



# UCN NEWS

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

- by Matt Virro


I am looking forward to the UCN retreat in June! And, yes, I am making this pitch for any and all to join us at Bliss Haven Retreat in Dunnville, Ontario because we need your commitment by the end of April. I speak for all that it has been a long hard time of COVID and, I think, being with friends amidst nature, even with masks, will be fun. I hear the food and accommodations are great. All of us will have been triple vaxxed, so all can attend.

I am so thankful to the great work of our planning team. I talk about the event over dinner with my wife, Liina, and speak to the masterful Mary-lyn Hopper about a nature walk she has planned. And we all count on the overall guidance of Karen Stovell.

The dates of the retreat, June 20-22, are an important time in my personal calendar. It includes a remembrance of Independence Day in my native country of Estonia which was founded in 1919. For others in the Northern Hemisphere, we celebrate summer solstice as do 20,000 or more who gather each year at Stonehenge for an early morning ritual. And so, too, here in Ontario, a tiny fraction of that number will gather in Dunnville, around a campfire to celebrate the same ritual on the night of June 21.

Retreats, to me, are safe places to let one's hair down (for those who have it) , to share different perspectives and to make the case for lifelong learning. It's having choice, whether to find quiet time or to join in with discussion or play. It's being one with nature on over 80 acres of conservation land, sitting around and enjoying the hiss and crackle of a campfire and enjoying the voices of a sing along. I am bringing my harmonica.

Think about it! Confirm your participation with **Karen Stovell, Mary-lyn Hopper, Liina Veer or me.**



## UPCOMING SERVICES

**May 1 - Ryan's Bowl** - Service presented by guest speaker Isabella Bujour  
Isabella will address her work with Ryan's Bowl, the organization's initiatives and how we can become involved.  
Service led by LesLee Turmel

**May 8 - Blanket Exercise** - Service presented by guest speaker Valerie Kerr  
The Blanket Exercise is an interactive and educational tool that illustrates the history of the Indigenous Peoples of Canada as the white settlers encroached on their land and their ways of life.  
Service led by Karen Stovell

**May 15 - CUC National Service via Zoom at 1:00 p.m.**

Our usual UCN Service will be cancelled this day in lieu of the National Service of the Canadian Unitarian Council (CUC) held on the same day, but at 1:00 p.m. The Zoom link for the service will be available with the regular updates from UCN Communications.

**May 22 - Canada's Music - Part One**

Service presented and led by Karen Stovell and Susan Glassford  
Our congregation will be treated to the musical talents of many UCNers as we are led through the rich diversity and varied genres of music that are unique to Canada's culture and history.

**May 29 - Canada's Music - Part Two**

Service presented and led by Karen Stovell and Susan Glassford  
This is a continuation of the previous week's service.

## **POLLINATOR GARDEN UPDATE BEGINNINGS - Sunday, May 15**

- by Mary-lyn Hopper

Since there is no service at UCN on Sunday, May 15, we will have a garden work party. The first step in a garden make-over is removing those unwanted parts of the existing garden.....taking out the landscape fabric, invasive ground cover like periwinkle and invasive shrubs like barberry. If you cannot provide labour, it would be wonderful if you could provide snacks for the volunteers. If you know young people who would like to do volunteer hours, they are most welcome.

Please let me know at [mary.lyn.hopper@gmail.com](mailto:mary.lyn.hopper@gmail.com) if you can help out on Sunday, May 15 between 9:00 am and noon.



## **HOW YOU CAN HELP UCN?**

By donating money or time or expertise!

Your financial gifts help UCN continue to operate and better serve you and the community. To make a monetary contribution you can give cash or cheque at time of service or make an e-transfer.

To make an e-transfer, set up Unitarian Congregation of Niagara as payee at your Bank with the e-mail [ucn.communications@gmail.com](mailto:ucn.communications@gmail.com). We are set up for automatic deposit so you don't need a password.

If writing a cheque, make it payable to UCN and offer it at Sunday service or mail it to: Unitarian Congregation of Niagara  
223 Church Street  
St. Catharines, Ontario  
L2R 3E8

To make a donation of time or expertise, follow the activities of the various committees and offer to participate. Organizers will typically call for and welcome all volunteers. You are always welcome to make a proposal to initiate something that is true to our principles and close to your heart.

Together, we can work harder and wiser towards a better world.

“I have found that among its other benefits, giving liberates the soul of the giver.”

Maya Angelou

## **SILVER SPIRE UNITED CHURCH**

UCN received a letter of appreciation from Silver Spire United Church for our generous contributions to them. These helped provide needed services to the community, including shower and laundry facilities.

The UCN has reliably provided gifts to Silver Spire on behalf of our congregation. But there are also ways that we can individually contribute. In the past, they have received items from many organizations that are not appropriate for those they serve. This has put a greater workload for the church volunteers.

