



UCN NEWS

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

How Are We Doing With the Eighth Principle?

- Matt Virro

We are all familiar with our newly adopted Unitarian Universalist 8th Principle for Canadian congregations. It asks that we “covenant to affirm and promote: Individual and communal action that accountably dismantles racism and systemic barriers to full inclusion in ourselves and our institutions.”

At first, I saw the Principle as something akin to Sisyphus pushing that rock up the hill, ambitious and perhaps unachievable. Yet, over this past year, with racial tensions growing here and in the US, I am convinced we need to be on the road doing what we can to dismantle racism. Yes, Canadian history has shown we don't mirror the American slave ship story of 1619. However, centuries later it's obvious the xenophobia, racism and anger have no borders and we are required to do more than observe.

On July 31, Rochelle Bush, known to many of you, hosted a special Emancipation Day Open House at the Salem Chapel British Methodist Episcopal Church (BME Church) on Geneva Street. UCN was represented by Doreen Peever, Mo Constantine, Liina Veer and myself. It was a beautiful overflowing crowd. She shared stories of the church and many great photos of that era. Rochelle's talk focused on the acclaimed Harriet Tubman, “the well armed conductor on the Underground Railroad,” who presided at that church 175 years ago. Tubman, I learned, would make a career of removing the yoke of slavery from fellow black slaves and would work tirelessly in Canada and USA to change the rules of racism and freedom. Britain abolished slavery in 1834 and she wanted those same rights and privileges available to everyone. She built a community with safe houses on North Street and a freedom railway with its last stop in Niagara.

The Tubman story is a testament to the magnificent ideal of equality and how ambitious that ideal is. It illustrates how much still needs to be done by so many and for much longer to keep a flame of hope alive. The freedom road is long.

I have thought about that ambition over the past weeks and asked what might be a personal challenge. Can I do something to dismantle racism in a practical way: I'll call out those that foment hatred of others. Fair; I'll write my elected officials when I see wrongdoing. Sure; Each year, I'll be part of the Niagara Emancipation Day activities held in Niagara at the beginning of August. Yes; I will apportion a section of my reading toward those books that better my understanding of racism and building community. Books such as *'The 1619 Project'* (2021) edited by Nicole Hannah-Jones or *'Frederick Douglass'* (2018) by Yale Professor of History David Blight or *'Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents'* (2020) by Isabel Wilkerson offer a backdrop that we are in this together. All good; I'll work to develop a more diverse congregation. With the help of others, sure.

I am still thinking about more that I can do.

How might you want to adopt this 8th Principle?



Harriet Tubman



UPCOMING SERVICES

September 2022

September 4 - UCN Picnic will be held Beamsville at Albright Gardens, 5040 Pinegrove Crescent and hosted by Eva Schwartzentruber and Paul Pipher. See Fall and Winter Events for details and directions.

September 11 - Water Communion - service presented and led by Karen Stovell
This is a ritual service within the Unitarian Universalist Congregations. At UCN, it is typically presented on the first Sunday after Summer Services. Congregants are asked to bring a small amount of water that has significance for them. At service people are invited to bring their water forward and pour it into a large vessel and explain why this water is important to them. The combined water is symbolic of our shared faith coming from many different sources. As a special offering, please bring a non-perishable food item for Community Care.

September 18 - Street Works - service presented by Andrew Mekbeb
Andrew will discuss the issues surrounding the services provided by Street Works which include a needle exchange program, materials and education for safer injections and safer sex, and a safe injection site.
Service led by Karen Stovell

September 25 - Celebrating Lives Lived - service presented by UCN congregants
Members of the congregation are provided the opportunity to share a vignette of a person or pet of significance to them. Please bring a picture if possible.
Service led by Matt Virro

We are very happy to welcome back Michael Tansley as our pianist. He will be available on a halftime basis beginning with our Water Communion on September 11.

