

Unity in Diversity

From our Jewish-Christian roots and their values of justice and love, the free faith of Unitarian Universalism has expanded to a broader concept of unity in diversity of beliefs. As stated in the Bylaws of the US based Unitarian Universalist Association and the Canadian Unitarian Council, *The living tradition which we share draws from many sources:*

- *Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces which create and uphold life;*
- *Words and deeds of prophetic women and men which challenge us to confront powers and structures of evil with justice, compassion, and the transforming power of love;*
- *Wisdom from the world's religions which inspires us in our ethical and spiritual life;*
- *Jewish and Christian teachings which call us to respond to God's love by loving our neighbors as ourselves;*
- *Humanist teachings which counsel us to heed the guidance of reason and the results of science, and warn us against idolatries of the mind and spirit;*
- *Spiritual teachings of earth-centered traditions which celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature.*

As I've noted in an earlier column (May 25, 2013), in addition to the "six sources" above some people suggest that we have a seventh source; feminism and the work of women who were prominent in the fight for equal rights such as Mary Wollstonecraft and Susan B. Anthony.

At times, our diversity is the subject of humour and at times it is a catalyst for poetry. Franci Louann, a poet, dental hygienist, and a member of the Unitarian Church of Vancouver has produced a brochure for the CUC, *"A Poetic Look at Being a Unitarian"*. With her permission, I have sampled some stanza's from this work:

We come together because
we are enough alike to speak with each other,
enough unlike to make it worthwhile.

Some of us are Christian, some Buddhist,
some call themselves Jew-nitarians,
some, Interfaitharians.

We might be agnostics -- maybe *devout agnostics*,
who think about God a lot,
but decide they can't be sure --

probably not *casual agnostics*,
who don't know,
and don't care . . .

We don't have all the answers,
but we do have most of the questions.
To question is an answer.

I believe that, not by faith,
but by good works alone,
shall I be saved -- if I shall be saved!

I believe in the environmental "Rs" --
recycling is
a religious experience.

We are inclusive, not exclusive --
our circle draws in all but those
who would exclude themselves.

Some of us are straight - some gay -
we welcome all --
trans, asexual too!

Some of us call it church --
I say sanctuary . . .
We celebrate all the holidays just in case.

YES, I AM A UNITARIAN!
I used to say UN-itarian,
or FUN-itarian!

Now I say YOU-itarian --
YOU may be
a Unitarian.

More of Franci Louann's work is accessible on the internet by putting her name in your search engine and also on Facebook and Twitter.

In closing this article on unity in diversity I note The Unitarian Congregation of Niagara mission statement: "We covenant to support an empowering church that affirms the individual and celebrates history, science and mystery in a welcoming, joyous and evolving fellowship."