



UNITARIAN CONGREGATION OF NIAGARA

A Congregation for Everybody

UCN NEWS

November 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

November, 2023

November 5 - Remembrance Day - service presented and led by Jim Glassford
The Town that Never Stared: A history all Canadians should know.

November 12 - Our 2nd Principle, Justice, Equity and Compassion - service presented by and led Karen Stovell
The service is part of this year's series on Unitarian-Universalist principles. Karen will be addressing this principle in relation to the current political upheaval across the globe.

November 19 - Celebrating Lives Led - service presented and led by Matt Virro and Liina Veer
Congregants are asked to bring a framed photograph of a person who has inspired them and then they are provided an opportunity to share at service, if they so choose, how that person influenced them. Details are offered on page 7 of the newsletter.

November 26 - Signs of the End of Democracy - service presented by Abu Hosen and led by Karen Stovell
Abu will explore the many threats to our democracy and where that may be leading.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

- Matt Virro

Turmoil and Hope in our Lives

In social work, at the family level, we know abusers abuse, and the children of abusers may continue that pattern into adulthood. You learn as a student that knowledge and behaviour are not related and that getting mistreated people to buy into change is difficult. You try on a small scale to help people see that while they have some power and control in their lives, everyone wins if that power and control is shared with others, and that established boundaries will help settle family disputes.

On a larger stage, such as in the Middle East today, I wonder about lessons learned and if disputed boundaries as to who has power and control over what land is an intractable problem.

This weekend the King of Jordan offered very powerful words at the Cairo Summit for Peace. As a Muslim himself, he said Muslims knew of the rules of engagement. "The Pact of Omar issued at the Gates of Jerusalem, almost 15 centuries ago, ordered Muslim soldiers not to kill a child, a woman or an old person, not to destroy a tree, not to harm a priest, not to destroy the church." It seems that boundaries were understood then, but I wonder if it's only aspirational now. It seems we have somehow lost the thread.

Might the problem be land and the ownership of it? The indigenous peoples of Canada have been teaching us that we are caretakers of the land, that we need not hoard it and that whoever owns it can and must share it.

Frances Deverell, renowned UU minister from BC, set out over 20 years ago, in a beautiful manual called *Finding a Common Voice*, that familiar voice that promotes justice, equity and compassion in human relations is the mission of Unitarian Universalists, calling for peace in the world and respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part, is central to who we are.

And so, too, Kiersten Moore, President of the CUC, said this week that "We believe as a faith organization that respects the inherent worth and dignity of every person and our interdependence, we can strongly state that no circumstances justify the horrendous acts of violence against civilians. As well, no circumstances justify subjugation, isolation, persecution, and violence against another group of people. Our statement calls for a peaceful resolution and condemns all acts of violence." UCN fully supports her statement.

It is our responsibility as Unitarian-Universalists to support the human rights for an individual or family to live in one's land in peace. Physical and emotional boundaries build strong families and promote peace. Boundaries build complex vibrant societies everywhere. It's time to stop the vile impediments to understanding.

It is a difficult, complex and worrisome time in the Middle East and for us here in Canada and the Niagara region. Yet, it is always time to start on a path to reconciliation. It begins with a cease-fire, the passage of humanitarian goods, providing civilian safe corridors, and reimagining lasting boundaries.



Jewish and Arab kids model co-existence through soccer. An initiative of the Peres Center for Peace and Innovation.



A FALL WALK

- Penny Blake

Tender yellows and passionate reds,
The wind in the willows
Overhead.
Peace!

The man on the path,
The boy on his bike.
The light filters down through
The leaves so bright.
Peace!

We walk together
In awe of this scene,
Surrounded by beauty so
Warm and serene.
Peace!

Some paths are uncertain,
Some paths are all torn,
We must work together,
Though all of us mourn.
Peace!

EVENTS

BRUNCH

Sunday, November 5

9:30am

This brunch is an annual Fall event which coincides with the time change. It will occur just before our Remembrance Day service on November 5. The following list outlines the food item which each person or couple is expected to bring. It's a fun time. Hope all can make it.

If you do not want to bring the assigned dish, please trade with someone from another list. If you are not going to be there at all,



Egg Dish

(devilled, quiche, hard boiled or ...)

Rhonda
Carol and Bill
Penny and Roy
Jacob and Nate
Fred and Mardele
Abigail

Meat Dish

Karen and Abu
Anita and Adolf
Ann
Moe and LesLee
Connie
Katherine

Fruit

Erdwin
Brian
Doreen
Peter
Shaun and Sarah
Kate

Bread

(muffins, rolls, bagels, Danish, non-gluten bread ...)

Jim and Susan
Mary-lyn
Eva and Paul
Guy
Matt and Liina
Russ
Eileen

A MUSICAL EVENT

An exciting new event is happening here on November 17! Singer, song writer and guitarist Jim Scott will be coming to visit us with an informative and uplifting presentation. Spread the news. I hope you can come!

