



UNITARIAN CONGREGATION OF NIAGARA

A church for people
with enquiring minds

April 2010

Sunday Services

Apr. 4 The Big Shift – *Dennis Gaumond*
S.L. V. Jaeger

Global warming and climate change is only the tip of the iceberg. Our planet and its residents are going through some profound and enormous changes that will affect climate, seismic activity, solar flares and, most importantly, human consciousness. Many prophets have spoken of this change - some call it the 'End Times', some the 'Apocalypse' or 'Armageddon', while others refer to it as 'the Big Shift'. Are we in the process of 'graduating' to a new dimension - of ascending into Christ-consciousness?

Apr. 11 Canadian Cancer Society Services
– *Charmaine Grace S.L. J. Momirov*

Charmaine delivers presentations to help people reduce their risk of developing cancer. Her goal as a speaker is "Helping Others Help Themselves."

Apr. 18 Kriya Yoga: Body, Mind, Heart and Soul – *John Tonin S.L. V. Jaeger*

An ancient technique that Yogananda brought from India will be taught to help focus & concentrate the mind.

Apr. 25 Lise Latremouille, USC – *Topic to be advised S.L. J. Momirov*

President's Corner . . .

This is the first newsletter since my becoming President, and I intend to communicate with our readers throughout my term of office. If you have any thoughts, responses, reactions, please communicate them to me either by E-mail, orally at Church, or by a note sent by "snailmail". Your active participation is always appreciated.

I would like to title this message "Social Action and Finances". In January I delivered a sermon based on a UUWORLD article with the theme of private or public religion. That article answered a concern that has bothered me for some time. I joined the Unitarian community in Toronto in the 1950s, while still a high-school student. Because most of my school friends representing a variety of denominations shared my committed disbelief in the usual Christian doctrines, I was then certain that by the time I was 35 or 40, the Unitarian denomination would be the dominant one at least in North America. The fact is, that in spite of some slow growth, we are essentially still a very small denomination. Most unbelievers are unchurched, rather than switch to us. The article explains that skeptics are not going to look to churches to answer whether or not there is a god, a soul, afterlife, heaven and/or hell or purgatory, was Jesus' resurrection a historical fact, and is belief in it salvific. All these issues are of private concern, and skeptics don't look to churches for "answers".

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2010/2011

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In contrast, a "public" church is concerned with community, justice, freedom, poverty, peace, respect, human rights and ecology. Of course most if not all the churches speak of the importance of gratitude, forgiveness and love. But talking the talk is different from walking the walk. The article suggested that churches which may appeal to spiritually concerned people are ones whose budget contains about 16% of the money going not to the mere continuation and preservation of the churches' inner needs and functions, but to outreach into the community and the world, to realize a better milieu locally, nationally and globally. If the Congregation, rather than merely individual members of it, act in this way, it is likely to find new and committed adherents, while it actually improves the social fabric of its local, regional and global setting.

You liked the ideas of that sermon, and in consequence two alternative budgets were proposed for 2010 at the February Annual General Meeting; one that carried on as we have been in the past; another, with a bumped up social action budget from the usual 5% to 16%. In other words, an 11% increase. The AGM, much to my delight, accepted the higher budget.

This brings us to the substance of this article. Item one is that your Social Action Committee needs input as to how to use this money. What we hope for is that we can identify some worthwhile need, possibly local, which needs a somewhat limited funding to function effectively, and with which we might be publically identified. We would prefer not merely to grant funds, but participate in its operation. Habitat for Humanity springs to my mind, but I want many of you to give this thought and make suggestions. These will be discussed at the Board meetings, and in consultation with our Social Action Committee. The result of those deliberations will be brought back to the congregation for vote and support. Probably some hard choices will have to be made. But at this time, we are collecting ideas. If you know of a project that represents a social need, and is close to the objectives of our congregation, let us know. Your suggestions will receive serious consideration.