Therefore, they are very specific as to what they require:

- gloves (seasonal)
- men's boxer briefs
- women's underwear
- deodorant
- T shirts
- \$25.00 Giant Tiger gift cards which are a great help for groceries

These items can be delivered to the Drop-In Centre at Silver Spire United Church, 366 St.Paul Street, St.Catharines. All donations, large or small, are appreciated.



20-22  
JUNE

# “Renewal and Change”



Bliss Haven, Dunnville Ontario

## UCN Retreat June 20-22

Games - Groups -  
Nature - Campfire



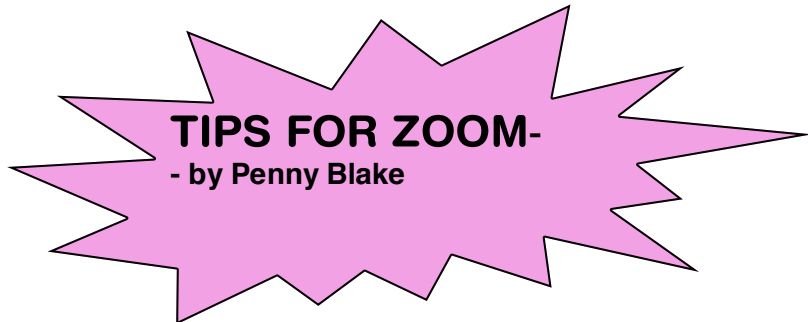
Please register By May 1 - \$250pp-  
all included. Lodging and food  
Contact any of our planning team:  
Karen S, Mary-Lyn, Liina or Matt.

## TECH VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Do you have tech skills, and the time and enthusiasm to share that expertise? Roy Blake and Abu Hosein currently manage all our technology for our Sunday services. They arrive at our sanctuary early every Sunday to set up and test our electronics, including microphones, camera, links, downloads and Zoom. They both work hard and, from time to time, require a break.

UCN is looking for those who are willing to provide intermittent back-up for Roy and Abu in their absence. It does require a firm commitment of time and energy.

Without Roy's and Abu's commitment, we would be unable to provide our hybrid services that reach out to those who are unable to attend and participate in person. This is essential to maintain an inclusive and expanding Unitarian community. If you are interested, please contact Roy or Abu.



Being able to participate during webinars is one of the biggest assets of Zoom. One efficient way to do this is to virtually raise your hand during a Zoom call to signal to the host that you have a question, comment or just need to be acknowledged.

To raise your hand in Zoom, tap the "Raise Hand" option in the "Reactions" tab of the webinar controls, typically located at the bottom of your screen. When the host allows you to speak, you can unmute yourself. After you have spoken, tap the Raise Hand again to remove it—the function will be in the same place and have changed itself to "Lower Hand". This will not mute you, so be sure to tap the mute/unmute button again.

Utilizing the "Raise Hand" function provides a more orderly, fair and inclusive means of participating in our meetings and services. Let's all work towards this end.

If you are wanting further tips in navigating the world of computers, I will be hosting a workshop during the summer. I will keep you informed.

You can also go to <https://howtogeek.com/> to address any of your unique computer challenges.

# SHOW ME THE MONEY, SHOW ME THE LOVE

- by Brian Jones

This is my first effort to reach out to all of you in this way. As you know, I am the new Treasurer of UCN. It is an honour to be of service to you and so I was wondering what might I say at this time.

It is spring and, for the moment, I am relishing in the birth we are able to witness in our beautiful surroundings of Niagara. I will leave it to others to describe in detail what names of flowers and trees are taking shape right now, but spirit's work is evident in the new life taking shape.

Taking shape is something I need to take quite seriously as this COVID pandemic has certainly changed my exercise habits. When I was 40, it took but a few weeks to get "back in shape." Now, in my 70's, let's see. It's great to walk along the Bruce Trail or even just on the back roads here in Lincoln. By and large, people seem to be okay saying hello and moving aside as we take our journeys together.

At the same time, I am struck by the human cost of COVID. We are all aware of the loss of lives around the world and in Canada. Some estimate over six million souls have been snuffed out due to the pandemic. That count may be low. In the US, it is fast approaching one million and here, in Canada, we have over 38,000 deaths. A heavy price has been paid and yet some will say that this pales to other pandemics.

I wonder, however, if we are aware of the other side of this discussion; that is, the number of people that have been left behind to grieve their loved ones. Some estimates indicate that for every life lost, nine other humans are left to grieve that loss. And the grieving is not like other losses. As in many cases, people are left with many daily reminders of the events of COVID and the judgement from others as to what the victim did or did not do leading up to their death.

In a wonderful article in The Atlantic, Sarah Wagner, an anthropologist at George Washington University who researches death and mourning, sees similarities between the experiences of COVID griever and people whose loved ones went missing during wars. "Families didn't know what happened and are left to imagine those horrible last moments" in a way that "still troubles their grief years later."

