allow him to preach and officiate rites of passage regularly. When Ed left Cambridge, he did receive the compliment that he had helped to bring the church into the twentieth-century, but he described himself as experiencing "burnout" for the first time in his ministry.

However, Ed experienced two great graces, one professional and one personal. First, he was blessed to spend a year as interim minister at Bellingham Unitarian Fellowship in Washington state; his time with this congregation revitalized his call to ministry. Second, he began a new relationship with Helen Munsinger, a laboratory supervisor at Dana-Farber, mother of three grown boys, and widow of Rev. John Baker, one of Ed's colleagues who was serving the First Parish in Needham at the time of his death. Helen was just beginning to try dating again, and Ed was quite lucky that she called. They dated long distance during his year in Bellingham, flying back and forth at least once a month for a whole week at a time; for a year, this was adventurous and not so burdensome on their relationship. Ed and Helen were a strong match and developed a deep love for one another; Helen describes them as a balance for one another, she keeping him involved and he keeping her from "going overboard."

In 1988, Ed and Helen got married. Ed moved back east into Helen's woodsy Wellesley home, and began to serve his final congregation, First Parish in Waltham. Helen recalls that the years at Waltham were the happiest of Ed's ministry, with lots of love between congregation and minister. Ed felt that the work there was very strong, as he strengthened the church's centuries' old foundations. Because he lived in

Wellesley but still wanted to *be* in Waltham, Ed got very involved in local politics and social service, such as chairing public meetings on difficult political topics with the League of Women Voters and supporting the town's Bristol Lodge Shelters. His son John would marry Mira Pospisil in 1994, and would make Ed a grandfather again with their daughters Libuška in 1995 and Leonora in 2000.

Ed neared his retirement years with a lengthy resume, which I have been privy to study. Even Ed summarized his extensive denominational service with the line "chair and/or member of numerous district and area council boards, by-law committees, UUMA committees, etc." He added that he was "member, often Chair, of many community organizations including: Planned Parenthood and [its] Ministerial Advisory Board; United World Federalists; Sane Nuclear Policy Committee; Common Cause; Human Relations Committees and Councils; Friends of the Library; Morrow Association on Correction; [the] American Civil Liberties Union; [and the] World Affairs Center." Ed also presented many workshops at General Assembly, Star Island, and Ferry Beach over his years in the ministry.

Ed served First Parish in Waltham until his retirement in 1996 at age sixty-eight; by then, Ed didn't feel he had the stamina for ministry any longer. The congregation honored Ed as their Minister Emeritus, and he visited the congregation regularly to preach (always in close consultation with their current pastor, as he did not want to repeat the errors of his predecessor in Cambridge). Ed last preached there in May of this year, and while sharing his practice of Schweitzer-ing bugs, bees suddenly arrived through the door of the sanctuary and needed to be Schweitzer-ed out; a bit of unplanned "chancel drama."

This May, Ed passed his sixtieth ordination anniversary, an impressive feat even among his beloved colleagues in the retired ministers organization. In his last blog post for First Parish in Needham, he described what he felt were the biggest changes in that time: the merger; different technologies (he used to literally cut and paste his sermons between his two side-by-side IBM Selectrics); and, women in ordained leadership (particularly their influence on relational instead of hierarchal power). He told me he has also been delighted to see more ministers of color and the acceptance of LGBTQ people.

Ed did joke in his 1985 spiritual odyssey for the Mass Bay District ministers that, "the trials and tests [Odysseus] encountered seem perilously close to those of my odyssey in ministry: the lotus-eaters who took the form of pot-smokers in [Liberal Religious Youth]; Cyclops who managed to be elected Chairman of the Board... ('Chairman' has not been rendered gender-inclusive because all the Cyclops[es] I happen to have encountered have been male. But let me state for the record and for gender

inclusiveness, that Cyclop[es] can be female as well as male.); there have been a few demons along the way, sirens and other distractions, and occasional descent into Hades.” But, everyone knew that Ed loved his life as a minister, trials and all.

Ed’s retirement years with Helen were a pleasure. They traveled to Australia, New Zealand, Spain, Portugal, and Hawaii. One of Ed’s favorite Hawaiian adventures was visiting the Kewalo Basin Marine Mammal Lab, learning hand signs to communicate with the dolphins. Together, the pair also participated in nine international bicycle trips, seeing Italy, Austria, Germany, Denmark, Sweden, England, Prince Edward Island, France, and the Netherlands. They loved seeing the world at the pace of a bicycle, and it was an added joy when they traveled to Europe to visit John’s family in the Netherlands. Ed would also see John and his family around Christmas when the Pospisil-Lanes made their annual pilgrimage to visit all four New England-based grandparents. Ed was invested in the short visits he’d have with his granddaughters, captivated by the stories they would write and illustrate together; falling asleep in front of movies; climbing up the ladder to Ed’s home office; and baking together, particularly cheese pennies.

Ed and Helen went back and forth across the United States a great deal too, visiting national parks on the way to and from Helen’s cabin in California and seeing Ed’s son and other relatives in Ohio. Michael recalls after the birth of Ed’s great-great-granddaughter Poppy, their 2016 Father’s Day celebration was an in-gathering of five generations, with four generations of fathers! As Ed had with Ann and with Alice, he had pets with Helen, including Marco, a feline Christmas gift from Helen in 2009.

