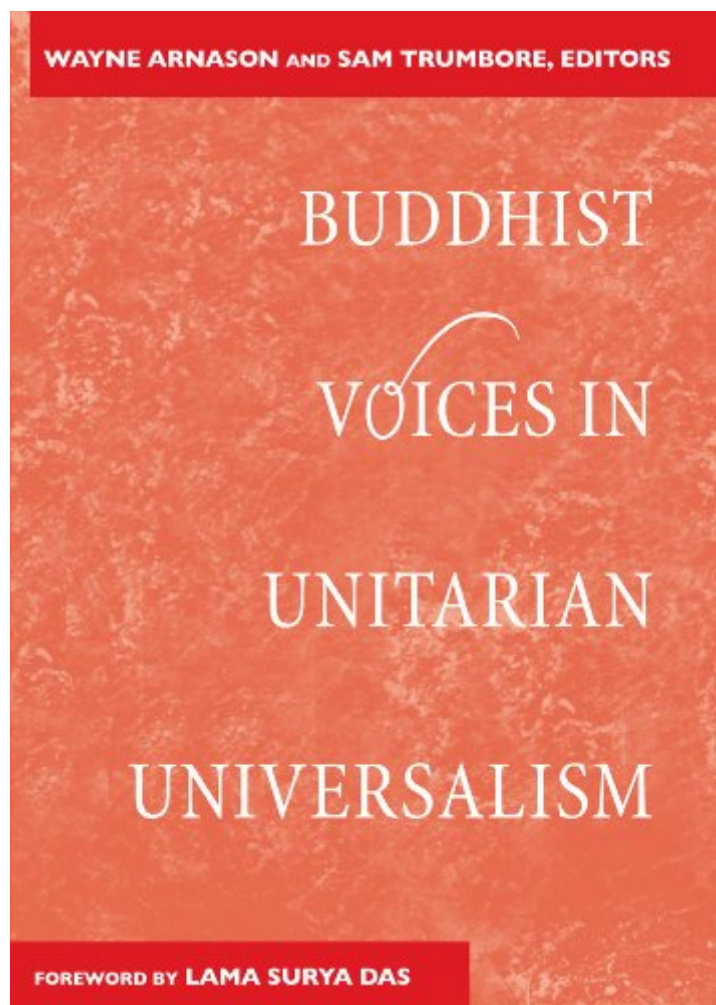


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# Buddhist Voices In Unitarian Universalism



## Synopsis

"When two distinctive and rich spiritual traditions become intimately interwoven, the unfolding dance deserves documentation. Buddhist Voices in Unitarian Universalism offers us an engaging mix of history, personal stories, reflections, and wisdom teachings. In reading this book, we can sense our evolutionary potential to embrace the sacred in its myriad creative expressions."-Tara Brach, PhD, author of *Radical Acceptance* and *True Refuge*"Anyone interested in awakening the inner mind, opening the heart, and co-creating a better world today will be delighted to hear the unified voices in these pages. This highly positive, diverse, and thoughtfully interwoven collection of essays can help us to empower and embrace others and lift them up in their own eyes. It also provides original research and anecdotes about the very first historical intimations of East-West spirituality, as well as the earliest initiatives of Buddhists in America almost two hundred years ago. I deeply appreciate lineage, traditional erudition, and vital, life-saving debate and discussion. They are the purling streams of any tradition's lifeblood. We find them here in these articles from Buddha-like meditating ministers, as well as an abundance of provocative ideas."--from the Foreword by Lama Surya Das

"This book is more than a celebration of the diversity of Buddhism within Unitarian Universalism. It celebrates diverse and conflicting views of the roles that Buddhist practices can and should play in congregational life and worship. If you are thinking about where we might go, read this book."--Robert Ertman, Editor, UU Sangha

Both the seven Principles and the six Sources of Unitarian Universalism affirm and encourage Unitarian Universalists in exploring world faith traditions while maintaining their UU identity. This book brings together for the first time the voices of UUs who have become Buddhists while not sacrificing that identity, and Buddhists who have found in Unitarian Universalism a spiritual home where they can sustain a practice and join in an activist religious community that accepts and encourages who they are. Also included is an exploration of how American Buddhism has been influenced by Unitarian Universalism and how UU congregations are being changed by Buddhist practice.

