



UNITARIAN CONGREGATION OF NIAGARA

A church for people
with enquiring minds

April 2006

Sunday Services

April 2006

- Apr 2 **Matthew Fox's A Spirituality Named Compassion: Uniting Mystical Awareness with Social Justice** – *John Mayer*
- Apr 9 **Rev. Christine Hillman (Olinda)**
- Apr 16 **Flower Communion Service (Easter)**
- Apr 23 **The Niagara Escarpment on Earth Day** – *Don Alexander*
- Apr 30 **Alia Hogben** – *Topic TBA*

May 2006

- May 7 **Timothy Healey** – *Topic TBA*
- May 14 **A Quaker Perspective on the Spiritual Journey** – *Rosemary Cipryk*
- May 21 **The China Diaries** – *Nick Kaethler*
- May 28 **Youth in Crisis** – *John Storm*

June 2006

- June 4 **Sharing Our Faith**
– *CUC Fundraiser Service*
- June 11 **Church Picnic**

Flower Communion Service . . .

On April 16th we will hold a flower communion service. Everyone is requested to bring at least one fresh flower to be exchanged with other members.

Taken from the UUA website, written by Reginald Zottoli:

The flower communion service was created by Norbert Capek (1870-1942), who founded the Unitarian Church in Czechoslovakia. He introduced this special service to that church on June 4, 1923 because he felt that some symbolic ritual would bind people more closely together. The format would not alienate any who had forsaken other religious traditions. He turned to the beauty of the countryside for elements of a communion which would be genuine to his congregation. The flower communion service was such a success that it was held yearly. It was brought to the United States in 1940 by Dr. Capek's wife, Maja V. Capek, also an ordained Unitarian minister. It was during her tour of the United States that Maja introduced the flower communion at the Unitarian church in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Unfortunately, Maja was unable to return to Prague due to the outbreak of World War II, and it was not until the war was over that Norbert Capek's death in a Nazi concentration camp was revealed. From this beginning the service has spread to many of our Unitarian Universalist congregations and has been adapted along the way.





**Unitarian Congregation
of Niagara**

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**Executive Council
for 2006/2007**

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Who Are We . . .

Doreen Peever has been our Lay Unitarian Chaplain since 1992. She was born in Orillia and sang in the United Church choir along with Gordon Lightfoot. While pursuing her Honours English course at McGill, she joined the Unitarian Church of the Messiah in Montreal and has been a UU ever since.

She is the mother of two grown children and the grandmother of five. Doreen has worked in libraries for approximately 25 years in several Canadian provinces and Germany for three years. When she became a senior citizen in 2004, she retired from her day job giving her more time to be a Lay Chaplain. Doreen does calligraphy and origami as a member of the Craft Guild in St. Catharines, where she has lived since 1976. She also has been collecting Inuit sculpture since 1957. She has served Meals on Wheels for 20 years and was on their Board for 18 years. For many years, she has been on our Church Board and on the Community Concert Board. In her leisure, she enjoys attending the theatre and symphony concerts.

Doreen has officiated at about 408 weddings, more than 30 memorial services and about a dozen child dedications. When the law legalizing same-sex marriages was passed in Ontario on June 10, 2003, she began to be inundated with couples from many different states of the U.S.A., as well as Niagara, Alberta, Mexico, Puerto Rico, Australia and Britain. The law change resulted in her officiating at 60 same-sex weddings in 2003, 52 in 2004, 43 in 2005 and 3 so far in 2006. Before the law changed, she had officiated at 7 same-sex unions since 1996.

Her support has been very public on this issue, lobbying MP Walt Lastewka to invite him to some of these weddings. He didn't even reply! The St. Catharines Standard and the Guardian Weekly have interviewed her and published pictures of one of the weddings. She debated a United Church minister in a Gr.12 Philosophy class at E. L. Crossley School in Fonthill, twice took part in a two-hour discussion as part of Plato Dialogues at the Centennial Public Library and debated a fundamentalist minister on air at CHSC. In total, she has had three radio interviews including one with me on CFBU. An interview with her appeared in the Unitarian newsletter which is sent to every member of our denomination in Canada. In 2004, she taught a group of Unitarian chaplains in Kingston two modules, one on same-sex marriage and the other on non-Christian and interfaith marriages. In 2005, she repeated the same-sex marriage workshop for another 30 or so Unitarian chaplains at the Mid-Winter Retreat that is sponsored by the Greater Toronto Area UU's. One component of these Retreats is for chaplain training. . . . pg. 3

Who Are We (cont'd)

It has been an honour and a pleasure for my husband, Paavo and me to have witnessed two of these very thoughtful and moving same-sex marriages officiated by Doreen. Right on, Doreen!

Finally, if you ever come to church feeling in a drab mood just take one look at our Doreen who is a joy to behold in her very unique, colourful, exquisitely designed clothing bedecked with some of her vast array of eclectic jewellery.