“The Year to Save the Earth” – A Multimedia Experience by Jim Scott



***The Year
To Save
The Earth***

***A Musical and
Multimedia
Experience by
Composer Jim Scott***

Jim's lyrical songs of ecology are illustrated by beautiful and striking projected images

7:30 pm - Friday, November 17
Suggested donation \$20 (cash only)

Unitarian Congregation of Niagara
223 Church St., St. Catharines, ON, L2R 3E8

www.unitarian-stcatharines.org
ucn.communications@gmail.com

Mixing powerful songs and beautiful projected images, “The Year to Save the Earth” takes us from celebration to grieving, protest to positive vision for the planet. Jim Scott’s lyrical melodies and outspoken poetry celebrate what’s beautiful, amazing, and fragile about our Earth. As well as hard reality, the program’s message is one of optimism with many invitations to join in the singing. Facing the urgency of the environmental crisis, the musical and visual experience challenges us to feel, to learn and to act.



Prolific composer guitarist Jim Scott brings a warmth and humor with his jazz and world music influenced songs. Formerly a member of the Paul Winter Consort, Jim was composer of their celebrated *Missa Gaia/Earth Mass* and sang their anthem song *Common Ground*. He has toured the world, recorded nine CDs of original music and published a growing line of choral works. One of the originators of the Unitarian Universalist Church “Green Sanctuary” program, Jim also compiled the *Earth and Spirit Songbook*, an anthology of over 100 songs of Earth by many contemporary composers.

Half of the profits from this concert will be donated to the environmental group 50by30 Niagara, an organization which is devoted to finding ways to halt global warming and climate change.

CELEBRATING LIVES LED

Sunday, November 19

- Matt Virro

Liina Veer and I will explore the theme we introduced last year, Celebrating Lives Led.

Please bring a framed photograph of a special person, no longer alive, who has helped shape your life. We will explore together the wonderful traits of special people that spark positivity, commitment and hope and how, in the end, they shape our lives.

As before, a table will be set at the front of the sanctuary where you can bring your framed photo to be set amongst others in advance of the tribute. If you prefer not to speak about your special person, that is fine. If you choose to tell a story at the microphone, retrieve your photo from the table and bring it to the mike. After your recollection, light a candle of remembrance and return your photo to the table with others. The next person comes up and so on and so on.

This ritual has worked for Liina and me. It underscores the natural cycle of life and loss, and how we can better live our lives. See you there!

WHAT OUR COMMUNITY NEEDS



Community Care

Please continue to bring a food item each week for the food hamper. An item brought weekly by each congregant will provide the equivalent of a week's worth of groceries for a family.

Niagara Mobile Closet

203 Church St (rear door)

Tuesdays and Fridays - open 10:00 am to Noon

Sunday - open Noon to 2:00 pm

They are currently in need of work wear, job interview clothing, winter wear including boots and, especially, men's coats. You can donate any of these items that are in good repair.

2024 PLEDGE DRIVE



It is that time of year again when congregants are asked to determine how much money they can contribute to UCN over the next year. Your contributions are critical in keeping our church financially viable.

Your pledge money is directed to the many costs associated with our goals and objectives. This includes the more practical aspects of operation, including annual CUC membership fees and building maintenance and enhancements. Your contributions are also used for guest service speakers and musicians, educational materials and social action initiatives.

Brian Jones, our treasurer, will be sending out pledge forms for you to complete before the end of 2023. You can contribute in one lump sum, monthly or any interval that works for you. Your pledge is a promise of what you want to give, but we recognize that your situation may change and so may your contribution. If so, there is no need to advise anyone.

Your treasurer and board work arduously to spend your money wisely and invest it in ways that help us build reserves for large initiatives or unforeseen costs. Brian provides a monthly statement of costs, expenses and investments which you can access by examining the minutes of our monthly board meetings.

Your pledge is confidential and only the treasurer knows what you give. Your financial gift is eligible for income tax deductions.

Please contribute what you can afford. Your contributions are appreciated and essential to keep our congregation functional, vibrant and relevant.

HOW DO I GET MY MONEY TO UCN?

There are several ways of honouring your pledge:

- You can contribute at services via cheque or cash. There are small envelopes where you can insert your contribution and place it on the Offertory plate set out at the table at the bottom of the ramp. Please put your name on the envelope so we can issue you a tax receipt.
- You can mail your pledge directly to Brian Jones c/o UCN, 223 Church Street, St. Catharines, Ontario L2R 3E8.
- You can e-transfer your pledge using Interac. To do this you must be registered with your financial institution on-line. Just set up Unitarian Congregation of Niagara as an Interac payee using the email address ucn.communications@gmail.com.

