



UNITARIAN CONGREGATION OF NIAGARA

A church for people
with enquiring minds

September 2006

Sunday Services

September 2006

Sept 10 Join us for our Ingathering Breakfast
at 9:30 a.m.

Water Communion – John Mayer

As usual, our opening service will include our "water ceremony". We are asking that each of you bring some water, whether actually from the place you have been to, or symbolically representing that water, so we can share the congregational summer experience. Of course, for those who stayed at home, some local water will give you the opportunity of sharing your summer experience. Looking forward to the new church year, with an interesting program assembled by the program committee. Also, bring a friend, if you wish!

Sept 17 Coinciding trends in Eastern and
Western Thought – Balkrishna Naipaul

Sept 24 (Equinox)
How Neo-Pagans Grapple with
the 4th Principle – Matt Habermehl

October 2006

Oct 1 Matthew Fox's Theology
– John Mayer

Oct 8 Thanksgiving – Craig Beam

Oct 15 The Moon and the Sun
(Buddhist philosophy) – John Mayer

Oct 22 Vivianne LaRiviere

Oct 29 Quakers, Carl Jung and Strawberries
– Morris Bosey

President's Message . . .

Welcome back to our 2006-2007 season!

Well that was a short Summer! I know, I know, it is not over until Sept. 21 but it just feels like the end.

Helen and I have attended a number of the offerings at the Shaw Festival which are as wonderfully produced as ever. One play that sticks in my mind is Arthur Miller's "The Crucible" which is inspired by the happenings which took place during the Salem Witch trials. It is a very powerful and rather difficult play to watch with its gloomy scenery and frightening Court scenes. After the final applause, I was struck by the relative silence that ensued as we moved out of the auditorium. I think that was explained by Miller himself, who, according to the program notes, said that the play was not his most successful, but noted that it does tend to be re-visited during times when the public becomes concerned with the abuse of government's powers. Sound familiar?

During the summer I was privileged to attend, together with Pam Wilson and Shari Virtue, our Church's CU*UL school which this year was in Ottawa. It was a remarkable experience, very intense, and full of wonderful vitality and friendship. We were all immersed in a very full program of leadership training and conflict resolution programs, amongst other things. Shari & Pam are reporting separately about our experience elsewhere in this Newsletter.

contd. . . . pg. 2



**Unitarian Congregation
of Niagara**

223 Church St.
St. Catharines, ON L2R 3E8
Tel: 905-687-8433
www.unitarian-stcatharines.org

**Executive Council
for 2006/2007**

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Doreen M. Peever
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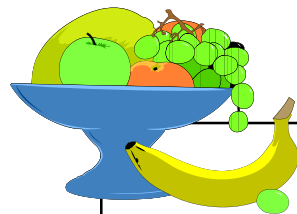
PASTORAL CARE:
Jennie Leach

Welcome Back . . . contd from pg. 1

The Program Committee tells me that we have filled up virtually all the Sundays to the end of 2006, and I'm sure that there will be items of interest to us all. One thing though, as we all know we are exerting a great deal of effort to increase our membership by advertising and with our new RE program. To help in this effort, please make a point of coming to our Sunday services as often as you can.....we want to show our visitors how committed we are to our principles!

See you in Church!

Fred

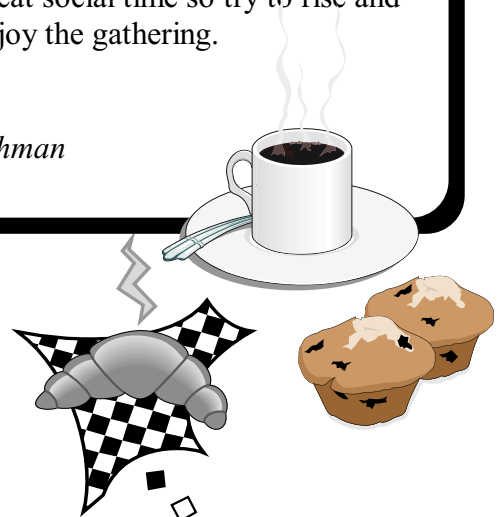


First Social Date !!

Join us for our **Ingathering Breakfast** on Sunday, **September 10th at 9:30 a.m.** Renew contact with friends after the summer over muffins, danish, breads, fruit, juice, tea and coffee!