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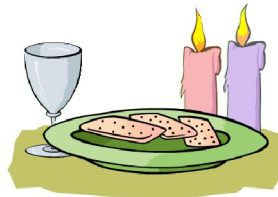
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The second matter is money. Last year we sought pledges in the Fall as the basis of our 2010 budget. These were collected before my sermon, and were based on the assumption of carrying on as always. The actual pledges this last year were somewhat less than the previous year. However, it was pointed out that if we are to spend more money in outreach and practical social action, we need to collect more money. At the last Board Meeting it was decided that we do not wish to reopen pledging now, since the budget is what it is. However, we need to find the extra 11% that we wish to spend, without going into deficit. We plan some fund raising events, such as a concert, a rummage sale, a dinner, and lunches. But these are not likely to raise the needed money in the neighborhood of \$5,000.00 I am asking all those who pledged, to consider donating about 10% more than they pledged, IF THAT IS NOT A HARDSHIP. Perhaps a cheque to the Treasurer, marked "a contribution in excess of my pledge" will indicate how we are doing, and can accelerate our actual start. This, I hope, will enable us to do what we have decided, without weakening our stability. Thank you for considering this; and a double thank you for a cheque if you decide to act on the suggestion. We shall keep the congregation posted on how we stand.

– John Mayer

Congregation News

Upcoming Events: *Mark your calendars!*



Community Seder
being planned
for
Friday, April 9
at the Unitarian
Congregation of Niagara
Doors open at 6 pm

Our Seder will focus on the theme of liberation and freedom. If you have any thoughts about this or a short poem to share feel free to bring this. A donation of \$10 per person is suggested for dinner.

As well, please bring a canned good for us to donate to the local food bank.

Sunday, April 25 a funding raising lunch will be held for USC. In accordance with USC philosophy of **promoting vibrant family farms, strong rural communities, and healthy ecosystems around the world**, the ingredients for lunch, once again, will be sourced from locally grown foods. The menu will be a

Potato Bar with interesting toppings followed by an apple based dessert.

The suggested cost of lunch is \$10.00.

Membership

- At the CUC Annual meeting there is a special dinner for "Empty Bowls". Delegates from each congregation are asked to bring a bowl which will be exchanged with another congregation. From now until May, members are invited to contribute cash to this bowl for our delegate, Carl Beckett, to take to Victoria. The money collected from all of these bowls will go to a charity (such as a soup kitchen, youth outreach, women's shelter) which is supported by the host church. Our bowl was made by Barb & Ron Zimmerman of Lakeside Pottery and is a beautiful yellow with a white design on the interior.
- Walter Jutting celebrated his 92nd birthday on March 12th. Happy birthday, Walter!
- This article is from "ABC's for UU Newcomers", by William Cleary. I intended it especially for our new members but it is useful as a reminder for all our members.

F is for Friendly,
The way we converse ---
Without always judging
Who's better or worse.

FRIENDLY All across history, people have shown themselves most unfriendly in the area of religion and belief, burning people at the stake for denying some "truth" of religion, and waging murderous wars against nations of other religious persuasions.

Today's UU Association is a kind of safe plateau where people of our culture who have opposed some things in the dominant religions and **dissented from common beliefs** can find a place of peace and agreement. For UUs, the great dissenters over the ages are their heroes and heroines, and within the UU "church" today every kind of opinion is found.

You may consider yourself Protestant or Catholic, Hindu or Buddhist, Jewish or Pagan, believer or unbeliever, and still be a good Unitarian Universalist. The only requirement is to honour the seven fundamental UU commitments: to respect, to equality, to openness, to encouragement, to democracy, to compassion, and to earth-friendliness.

Humanism is an important movement both within and outside of UUism. Often when a UU is called a humanist, it means the person is not a believer in a god or a supernatural world, but

other UUs call themselves "religious humanists" or "secular humanists." It is not an exact title but stresses concentration on human values and ethics, rather than on spirituality or religion. Within the UUA, humanists are well organized __ and comfortable.

"May I be no one's enemy and may I be the friend of that which is eternal and abides. May I wish for every person's happiness and envy none. May I never rejoice in the ill fortune of one who has wronged me. May I, to the extent of my power, give needful help to all who are in want."

