

1th anniversary



created by religious naturalists for religious naturalists

July 2024

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Feature Article - July 2024

Our First Decade by Ursula Goodenough

On August 8 2014, the first RNA Board of Directors signed the Religious Naturalist Association's Articles of Incorporation on Star Island NH. The purpose of the association, it reads, is to "encourage the development and spread the awareness of the religious orientation known as Religious Naturalism."

The occasion had a long pre-history. Eighteen years earlier, Loyal Rue and I co-chaired an [IRAS](#) Star Island Conference called [The Epic of Evolution](#) which brought together a core group of incipient religious naturalists. The group subsequently expanded and kept in touch via email listservs. The conference also inspired Loyal and me to write books, [Everybody's Story](#) and [The Sacred Depths of Nature](#), wherein we expanded on the writings of our many [predecessors](#), [contemporaries](#), and listserv colleagues and outlined what an RN orientation might look like.

In the early 2000s, several listserv members set out to find an official home for RN within existing organizations, approaching IRAS and the Unitarian Universalist Association. These efforts failed, a core reason being that established traditions prefer to pursue their established trajectories rather than foster new ones. Happily, listserv member and lawyer Michael Cavanaugh decided in 2013 to pick up the ball and establish an independent RN-based organization. With extensive group input, he crafted our founding documents and recruited the Board. Our very own 501(c)(3) was launched.

The Board elected me as president, Michael as secretary/treasurer, and Todd Macalister as director of communications. We also recruited a distinguished [Board of Advisors](#). Our initial job was to craft a website that would convey the essence of RN and allow us to offer membership.

By the end of 2014 there were 212 members, most from the listservs plus a few others who found us. Happily, one finder was web designer Terry Findlay, who volunteered to upgrade and manage our fledgling website and became our fourth elected officer.

For the next few years we four officers did most of the legwork, overseeing the vibrant [RNAnet](#) googlegroup, encouraging the formation of regional liaisons, sending out monthly [newsletters](#), and picking up maybe eight members a month. Things moved along.

Happily, member Partap Khalsa blew the whistle, basically saying Hey guys, this is all very nice but what about things like expansion and impact? So in 2020 he chaired a zoom-based “Outreach Committee” whose members pondered “Whither RNA?” We hired a marketer who looked at our self-presentation and made some helpful suggestions. We ran a few Facebook ads. Terry juiced up the newsletter and reorganized the [website](#). Most importantly, once the committee submitted its report to the BOD, many of its members re-assembled as a group called the Hub which, with expanded membership (currently twelve) and Jason Keune as its chair, now oversees RNA operations and stays in close contact via Zoom and email. No longer is RNA being administered by four aging officers.

The Hub proceeded to adopt non-hierarchical [management principles](#) as diagrammed in its mycelial [organizational chart](#), crafted by current RNA secretary JD Sillwater. There’s still a Board of Directors that elects officers, as mandated to retain 501(c)(3) status. But the officers now join other Hub members to stimulate and keep track of RNA teams, each with a spoke member who channels information and resources to and from the Hub; examples of teams and spokes include the [RN Songbook](#) (Mark Iredell), [RNUU](#) (Juniper Meadows), and the RN [YouTube site](#) (Andrew Howard). We are particularly excited about our [chaplain-endorsement](#) program, which to date includes 20 chaplains. We’re now >1200 members from 53 states and 51 countries with a deep range of occupations and perspectives. Our steady trajectory has acquired a nice tailwind as we enter the next decade.

RNA continues its commitment to be a community of explorers, encouraging members to [visit the websites](#) of other on-line associations that focus on specific approaches along the RN axis (e.g. cosmology-centered education, eco-activism, meditative practice, paganism, indigenous wisdom, pantheism). If the RN orientation is to spread, it is important that the trajectory be also mycelial, adding RN understandings to what else is going on.

Google tells me that the traditional tenth-year-anniversary gift is made of tin or aluminum because, I’m told, “You’ve been going strong for quite some time, and these are very durable materials.”

