

Heart of Universalism
Rev. Jack Pride
2021 Universalist Convocation

The Rockwell Universalist Church in Winder, Georgia, northeast of Atlanta, near Athens, was originally founded in 1839, one year after the Harmony Universalist Church was founded in Senoia, Georgia in 1838. It ceased operations during the Civil War and reorganized in 1869. It has been a voice of liberal religion in that community since that time. It is one of the few churches that has the distinction of having the road on which it is located named after it. The church is located on the corner of Rockwell Church Road and Georgia Highway 53 and is known by all who live in that area of Barrow County and beyond to be a welcoming and generous congregation and caring neighbor. The Rockwell Church has been served by many deeply committed and caring clergy and lay ministers. During the Great Depression some were even paid with a pig for the winter. Some traveled by horseback. Others by more modern motorized vehicles. All had one thing in common. They all valued the Universalist message of love and the welcoming of all.

Rev. Jack Pride stands in the front of a long line of preachers who have faithfully served that congregation. Two of the others who are right behind him in that line are here today as well: Rev. Joan Armstrong-Davis, who served Rockwell for a brief time immediately after Rev. Rhett Baird concluded his thirteen year tenure as Rockwell's country circuit riding lay preacher in order to complete his theological studies at Candler School of Theology at Emory University. Rev. Pride has honorably served the Rockwell congregation for about twenty eight years. Not many ministers serve a congregation for that length of time. It takes a strong and deep commitment to live out that legacy. It takes a deep love of Universalism and an equally deep love of every member of that congregation to live out that legacy.

Rev. Pride's once a month services at Rockwell were clearly a labor of love. But Jack also had another labor of love, which was his primary profession as a licensed psychotherapist. Helping people find ways to move from brokenness toward wholeness. From alienation to inclusion. From estrangement to connection. From isolation to community. A very important and special kind of ministry that no doubt enriched his ministry at the Rockwell Church. Tomorrow, August 8, at Rockwell's Homecoming service and dinner on the grounds, Rev. Pride will be stepping down and concluding his long ministry at that church.

Rev. Pride received his Master of Divinity degree from Candler School of Theology at Emory University and a Master of Theology in Marriage and Family Therapy from Columbia Theological Seminary. He was originally ordained in the Methodist tradition and early on in his career applied and was approved by the UUA Ministerial Fellowship Committee to become a Unitarian Universalist minister. He has joined a long line of distinguished UU clergy who have made such a transition from other faith traditions, especially back in the earlier days.

Rev. Pride has been married to his wife, Mary, for forty-four years, and they have two adult children and three grandchildren. He was a Navy and Marine Corps Reserve chaplain for twelve years. He has twenty five years experience as a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist and twenty years managed care experience in supervisory and executive positions with Magellan Behavioral Health and APS Healthcare. Rev. Pride is a member of the American Association of Marriage and Family Therapists and the American Association of Pastoral Counselors.

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As president of the Universalist Convocation, I am happy to announce that our Board of Directors has voted to present our annual HEART OF UNIVERSALISM award to Rev. Jack Pride for his exemplary ministry and work and commitment to the values of Universalism.

JACK, WE ARE PROUD OF YOU AND YOUR LIFE WORK, AND WE ARE HONORED TO PRESENT YOU WITH THIS YEAR'S HEART OF UNIVERSALISM AWARD. CONGRATULATIONS AND BEST WISHES.