



UNITARIAN CONGREGATION OF NIAGARA

February 2022 Newsletter

Upcoming Services

February 6: Wade Pfaff will speak on the topic: *Black History in Niagara*. The service will be led by Karen Stovell.

February 13: Matt Virro will lead our service and speak on the topic: *Faces of Luck*.

February 20: Paul Pipher will lead the service and follow up on one of our previous service topics: *Conspiracy Theories*.

February 27: Our Annual General Meeting will be held in place of our regular service.

Adult Education

The second Adult Ed class will begin on Tuesday, February 8, 10:30 am until noon. The class will be on Zoom and the link will be forwarded to you the day before. Class material will be sent by email at least two weeks prior to the class. There are three spaces left. If you are interested in attending, please send an email to me ASAP.

- Karen Stovell

President's Message

I will soon be leaving my post as your pandemic President, and it has been quite the adventure. I grew and learned many valuable lessons about the process of leadership, and from others on the board. We steered a pretty steady ship, and it was a collective process, not singular. So I am very grateful for all the people who stepped up to this task.

We all learned as well, through the ups and downs of this pandemic year, that we are resilient and that we can carry on. We filled seniors' hampers and provided winter necessities for Positive Living, fulfilling our mission to care for others in our community. And, through Zoom, we continue to meet to fulfill our own community's and personal needs. We need to stay connected. We need to hear messages of hope and inspiration to keep our spirits strong.

So, thanks all, to service leaders, speakers, and musicians. Every week, the humour and kindness from friends old and new is still able to reach me, and provide me with new reasons to see life as full of possibilities.

I can't say goodbye yet to my work here for the UCN. I will now fill the role of Past President, help with our publications and Zoom board meetings. But now I can pass on the responsibility of steering the whole ship. Thanks to LesLee, for all her work, to Roy, our communications guru, to all of the Board, who have worked hard to keep the UCN running, and to you, the congregation. I know that each of us, in our own way, has chosen to show up – for each other, and the larger community.

I know much is planned for the following year. I trust that, as always, we will continue in good spirits, and for the good of all.

- Penny Blake

Resuming Social Activities



We regret that any plans for the Circle Dinner, Film Night and the Book Club have again been postponed because of Covid. We hope that this suspension of activities is short-term and that we can get together again sooner than later.



A Prayer

This prayer was said at the end of one of Karen Stovell's Sunday presentations and is printed here at the request of Jenny Leach.

May peace be the rain to thirsty bones
The sun to grief-soaked hearts
May it fall like fresh linen on unmade beds of unsettled minds
May peace be the gentle kiss breeze that kisses cheeks and tickles the skin
May it come to hush cresting waves
The shores made safe to breathe

- *Courtney Tudman*
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Snow Removal

I attended the Queenston Roundtable meeting on Wednesday, February 2. There was much discussion centred on snow removal in St.Catharines. It was noted that sidewalk snow removal can be provided free of charge to any person who is elderly or has mobility issues. For those who wish to use this service, contact Citizens First at St.Catharines City Hall: phone at 905-688-5600, email at citizensfirst@stcatharines.ca or in person on the second floor of City Hall.

There are other groups that provide similar services, but contacts were not made available at the time. I will search those out for future reference.

You are encouraged to use these services if you require them. They are provided to eliminate risk of injury and facilitate access to your home, especially in an emergency.

- *LesLee Turmel*



CUC Special General Meeting

The Canadian Unitarian Council met on November 27, 2021 and was a fascinating look at the cultural divide inherent in our organization. There were 104 delegates, tasked with voting on the proposed eighth principle. There were an almost equal number of observers, including youth and support staff. Forty congregations and all four regions were represented after months of roundtable discussions, amendments, reviews of bylaws, and strategic discussions.

The proposed principle was: **“Individual and communal action that accountably dismantles racism and systemic barriers to full inclusion in ourselves and our institutions”**.

The meeting included people from across Canada and was 20 minutes late in starting, despite the urgent request for people to join in the Zoom meeting 45 minutes earlier. The delay before all people were registered was wearying even before we began. Once we began, people were invited to register for discussion. Many wanted to have their say, asking for amendments, discussing harm reduction, exclusions, and appeared to be diverting the intent and purpose of the meeting. We were quickly bogged down in repetitive and irrelevant input from so many people. The president kept trying to invite IBPOC members to speak, but so many others grabbed the floor, reiterating what had already been discussed during the previous months, both for and against the proposed principle. Some wanted to postpone the vote indefinitely. Some wanted to change the order of the existing Principles. It appeared a select few were dominating the whole process.

We became bogged down in Robert’s Rules of Order. Point of Order. Debates. Call the Question. Motion to Defer. How to proceed with diverse motions.

Finally, a few IBPOC people had the opportunity to speak, talking about how distressing the day had become, where the procedure to adhere to the colonialism inherent in Robert’s Rules had obliterated the fundamental issue of the day. Another spoke with anguish, pointing out that this process was destroying her hopes that the CUC, offering solace and inclusion, seemed to have denied her a place of acceptance.

Her eloquence brought us all to a halt. Had this meeting ended with another “white exclusive” expression? A dash of cold reality. Most of us seemed to realize the harm that was happening.

The final vote was called and proceeded quietly, even humbly. Delegates responded with 95% voting in favour of the eighth principle.

