



UNITARIAN CONGREGATION OF NIAGARA

A Congregation for Everybody

UCN NEWS

September 2023

Our Covenant

We come in peace
To this place of fellowship and love,
Searching for truth and meaning,
Seeking justice and equity through action,
Supporting each other and serving our community,
Acknowledging and preserving the gifts of this world,
This is our covenant with each other and with all.

UPCOMING SERVICES

September 3 - Stardust - service presented and led by Beryl Stovell. This will be the last informal summer service.

September 10 - Water Communion - service presented and led by Mary-lyn Hopper. Our annual Water Communion service symbolizes coming together. After a summer of rest and relaxation, we reaffirm our commitment to our principles and traditions. Bring a small amount of water from a place which is important to you. At service you will have the opportunity to pour it into a larger vessel and tell why this water is special for you. The combined water is symbolic of our shared faith coming from many different sources. It will be reserved for special occasions.

September 17 - Finding the Best Way to Give. Speaker Ron Brydges of the Canadian Cuban Friendship Association will discuss ways we can help the Cuban people and the pitfalls we can avoid in giving - service led by Karen Stovell

September 24 - Truth and Reconciliation; The Survivors - service presented and led by LesLee Turmel. In honouring the survivors of the residential school system, we will reflect upon the missing and murdered indigenous women who survived the schools, but not their impact. We will also examine one resource in the Niagara Region, Abbey House, designed to help these women.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

- Matt Virro

When I was working as a Rehabilitationist with disabled clients, I was constantly reminded of something called the body-mind connection. Everyone I was in contact with had the requisite problem with a knee or back. Sure enough, there would be a psychological overlay such as anxiety or a pain response that affected recovery.

The medical literature was clear as early as the 1960's that there is a strong connection between the mind and body as it relates to healing. What I would learn in my dealings with medical specialists is that they protect their turf and see patient needs strictly in the light of their specialist training: orthopods crafting opinions exclusively with the shoulder and knee, and psychologists and other health-care practitioners with the mind. But what of other dynamics such as family turmoil? Interdisciplinary collaboration in personal injury medicine needed an upgrade.

What remains true today is that thoughts, feelings, beliefs and attitudes can positively or negatively affect our biological functioning. So how do we as UU's address this? My answer to myself as I age is to maintain and increase my physical activity level, especially with resistance training. I need a hook to promote self-discipline.

Of course, I can pay attention to time management. I can listen to my body. I can look to relaxation response exercises and meditation. I can choose a comfortable pace to manage my daily activities. But really, I know instinctively I must put a wedge between my backside and the couch if I hope to keep my mood in order.

I can't feel the wellness I had when I was 50, but I know I can feel better by managing negative thoughts or aches and pains better today because I have linked my thoughts to a physical exercise routine.

For the last year I have been attending, along with my wife, a program at Brock University called **Bfit**. Their website talks about it being a supervised community exercise program for older adults, cardiac patients, significant spinal cord injury, those with Parkinson's and amputees. The supervision comes from Brock University practicum students. The program is open to the general public with a medical referral. I feel right at home there. I think anyone reading this knows they have not gone through the gauntlet of life unscathed. Everyone can use supportive help, especially with self-discipline. There is a modest cost per month which encourages participation.

One of the key objectives of being a Unitarian Universalist is for us to help each other become the people we most want to be. We do it by sharing good news. I highly recommend **Bfit** as one facet of good mind-body health for those in the Niagara Region.

Lifelong Fitness and Wellness



WE LIGHT TWO CANDLES

In the course of life we are met with the joy of forming friendships that fill our lives and hearts, and we are stilled by the sorrow of our friends mortality and the hole they leave behind.

It is with deep sadness that we bid the final farewell to two members of the UCN family, David Jordan and Wade Pfaff.

DAVID JORDAN

David died June 23, 2023 at the age of 83.

David and his partner, Carol Riseing, joined our congregation in November, 2010. His work for the UCN congregation and the larger community was substantial. He chaired the UCN Social Action Committee in 2011, assisted Karen Stovell in organizing our church retreat in 2013, served as UCN president from 2014 to 2016, and organized and facilitated our Pub Nights. David was active in social action activities outside our congregation, including hands-on participation in MAID and addressing racial issues that persisted in the Greater Niagara Region.