Happily, they are also fully recyclable.



Wishing you all a joyous Solstice and Juneteenth.

News and Events

Temple of Understanding

Youth Sharing Their Perspectives On Climate Change and Conflict

Thursday, June 27, 2024, 11am-12:30pm ET on Zoom



<https://templeofunderstanding.org/youth-perspectives-on-climate-and-conflict/>

Regular Events:

Deep Transformation Network Monthly Meeting

Attend the live monthly network meeting on the **first Tuesday of every month at 1:00 pm Pacific** (check your time zones carefully!) <https://deeptransformation.network/spaces/10286307/feed>

Sacred Depths of Nature Presentations and Podcasts

Follow this link for the latest presentations and podcasts on *The Sacred Depths of Nature* with Ursula Goodenough. <http://sacreddepthsofnature.com/conferences/>



RNA Store

RNA "Swag" Now Available!

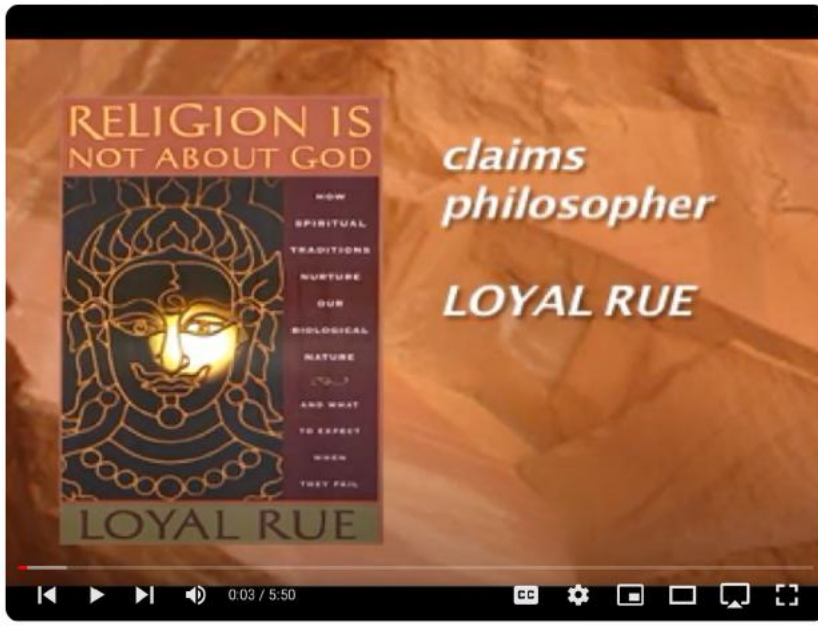
We are now offering RNA branded merchandise on our website.

Get yours here: <https://religious-naturalist-association.org/shop/>



RNA YouTube Channel Video of the Month

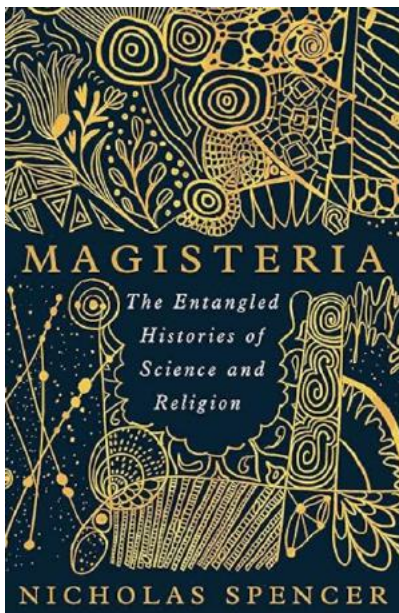
Religion is Not About God



Loyal Rue presenting the central concept of his 2006 book, "Religion Is Not About God,"

[Watch on YouTube](#)

[Visit Our YouTube Channel](#)



Book of the Month

Magisteria by Nickolas Spencer

The true history of science and religion is a human one. It's about the role of religion in inspiring, and strangling, science before the scientific revolution. It's about the sincere but eccentric faith and the quiet, creeping doubts of the most brilliant scientists in history – Galileo, Newton, Faraday, Darwin, Maxwell, Einstein. Above all it's about the question of what it means to be human and who gets to say – a question that is more urgent in the twenty-first century than ever before.

