



UNITARIAN CONGREGATION OF NIAGARA

A Congregation for Everybody

UCN NEWS

April 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

April 2 - Rabbits and Jesus - service presented and led by Rev. Linda Thomson

April 9 - Easter - service presented by Paul Pipher; service led by Eva Schwartzentruber

April 16 - The Jewish New Year - service presented and led by Penny Blake

April 23 - Leadership - service presented and led by Russell Baird

April 30 - Universalism in Action - service presented and led by Jacob Santos

UPCOMING EVENTS

CIRCLE DINNER

Friday, April 14

A Circle Dinner will be held on Friday, April 14 at 5:30 pm. This month's theme is "April Showers Bring May Flowers."

Our Circle Dinners are welcoming gatherings that are packed with fun and opportunities to better know your fellow congregants. It allows for enthusiastic conversations that will refresh and rejuvenate after many months of lockdown.

The meal is potluck, and this year food dishes are **not** assigned. You only need prepare a favourite dish or a new and untried one to bring and share with those in attendance.

As always, all are welcome. No RVSP is required.

While you are planning your upcoming events, take this opportunity to schedule May's Circle Dinner for Friday, May 12, 2023.

QUEENSTON NEIGHBOURS ROUNDTABLE

Wednesday, April 5 at 7:30

Connaught Public School

28 Prince Street

This is a group organized by the residents, businesses, churches and other stakeholders of the Queenston Community. It is a good opportunity for UCNers to network, keep apprised of neighbourhood issues and initiatives, and provide opportunities for hands-on involvement.

The group focuses on existing assets within the Queenston area. Their work "is driven by the idea that residents are key to lasting development".

If you are unable to attend in person, you can attend by Zoom by contacting www.queenstonneighbours.weebly.com. They will forward the link to you.

RETREAT

Wednesday, June 21

We will meet at Club LaSalle in St.Catharines for an all day retreat where we will have an opportunity for self-reflection and exploration of our collective goals. There will also be a Summer Solstice Celebration.

Keep this date open. It has been a reliable experience of fun and learning. Details will follow in the weeks to come.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

- Matt Virro

I was recently struck by how Unitarian messages go beyond that which we recite from "The Living Tradition" on Sundays. In autumn I bought a personal item that came in a larger box. Tucked away in the tissue paper was a tiny booklet. My eyes grew wide as I read words, familiar, distinctive and colourful. The package I had purchased was from Denmark.

The booklet sought to explain a Danish term, "HYGGE," and used the following words:

"The art of building sanctuary and community, of inviting closeness and paying attention to what makes us feel open-hearted and alive;
To create well-being, connection and warmth. A feeling of belonging to the moment and to each other. Celebrating every day."

It sounded like a covenant, I thought. I had bought myself a box of felt slippers that included "hygge." As I slip them on each day, I briefly think of those hygge words and then, on occasion, what we as Unitarians do to feel open hearted and alive.

Its seems the Unitarian message has travelled the seas and, frankly, is deeply rooted in the mythology of northern peoples. It's nice, too, that that someone cares about the interconnectedness of all things — both my soul and my feet.

Good times. Spring has finally arrived!



UCN CONTRIBUTION

- Matt Virro

People often ask where our money is going? Last fall when we reached out to members of UCN, our monies contributed, in part, to the following announcement:

“On behalf of the Ukraine Humanitarian Appeal - a joint effort of the Canada-Ukraine Foundation (CUF) and the Ukrainian-Canadian Congress (UCC), Oksana Wynnyckyj-Yusypovych, Honorary Consul at Canadian Consulate in Lviv, Ukraine, officially handed over 11 new ambulances to the Ukraine's Ministry of Health on February 21st, 2023.”

The ambulances are unique four-wheel drive Toyota Land Cruiser J78 off-road vehicles designed to operate in difficult conditions and have high cross-country ability. They are easy to maintain and have a large fuel tank, providing a range of 1,000 km. These new medical evacuation vehicles will safely transport wounded patients to the designated hospitals. They were assembled in Gibraltar.

Our monies do lead to good work.