UPCOMING SERVICES

October, November and December 2022

N.B. This section will be updated every Newsletter. Please check frequently.

October 2 - UCN History - presented and led by Doreen Peever

October 9 - Thanksgiving - presented and led by Mary-lyn Hopper

October 16 - History and Gratitude - presented by Rev. Linda Thomson - service led by Karen Stovell

October 23 - Homes for the Homeless - presented by Mo Constantine - service led by Karen Stovell

October 30 - Letters to a Stranger - presented and led by Russ Baird

November 6 - Remembrance Day Service - presented and led by Jim Glassford

November 13 - The Underbelly of Evil - presented and led by LesLee Turmel

November 20 - Conspiracy Theories Part Two - presented via Zoom by Max Kennel - service led by Eva Schwartzentruber

November 27 - The Artwork of UCN - presented and led by Doreen Peever

December 4 - Myths We Buy Into - presented and led by Karen Stovell

December 11 - Hope - presented and led by Brian Jones
A Potluck lunch will follow service.

December 18 - Enacting Hanukkah - presented and led by Penny Blake

December 21 - Winter Solstice with Drumming Circle - led by Eva Schwartzentruber

December 24 at 4:30 pm - Christmas Carol Service - presented and led by Karen Stovell and Susan Glassford

December 25 - No Service

The Program Committee is always looking for UCN congregants who want to speak of something important to them or to UCN. If you are interested in speaking at service or leading a service when someone else speaks, please contact

FALL AND WINTER EVENTS

UCN ANNUAL PICNIC

Sunday, September 4

Our annual picnic will be held in lieu of Sunday Service at noon in Beamsville. It will be hosted by Eva Schwartzentruber and Paul Pipher at Albright Park, 5040 Pinegrove Crescent, Beamsville, Ontario.

For directions go to Google Maps and search 5040 Pinegrove Crescent, Lincoln Ontario.

This event is potluck. Please bring a dish to share with others. Also, please bring a plate, cutlery, a beverage and lawnchair. In the event of rain, we will be protected by a shelter.

All are welcome. If you require transportation, please make arrangements with a fellow congregant.

CIRCLE DINNERS

Our Circle Dinners will resume on Saturday, September 10 at 5:30 pm at our UCN building. As always, it will be potluck. This year the Social Committee is not assigning dishes. We simply ask participants to bring a dish of their choice to share with others.

Subsequent Circle Dinners are scheduled for Saturday, October 15 and Saturday, November 12. They, too, will be potluck and held at 5:30 pm at UCN.

Circle Dinners are a great way to let loose and get to know your fellow congregants in a fun and non-threatening gathering. All are welcome. No RSVP required.

ADULT CLASSES

Class 1 will meet on Thursday, September 15 at 10:30 am

Class 2 will meet on Tuesday, September 13 at 10:30 am

September's topic will be Rites of Passage. Reading material to help you prepare for discussion will be issued at least a week before the class.

If you are interested in attending adult classes, please contact Karen Stovell.

NATIVE PLANT GARDEN

Friday, September 30

We are receiving our plants on September 30. We will need volunteers to assist in the planting on that Friday and Saturday. If you are interested and able, con-

tact Mary-lyn Hopper. We hope that we will be able to recruit volunteers from the Queenston neighbourhood. Snacks and beverages will be offered.

IN TRIBUTE OF THE NATIONAL DAY OF TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION

Canada-Wide POW WOW

Monday, October 1

Meridian Centre (inside)

This national Pow Wow is an all day event. It will host a variety of Indigenous performances, crafts and food. All are welcome and admission is free.

Truth and Reconciliation Day has also been called Orange Shirt Day. The day was founded by Phyllis Webstadt to create an opportunity to discuss the effects of residential schools and their legacy. Phyllis will be honoured at the Pow Wow for these efforts.