[View on Amazon](#)

Help Wanted! RNA is looking for volunteers with abilities in Accounting, Volunteer Coordinating, Spotify, Google Workspace, TikTok, LinkedIn, and Grant-Writing. Do any of those sound like fun to you? [Say so here](#) and we'll get you started!



Music of the Month

The Tide is Rising by Rabbi Shoshana Meira Friedman & Yotam Schachter.



This recording is by Annie Patterson (vocals & guitar) & Peter Blood (violin), creators of Rise Up Singing and Rise Again. [Listen on YouTube](#)

Suggest Music

Help Build Our RNA Songbook

Do you know of a song or poem that we could add to our songbook? Click this link to nominate your item.

[Song Nomination Form](#)

[View Songbook](#)

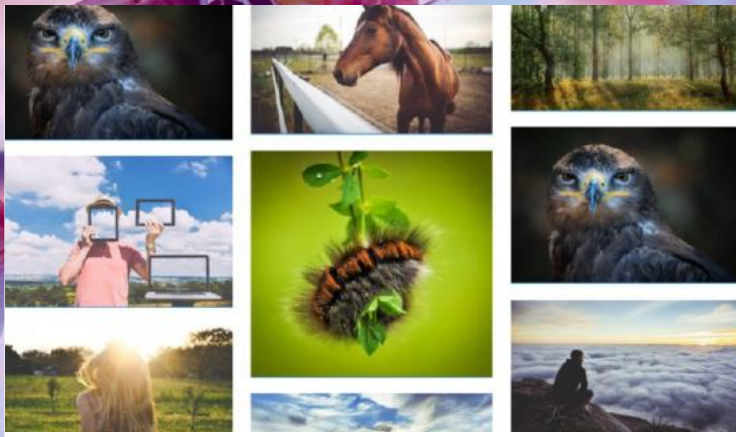


Natural Wonder of the Month

13 Greatest Wonders of the World



From towering mountains to vibrant reefs, our planet is home to some of the most stunning sights in the universe. This video explores 13 of the greatest natural wonders of the world. [Watch on YouTube](#)



RNA Photo Gallery
add your photos

[Visit the Gallery](#)

Visit us on Social Media



Facebook



YouTube



Reddit



Mastodon

Letters to the Editor:

Please send your comments, suggestions, questions, and submissions to newsletter@religious-naturalist-association.org.

If your letter has content that we would like to publish in a future newsletter we will contact you for permission.

Website of the Month



With few years left before the rapid shift of Earth's systems, it is time for a philosophy that can help people to:

- build a community of those who believe Gaia is sacred and that there is no calling higher than protecting and restoring Gaia;
- provide ways to stop the horrors that we are unleashing on the planet, ourselves, and countless other species;
- offer means to prepare—oneself, one's families, and one's communities (mentally, physically, and spiritually)—for the difficult and possibly terrible changes coming;
- find ways to draw others away from the Earth-consuming dominant cultures and toward a Gaian culture.

<https://gaianism.org>

RNA Links

Members Contributions: Our members contribute sermons, articles, videos, music and other material related to the Religious Naturalist orientation. Go to <https://religious-naturalist-association.org/members-contributions/> to check them out. Please consider contributing your own material. There is a link on the page for submitting items.

Members' Projects:

The RNA website has a section called [Members' Projects](#). This page provides links to projects of RNA members. If you have a project related to RN that you would like included on this webpage please email a description to projects@religious-naturalist-association.org.

Latest RNA Blog Post

How Kayaking Taught Me to Be Present and Trust The Flow of Life

[Go to Post](#)

