



UNITARIAN CONGREGATION OF NIAGARA
A Congregation for Everybody

UCN NEWS

February 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

February 4 - Are You a Mystic and Don't Know It? - service presented and led by Jim Glassford

February 8 - 6th Principle: The Goal of World Community with Peace, Liberty and Justice for All - service presented and led by LesLee Turmel

February 18 - Sharing our Faith - service presented and led by Rev. Linda Thomson

February 25 - Annual General Meeting - Meeting led by Matt Virro

**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

I was reminded the other day of a text that has brought me comfort for many years. Psychologist Bill O'Hanlon, in his book 'Do One Thing Differently', says, "If you decide something is impossible, you are right. If you decided that it's possible, you're also right."

How true that is: depending on which side you see things, it's either a hill too far to climb or not. Herb Sawatzky's initiative 50by30 Niagara and his goal of a 50 per cent reduction in fossil fuel use by 2030 comes to mind. Some think of it as a pipe dream. Yet I suspect that with the three P's.....persistence, patience, and participation.....it is possible. Herb will do everything in his power to live the possible. As an illustration, are you hearing more about heat pumps in the news than ever before?

In my quest for congregational sustainability, I certainly learned about those three principles in the last two years. By the seat of my pants, I learned about church insurance matters and contents coverage, dealing with banks that change personnel every few months, and then having to navigate 'two-factor authentication.' It was setting aside more time to learn about the budget and to collaborate with a talented treasurer. It was dealing with our desperate homeless friends who frequent the perimeter of our building and learning from St. John Ambulance about being a good neighbour, having naloxone and defibrillators at the ready, and providing training to our team. In that vein, it was keeping the building surroundings safe and secure while maintaining a balance of never shutting our doors to the less fortunate. It was sharing Zoom space with other small congregations and collaborating with the Canadian Unitarian Council on their 8th principle initiatives. Again, things possible, with the contribution of others.

Live it, do it, share it. We create the silver lining in the dark clouds that abound. This is the mission of us as Unitarian Universalists, to explore heart and soul for ourselves and to expand our understanding of a complex world with the help of others, all in the pursuit of creating a caring society. It is all possible.

Thanks to all of you, and best wishes to everyone in 2024 on whatever road you may travel!



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)

Tuesdays and Fridays - open 10:00 am to Noon

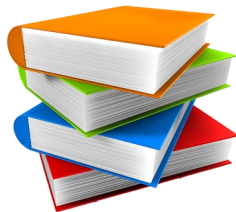
Sunday - open Noon to 2:00 pm

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.

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 11 after service

The UCN board is proposing a maximum of \$13,000.00, 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 11, 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

WHO WE ARE

- Fred Harland

My wife, Mardele, and I moved to St. Catharines last March from Mexico where we had spent most of the last 25 years in retirement. We chose the Niagara area because it is within driving distance to our daughter and family in Erie, PA, and it has a Unitarian fellowship.

I grew up in Strathclair in rural Manitoba. My Dad, a United Church minister, had many sayings. Two I recall were “How can I help?” and, as I was going off to University, “Never let your religion contradict your understanding of science.”

His advice about religion and science was often in my mind as I studied Arts and Science at the University of Manitoba, and Theology at Queen’s University in Kingston and Union Theological Seminary in New York. I left Union Theological Seminary with the question of science and religion unresolved. I then addressed my Dad’s other saying, “How can I help?”

In 1964, just after Mardele and I were married, we went with CUSO to teach in Ghana, the first newly independent nation in Africa. We had a wonderful time, learned a lot and met many fascinating people. Our appetite for development was whetted, and when we returned to Canada I spent two years at Carleton University studying the politics of developing countries and a further two years at Queen’s University directing the International Centre and working with international students. After, we spent four years in Papua New Guinea and the South Pacific opening new CUSO programs.

On returning to Canada in 1973, I was hired to develop a community college in Regina with a difference—a college that would serve not just individuals but communities as a whole. So I founded the Regina Plains Community College where as Principal I hired community development specialists who would assess community needs and develop programs to meet them. We issued a city-wide magazine twice a year advertising all the adult education available. We ran hundreds of adult education programs without hiring anyone full time, using existing teachers and facilities in the city.

I operated this college until 1986 when a new provincial government decided that they didn’t want to ask people what they needed but, instead, would tell them what they needed. My community college, along with other educational

entities, became the province-wide Saskatchewan Polytechnic. There, I established the program of International Projects and, with community development specialists, travelled throughout the third world to vocational institutes, universities, ministries of Education and asked, “How can we help?”

In the 12 years until I retired, we were involved in over 40 projects in Asia, Africa and the Caribbean helping institutions develop new programs and upgrade their staff.

I took early retirement in 1997 and for several years we were snowbirds, spending half the year in Regina and half the year in Ajijic, Mexico. There, apart from enjoying the wonderful climate and lifestyle, I was mainly involved with two things; I organized and ran discussion groups, and Mardele and I helped found a Unitarian Universalist Fellowship in 2006. It seemed to address my Dad’s advice about a religion that did not contradict science. There, I was involved in organizing and presenting services and, as President, instituted pledging and hired a part-time minister.

In looking back on my life, I get satisfaction in realizing that I have much. I have two accomplished and supportive children and four wonderful grandsons, I have explored and had the opportunity to work in much of the world, being witness to and playing a small part in one of the major events of our lifetime, the emergence and independence of former colonies, and I have helped establish a number of important organizations.

Mardele and I are enjoying this new phase of our lives, living at Ina Grafton and being part of this welcoming and supportive fellowship.



Unitarian Congregation of Niagara

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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 Schwartzentruber
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
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Social: Susan Glassford, Jim Glassford,
Karen Stovell, Abu Hosein
Social Action: Shaun Ironside

Trustees

Jim Glassford, Erdwin Hueniken,
Doreen Peever



**Deadline for March Newsletter:
February 23, 2024**