THE UKRAINIAN EASTER EGG

- LesLee Turmel

As the war in Ukraine continues into the Easter season with the Orthodox Easter celebration on April 24, I am compelled to revisit my Ukrainian roots and the tradition of decorating eggs for Easter.



These eggs are called pysanky (pysanka is singular) and are embellished with intricate floral and geometric designs that are found within much Ukrainian religious and folk art.

Of the many traditions which my family brought from “the old country” was the annual practice of egg decoration. My Baba (formally Babusia) began preparing them well in advance. She carefully emptied hen eggs of their contents and, in a process not unlike batik, she artfully and skillfully applied wax, dyes and her stylus to create complex traditional designs.

On Easter she would hand them out, along with the requisite chocolate bunnies, to her grandchildren as an expression of her love for us. Traditionally, the eggs were to celebrate the resurrection of Christ and the fertility associated with Spring. She was also quick to point out their delicate and brittle nature was a symbol of life's fragility, an understanding that was punctuated by her fleeing a country that had been, for centuries, rife with conflict and subjugation. In the past, this tradition was oft pushed underground by authoritarian forces.

How fitting that today we acknowledge this traditional practice. As I decorate my home with these eggs this Easter, I will also embrace them as symbols of courage, tenacity and hope.

Khrystos Voskros!
Happy Easter!

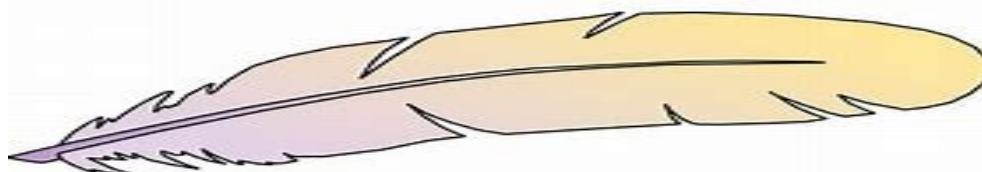
NII'KINAAGANA FOUNDATION PAY YOUR RENT

Nii'kinaagana was founded in July, 2018 as a way for those who live on occupied lands of Indigenous peoples to give back. It is a non-profit foundation that collects money and distributes it to Indigenous-led groups and individuals. It supports activities such as grassroots initiatives, cultural development and material needs. Specific examples of their work include cultural education at Lac Seul, supporting queer youth in Sioux Lookout and Kids Eat First which aims to provide food to Indigenous families in need.

The foundation has two streams; PayYour Rent, a means of garnering monies and Fireweed, the process of issuing grants from this money to Indigenous individuals or groups.

You can support this work through a one time donation or by regular monthly support. It is a meaningful and active way to acknowledge the land which we live upon, land that was taken without fair compensation or consideration of the rights and integrity of North America's Indigenous people.

More information and ways to pay back are outlined at payyourrent.ca



A POEM ABOUT UIism

- written by ChatGPT (Generative Pre-trained Transformer); submitted by Nate Smith and Jacob Santos

You may have recently heard about ChatGPT in the news. It is a new form of artificial intelligence (AI) software that can quickly garner detailed responses in just a matter of seconds. Such new technology is both intriguing and spooky. In the meantime, here is one example in which Chat GPT is entertaining.

We asked ChatGPT this:

“Write a poem about Unitarian Universalism as if written by Dr. Seuss.”

This is what ChatGPT produced in a matter of seconds:



Oh Unitarian Universalism, it's quite
a thing to say,
A community of seekers who come
from every way.

We welcome all religions and beliefs
without a fuss,
And celebrate our differences,
that's what makes us us!

We gather in our sanctuaries,
or in nature's beauty too,
To reflect upon our values
and what we think is true.

We're guided by seven principles, that's where we begin,
They help us navigate the world and treat others as kin.

We cherish social justice, and work to make things right,
To fight for human dignity, for equity and light.

We strive to live with open hearts, to listen and to learn,
To build a world that's peaceful, where all can take their turn.

We honour all traditions, and we celebrate them too,
From Christianity to Buddhism, from Paganism to Jew.

So whether you're an atheist or a believer in Divine,
Unitarian Universalism is a place for you to shine.

Unitarian Congregation of Niagara

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**Deadline for May Newsletter:
April 19, 2023**