- *Beryl Stovell*

Ecumenical Chaplaincy at Brock University



“We have not ceased praying for you and asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of God’s will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you may lead lives worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, as you bear fruit in every good work and as you grow in the knowledge of God.” Colossians 1:9b-10

It is my pleasure to introduce myself as the new ecumenical chaplain at Brock University in St. Catharines, Ontario. I began in the position on April 1, 2021 and I have been settling into the role these recent months. Due to Covid restrictions, September marked the first time I was able to be physically present on campus.

Chaplaincy at university provides spiritual and pastoral care to students and staff via a ministry of presence, outreach, and faith exploration. I now have the privilege of walking with university students as they discern the pathways for their future and learn to listen to how God is guiding them. Entering university is both an exciting and scary time for many of them. It is often a time of budding independence, exploring new ideas and ways of being in the world. This can be challenging, confusing, and mind-broadening all at the same time. A university chaplain provides a ministry of presence; a person who will walk alongside and provide a safe space for wrestling with new concepts, light bulb moments, and even discovering new identities.

Given the challenges we have all faced during the pandemic, I decided to offer a program last fall that examines the intersection of faith and mental health. The program is called “The Sanctuary Course” and it is an online, ecumenical program which explores the topic from a psychological, social, and theological perspective. Additionally, each session is accompanied by a compelling film featuring the story of an individual who has journeyed through mental health challenges as a person of faith. This course was created to raise awareness and start conversations about mental health and how it combines clinical research, theological practice, and lived experience. The program helps reduce stigma, support mental health, and promote mental wellbeing. It is a very user-friendly program and is suitable for congregations. I would highly recommend it! More information can be found at www.sanctuarymentalhealth.org

Much of the role as chaplain involves building bridges and creating liaison opportunities. I encourage students at Brock University to reach out to me as a resource for support, encouragement, and spiritual guidance. From local congregations, I welcome prayers for the chaplaincy ministry at Brock University, that it may be a place of welcome and acceptance for everyone.

- Rev. Krista Hilton - nb_khilton@brocku.ca

Social Action at UCN

Our social action activities were significantly constricted last year by Covid-19 restrictions. Yet this did not stop us from pursuing our goals.

Participation in the annual Out of the Cold dinner served at Knox Presbyterian Church was successfully carried out last year. The date for this year's Out of the Cold dinner has been set for Friday, March 4, and our four volunteers have been secured.

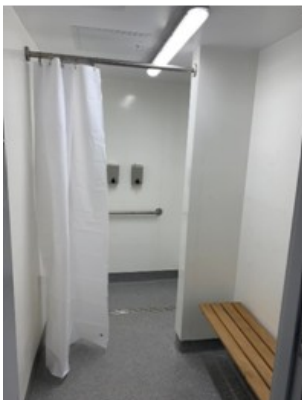
Several UCN members have attended the Queenston Neighbours monthly Zoom meetings. This sharing and coordination of agencies and resources in the Niagara area is very vital and impressive. Represented are local clergy, MPPs, Streetwise, Positive Living, Niagara School programs including care packages at Christmas. The coordination of food resources for the needy, information about drop-in centres, Covid vaccination sites, and updates on activities fill the hour with information on many resources in the community. I encourage anyone who is able to sign up for these meetings.

Our social action budget is based on 10% of the total 2022 UCN budget, providing us with \$2760 to administer. We gave the majority of our donations, \$2000, to Silver Spire United Church to put towards the renovations and expansions of their washroom and laundry facilities. (See pictures). This way, we are contributing significantly towards the homeless people in our community. We also gave \$150 each to The Village of Hope, Seeds Change, Women4Women, Gillian's Place, and the Native Centre at Niagara on the Lake.

Christmas again saw UCN, spearheaded by LesLee Turmel, preparing hampers for seniors, and warm hats and mitts distributed to Positive Living. Thanks to all who have made donations to these causes.

I am so grateful to all the on-site people who are doing everything we can as a congregation to address the needs of the Niagara community. Thank you everyone.
- *Beryl Stovell*

Silver Spire's New Facilities for the Homeless



Unitarian Congregation of Niagara

223 Church St.
St. Catharines, ON L2R 3E8
905-687-8433
unitarian-stcatharines.org
ucn.communications@gmail.com

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Social Action: Beryl Stovell

Lay Chaplains: Contact

laychaplainsucn@gmail.com
Beryl Stovell, Karen Stovell

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Adult Religious Education: Karen Stovell
Choir and Music: Penny Blake, Karen Stovell
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Social: Susan Velkers, Jim Glassford, Karen Stovell, Abu Hosein

Trustees

Jim Glassford, Jenny Leach, Doreen Peever

Reiki Principles

Jim Glassford's October presentation addressing Reiki principles garnered interest from many UCN congregants. In response, Jim has submitted the Five Reiki Principles.

1. Just for today, I release angry thoughts.
2. Just for today, I release thoughts of worry.
3. Just for today, I am grateful.
4. Just for today, I expand my consciousness.
5. Just for today, I am gentle with all being.

Using the Reiki principles as a daily mantra helps to guide your thoughts and actions, promoting spiritual and personal growth, and facilitating a healthier, more fulfilling and balanced life.

Deadline for March Newsletter:
February 16.

Send articles to LesLee Turmel at
larganturmel@gmail.com