Phyllis, at the age of six, was given an orange shirt by her grandmother, a gift expressly purchased for her as she excitedly waited to go off to school. Upon arriving at school, her long hair was cut short and the orange shirt, which meant so much to her, was stripped away from her to never be seen again. The colour orange is a symbol for Phyllis of the invalidating experiences of residential schools.

Phyllis is also founder and Ambassador of the Orange Shirt Society. She tours the country speaking of her story and addressing the impacts of the residential school system.

For UCNers, this is a grand opportunity to take another step on our journey to greater understanding of Indigenous peoples' history, culture and challenges. Hopefully, we can all show up! And if you have an orange shirt, wear it!

AGE-ING AND SAGE-ING

These classes will begin in October and will be led by Brian Jones.

Details of dates and times will be announced later.

DECEMBER HOLIDAY POTLUCK LUNCH

Sunday, December 11

Noon

This is scheduled for after Sunday's Service on the topic of Hope presented by Brian Jones. The luncheon format will be that of Circle Dinners and will be holiday themed.



CELEBRATION OF LIFE



Peter Shea, husband, friend and consummate Jazz musician of artistry and technique died Sunday, August 21. He had been battling cancer for several years and continued to share his musical gifts throughout his illness. Plato said, "Music gives soul to the universe, wings to the mind, flight to the imagination and life to everything." This, in good part, is Peter's legacy.

Peter had expressed to his wife, Juliet Dunn, a wish to have a Celebration of Life while he was still with us and could also enjoy the party. Sadly, Peter will not be able to partake in this celebration that will bring his family, friends and fans together. This gathering is scheduled for Monday, September 12 from 6:00 pm to 10:00 pm at White Oaks Resort. Many musicians from around the Niagara Region and beyond will be on hand to play musical tributes to Peter. Members of the UCN are welcome to attend.

A GoFundMe page had been organized by Maria Mavridis prior to Peter's death. The costs incurred and income lost due to Peter's illness are high, and Julia requires all the help you can give. Please contribute as you are able.

A funeral service will be held for Peter at Club LaSalle, 111 Arthur Street, St. Catharines on Monday, September 12 at 2:00 pm. The service will be officiated by Karen Stovell.

We at UCN extend our heartfelt condolences to Juliet and to the family. May they find comfort and peace of mind knowing that Peter lived his life to the fullest and brought great joy to others.

UCN Communications will send any updates about the Funeral, Celebration of Life or how to reach out to Juliet.

NATIONAL DAY OF TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION

- Friday, September 30

“For the Child Taken, For the Parent Left Behind”

- LesLee Turmel

Phil Fontaine forced the nation to open its eyes in October 1990 when he publicly spoke of the childhood violence and subjugation he experienced in residential schools. His public revelations validated the experiences of thousands of indigenous individuals who had also lived under the oppressive shadow of the church and government. His disclosure forced Canadians to acknowledge what many had been aware of but denied, rationalized or minimized. We could no longer believe our own propaganda. The flood gates had been opened.

In 2007, now Senator Murray Sinclair was appointed chair of the Canada’s Indian Residential Schools Truth and Reconciliation Commission. In 2015, after six years of intensive inquiries, Senator Sinclair released the Commission’s 94 recommendations encompassing child welfare, education, language and culture, health, justice, settlement agreements, missing children, burial information, and processes of reconciliation, including a call for apologies. Additionally, there was a call to establish a National Council for Reconciliation and a National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation. As of July 2021, there have only been 17 recommendations wholly or partially met by churches and governments.

There have been several formal apologies over the past 25 years, some being more fulsome than others. The two primary sources of apologies have come from the federal government and several churches. Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development Mary Stewart offered the first government apology in 1998 upon the completion of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. It uncovered and confirmed many inequities and injustices. In June, 2008 Prime Minister Stephen Harper apologized to the indigenous peoples of Canada for the Residential Schools, acknowledging that sanctioned and forced assimilation caused “great harm.” Other Canadian leaders, including the current Prime Minister, have made less formal apologies which have been specific to a group or an incident.