This event is always a great social time so try to rise and shine a little early and enjoy the gathering.

See you there!
Social Chair – Joan Rothman



Membership News . . .

CU*UL SCHOOL 2006

July 20 - 23

Ottawa, Ontario

While many were taking a hiatus from regular congregational life over the summer (in true UU style!), Fred Bolton, Pamela Spear-Wilson and Shari Virtue devoted one of their lazy, hazy summer weekends to exploring Unitarian Universalism a little more. They attended the Canadian Unitarian Universalist Leadership School a.k.a. CU*UL School. 2006.

As stated on the CUC website, CU*UL School is one part of a more comprehensive leadership development program designed to provide congregations with quality, component-based programs that will ensure they have regional access to relevant Unitarian Universalist programs for their emerging leaders. The program promotes congregational connections and a whole church perspective. It provides experiential, residential, leadership training over a period of four days and includes the following: personality preference tool training (a temperament model), Canadian Contextual Theology, Canadian U*U History, opportunities for experience with a reflective small group task team, exposure to Covenant Groups (Small Group Ministry Model), basic information on Systems Theory, Church Conflict (using the

Conflict as a gift premise) and Church Size Theory.

While that's the official version of CU*UL School, you may be curious to know about the first-hand experiences of two Niagara representatives, what they learned, and how CU*UL school has had an impact on each of them.

Pam: Chalice Groups

CU*UL School was an exciting and wonderful event from beginning to end. We learned about all facets of leadership within the church and much about ourselves. However, learning about Chalice Circles and being part of a Chalice Circle for the four days that I attended the school had the most profound effect on me.

I had never heard of Chalice Circles before (Covenant Groups, Small Group Ministry, they have numerous names) but I thought that they are such a positive and uplifting way to connect and deepen our connection to each other.

What are Chalice Circles? They are a network of small groups, whose main objectives are to strengthen the congregation by drawing us into mutual ministry. These groups deepen our understanding of UU principles and values. Members become challenged to further action and spiritual growth. The primary emphasis is to care for people-meet their needs for affirmation and acceptance. The groups promote mutual interactive care for one another therefore providing a quality of caring that

most people can wish for.

I realize these are far-reaching goals but having only had a glimpse of the experience, I can understand that these goals are achieved. In just four days, I developed a deep understanding of those in my group. Actually, I will never forget the experience.

I am reading the book *The Complete Guide to Small Group Ministries* by Robert L. Hill. He emphasizes throughout the book that if we conduct a group at our church, that we follow very specific guidelines. These group sessions would consist of up to 8 new and/or old members /nonmembers who would meet twice a month. It is suggested that the lay leader be trained to run Chalice Groups. There is a training session coming up soon and I hope to attend.

I sincerely thank the church for allowing me to attend CU*UL School. The program had a profound effect on me.

Shari: Community and Inspiration

At the end of the weekend we were asked to choose two words that most reflected our experience at CU*UL school. I chose *community* and *inspiration* and was then intrigued to find that many of the other participants echoed similar sentiments. Although it was a highly informative weekend, and I have binders of hand-outs and notes to sustain this learning, I initially went to CU*UL school with the

intention of trying to understand and connect with Unitarians beyond the borders of Niagara. Little did I know that this goal would be accomplished over and over again, and that I would also come away with a better understanding myself, as an individual, as a new Unitarian generally, and as a more inspired member of the Niagara Congregation.

Community and inspiration presented themselves to me in many different ways. The six-hour car ride to Ottawa allowed me to get to know Fred and Pam a little better. Although we did not share any group activities together, we would occasionally touch base with each other throughout the weekend and make sure we were all doing okay. It was nice that we felt like a little family group from Niagara. In addition, through the wide variety of leadership activities, discussion groups, covenant groups and social activities (subtext: drinking, talking and laughing until 2:00 a.m. every morning!), I met lots and lots of wonderful people. I learned from them and was inspired by both their individual stories and by the work they are doing in their congregations. Some I have continued to stay in contact with and others I know I could connect with again should the occasion ever arise. In fact, I have made some plans to visit other Unitarian Congregations throughout Ontario about one Sunday a month in the coming

year. I think I have been seeking this kind of community for some time, and consequently, finding it has nourished me as an individual and, I suspect, will continue to inspire me to more active, creative and generous participation in our congregation. I am excited to be a Unitarian now, I have lots of ideas in my head, and I hope, with your guidance, I can find my own way to contribute to the present and the future of our congregation in Niagara.

