



UNITARIAN CONGREGATION OF NIAGARA

A Congregation for Everybody

UCN NEWS

January 2024

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

January 7 - The 3rd Principle: Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregation - service presented and led by Jacob Santos

January 14 - The 4th Principle: A free and responsible search for truth and meaning - service presented by Abu Hosein and led by Karen Stovell

January 21 - Wellspring Cancer Support Niagara - Guest Speaker, Susan Bernier. Service led by Karen Stovell

January 28 - Why We Remember: International Holocaust Remembrance Day - Service presented and led by Penny Blake

UPCOMING EVENTS

Circle Dinner
Friday, January 26 at 5:30

Our first Circle Dinner of the New Year will be a fun opportunity for all of us to catch up on holiday news. It is potluck. All you need to do is bring any food item you wish, from salads to entrees to desserts, to share with the group. Everyone is welcome and no RSVP is required. It is always an evening full of fun, laughter and good food!

EVENTS 33rd ANNUAL UNITARIAN MIDWINTER RETREAT
February 2-4, 2024

This year's theme is "Becoming Reacquainted," and the topic of the keynote speaker, Rev. Linda Thomson, will be "For Such a Time as This." The participants will reflect on the challenges of recent years, and ask how we can rebuild and strengthen our UU-community.



"Becoming Reacquainted"

**33rd Unitarian
Midwinter Retreat**

**@ Cedar Glen,
February 2-4, 2024**

Information: <http://uumidwinterretreat.blogspot.ca>
or Helen Iacovino, Registrar at Midwinter@FirstUnitarianToronto.org

Unitarian Midwinter Retreat
February 2 - 5, 2024 - arrival after 5pm Friday until after Sunday lunch YMCA Cedar Glen Outdoor Centre 13300 Concession 11 Schomberg, Ontario, L0G 1T0

- Full weekend, 2 nights, 6 meals, double occupancy - \$375.00 per person
- Full weekend, 2 nights, 6 meals, single occupancy - \$535.00 per person
- Saturday program, one day only with lunch and dinner - \$100.00 per person
- Saturday program, one day only, with lunch only - \$80.00 per person

There will be a wide variety of workshops and out door activities. A brochure with details will be sent out later.

Registration

Early Bird Registration will be open until December 29, 2023, and deadline for all registration is January 12, 2024. To register go to:

<https://uumidwinterretreat.blogspot.com/>

**NOTIFICATION OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
OF THE UNITARIAN CONGREGATION OF NIAGARA**

Our AGM will be held on **Sunday February 25** at the UCN
at 11 am.

It will be a hybrid meeting.



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

- Matt Virro

As December 21 approaches each year, I take a few moments to reflect on the stark contrast of the waning light and the emerging darkness in my life. I can't mistake rising in the dark and I have candles at the ready for potential power outages. I am driving a car, it seems, in darkness. And at 10:21 p.m. in the Northern Hemisphere on that date, the earth will be at its maximum tilt away from the sun. That night will be the longest of the year.

Over the centuries winter solstice celebrations were key to binding a community and softening the darkness and hardships of life. In the Northern Hemisphere, in the most ancient of times, Yule was an amalgam of many northern European customs including the stories of Odin in Norse tradition and pre-Christian Germanic and Finno-Ugric traditions. Yule could cleanse the soul, giving all a chance to look ahead to the coming year. It was a time of storytelling, making and lighting candles, and gathering around fires to lure back the sun. It was a time for feasting and festivities, including dancing and singing. Evergreens were cut and brought indoors to symbolize life, rebirth, and renewal. Evergreens were believed to have power over death because their green never faded and their strength was thought to encourage the sun's return. Over the centuries much of that merriment was rightly co-opted by Christians for their Christmas story.

Canadian Indigenous cultures, such as the Inuit, have centuries-long traditions of coming together as seasons change, hunkering down, sharing stories, eating good food, and celebrating the Indigenous identity. Some tribes, like the Nisga'a in British Columbia, blend Indigenous stories with Christian versions of Yule, mixing and matching cultures and religions in dance and song.

My winter solstice message to myself is that Yuletide is a great time and Unitarian-Universalists would do well to build a winter solstice occasion. We will look to this in 2024.

I look forward to sharing in the joys of goodness and the ever-brightening lights of our community in 2024.

Best wishes to all for a super New Year.



A NEW YEAR'S MESSAGE

- LesLee Turmel

The new year dawns and I find myself fraught with doubts about humanity's future. The world is bound by a complex history and countless struggles that we cannot untether by ourselves.

And still, we stand before a new year of opportunity. The new year is not rigidly shaped. It is as malleable as we chose to make it. What will we do with this gift, this opportunity of time?

Let us be ever aware that whatever justice, equity and peace unfolds in our world this new year, it will be brought about by the minds, hearts and hands of ordinary people with all our flaws and doubts who, still facing high hurdles, are tenacious and courageous enough to take a leap forward to help shape a world that is based on sound principles of justice and substantive purpose.

Let us dream well, and with commitment and courage open ourselves to new beginnings and possibilities

A NEW YEAR'S GIFT

- Gracia Janes

Touched by a moonbeam
Lit by a star
Let the spirit of love
Soar near and then far
Looking for children
In order to give
Our promise of peace
Wherever they live.