From the 1990’s to the present, churches have also apologized: The Anglican Church of Canada (1993); Missionary Oblate of Mary Immaculate (1992); Presbyterian Church of Canada (1994); and the United Church of Canada (1998). The most recent apologies were offered by Pope Francis in April from the Vatican and in July 2022 from Alberta and Quebec.

Are any of these apologies enough? There are many for whom they are enough. There are some that are still tormented and not able or willing to accept an apology. Others are wanting to see change beyond the words. None of these groups can be faulted for where they stand on the continuum of forgiveness and healing. Such individual journeys are fraught with obstacles that others may not see or appreciate.

Most of these apologies, speeches and homilies lack specifics beyond expressions of atonement, and only offer the promise of change or money. If good intentions, albeit often misguided and misrepresented, and money were the answer alone, there would not have been this historically colossal quagmire brought of colonialism and its incumbent racism. Pope Francis and the UN have summed it up in one word.....genocide.

Many indigenous people are beyond wanting apologies. What they most want is action. They want for their stolen land to be returned, or at least find an equitable solution. They want their treaties respected. They want self-determination which continues to be solidly withheld by the colonial based Indian Act.

If this makes us uncomfortable, so be it. We are required, if real change is to occur, to examine ourselves, not the other or just each other. It is essential to step away from "that's not me" and honestly reflect upon our preconceived notions and respective biases that restrain us from moving forward.

After examining the history and pain of Canada's indigenous peoples, we must ask ourselves what each of us is doing for our Native peoples. Do I meet, read, advocate, support them and actively listen to their stories? And how?

The path to reconciliation requires practical action and a change of heart. The Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) philosophy holds that changes and actions we take today will not be seen for seven generations. This is how long it will take to heal the deep rooted trauma. We are in it for the long haul. It does not end with an apology.

On October 1 a National Pow-Wow will be held in Meridian Centre (See Fall and Winter Events for details). Here is an opportunity for each of us to move forward. Commit to attend with an open mind and an open heart.



AGE-ING TO SAGE-ING

- by Brian Jones

What is Sage-ing? According to the traditional model of life span development, we ascend the ladder of our careers, reach the zenith of our success and influence in midlife, then give way to an inevitable decline that culminates in a weak, often impoverished old age. This is aging pure and simple, a process of gradually increasing personal diminishment and disengagement from life. As an alternative, there is a new model of late-life development called Sage-ing, a process that enables older people to become spiritually radiant, physically vital, and socially responsible “elders of the tribe.” (Age-ing to Sage-ing: A Revolutionary Approach to Growing Older (2014), Zalman Schachter-Shalomi and Ronald Miller)

Sounds wordy, and within the walls of our UCN community it might appear to be unnecessary. I am not saying that we are not living elements of what is written above, but for me, I do think there is more that can be done in this third stage of life. Here are some examples we can imagine from the ‘Treasures of Late Life’ by Connie Zweig and published in Psychology Today (2022):

1. Releasing the past, so that it no longer controls how we feel or act now.
2. Releasing our hurt, anger, resentment and regret by using emotional repair to reframe relationships.
3. Cultivating a genuine self-acceptance of who we are now, which liberates us from our inner critic and empowers us to feel and act with full authenticity,
4. Finding a broader and deeper view of our life stories, which reveals our soul’s mission.
5. Reclaiming our lost creativity and exploring its joyous value today.
6. Reconnecting with activism and service, which ends isolation and connects us to a kinship community.
7. Living with a renewed orientation toward the future that includes our evolutionary purpose and legacy.
8. Ultimately, feeling a sense of peace in the face of death.

I joined this UCN community because you share in the values I do respective to my own spirituality. I also feel there is a place in our community that allows us to stand with others in the pursuit to end racism, to end judgement of others as they embrace their own identity, and to change institutions that work for a certain segment of our society and disengage from many others. We, at this stage of our lives, have so much to offer.

