



UNITARIAN CONGREGATION OF NIAGARA

A Congregation for Everybody

UCN NEWS

February 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

February, 2023

February 5 - Free Spirits - presented by Paul Pipher
An examination and presentation of Black American music and its impact on the trajectory of music we experience today. - service led by Eva Schwartzentruber

February 12 - The Gleaners - presented by Klaas Zeldenrust
Klaas will discuss The Gleaners project of sharing our over abundance by gathering, processing and distributing the excesses we produce to serve those with less. - service led by Karen Stovell

February 19 - Becoming Kin - presented by Patty Krawec
Author and Indigenous activist, Patty Krawec, will discuss her book which examines reimagining a better future by becoming better relatives to the land, to one another and to indigenous movements for solidarity. - service led by Eva Schwartzentruber

FEBRUARY 26
THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
OF THE UNITARIAN CONGREGATION OF NIAGARA

- A review of the past year, a projection for the new year and voting for new endeavours and committee members. All UCN members are eligible to attend.

Potluck Lunch to follow.

It will be a hybrid meeting.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Tuesday, February 7

Book Club - 10:00 am to noon at the home of Brian Jones

Becoming Kin by Patty Krawec

Lunch at a restaurant to follow

Contact Eva Schwartzenruber for details.

Tuesday, February 7

Meditation by Leaf - 4:00 to 5:00 pm

At UCN

Contact Karen Stovell for details.

Sunday, February 26

Pot Luck Lunch to follow AGM

Bring your favourite Pot Luck speciality.

Every 2nd Monday

Start Me Up Niagara

Coffee at the junction of Queenston and Church St.

All welcome.

Contact Erdwin Hueniken for details.



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Matt Virro

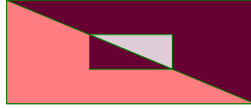
It's the thirteenth edition of 'Bell Let's Talk Day' in Canada. Not a civic holiday, nor should it be, but a reminder that mental health is such a delicate balance and must be commemorated as essential. It is so cherished and yet fleeting for many. It is the pervasive ups and downs and how we handle them differently over time. The problem is everywhere. It is ever-present in large cities and small, board rooms, shop floors, homes, schools and in faith congregations.

The Public Health Agency of Canada cites in 2023 the following bracing statistics:

- More than 200 people will try to kill themselves everyday and 12 will accomplish the task.
- One in two people struggling in this country are not getting the help they need.
- More than one in four Canadians are experiencing high levels of anxiety.
- The number of opioid overdose deaths in Canada went up more than 90% during the pandemic. It is now 20 people per day.

Our UCN covenant of love, peace and justice will guide us somewhat, but there are practical things we can all do to help one another. You have your own list, but here are some reminders. Call a neighbour, a friend, a family member. Call someone you sit next to at UCN on a Sunday service. Call those you have not seen and consider offering them a lift to service. Offer messages of kindness to anyone you are in contact with one day and then do it again the next day and the day after that. You will receive kindness in return. Clinical practice has taught me that people need to be heard. Just as much as we welcome a coffee hour on a Sunday in the sanctuary, we also welcome the other hours of the week and that include connecting as best we can in any and all ways we can. Even text!

I often refer to the Poetry Pharmacy by William Seighard who offers a compendium of *thoughts and poetry that target mental health well being*. It's a lovely resource that helps during difficult times and better times. Here is one of the poems that addresses our need for reassurance that can help today and at other times of the year:



Everything is Going to be All Right
by Derek Mahon

How should I not be glad to contemplate
The clouds clearing beyond the dormer window
And a high tide reflected on the ceiling?
There will be dying, there will be dying,
But there is no need to go into that.

The poems flow from the hand unbidden
And the hidden source is the watchful heart.
The sun rises in spite of everything
and the far cities are beautiful and bright.