CORRECTION:

In the December, 2023 newsletter, I misspelled Gracia Janes' name when she submitted a "A Very Short Poem for Peace."

Please note her surname is Janes and not James.

I extend an apology to Gracia and to the newsletter readership.

SOCIAL ACTION

Community Care Food Hamper

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

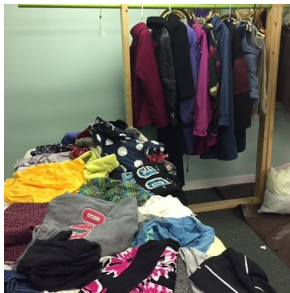
We have received a letter of appreciation from Community Care for our last contribution which was in excess of 25 pounds of food. Let us continue with this trend throughout the New Year. We know our efforts benefit others and are deeply appreciated.

Community Care Hampers for Seniors

A big THANK-YOU to all those who contributed to 2023's Community Care drive to collect funds for disadvantaged and marginalized elders. This year's contributions totalled \$485.00. All this moves St. Catharines closer towards a community where everyone's essential needs are met.

You made a difference!

Niagara Mobile Closet



203 Church St (rear door)

Tuesday's and Friday's - open 10:00 am to Noon

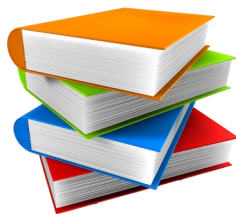
Sunday - open Noon to 2:00 pm

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.

Book Riot

Book Riot is an annual event to raise money for Birchway, a women's shelter in Niagara Falls. This year's event is scheduled for June. A specific date will be provided later.

If you have useable books that you would like to donate, bring them to UCN and place them in a box or bag in the back room, and be sure to label them "Book Riot". Mary-lyn Hopper will drop the books off at the Niagara Falls collection location.



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.

SPECIAL MEETING on INTERIOR IMPROVEMENTS

Sunday, January 7 after service

The UCN board is proposing a maximum of \$12,000.00, including a CUC grant of \$5000.00, to go towards making improvements to the sanctuary:

- repair of ceiling above kitchen entrance
- painting the ceiling and walls of the sanctuary
- replacing lighting in the sanctuary and the installation of spotlights highlighting the lectern
- replacing and repositioning sound components

The vote will occur after service on January 7, 2024. A quorum of 1/3 of our membership, currently 42, is required.

You can vote in person or by Zoom, but not proxy.

Any questions you have can be directed to Mary-lyn Hopper via email at mary.lyn.hopper@gmail.com

**Unitarian Congregation
of Niagara**

223 Church St.
St. Catharines, ON L2R 3E8
905-687-8433

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

Board of Directors

President: Matt Virro
Vice-president: Mary-lyn Hopper
Past-president: Penny Blake
Secretary: Anita Miecznikowski
Treasurer: Brian Jones
Member-at-large: Eva Schwartzenruber
Program: Karen Stovell
Social Action: Shaun Ironside

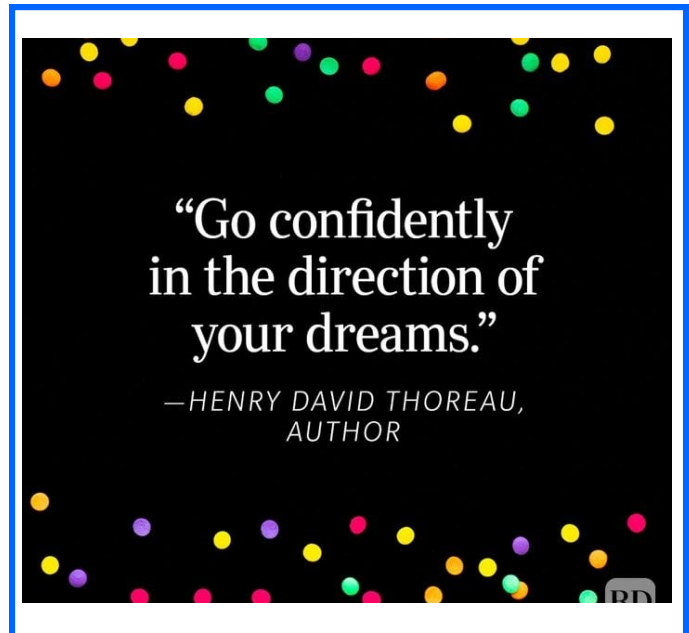
Lay Chaplains: Contact
laychaplainsucn@gmail.com
Beryl Stovell, Karen Stovell

Committee Chairs

Adult Religious Education: Karen Stovell
Music: Penny Blake, Karen Stovell
Communications: Roy Blake
Denominational Affairs: Jacob Santos
Lay Chaplaincy: Doreen Peever
Membership: Doreen Peever
Newsletter: LesLee Turmel, Penny Blake
Pastoral Care: Doreen Peever
Property: Peter Skelton
Rental: Doreen Peever
Social: Susan Glassford, Jim Glassford,
Karen Stovell, Abu Hosein
Social Action: Shaun Ironside

Trustees

Jim Glassford, Erdwin Hueniken,
Doreen Peever



**Deadline for January Newsletter:
January 19, 2024**