What stands out as most impressive about David was his sterling character and demeanour. Whatever the task before him, he met it with dignity, commitment and aplomb. His words and action were thoughtful and prompted all of us to think a little deeper and behave a little more honourably. As serious as David could be, he was also a great punster, often sharing his quirky humour to the delight of all.

In 2016, he and Carol, after sharing 25 years with one another, were married at UCN. Their love and commitment to each other was always evident.

When David and Carol decided to move to Vancouver Island to be closer to their family, our community felt the loss of loved family members. We never expected that we would never see him again.

David's legacy is one of integrity and authenticity.

Our deepest condolences to Carol, family and those friends whose lives were the most deeply touched by David's love and life.

WADE PFAFF:

Wade died June 9, 2023 at the age of 56.

Wade was a recent addition to the UCN family. When he left for Toronto to work towards his doctorate, he continued to participate in UCN via ZOOM or would surprise us with an unannounced visit.

Wade's first commitment was to his Black heritage. He presented an informative service on Black History in the Niagara Region. He was also very involved in the Region's Jazz Community, with an affinity to the evolution of Jazz as a reflection of Black history and culture.

Wade had enormous energy and passion, always looking for a project. I remember his vigorous effort when we were pulling out the previous garden to replace with the Pollinator Garden. His effort was unsurpassed.

We extend our deep condolences to Wade's family and his many friends who shared in Wade's love and life.

NOTE:

I extend special thanks to Susan Glassford, Doreen Peever and Karen Stovell for their input in the information shared in the above tributes.

- LesLee Turmel



WHAT I AM THINKING: ON BEING EARNEST

- Brian Jones

I am honoured to be of service to this amazing Congregation for almost two years. As your current treasurer, I am privileged to have a window into our finances. I am approaching my duties with great respect for what has happened in the past and with an ever-present eye to the future.

There are times when I am sharing my “joys and concerns” that there might be some uncertainty as to what I am trying to say. Though the invitation has been present to write something, I have hesitated. I want my thoughts and words to come together from a place of peace and joy. Am I there yet?

Under the title of “What am I thinking,” I want to share where my thoughts are going in regards to our presence as Unitarians and what we might think about as our congregation continues to move forward.

As a recent attendee of this year’s CUC (Canadian Unitarian Council) Annual General Meeting held in Ottawa, I was fortunate to meet others from both large and small congregations. Regardless of the size, we share some very real issues.

Congregational memberships are either diminishing or, in our case, growing slowly. This is putting pressure on our finances both at a local level and at the national level.

The CUC is seeing a drop in annual program contributions. This year they will be forced to cover some expenses with an increase in transfers from the Capital Fund. Additional expenses are planned over the next two years to support the implementation of the 8th Principle within congregations.

UCN’s collections are in line with our pledges made for 2023. The support and generosity of each of our members is appreciated. Expenses are running a little higher than planned, but generally, we are in line with our forecast. We are in a stable place.

As I referenced the CUC proposal for the 8th Principle, there are yet no details as to who will be involved or how it is to be implemented. I think the bigger question is where does our congregation stand with respect to this principle? Is it something we think we can find a place to operate from?

As a start, I invite you to read the below article I found in The Atlantic under the title of “Why is America so Mean” by David Brooks.

https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2023/09/us-culture-moral-education-formation/674765/?utm_source=email&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=share

Brooks has also written two important books, including “The Second Mountain” and “The Quest for a Moral Life.” He writes: “The most important story about why Americans have become sad and alienated and rude, I believe, is also the simplest. We inhabit a society in which people are no longer trained in how to treat others with kindness and consideration.”

I am struck by the words “kindness” and “consideration.” I ask, do they have a place in our daily lives as Unitarian Universalists? Do they have a place in my daily language and with the people I meet? I know it is sometimes very difficult for me to find such sentiments when driving on the QEW or when I am looking for that special parking spot at the local shopping centre. I also ask myself what about BIPOC or LGBTQ2+ communities? Especially of the word “consideration,” am I truly able to understand what is like to walk in their shoes and how my “white, cis-gendered status” may limit a true appreciation of their feelings in the context of these values, values which seem so right for me?