“Being deeply loved by someone gives
you strength, while loving someone
deeply gives you courage.”
- Lao Tzu

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Wednesday, February 1 to Tuesday, February 28, 2023

Canada will mark the 28th official Black History Month this February. This year's theme is "Ours to Tell." Sharing the many stories of success, sacrifice and triumph of many Canadians such as Lincoln Alexander, the first Black Member of Parliament, Viola Desmond, civil and women's rights activist whose face adorns our ten dollar bill, or Isaac Phills who was the first Black man to receive the Order of Canada for his "gracious service to his country, his community and his family" help inspire all Canadians to build a more equitable and inclusive society. Be inspired to ask the hard questions in a conversation with a Black friend or neighbour about their unique experiences. Or learn more about the Underground Railroad where the "Province of Canada" received tens of thousands of "freedom seekers" from the 1840's to the 1860's, the largest terminus being the Niagara Peninsula. All of these are stories to be told. And heard.

Whether it is Black History Month, the theme of Black Lives Matter or our new eighth principle, Unitarians are called upon and, yes, obliged to learn how Black history is an integral part of Canadian history. There is a strong Ontario connection to America's slavery. It is ours to explore and uncover. There is an umbrella of freedom we helped to create. May we ensure its legacy by directing our queries from a dark past to a fulsome understanding where hope transcends to unequivocal inclusivity.



"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."
- Martin Luther King Jr.

WE'RE ALL UNITARIANS - provided by Anita Miecznikowski

*we're all normal
we're all male
we're all funny
we're all bi-sexual
we're all inspired
we're all asian
we're all cis-gender
we're all serious
we're all fed up
we're all straight*



*we're all from labrador and newfoundland
we're all stuck-up
we're all boring
we're all white
we're all awkward
we're all non-believers
we're all exhausted
we're all sassy
we're all happy*

**WE'RE ALL HISPANIC
WE'RE ALL SAD
WE'RE ALL SCEPTICAL
WE'RE ALL GAY
WE'RE ALL HUNGRY
WE'RE ALL FEMALE
WE'RE ALL LIVELY**

*we're all muslim
we're all sweet
we're all crazy
we're all loveable
we're all queer
we're all honest
we're all secretive
we're all silly
we're all human*

*we're all believers
we're all weird
we're all black
we're all amazing
we're all christian*



NOTEWORTHY

This is the section in our newsletter that provides a forum for UCN congregants to contribute material that is of interest to them. These may include personal reflections, experiences and general information consistent with UU principles and interests.

This month's contribution is from Russ Baird.

The Massey Lectures by Martin Luther King Jr.

- Russ Baird

I know of nothing that makes me more proud to be Canadian than Martin Luther King's 1967 Massey Lectures. They are amazing. I remember hearing a re-run of one about 30 years ago on NPR as I drove to Cleveland, seeing a stark contrast to his words 'the mountains of New York' and being shocked into learning that a (black) southerner could have had that as his image of a great part of his country on the way to "Canada, The Promised Land." Here is a quote from Martin Luther King's "Conscience of Change," now out of print. The complete lectures can be found in *The Lost Massey Lectures* published by House of Anansi.

"Canada is not merely a neighbor to Negroes. Deep in our history of struggle for freedom Canada was the North Star. The Negro slave, denied education, dehumanized, imprisoned on cruel plantations, knew that far to the North a land existed where a fugitive slave, if survived the horrors of the journey, could find freedom.

"The legendary Underground Railroad started in the south and ended in Canada. The freedom road links us together. Our spirituals, now so widely admired around the world, were often codes. We sang of 'heaven' that awaited us and the slave masters listened in innocence, not realizing that we were not speaking of the hereafter. Heaven was the word for Canada and the Negro sang of the hope that his escape on the Underground Railroad would carry him there.

"One of our spirituals, *Follow the Drinking Gourd*, in its disguised lyrics con-



tained directions for escape. The gourd was the Big Dipper, and the North Star to which its handle pointed gave the celestial map that directed flight to the Canadian border. So standing in Canada I am linked with the history of my people and its unity with your past.”



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Board of Directors

President: Matt Virro

Vice-president: Mary-lyn Hopper

Past-president: Penny Blake

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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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Music: Penny Blake, Karen Stovell

Communications: Roy Blake

Denominational Affairs: Connie Scott

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Social Action: Beryl Stovell,

Erdwin Huenikan

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Jim Glassford, Erdwin Huenikan,

Doreen Peever

from **The Hill We Climb**

- Amanda Gorman,
youngest ever inaugural poet

“ There is always light,
if only we’re brave enough
to see it.
If only
we’re brave enough
to be it.”



Deadline for March Newsletter:

Feb. 17, 2023

