



URANTIA FOUNDATION'S NEWS ONLINE



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THE MUSTARD SEED GRANTS PROGRAM

By Urantia Foundation staff, Illinois, United States

On November 15, Urantia Foundation announced the launch of the Mustard Seed Grants Program (MSGP). Thanks to the generosity of Gard and Florence Jameson, Urantia Foundation is now endowing a grant-making program that awards financial assistance to eligible projects which support the Foundation's Declaration of Trust and mission to seed *The Urantia Book* and its teachings globally.

Gard described his intent in starting the fund and his vision for its future results: "Like the mustard seed, this fund will be a blessing to many

individuals and groups who are working to share the good news of the fifth epochal revelation globally and to bring an era of light and life to our troubled planet. The grants will be of varying size; the ones that will surprise many will be the small grants that grew in their blessing, much like the mustard seed!"

MSGP encourages students of *The Urantia Book* around the world to develop projects that articulate both a problem and its solution. Whether large projects or small, the top submissions must be impactful, feasible, and sustainable. Funds will be granted to support projects that further education and outreach in tangible and measurable

ways, and across all regions of the globe. We anticipate that the funded projects may one day solve some of our most significant outreach challenges.

MSGP areas of focus include educational programs, centers, and schools; secondary publications; music, art, and film; digital outreach (visual/audio); interfaith projects; and family-based programs.

Applications for the first round of the program were accepted through January 15, 2023. Within two months the Foundation received 28 applications from Brazil, Canada, France, Ghana, Mexico, Nigeria, the Philippines, Senegal, Spain, Sweden, Uganda, and the United States.



Mustard Seed Grants Program

The following grant awards were announced on March 15:

- Creating Audible Recordings for Four Urantia-Based Novels, Rick Warren
- FER_UB, Maricor Doctor
- Living Bridge Productions, Gary Tonge
- School of Divine Progressive Wisdom, Moustapha N'Diaye
- Spreading the Good News, Pato Banton
- The Urantia Book Teacher Training Program, Elisabeth Callahan
- Urantia Conference in Nigeria, Emeka Anazodo
- Urantopedia, José Antonio Hernández

Congratulations to the Round 1 Mustard Seed Grant recipients!

Do you have an idea for an educational program that will bring the fifth epochal revelation to untapped audiences? Have you thought of an innovative project that addresses some significant outreach challenges? If so, you may be eligible for a Mustard Seed Grant! The opening for Round 2 will be announced this summer.

Said Jesus, "The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed which a man sowed in his field. Now a mustard seed is the least of seeds, but when it is full grown, it becomes the greatest of all herbs and is like a tree so that the birds of heaven are able to come and rest in the branches thereof."
151:4.2 (1693.8)

UPDATES FROM THE JANUARY 2023 TRUSTEE MEETING



By Judy Van Cleave, secretary, Urantia Foundation, Idaho, United States

Operations Overview

Books

- Total sales for Q4 2022—including Urantia Press titles—were up 10%, and was up 4% for the year.

- Urantia Press sales were down 19% for Q4, and down 17% for the year.
- Downloads were up 34% for the quarter, and down 11% for the year.
- E-books were up 49% for the quarter, and up 15% for the year.
- More than 1,900 free books were sent around the world in 2022. In Q4, 580 Spanish paperbacks were gifted to Urantia Association International, which distributed them to nine Latin American countries, and 90 Spanish books were gifted to the Fellowship's Pipeline of Light. This brought the Fellowship's total to 941 free books in 2022.

- Total dissemination was up 20% for Q4, and 9% for the year. This includes everything but downloads.
- Urantia Foundation also had Urantia Books printed. 4,500 Portuguese, 2,000 Spanish European, 1,200 Hungarian, and 990 Italian books have arrived at their appropriate warehouses and are selling. The Hungarians were especially pleased to have the newly revised text.
- Hanno van der Plas of the Netherlands assumed the role of manager of European book sales, replacing former trustee Henk Mylanus.

Education

- The Urantia Book International School (UBIS) is launching soon the new Spotlight Series. It will include small topics, invited speakers, and group discussion; each branch is planning one in their own language. The advisory council is increasingly global—international growth being a great highlight.
- Planning is underway for seminars on race and family.
- During their Q4 meeting, the Urantia Study Group Directory team discussed succession and how to best leave the mechanics of this operation for those who follow. The most difficult and time-

consuming job is ensuring that the directory's information is up to date. To make this easier, they approved the building of an automated system which is expected to be finished in early 2023.