EUSEBIUS
UU Service Book #521

Jim Glassford,
Membership Co-ordinator

Free Unicamp Stay . . .

Unicamp has given our congregation a voucher for free room and board for 2 persons for 2 nights. If you wish to be included in the draw for the Unicamp voucher please put your name in the envelope at the back bulletin board. If want to be included but are unable to get to the church, email me and I will put your name in for you. [Carl Beckett cbeckett8@cogeco.ca](mailto:Carl.Beckett@cogeco.ca)

(If you don't know about Unicamp I would suggest you visit their website, www.unicampofontario.ca. Unicamp is a very special place for Unitarians and like minded people and it's especially wonderful for children. They get visitors from all over the world.- S. Vuorinen)

Land for Life, Not for Agrofuels

I attended the Social Justice forum at Brock on March 20th. This is their fourth year to have this type of forum. There were so many interesting workshops to attend that it was difficult to choose. All the workshop leaders were tops. I will list the topics covered. Niagara's threatened beautiful landscapes, proper shelter saves lives (Habitat for Humanity), Building global solidarity with migrant farm workers in the Niagara region, aboriginal children in the care of Children's Aid Society, conflict, violence and reconciliation with reference to Colombia, naming homelessness, the other side of consciousness - lesbian, gay, bisexual transgendered queer films, native women - an endangered species, food sovereignty in the Global South (A Development and Peace appeal), and peace cafes. Finally, we were all gathered together in the Plenary to see a film called Six Miles Deep. The director Sara Roque was present to answer questions about the Haudenosaunee women and the Six Nations/Caledonia conflict. In the evening there was a performance of the Vagina Monologues at the Market Square in downtown St. Catharines. There were information tables such as information about Cuba from the local Canada-Cuba Friendship Society. The lunch and snacks were exceptionally delicious.

I have listed all the topics so if anyone wants further information about any of the workshops, I can give you some leads as to who to contact. Also, I will make sure to have you informed when the next forum will be held and the workshops that will be offered.

I have some petitions from the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace. I will summarize what is written on the petition and why it is so important since the meeting of the G8 in June 2010 will be held in Canada in both Huntsville and Toronto. Mohammed Nazir informed us that buses will be leaving from the CAW if you are interested in attending the demonstrations. The petitions are addressed to the Prime Minister and your Member of Parliament who can publicly support Development and Peace's call to action. Your MP can ask a question or make a motion in the House of Commons, and ask their party to support

Development and Peace's call to action.

The petition states the following. "Faced with hunger in many parts of the world, I believe that agricultural policies must be guided by the principles of food sovereignty. Hunger and poverty can be reduced by giving priority to small-scale farmers, to local food production for local markets, and to the needs of future generations.

Current agricultural policies that support industrial agriculture, especially those that promote agrofuels, threaten the food sovereignty of people in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Production of agrofuels cause population displacement and environmental problems. It also raises the price of food. It does not solve the growing problem of climate change or address the exhaustion of the world's oil supplies.

During the meeting of the G8 to be held in Canada in June 2010, I ask

that you use your influence with the other G8 members to ensure that these countries increase their support for small-scale, sustainable agriculture in the Global South. This must be given priority over industrial agriculture especially that which focuses on agrofuels."

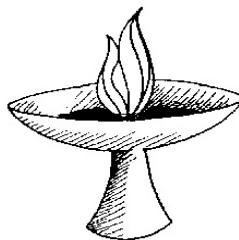
To conclude, let's examine why the word biofuels has been replaced by agrofuels. Many of the Global South argue that the word "biofuels" gives the impression that they are clean, green and sustainable. In reality, these fuels are created from agricultural products such as corn, sugar, oil palm, soy or even eucalyptus. They are usually grown in an industrial way in large-scale monocultures, which depend on chemical fertilizers, cause deforestation, pollute water, and damage biodiversity. For further information on this matter, consult www.dev.org/materials and connect to education.

– Sofia Vuorinen

Annual ACM Meeting **2010**

If you're planning to attend the annual ACM meeting this year in Victoria, BC, you can now find registration forms online.

Visit www.cuc.ca/conference/2010 for more information.



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