They traveled a lot, but Ed and Helen’s spiritual and social home was at First Parish in Needham. Ed loved all of Helen’s old friends at First Parish, making them his own. They’d go to the opera, movies, and plays with other church members, and Ed even went to Africa twice with his buddy Ron Shepherd and Habitat for Humanity. Ed and Helen hosted scores upon scores of parties, for which Ed was always the head chef; his cooking and baking made regular and profitable appearances on the church’s auction item lists. Though Ed claimed he did not want to be on any committees in his retirement, he could not stay away. Ed served on the Membership Committee, Intern Committee, Small Group Ministry, and Continuing Ed Committee (through which he regularly presented Lyceum lectures and workshops, sometimes in partnership with Helen). Ed was known as a “news junkie,” and was a foundational member of the congregation’s News Group. He also had several letters-to-the-editors published in *The New York Times* and *The Boston Globe*. Ed and Helen served First Parish in many ways — including sometimes offering temporary lodging to fellow church members and grown children — and the church served them in return, comforting them through the deaths of all three of Ed’s older siblings and one of Helen’s sons.

As Ed and Helen moved into their 80's and weathered many painful deaths of family members and friends, they promised each other this: that they would trust one another to choose the time when they would die, allowing "the last" bad illness to take them instead of fighting off the inevitability of death. They would support each other in having a "good death."

Though in June he had just turned 89 years old, Ed seemed in quite good health from the outside. But, while he was visiting relatives in Ohio, he experienced a GI bleed. Ed faced the choice of hospitalization and likely weeks of physical therapy in Ohio, possibly followed by more surgery down the road... Or, letting go. I remember speaking with Ed on the phone about this from Ragusa, Sicily. He told me he just didn't want to bother with all that, and planned to go on hospice care and stop eating. Even though I wanted to respect his wishes and understood he had lived a good life, I remember saying to him, "Oh, Ed, Ohio can't be *that* bad." I also chastised him for leaving Helen with *his* cat and told him in no uncertain terms how much he would be missed by me and by our church.

For a couple weeks, Ed kept reading the news, enjoying visits and video calls from his family, and receiving many cards and flowers from friends. On July 19, Ed Lane died under hospice care, with as little pain and as much cognizance as he could have hoped for. He was survived by his wife of nearly twenty-nine years, Helen; his sons, Michael and John, and their wives, Gerilyn and Mira; his step-sons, Douglas and David, and their wives, Monica and Mary; many grandchildren and great-grandchildren; one great-great-grandchild; and, one cat.

Personally, I'm devastated, even angry, I won't get to offer Ed his Doctorate of Durability for his ninetieth birthday, won't get to preach with him this spring on the anniversary of Dr. King's death, won't receive his kind nudges of compliments and concerns through email, won't receive my annual Christmas gift of cheese pennies from him with a note written on that paper with the funny caricature of Ed's face.

Despite Mary Oliver's reminder, that we must

"love what is mortal;  
hold it

against [our] bones knowing  
[our] own life depends on it;  
and, when the time comes to let it go,  
to let it go."

... Despite this reminder, Ed's absence is palpable in this church that loved him and who he loved. The first year without a loved one is always so, so hard.

And, to ensure the congregation knew how much he loved them, Ed dictated these words to First Parish in Needham in his dying days:

Ed said,

"When I married Helen in 1988, I became part of a whole church full of friends even though I was taking her away for my nine-year ministry in Waltham. When I retired in 1996, I became a member of the church. As friends and fellow church members, you have been the center of my life for these many years. Words cannot express my deep gratitude for all you have meant to me over these last twenty-eight years at the age of 89. I am ready and happy to let my life come to a close. What you accomplished with John Buehrens when First Parish was in a very difficult time, had had several very difficult years... With John's help, you rebuilt First Parish as a church organization as well as a physical building. When John left, we moved through a very smooth transition with the two-year interim minister Katie Lee Crane. And I too see a wonderful ministry with Catie Scudera in which you are continuing to thrive and be a healthy, exciting congregation. What you accomplished during John Buehrens's ten-year ministry and now with Rev. Catie's wonderful ministry leaves me so assured of the future of First Parish and its continuation in your lives. I want all of you as that church family to continue. I wish I could be a part of it. My love to all of you, as you continue your good works in our wonderful church. My blessings on all of you."

Ed was a minister to the end.

Ed knew that his life and his death contained both endings and beginnings all at once, as T.S. Eliot wrote. He expected that the vision of a global compassionate and caring world would not be realized in his life — knew that particularly this summer as he continued to read his newspapers and magazines while in hospice — but he hoped perhaps would be completed during one of our lives.

Ed once sent me a document he called his "death philosophy." One of the quotes therein was from nineteenth-century Irish critic and writer George Bernard Shaw, saying "I am of the opinion that my life belongs to the whole community, and as long as I live, it is my privilege to do for it whatever I can. I want to be thoroughly used up when I die, for the harder I work, the more I live. I rejoice in life for its own sake. Life is no brief candle for me. It is a sort of splendid torch which I have got hold of for a

moment, and I want to make it burn as brightly as possible before handing it on to future generations.”

Ed burned brightly in his communities, both secular and Unitarian Universalist, and his candle was burned down to the end before it went out. We miss him so.

So what shall we do? The poet Mary Oliver asks us in another poem,

“Doesn’t everything die at last, and too soon?  
Tell me, what is it you plan to do  
with your one wild and precious life?”

What shall we do, now that Ed has died?

May we pick up the splendid torch Ed left for us and carry it forward. Blessed be, and amen.