Fundraising and Finances

- Donations—Q4 unrestricted donations were 11% below budget, and up 9% for 2022. Restricted donations came in 1,963% above budget, and 1,476% above budget for the year. Total income is up 20% from 2021 and up 41% from the 2022 budget.

- Estate gifts—Q4 2022 estate gifts were \$407,287 compared to \$0 in Q4 2021. Estate gifts for the year were \$1,048,942 compared to \$813,213 in 2021.

- Expenses—Total expenses were up 9% for the year, but 10% below budget.

Translations and Revisions

- The Filipino translation team completed Part I in Q4 and is now working on Paper 38. The team reported that their productivity has been going

up, to the point where they can translate and edit between 20 and 30 pages a month. This is due to several factors including familiarity with the common English-to-Filipino words acquired over the past two years, and the increasing number of work hours devoted to the translation. Some minor adjustments to the organization of the team have also resulted in greater efficiency.

- The Farsi translation team is down to their final 20 papers! They plan to translate 12 papers in

2023, and the remaining 8 in 2024. You can view the Farsi translation on our website:

<https://www.urantia.org/fa>

- The Translation Committee plans to dedicate time during the April meeting for a discussion about the Spanish revision and Chinese translation processes.

AN EPOCHAL PLAN



By Gard Jameson, treasurer, Urantia Foundation, Nevada, United States

My friend Ralph Zehr said it best: "What better investment than an epochal revelation!"

Oftentimes we do wonder how we should allocate our resources at the time of our departure from this planet. The obvious emerges:

family! Of course, we should take care of our loved ones. Then there come questions of higher purposes—the family of God! Not many are given the opportunity to be involved with an epochal revelation. By virtue of your reading these words, you have!

I encourage you to think of making some investment into the fifth epochal revelation. Looking back on your time on Urantia, you will be blessed to know that you made some contribution to the destiny of the Urantia Revelation! You will be blessed to know that in some manner you nudged the planet toward a time of light and life!

The best-planned gift, which can be made while alive or at the time of passing, is to unrestricted funds for the organization that you are

supporting. Circumstances change, and it is best to allow the current wisdom pool of personalities to assess the wise use of such funds.

The other attribute of such a wise gift is to direct it toward an endowment fund, which will keep giving for a very long time. A general endowment fund allows for the trustees to use a small percentage for unrestricted purposes. In the case of Urantia Foundation, the Revelation Bridge Endowment Fund and the Mustard Seed Fund are two such funds that allow for long-term dissemination of the revelation globally.

During my time as a trustee of Urantia Foundation, I have been impressed at how effectively the board has

used its funding in a conservatively thoughtful, mission-driven, and visionary manner. This way of guiding the organization, which is a public trust, has been instilled into every one of us. Just so you know, Urantia Foundation is clearly in my planned-giving plan! I pray that you may be given the gift of discernment as you assess your own plan.

For more information, please visit the Foundation's [Planned Giving web page](#).

Thank you, friend, for your consideration and commitment to the fifth epochal revelation!

URANTIA BOOK INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL VIRTUAL STUDY GROUPS



By Erika Webster,
Oklahoma, United States

Urantia Book International School (UBIS) has long been recognized for offering quality courses to Urantia Book students. We have always followed a “log in at your convenience” asynchronous model, alternating between periods of reading and responding to questions, and weeks of discussion in an online forum. Now there is a new option—a virtual study group! As virtual platforms have become more accessible and popular, we recognize the importance of taking advantage of this modality as another tool to ensure that our students have a quality connection and study opportunity with one another.

I had the pleasure of participating in the first two UBIS study groups in the Spanish branch, along with

my co-host Eduardo Altuzarra. The first time, the virtual option was offered to new readers as a test, following a similar model offered in the English branch. This second time we have been focusing on the needs of a variety of both new and experienced readers. Using the Zoom platform, participants enjoy a two-hour session every Sunday for eight consecutive weeks.

We have found that reading four or five paragraphs at a time works very well with new readers, while more experienced readers are inclined to prefer one to three paragraphs at a time. As facilitators, we face a certain amount of uncertainty in planning how much to cover in any given week. In a written course, the readings are clearly outlined in advance, with a full week allotted for each paper, and there is rarely a need for deviation from the plan.