I see much that calls to me as I call Niagara home. I, too, must deal with my demons and shadows, and I am constantly working to improve my level of comfort and authenticity with all of you. My love for each of you is what calls me to sit with you and explore some of these concepts. We will learn together. You all bring so much to the conversation.

With Love,
Brian



**Nobody grows old
merely by living a
number of years. We
grow old by deserting
our ideals. Years may
wrinkle the skin, but to
give up enthusiasm
wrinkles the soul.**

 heartfeltquotes.blogspot.com

THE IMPORTANCE OF NATIVE PLANTS

- by Mary-lyn Hopper

We are developing a native plant garden at UCN. Native plant gardens are often confused with “Pollinator Gardens.” The distinction is clearly outlined here in an article by *Lorraine Johnson* on The Halton Master Gardeners website:

“Native plants are a species that has evolved in association with all the features of a place and developed specific and important functional relationships and interactions that contribute to the specificity and identity to that place.”

The plants in our garden will provide a rich environment for native insects and, consequently, the birds which feed upon them.

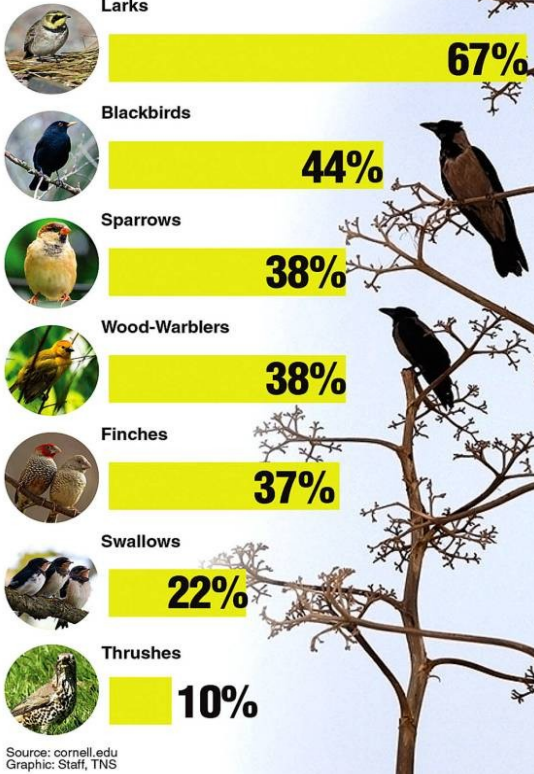
Native plants matter because they have evolved with native insects. The monarch butterfly is an easy-to-understand example. Without milkweed, there are NO monarchs. When we plant species from other geographic regions, we don't sustain the local insect population. Why is this important? Because the insect population is currently collapsing. Why is that important? Because the bird population is collapsing.

We have all seen it. There is probably some part of us that may desire the look that is achieved by planting some of those highly popular landscape plants promoted by nurseries, home decor websites and growers. Often, they are promoted as “pest-free” and/or “low maintenance.” The reason they are pest free or low maintenance is they offer almost no value to local ecosystems and add nothing to biodiversity. They do not support any insects which means they do not support birds. The flowers, sap and leaves of these trees and shrubs do not appeal to insects that have evolved in North America. (Insect diversity decreases in gardens with non-native plants; Burghardt, Tallamy 2015). Sometimes, the time of blooms or fruit doesn't coincide with the emergence of native insect species or bird migration. In other cases, some of our native plants have been hybridized to create leaves of unusual colours or showy blossoms but offer little to no value to insects and birds. Take, for example, hydrangeas. The horticulture trade has developed many cultivars that actually don't have flowers! The ‘blossoms’ are made up of sterile bracts which have no nectar or pollen. Lacecaps is one variety of hydrangea that does have some value for pollinators (shown)

Where have all the birds gone?