Pam, Shari and Fred, whose report is in the President's Message, would like to thank everyone at the Unitarian Congregation of Niagara for the opportunity to attend the Canadian Unitarian Universalist Leadership School. They would welcome any opportunities to continue sharing and discussing what they learned there, and hope to put this knowledge, experience and renewed inspiration into service here at home in Niagara.

ALL THINGS BRIGHT AND BEAUTIFUL



The Major Fundraiser of the Year will be a craft and art sale at the church on Saturday, Oct. 14 from 10:00 a.m.- 5:00 p.m.

We have asked numerous artisans to display their work. We hope to have a bake table and coffee table available most of the day.

Julianne, Doreen and Pamela are

organizing this event and we will be calling upon all members to help us make the day a success.

So put Saturday, Oct. 14th on your calendar now and start baking!!

If you wish to have a table for selling your wares please contact one of the above Fundraiser committee members.



Raffle Announcement

At the June picnic, we pulled a winner of the free weekend at UNICAMP. The happy winners are Donna Sullivan and Mark Salterelli. Congratulations to the lucky pair and I hope they had good weather.

The raffle raised about \$80.00 for the church coffers!!

*Respectfully submitted,
Pamela Spear-Wilson*

RAFT Reminder

Our church is continuing to collect items for our Church Street neighbours RAFT, a hostel for homeless youth. The following are some good ideas for donations to bring to the ingathering service in September or any Sunday throughout the autumn months.

- ☺ Salad dressing
- ☺ Tooth brushes / tooth paste
- ☺ Light bulbs
- ☺ Bath towels
- ☺ Pillow cases / pillows

- ☺ Day planners / dishes
- ☺ Peanut butter / cheese whiz
- ☺ Cookies
- ☺ All purpose cleaners
- ☺ Stamps / tea towels / bike locks

Any of the above items would be gratefully received by the kids at RAFT.

*Respectfully submitted,
Will Wilson*

****NEW****

Children's Program

TELL YOUR NEIGHBOURS

We are proud of our congregation, Unitarianism, and especially our new program for children (the UNicorn Club). Soon we will have a flyer that, in a simple and welcoming way, invites families in your area to come and see more about them.

At that time, we will encourage members to take a few minutes and put our flyer in mailboxes near them. If everyone does a little bit, it will go a long way to bring families and children to our church.

Philip Curtis

The R.E. committee and Publicity committee are hoping to contact any families/guests who have attended services in the past - to inform them of our exciting, new and upcoming children's program. However, we are not able to recall names and contact details specifically.

If anyone is able to recall details of these guests/families and assist in this endeavour, please contact Lisa Laughton - 905-937-0264 or dadsfarm@computan.on.ca

CUC ANNUAL MEETING May 2006

I was privileged to be your delegate at the annual meeting of the CUC in Saint John, NB and to attend the meetings of the Chaplains' organization, CUULCA, of which I am the treasurer.

Two days of training and enrichment courses for chaplains are offered preceding each annual meeting. On the first day, we worked at revising the Congregational Lay Chaplaincy Manual and the Code of Ethics for Lay Chaplains. There was discussion of the role of Lay Chaplains, with much sharing of experiences among us. It is always affirming to be with other Lay Chaplains, as we are all doing the same job, under the same and different circumstances. We learn from each other, as there is always a mixture of experienced and new chaplains. A slate of officers was elected. In the afternoon, a stimulating session on the **Care and Feeding of Lay Chaplains** was presented by Rev. Vann Knight. He discussed his own spiritual practices and led the group in an interactive meditation, reading and self-discovery process. The next morning, Sherill Gilbert led a workshop in **Sacred Moments in Lay Chaplaincy**.

Also that morning, Rev. Anne Treadwell led a workshop called **Right Relations: Lay Chaplains and their Congregations**. On Friday afternoon, Kim Turner, former president of the CUC and a labour lawyer in Halifax, presented a workshop called **Lay Chaplaincy, Liability, and the Law**. Several of these workshops had useful handouts.