As I look at our community and the building we occupy, I see great opportunity. It is easy to see the need around our door and the hope I hold onto that we will find a way to approach others who do not have the same as we do, and our hearts and our actions will speak with an abundance of “kindness and consideration.”

Your thoughts can be shared with me at bjcanada439@gmail.com or by phone at 365-888-1851.

“Buddha was not a Buddhist
Jesus was not a Christian
Mohammed was not a Muslim
They were Teachers who taught Love
Love was their Religion.”

- Anonymous

SOCIAL ACTION

There were no social action initiatives or meetings over the summer. This Autumn the Social Action Committee, Beryl Stovell and Erdwin Hueniken, will be asking membership for their input as to where our Social Action monies can be best appropriated. Please reflect on potential recipients who would benefit from our donations or participation and whose initiatives are in keeping with our principles.

Beryl will be leaving soon to Texas for the winter and will be standing down from social action for that duration. Erdwin is looking for someone to sit in for Beryl in her absence. If you have the passion, energy and time for this commitment, contact Beryl or Erdwin. It is a rewarding and oftentimes fun position. We know our efforts are appreciated by those agencies to whom we contribute. Letters of thanks are always extended as forms of the community's appreciation.

Over the summer our commitment to the Community Care food hamper has waned. Please remember to bring a quality food product on Sundays for the hamper. You can check the Community Care website <https://communitycarestca.ca> to learn the specific items of food, dry goods, baby needs and school supplies required by members of our community. As Community Care's specific needs frequently change, it is prudent to check their website regularly.

There is an upcoming rally to bring more attention to climate change:
GLOBAL "FRIDAY'S FOR FUTURE" DAY CLIMATE STRIKE
Friday, September 15
Niagara Falls City Hall
4310 Queen Street
4:00 pm to 5:30 pm



50 by 30 Niagara is organizing a Niagara citizens' rally to bring greater awareness to the necessity of reducing carbon emissions with the focus of change within our region by:

- reducing use of fossil fuel heating in new builds and substituting it with heat pumps and district energy.
- designing mixed-use communities that are centred on accessibility to services, walkability and public transit instead of cars.

Promoting these rallies is costly. If you would like to donate to help cover costs for flyers, posters and handbills, you can contact 50by30niagara@gmail.com. Also, if you are interested in assisting in car-pooling people from your area to the rally, please contact the above email address to register.

Bring your friends, bring your signs and bring your passion. This is an opportunity to connect with others who care about this planet as much as you. Together, we will make a difference!



WHO WE ARE

We are resuming this section after its lengthy leave of absence from the newsletter. As our membership grows and long-term members experience life-changing events, these articles help us learn about others and keep us up to date with each other. They are intended to spotlight congregational members who wish to share themselves in print. It is an important part of learning about the diverse membership that embodies UCN.

Jim and Susan Glassford are the contributors for September:

LATER IN LOVE

Jim begins....

I am a retired public school principal and Reiki master. I was married for 45 years when my wife suddenly died two days after Christmas in 2007. Shock? Yes!

My friends helped me a lot. I did a river trip in France with a long time buddy, I opened up my cottage and I spent a lot of time alone. Later in the summer I received a letter from one of my former teachers, Susan Velkers. She had taught grade 5 and music at a school where I had been principal for eight years. Susan liked writing letters and would always give out funny Christmas cards every year.

Susan told me she had taken a bus trip to a guest ranch in the Catskills and that she was the only one who went horseback riding. I was intrigued. I had gone to guest ranches in Arizona and Alberta. So I phoned Susan and asked her to lunch and we could share stories and photos. That was the beginning of a long and wonderful friendship.

Susan resumes the story.....

After Jim and I left the same school in 1987, Jim and I continued to exchange Christmas cards with newsy updates for 20 years, so I knew he liked to ride horses in the Canadian mountains.

Fast forward to 2007.....

I had been married for 31 years and became a widow. On our first picture sharing lunch, we met two former students and a former teacher. It felt very comfortable. It was like old home week!