WE LIGHT A CANDLE



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 of those they leave behind to mourn. We bid a final farewell to a cherished member of our UCN family:

ELAINE EDMISTON

It is with sadness that we announce the death of Elaine on October 4, 2023 at 84 years after a lionhearted battle with a rare and debilitating lung disease.

Elaine was a long time member of the UCN family. Upon joining, she wasted no time throwing herself into UCN life. She participated in pastoral care, was a faithful creator of quality handmade clothing for the homeless, and was a regular contributor to the UCN newsletter in that she was the backbone of the section "Who We Are."

What stands out about Elaine was her enormous energy, not solely to do that which is worthwhile, but also to explore new ideas and to learn. She asserted that age should not be an impediment to curiosity and discovery. And so it was with Elaine, always ready to share new ideas and to provide us with thoughtful quotations. Whether during services, study groups or in the newsletter, she reliably offered relevant citations from poets, authors or philosophers that provoked further thought and discussion or prompted a smile.

Elaine volunteered with other organizations including Gillian Place, Out of the Cold, Canadian Mental Health, The United Way and the M.S.Society.

Elaine's legacy is one of generosity of heart, mind and time. She has left all of us better and with many examples of how we can better participate in life.

Our deepest condolences are extended to Elaine's family, most notably her children Cynthia, David and Stephanie, as well as her many friends whose lives were touched by Elaine's life, love and generosity.

A funeral was held for Elaine on October 12, 2023. Those who wish can make a memorial donation to the Canadian Pulmonary Fibrosis Foundation.



REMEMBRANCE DAY REMEMBERED

- LesLee Turmel

Every November 11, while I was in elementary school, morning classes were cancelled. We were all expected to attend Remembrance Day services at the Military Memorial Cenotaph at Victoria Park, situated in the midst of a small town downtown.

I cannot remember how free or relieved I may have felt from cancelled classes. I don't remember how we all got to the park. We probably took a regular transit bus or maybe a parent drove us. It was too far for a young child to walk, even for the 1950's.

And I don't remember standing before the cenotaph shivering from the prairie cold waiting for the bugle to call us to silence. And I don't remember shifting from foot to foot to keep my feet warm or covering my mouth and nose in an effort to keep them toasty. But I probably did so, as did others who were also waiting.

But I do remember how the business of life grew distant, dim and faint with the sounds of Oh Canada, God Save the Queen and the recital of "In Flanders Fields." I remember the accounting of battles and names of local folk who died in battle. I remember hearing the stories from those who survived each World War and returned home forever changed. I remember the silence. I remember that a ghostly stillness lingered until the bugle heralded them to a quiet respite. I remember feeling great sadness.

Of all this I knew, yet I understood nothing of war. But I did feel the loss. And maybe that is beginning of understanding the costs of war, to person, a people, a nation. And maybe, just maybe, if we can remember that, it can be the beginning of bringing an end to war.



NOTEWORTHY

This is the section of the Newsletter which provides a forum for UCN congregants to contribute material that is of interest to them. This may include personal reflections, experiences or general information consistent with UU principles and interests. *This month's contribution is by Paul Pipher.*

THE VIEW FROM HERE

- Paul Pipher

I have been thinking about a topic that comes up now and again at UCN, without ever being resolved, and that is, "What is Truth?" I would like to try and come up with something that is more useful than "Truth can't be defined."

I suggest that Truth can be considered as a process: the process of becoming aware or mindful of as many different perspectives about a situation as possible. It could be called "updating our conscience." At the very least, we might develop a new appreciation for an old way of thinking. Let's consider this in the light of a recent message at UCN: Celebrating World Animal Day.

At the service we considered the reputation of St. Francis of Assisi as being kind to animals, but did not consider the menu at his Feast. This is an important question for those hoping to follow in his footsteps.

After the service, I discovered that Francis' contemporaries also wondered about his food philosophy. Although he was generally considered a vegetarian, there were doubts. Today, the evidence is only circumstantial. For example, he seemed to have followed the Benedictine dictates on meat, that it should be eaten by those who are ill, but otherwise eaten in moderation. But when Francis was asked directly about Christmas feasting, he proclaimed "I want even the walls to eat meat....and if they cannot, at least on the outside they (should) be rubbed with grease!" Although at the time there was an ongoing debate as to whether it was God's will that we be vegetarians, it was also realized that total meat abstinence would be seen as evidence of membership in a heretical group, for which penalties could be very severe.

As we know, Unitarians often express their faith as the "willingness to ask questions." There are many questions that could be asked about the effect of food animals on climate change and dangers to our health. Think of the Walkerton water contamination or the Calgary children on dialysis after eating undercooked meatloaf. Let me, instead, offer a "conscience-updater" inspired by the aforementioned service:

When we eat our fellow animals in this Web of Life, are we engaging in a form of cannibalism?

Unitarian Congregation of Niagara

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**Deadline for December Newsletter:
November 24, 2023**