The general conference began on Friday evening with a banner parade. The 300+ participants represented 31 congregations. Our banner stood out well among the others. The ingathering featured the mingling of river, lake and ocean waters brought in small vials from each congregation. While these waters mixed in a bowl, a collage of pictures was played showing the congregations across Canada and the bodies of water near and dear to them. Each of us could take a vial of the blended water back to our own congregations.

Workshops began on Saturday. I attended one on **Finding, Being, Keeping a Minister** which was presented by half a dozen ministers from across Canada. They went through the process of calling a minister, a process that goes on for a year or more. Some of the notes from the "Keeping a Minister" section include: all ministers are interim minister – long or short term; good ministers and congregations create each other; confront conflict directly with a minister; do not let power-needy people be in positions of power; minister and board are in a co-equal partnership.

The keynote address was presented by Dr. Alan Sharpe, a physicist at the University of New Brunswick and a member of the Fredericton Unitarian congregation. In his address, titled "The Transforming Resonance of Water", Professor Sharpe argued that we Canadian UU's can learn from the development and shaping of the Bay of Fundy how to shape ourselves and articulate a powerful world view that will allow us to influence public policy far beyond our modest numbers. By so doing, we will rise above the ordinary like the Fundy tides, greatly enriching our contribution to the world.

At the Empty Bowls dinner \$7000 was collected, to be divided between Romero House (a soup kitchen in Saint John) and the Alpha Foundation (which supplies healthy food to starving children in Sierra Leone). The Sunday morning collection was over \$4000.

A number of social responsibility resolutions were passed at the plenary sessions (I have the text of them, if anyone is interested). Vyda Ng-Cornish was elected President, replacing the outgoing Brian Kiely.

One of the most moving ceremonies was the graduation of the youth group to the young adult status. Many of the kids had been together for several years and were quite close. There were tears as they left their peers to cross the room to the invitation of the older group singing "Come, come, whoever

you are" and embracing them.

On the Saturday night, there was a Maritime kitchen party with lots of down east music and dancing and fun.

Altogether it was a wonderful conference, with useful workshops, friendships renewed, networking and fun. As far as networking goes, I agreed to be the contact person in our congregation for the UN information.

Thank you for the opportunity to be part of this occasion.

Doreen M. Peever

UCN Social Action Committee

Dear UCN members,

This is Will Wilson wearing my "social action chair" hat.

Valerie Jaeger recently made an excellent suggestion: rather than just giving money to worthwhile causes, the Social Action committee should organize some concrete work in the community. Valerie suggested volunteering as adult literacy coaches.

So I contacted the Niagara Regional Literacy Council, and here is what they just told me:

- Out of Niagara's 300,000 residents, an estimated 88,000 are functionally illiterate . . . so there is a great need in the community for this service, and

the NRLC would love new volunteers.

- Volunteers need to make a minimum commitment of one year.
- Volunteers also need to take a short course to prepare for their work as literacy coaches. The next available training session will be offered on four (Monday and Wednesday) afternoons in November from 1 - 4 p.m.: Nov. 6, 8, 13 and 15. Trainees must attend all four sessions.
- The cost of training is \$25, which the Social Action Committee would be glad to pay.

Some of you may have already responded to my email request. If you do not have email perhaps you could drop me a line or phone to advise of your interest in volunteering.

Thanks,

Will Wilson

"YES" VERSION

YES I'd be interested in training to be a literacy volunteer in November, and I'm willing to make a one-year commitment.

(Your name here)

"NO" VERSION

A) Sorry, but I won't be able to attend the four training sessions in November. OR

B) Sorry, but I'm unable to participate this year.

(Your name here)

Niagara's Projects in Bangladesh

Niagara Volunteers for Bangladesh has adopted two lower grade schools in Bangladesh who are struggling for their survival. Since last year we have assisted two schools so far and we have plans for others.

One of the schools we have adopted is situated in Dhaka the capital city. The name of this school is "Uttoron Special School." It was established in 1995 by a few social workers. Classes from play group to grade eight are being offered at this school. Over time, Uttoron will branch out to other areas of work, commitment to which is what the particular Bengali word, Uttoron, means. This school is specially meant for those with special needs i.e. children born with Down Syndrome or Autism who do not get the scope of studying at schools meant for normal healthy children.