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## **Customer Reviews**

Some great stories here and some surprising relationships of spiritual practices/influences. This is largely a collection of personal essays so the takeaway for me is really just having the privilege to hear very personal stories of spiritual journeys, mostly told by Unitarian ministers. I say privilege because a free and open search for truth and meaning isn't always pretty or comfortable and these shard stories talk about those journeys with humility and honesty.

This book offers UU members insight to the Buddhist practice within the congregation. For Buddhists seeking to explore the Dharma in action, the benefits for becoming a UU member are well

articulated.

A great book - poorly formatted as an ebook for the price though. Lots of spacing and font-conversion errors. When will Kindle start enforcing higher standards for epublication format? Seems like we have no recourse when this happens.

This book was both a delightful read and an eye-opener. If you've ever wondered what it would be like to actually use Buddhist practices to deepen or broaden Christian or Humanist practices, this book is for you. Each chapter is a short essay by a different person who has done just that, mostly Unitarian Universalist ministers of the last half century. As a UU who has read about Zen Buddhism and seen Theravada Buddhism first hand (my first wife was from northeast Thailand), I've always been curious about Buddhism, admiring its humility, its sense of inclusion, and devotion to the basic human condition. But I had no idea that the Buddhism popularized by Alan Watts and D.T. Suzuki in America was actually heavily influenced by Unitarianism, which made its way to Japan in the latter half of the 19th century. This amazing story - the stuff of a good movie - begins with the 1841 shipwreck of five Japanese fishermen, their rescue by an American ship, and the journey of one of them, Nakahama Manjiro, who eventually returns to Japan, steeped in Unitarianism, avoiding the execution that was the lot of Catholic missionaries, by his willingness to step on an image of the Virgin Mary. Most of the rest of the book is about how individual UUs developed practices of Buddhist meditation and mindfulness under the guidance of mentors or masters from different Buddhist traditions. This has generally worked well when individuals have engaged in regular Buddhist retreats and local support groups, but it has been more difficult to fit Buddhist practices into the format of traditional Protestant church services. Moreover, the chapter by a Chinese Buddhist remarks that these demanding and individualistic American Buddhist practices are only a small part of the Buddhism, such as Pure Land Buddhism, practiced by most Asians. In the popular Asian tradition, temples are always open for people to receive blessings and earn merit by coming in with alms for the monks, or offerings for various deities or ancestors, or to participate in chantings or celebrations, or to consult with the monks, or to help out with various tasks, etc. For example, my first wife often took offerings to Nahng Torwahnee, the earth goddess from a pre-Buddhist spirit tradition, and was a regular helper at the Thai Wat. My youngest daughter recently had a UU wedding in one location, then three wedding ceremonies (Buddhist, Lao, and Thai) in one day at the Wat, with the monks leading the Buddhist ceremony in Pali, while elders led the Lao and Thai ceremonies. I noted that Nahng Torwahnee was invoked in the Lao ceremony, which included the

blessing of tying strings around the wrist. Such diverse and inclusive Buddhist traditions will probably be reserved for ethnic groups, along with the institution of the Wat, despite the need for more practices of generosity, devotion, and community building in UU circles. Instead the trend, as documented in this book, is toward UU influenced philosophical and meditative practices from Buddhism gradually becoming part of mainstream spiritual practices under the leadership of ministers and others who are developing new spiritual communities. This book may even inspire you to join this movement.

This is a really important book. However, the list price is \$14 and it is available from the UUA Bookstore, online. Here's what I said about the book elsewhere: "This book is more than a celebration of the diversity of Buddhism within Unitarian Universalism. It celebrates diverse and conflicting views of the roles that Buddhist practices can and should play in congregational life and worship. If you are thinking about where we might go, read this book." Shame on the seller for trying to sell this book for five times the current price from the publisher! And shame on for refusing to pull the plug on this seller. Robert Ertman

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