As Unitarians, what are we to do within our local community? The Canadian Mental Health Association has information about grief and ways that one can get support. However, we might want to be aware that a normal recovery path is not the experience of many COVID grieverers. As stated in The Atlantic article, “Many grieverers are starved for sympathy and patience because our popular understanding of grief is wrong. An influential, but misleading model, suggests that it progresses through five stages—denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. But, in fact, it doesn’t involve discrete stages, it doesn’t proceed along a predictable linear path, and might not end in acceptance. ‘Closure’ is a simplistic myth. Grief, as it actually unfolds, is erratic and often slow.”

So you may be asking why do I bring these moments forward? Well, my goal is to support all of us and, to the degree possible, ensure that our funds will be available to allow us to serve our community in whatever way we want. I am touched by the donations I see coming into us, small or large. You are a giving community and there is so much we can imagine supporting.

Back to my story above. If any amongst you have thoughts on what I might be able to do to support grieving persons who have lost loved ones, please let me know. My service does not stop with what I do today. I have a flame inside that I hope will burn for so many persons in my future.



“The meaning of life is to find your gift. The purpose of life is to give it away.”

Pablo Picasso





# RYAN'S BOWL PROGRAM

*To help a child is to help a community. Education, love and hope can grow a nation.*

Ryan's Bowl is a Canadian based charity that was founded in 2006 by Ken Walsh after he travelled to Uganda. He saw, first hand, the poverty of the region, notably the sad and tragic conditions in which the children lived. It began with just sending some money to feed and care for five children. Years later and after much hard work, Ryan's Bowl is assisting with seven schools and with a babies' home. They now help feed 1,500 children and secure jobs for cooks in each school.

Ryan's Bowl's mission is to bring food, education, medical care and hope to the children of Uganda, specifically the M'bale region. Currently, they are in the stage of growth and expansion. Their plans are to assist an increasing number of small villages to flourish to the point of self-sufficiency. Their primary goals are fourfold:

1. To increase the percentage of girls attending school and passing their classes.  
By educating girls, they indirectly educate the mothers, sisters and wives of the community.
2. To offer help throughout a child's school years to ensure success and to see the child into post secondary school. This can include donors participating in a sponsorship program where they can select a child while supporting and watching them grow.
3. To address urgent needs in communities and implement programs which provide, for example, access to safe water and medical supplies/care.
4. To set up a safe home for orphans who are not fortunate enough to have a family or are in need of reliable and safe shelter; to ensure all the basic needs of a child are provided, including education, food and clothing.

To learn more about Ryan's Bowl, meet the kids and the team, learn of the impact they are having on Uganda communities or to donate, contact their website at <https://www.ryansbowl.ca>

Information and quotations obtained at Ryan's Bowl Website

*We can change the world and make it a better place. It's in our hands to make a **difference** - Nelson Mandela*

# FREE BOOKS ON LINE

by Paul Pipher



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One of my great joys used to be going to the library, the 'poor man's university', to borrow and browse. But libraries have drastically cut back their collections. With COVID epidemics shutting doors everywhere, the Internet has come to my rescue. There are many sites that offer free download books. Most sites are scams of some sort, but a few are

marvellously legitimate. The largest one, with over 34 million books to stream or download, is the Internet Archive. A few other sites restrict their offerings to higher quality downloads. There are no hidden costs on these volunteer sites, your email address is either not taken or taken and kept private. It's a wonderful doorway to information and entertainment. Here are the sites I mostly use:

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<https://standardebooks.org/>

## **INTERNET ARCHIVE**

Internet Archive is an American digital library with the stated mission of "universal access to all knowledge." As of 2022, the Internet Archive holds over 34 million books and texts, 7 million movies, videos and TV shows, 800 thousand software programs, 14 million audio files, 4 million images, 1 million media files, 2 million TV clips, and over 670 billion web pages, free to access online and sometimes to download.

<https://archive.org/>

One more site gets my 'honourable mention' and that is **IMSLP** (International Music Score Library Project) for classical sheet music and audio files. It is the first place I turn to when raw material is needed for an arrangement. The **IMSLP** is a Canadian site that is supported around the world.

[https://imslp.org/wiki/Main\\_Page](https://imslp.org/wiki/Main_Page)





## Unitarian Congregation of Niagara

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[ucn.communications@gmail.com](mailto:ucn.communications@gmail.com)

### Board of Directors

President: Matt Virro  
Vice-president: Mary-lyn Hopper  
Past-president: Penny Blake  
Secretary: Connie Scott  
Treasurer: Brian Jones  
Member-at-large: Eva Schwartzentruber  
Program: Karen Stovell  
Social Action: Beryl Stovell

**Lay Chaplains:** Contact  
laychaplainsucn@gmail.com  
Beryl Stovell, Karen Stovell

### Committee Chairs

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Choir and Music: Penny Blake,  
Karen Stovell  
Communications: Roy Blake  
Denominational Affairs: Connie Scott  
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Newsletter: LesLee Turmel, Penny Blake  
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Social: Susan Velkers, Jim Glassford,  
Karen Stovell, Abu Hosein

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Jim Glassford, Erdwin Hueniken,  
Doreen Peever

## 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.



### Deadline for Newsletter:

Wednesday, May 18