Eduardo and I have learned to supplement our weekly sessions with emails and WhatsApp messages to keep the participants engaged. This provides us with a wonderful

opportunity to receive questions, and to allow time to reflect on what was covered.

Andres Forero of Colombia commented that “it has been a very gratifying experience to participate in this UBIS virtual study group. It provides a place of expression when reading *The Urantia Book* together, in an environment of respect, tolerance, patience, and fellowship.”

It has been rewarding to moderate these virtual sessions with Eduardo. The most important thing for me is to make sure that the participants feel that they are in a safe space to express and share their thoughts and opinions, to expand their understanding of the revelation, and most

importantly to value their fellow readers and establish new bonds of friendship.

Representing UBIS means providing a quality session, free of interpretation, exemplifying the highest spiritual values, and gently pointing the students in the right direction. Our meetings become a living example of a simple, yet high-functioning, study group. It is our hope that the format will be replicated by students within their own community.

The next UBIS study group will be offered in English during this April trimester. Registration will open on Monday, April 17. Keep an eye out for the email!



REMEMBERING TONIA BANEY, FORMER EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, URANTIA FOUNDATION



Sheila Schneider and Tonia Baney

By Sheila Schneider, former Foundation staff member, Illinois, United States

Editor's Note: Tonia Baney served as Urantia Foundation's executive director from 1996 to 2003. During her tenure, she led the Foundation towards a multi-national framework, which helped increase book distribution worldwide. Her skills and business savvy steered the Foundation through some challenging times, and her warmheartedness created a friendly, family-like atmosphere within 533. We are all grateful for her service and wish her Godspeed during this next phase of the universe career.

I first met Tonia Baney when she arrived at Urantia Foundation for the first

Advisory Committee to the Trustees (ACT) meeting in 1991. She was friendly, engaging, dedicated, and all the things you would expect from someone advising the trustees and helping them create a new organization for members who read *The Urantia Book*.

Tonia and her husband Steve lived on the island of Maui in Hawaii. Tonia had established an advertising agency and was the executive director of the Maui Arts & Cultural Center. She was also a talented portrait artist. For years, she would travel from Hawaii to Chicago, or wherever she was needed, to facilitate the work of ACT.

As a student of *The Urantia Book* for over 20 years, Tonia was enthusiastic and dedicated to spreading the

teachings in any way she could. And in 1996, Tonia became the executive director of Urantia Foundation.

It was a time of expansion, and the Foundation office took on a new "vibe" if you will. I was her executive assistant and had served as assistant to the previous two executive directors. Tonia accomplished a lot during this time, and it was a privilege to serve with her. The cover of *The Urantia Book* was redesigned. Translation work began on the Russian, Korean, Farsi, Portuguese, Chinese, Hindi, German, and Italian languages. The library book program expanded to include a volunteer, Mark Bloomfield, who traveled

the globe to provide books to libraries worldwide. We also opened branch offices in Australia, Canada, France, and Finland to expedite global book distribution.

Tonia began the annual tradition of the holiday party held at Urantia Foundation headquarters. The party gave many readers an opportunity to visit Chicago and the Foundation while enjoying the festivities and meeting the staff and other readers of *The Urantia Book*.

Tonia traveled to many book fairs, reader meetings, and other Urantia-related gatherings throughout her tenure as executive director. When I



Steve Baney and Tonia Baney



Tonia Baney painting

began reading *The Urantia Book*, she encouraged me to attend the regular study group meetings at the Foundation, and we had many discussions about how to promote its teachings.

Tonia left Urantia Foundation in October 2003, returned to Hawaii, and pursued other projects including her work as a portrait artist. She also remained a great advocate and promoter of *The Urantia Book*. When I left the Foundation in April 2004, Tonia supported my decision to go back to school and encouraged me while I was earning my bachelor's degree in sculpture.

In 2011, Tonia and Steve returned to Wisconsin where Tonia was born and most of her family lives. When I received my graduate degree in 2014, they came to celebrate with me. I couldn't have been more thrilled that they were with me during that special time.

I continued to speak to Tonia and Steve via phone and noticed when Tonia began to lose some of her language abilities. After her Alzheimer's diagnosis, I spoke frequently with Steve, giving him encouragement when needed. When I learned of Tonia's death on February 13, 2023, my first thought was, "I will see you later, my friend!"