If you were alive in 1970, more than 1 in 4 or 2.9 billion birds in the U.S. and Canada have disappeared within your lifetime. Habitat loss is likely to be one of the driving factors in these declines.

Losses among birds by family



HOW CAN YOU 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. 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

You can also support UCN beyond your lifetime through a Legacy Gift. This enables the continuous message and work of Unitarianism to speak out and lays the foundation for a stable and exciting future for the congregation.

There are several ways to do this, and it is recommended you seek independent financial advice about legacy gifts and discuss it with those family members who need to be aware of your decision.

For the best future for UCN, please consider a Legacy Gift.

SOCIAL JUSTICE

A Positive Challenge

- by Beryl Stovell

Why not bring an item of food to church every week to donate to Community Care St.Catharines? It is a simple way to develop the habit of making regular contributions to an ongoing need within our community.

Please bring only non-perishable food or household items. You can check with Community Care's website www.communitycaresca.ca or their Facebook page to see what specific items they need at a particular time. You can also select from the list that follows.

Items regularly required:

- canned proteins
- granola bars
- hearty stews and soups with protein
- diapers size 4 and up
- beans with sauce
- canned fruit
- canned vegetables
- spaghetti sauce
- canned pasta such as Beefaroni or SpaghettiO's

Recent research released from Homeless Hub reports that one in six Canadian households experience food scarcity. With food prices rising, the cost of living fluctuating and food banks' use ticking upwards, it becomes increasingly critical that Community Care remains a sustainable venue for serving others living at the edge. Please do your part and contribute as you can. A bin will be placed below our bulletin board for your donations.

Your contributions are appreciated.



THE PRIDE FLAG

- Matt Virro

I am reminded how Canadians have wholeheartedly adopted Pride Month each June. Fabulous parades! Our style varies quite a lot from our friends south of the border who are more hesitant to jump on board. Legislators, it seems, are steadily enacting laws to remove LGBTQ+ rights in many states. This is discouraging.

In 1995 the Canadian Supreme Court held that sexual orientation is constitutionally protected under the equality clause of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. In 2005, Canada was the fourth country in the world and the first in the Americas to implement same-sex marriage nationwide.



It got me thinking about our LGBTQ flag in the sanctuary which has held up well over the past 45 years but may need replacement.

It was in 1978 when San Francisco resident, Gilbert Baker, set out to design a flag in beautiful bold stripes; hot pink for sexuality, red for life, orange for healing, yellow for sunlight, green for nature, turquoise for magic, blue for serenity and violet for spirit.

Baker, an openly gay artist and activist, at the age of 27 sewed the first gay pride flag by hand. The flag spanned 30x60 feet which would hang at the United Nations. To date, there have been 50 different iterations of that flag, each symbolizing different gender identities, sexual orientations and regional character.



The Pride Progressive Flag, designed by Daniel Quasar in 2018, has been the foundation for newer flags. Core ingredients feature the addition of black and brown stripes to portray marginalized LGBTQ+ communities of colour, and baby blue, pink and white

to incorporate the trans flag as part of the new arrow shape. The arrow leads to the right to confer forward movement while purposely being aligned with left edge, pointing to the fact that much progress still needs to be made.

In 2021, Valentino Vecchietti created the design on the left of the flag calling it the “Intersex Pride Progress Flag” which adds a purple circle to the flag. The design has gained much traction in the UK.

Is it time for UCN to update its LGBTQ flag in the sanctuary? By doing so, are we demonstrating our desire to adopt a new inclusive progress symbol?

You can view the video from Mary Bennett of the Unitarian Congregation of Victoria describing why their congregation is adopting this latest iteration of the flag at:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/14VHkU2dKsBDvnbrO9k5B1Oud9N_hgfLF/view?usp=sharing

**Unitarian Congregation
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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 Oct. Newsletter:

Sept. 16