The second school is situated in Chittogong on the southern coast of Bangladesh which is often affected by tidal waves, tornadoes and tsunamis. The name of this organization is UTSA (United Theatre for Social Action). An infant education program grew out of discussion findings during an adult literacy training. While running the program to teach women reading, UTSA facilitators found that the trainee women themselves did not send their

children to school. The reason was that these children did not have the basic preparation to begin school. UTSA took up the matter and opened centres for infant education. It succeeded in having many of the children admitted into schools. But it has only been able to touch the tip of the iceberg. The underlying problem is too big to be solved by UTSA alone.

Hundreds of underprivileged children never enter any school. The reasons are not so hard to identify. Parents often do not send their children to schools for lack of money though primary education is free. Their motivation is low. Many a parent prefers their minor children to hire out their services to add to the income of the family. In general, there is also an indifference to education as many are unaware of its value in life.

UTSA believes that the ever widening gap between social classes can be narrowed through educating more people, particularly children.

UTSA was founded in 1997 to create awareness on social issues through performing issue-based theatre and conducting therapeutic theatre sessions. Besides performing and conducting social issue-based plays, it maintains various activities to uplift the life of the underprivileged and disabled.

For more information contact Nasim Banu-Ahmed at 905-682-6569 or Mahbuba Khanam at 905-680-4669.

Niagara Volunteers for Bangladesh Fundraiser

Come for an exciting and fun evening of dinner and entertainment on September 9th from 6:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. at the Queen Elizabeth Community Centre at 2 Facer Street in St. Catharines. The admission is \$10.00 for adults and \$5.00 for children aged 5 to 10. From the comments of people that went to this event last year it was outstanding and such a worthwhile cause. Sofia has tickets.

Incidentally, when Nasim Banu and Mahbuba Khan gave their presentation this summer, we raised \$193.00 to help them.



Central American Development Project

I'm writing to you to ask for your assistance in making all Canadian UU's aware of the opportunity to participate in the Central American Community Development Project co-sponsored by Toronto First. Thanks to your past efforts and those of your predecessors and colleagues, 87 Canadian UU's from 20 congregations - New Brunswick to British Columbia - have travelled to Central America in the last ten years to help hard

working people improve their lives. Working alongside Guatemalans, Hondurans and Canadians from other walks of life; we have helped our hosts achieve their goals.

The First Unitarian Congregation of Toronto has been working on development projects in Central America since 1997 with the goal of building understanding between people and improving the social, economic and living

conditions in the poorest areas. We have helped build schools, houses and training centres. We have also helped operate medical clinics.

This year, we would again like to extend an invitation to all UU's across Canada to join us for an unforgettable experience, building "kinders" (kindergarten schools) in Honduras or rebuilding Chichoy, a

Guatemalan community devastated by Hurricane Stan. There will be four trips this year although the March trip is already full.

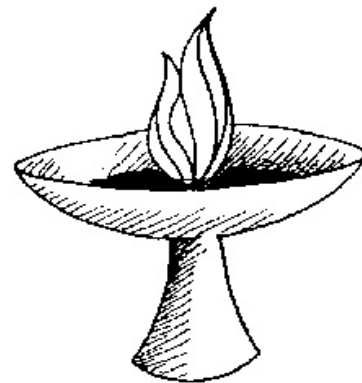
For further information contact (richardkirsh@sympatico.ca).



"If you wish to glimpse inside a human soul and get to know the man," wrote Dostoyevsky, "don't bother analyzing his ways of being silent, of talking, of weeping, or seeing how much he is moved by noble ideas; you'll get better results if you just watch him laugh. If he laughs well, he's a good man . . . **All I claim to know is that laughter is the most reliable gauge of human nature.**"

Java Earthquake

This item came to me during the summer. The earthquake that hit Java on May 27th seriously affected the lives of our Indonesian USC partners and the communities we have worked with over the past 30 years. All staff have been accounted for and are helping distribute tents, rice and other items to meet the basic needs of those affected. If you would like more information go to www.usc-canada.org.



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223 Church St., St. Catharines, ON L2R 3E8

Tel: 905-687-8433 www.unitarian-stcatharines.org

Editor: Sofia Vuorinen

905-563-8615

sofia.vuorinen@3web.net

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