Chris Wood and Tonia Baney

Although this is a sad event, my memories of Tonia—her good heart, her beauty both inside and out, her smiles, her generosity

of spirit, her calm demeanor, and the twinkle in her eyes—will remain with me for the rest of my earthly life.



Richard Keeler, Tonia Baney, and Bob Solone



Tonia Baney at the UAI Leadership 2011 symposium



Share Beasley and Tonia Baney

WHAT *THE URANTIA BOOK* MEANS TO ME



By Mirela Gradinariu-Kelpin, Sulzbach, Germany

What does *The Urantia Book* mean to me? I can answer this question best by describing the effect it has had on me.

But first I would like to tell you how this book came to appear in my life. I found *The Urantia Book* at the very moment when I was ready to accept it, when my thirst for knowledge could no longer be satisfied by

the practice of religion. Years of searching through various Christian cults had brought me great disappointment. But in my heart, even while thinking that perhaps this was all there was, I still could not stop looking for something more.

What was I seeking? Answers to my questions about God, faith, the universe, the meaning of life, and finally our destiny. Life without a meaningful sequel seemed just a waste to me; such a universe must be pointless.

When I finally held the book in my hands and excitedly began to read it, I found myself amazed over and over again. The wonderful teachings of the fifth revelation have nurtured me, broadened my cosmic vision, increased my understanding, deepened my spiritual values,

strengthened my faith, and made my life replete. I am infinitely grateful to be able to study it, discuss it with like-minded people, and exchange opinions with them.

The book enlightened me with answers to all my questions and more besides: questions I had not even known I should be asking. That is why one might call it the "Encyclopedia of the Universe." Of course, it is, first and always, undisputedly *the fifth revelation!*

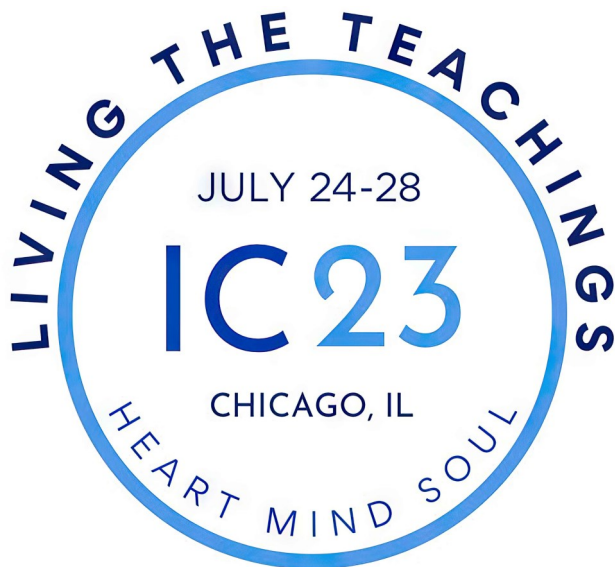
This book's focus on the golden rule, on love, truth, beauty, and goodness, stabilizes the personality and is the key to the highest-quality interpersonal relationships. The book has revealed to me the divine gifts that each of us possesses. But first and foremost is the

knowledge of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man, and that God's attitude toward all his children and his creations throughout the universe of universes is benevolent—GOD IS LOVE.

It is exhilarating to know that each of us has a part in the divine plan, with the help of God's divine spark within us: "and not ours, but your will be done." It is an honor and privilege to experience and understand these truths of the universe and the Creator during our earthly life—as much as our limited mortal conception allows.

My wish is that more and more people will "discover" this book for themselves, because it offers the best opportunity for both peace and a transformed world.

Announcements



The Urantia Book Fellowship's International Conference 2023 (IC23)

The Urantia Book Fellowship is hosting its next international conference for readers of *The Urantia Book* July 24–28, 2023, in Chicago, Illinois!

The location, Oak Brook Hills Resort and Conference Center, is about a half hour from Chicago's two major airports (O'Hare/ORD and Midway/MDW) and offers comfy beds, a beautiful pool, and golf course. For one week next summer, it will also be home to hundreds of your closest friends.

You can register now, or take the opportunity today to pre-register (reserve your place): <https://urantiabook.org/ic23>



The Urantia Book Android App

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