PALS

We extend congratulations to the Preservation of Agricultural Lands Society which is celebrating their 30th Anniversary on Tuesday, April 11th. They will hold their reception in our church from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. Our congregation has supported PALS over the long run and we wish them success in the future. A presentation will be made to honour PALS founding President, Robert Hoover, Professor Emeritus, Urban and Environmental Studies, Brock University. Bruce Krushelnicki, Director of Planning for Burlington, will speak on "The Challenges of Planning in Ontario." Those interested in attending please contact Gracia Janes (905-468-2841) or, jrjanes@sympatico.ca

CUC NEWS . . .

The Canadian Unitarian Council (CUC) send a package of information to each congregation monthly. The following is from the March package.

1. CU*UL School- Canadian Unitarian-Universalist Leadership School will be conducting a 4 day session in Ottawa from July 20 - 23. Any member of the congregation, especially those in leadership roles, is invited to attend this worthwhile experience. If interested, speak to or phone Pam or Marie.

2. Unicamp is the unitarian summer camp in southern Ontario. All of our members and friends can attend the many weekend or week long programs. Ask about the flyer at the church.

3. Our church has two Lay Chaplains. If any member of our congregation is interested in becoming a Lay Chaplain, there will be an initial training session in Hamilton in April called Designing and Leading Rites of Passage. Please speak to Marie, Pam or Fred if you are interested in starting the process to become a Lay Chaplain. It takes approximately a year.

4. CUC Annual Conference is May 19 - 22 and again all members of the church are welcome to attend although this year it is in St. John, N.B. If

you are interested, you can apply for a limited amount of financial subsidy from the church depending on how many members are attending. Our congregation likes to have at least one representative.

5. CUC online communities – Join email discussion groups on numerous topics such as poetry or being on a church executive at <<http://www.cuc.ca/e-lists/index.htm>>

Commonplace Eco-village

Michael Jackson, president of the recently incorporated not-for-profit charity, Commonplace Eco-village Project Niagara, explained how this exciting new initiative will be developed on a parcel of land in the northwestern corner of Thorold, Ontario, adjacent to the new campus of Grey Gables School. The project, first envisioned by Kathleen Miller (director) and Anthony Barrett (secretary), will showcase modern technologies and other options for living more affordably and sustainably.

Much assistance has already been donated to launch this worthy initiative: TD Friends of the Environment Trust and the Ontario Trillium Foundation are providing seed funding, Grey Gables School is donating land and administrative assistance, the Unitarian Congregation of

Niagara is providing encouragement and volunteer help, legal support is being donated by Thomas Wall of Sullivan Mahoney LLP, chartered accounting services are being donated by Michael Jones of English and Jones LLP, web services are being provided by yournamesells.com, and additional board responsibilities are being met by John Middleton (director), Maria Vanvelzen (director) and Fred Bolton (treasurer).

The vision of Commonplace Eco-village Project Niagara is a world committed to healthful sustainable living. Its mission is to help people create lifestyles sustainable within the global ecosystem by researching, disseminating, and demonstrating environmentally friendly and affordable alternatives to conventional housing, food production, water usage, waste treatment, and energy generation and consumption.



Help!!

Part of our program each week is the conversation, coffee and cookie time enjoyed after the service. At the moment our volunteer sign up sheet has no sign ups! A number of our members find the idea of coffee making for a large group a bit intimidating. We all enjoy this part of our Sunday meetings and if we wish to keep this going help is needed! Volunteers willing to give it a try but feel uncertain as to procedure will certainly be given a helping hand until they feel comfortable. Please do not feel too shy to volunteer.

Joan Rothman (Social Chairperson)

Michael went on to explain how Commonplace Eco-village Project Niagara will demonstrate affordable alternatives to achieve a more healthful and sustainable way of living. Food production would employ organic methods (e.g., pesticide and growth hormone free and use of natural fertilizers). Well-water would supply human consumption needs, while rainwater would be used for non-human consumption only (e.g., irrigation). Food scraps and yard/garden trimmings would be composted, gas incineration or composting toilets would deal with human waste, and grey water (from kitchen sinks, washing machines, and showers) would be treated using a cattail marsh application. Structures proposed for the site would include an energy efficient caretaker's residence, demonstration residence, barn, workshop, and dormitory (for visiting students, researchers, and course participants). Environmentally-

friendly construction materials would include the use of straw bales and SIPs (structural insulated panels). Energy requirements would be met without accessing the electrical grid by reducing consumption (e.g., tankless water heater, and energy efficient appliances) and using alternative energy sources (e.g., wind, solar, propane and wood). Education and information transfer would be a key component of the project (e.g., "how to courses" for interested citizens, educational opportunities for students at all academic levels, and applied research and development initiatives). The project, and those committed to its success, would advocate and promote the benefits and means of living more affordably and sustainably to business, educators, government and the community at large.

Commonplace Eco-village Project Niagara is operated by a team of enthusiastic volunteers from the Niagara region. If you have energy and skills to volunteer, please contact us at our website: www.commonplace-ecovillage.ca.

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