Jim encouraged me to take horseback riding lessons (nothing prepares you for riding down mountains). For over ten years we went to a working cattle ranch in Alberta where we became close friends with the rancher and his family, rounded

up cattle and breech birthed a calf! We were always the oldest riders on the Plains.

On our first cruise together, I joked, "We just spent one week together and neither of us threw the other out the porthole!" Jim replied, "That's because it wouldn't open."

After 12 years of sharing ranching and cruises, Jim and I decided to get married (the clincher was we both enjoyed a meal of liver!). We had a Celtic Hand Fastening Tying the Knot Ceremony. We were adorned in our Ancestral Tartan Kilts.

I often tell Jim that these have been the happiest years of my life.



RECIPES

On Sunday, August 20, Sarah McLaren presented a talk on nutrition. She backed up her premise that food can be simultaneously fun and tasty **and** nutritious with the presentation of yummy treats. Here are those recipes!

SARAH'S BLUEBERRY FRESH BASIL SMOOTHIE

- adapted from Breakfast for Dinner's Blueberry Smoothie:
- www.breakfastfordinner.net
- recipe yields 2 glasses (10-12 ounces each)

Ingredients:

- 3 ice cubes
- 1 banana, preferably frozen
- 1 cup almond or oat milk (or any kind of milk)
- 1 cup blueberries
- 1/4 cup fresh basil
- 1/2 tsp. dark maple syrup
- 1 tbsp. whole flaxseed freshly ground



Optional Ingredients:

- 1 cup chopped spinach or kale
- 1 tbsp. kefir or Greek yogurt (Sarah uses coconut kefir)
- 1 tbsp. hemp hearts and/or 1/2 tbsp. chia seeds

Note: If adding extra ingredients, 1/4 to 1/2 cup extra milk will be required

Instructions:

- Add all ingredients in the order they are listed into a blender and use the ice crush button for 2 minutes or so. You may need to stir it up a bit to get the clumpy bits mixed in. Then ice crush again or blend.
- Pick the glasses or cups that mean a lot to you or make you smile. Use curly or colourful straws for extra delight!
- You can pour yourself a glass and freeze the rest. Sarah pours the extra into ice cube trays and thaws overnight in the fridge for a ready-to-go smoothie in the morning.

SARAH'S RAW DATE SQUARE

These are rich in nutrients and taste, making them an ideal yummy mid afternoon snack.

- adapted from Detoxinista's Raw Date Squares: <https://detoxinista.com>
- recipe yields 16 squares

Ingredients:

Crust/crumble

- 3 cups raw walnuts or 3 cups pistachios
- 8 soft, pitted Medjool dates, chopped
- 1/4 cup melted coconut oil
- 1/2 tsp. ground cinnamon
- 1/2 tsp. ground cloves
- 1/2 tsp. salt

Filling:

- 2 cups whole soft, pitted Medjool dates
- 1/2 cup warm water
- 1/8 tsp. rose water (optional)
- 1/2 tsp. vanilla extract or fresh vanilla pod from a vanilla bean
- 1/4 tsp. salt

Instructions:

- Line the bottom and sides of an 8" square pan with parchment paper.
- In a food processor pulse the nuts until finely ground to meal.
- Add the remaining crust/crumble ingredients and pulse again until a sticky dough is formed.
- Scoop out 1 cup of dough and reserve for the crumble.
- Spread the the remaining dough evenly into the bottom of the lined pan. Firmly press down using your hands.
- Wash out the food processor. Combine all filling ingredients into your clean food processor and pulse for 2 minutes until smooth (the consistency of caramel). If you prefer a chunkier filling, pulse for only 40 seconds.
- Spread the filling evenly over the crust.
- Sprinkle the reserved crumble over the filling.
- Gently press the crumble down with your fingers. This will help it set.
- If desired sprinkle extra cinnamon and cloves over the crumble.
- Refrigerate for at least 2 hours. Overnight is best.
- Cut the chilled square into 16 smaller squares and serve.

Source Sarah referenced in her presentation on nutrition:

Living for Longevity: The Nutrition Connection - Research on Aging

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**Deadline for Oct. Newsletter:
September 21, 2023**

