



UNITARIAN CONGREGATION OF NIAGARA

A church for people
with enquiring minds

May 2008

*** Sunday Services ***

May 4

*** A Very Special Celebration ***

The Unitarian Congregation of Niagara will be having a special service to acknowledge the many years of dedication as Lay Chaplains performed by **John Mayer** and **Doreen Peever**. Please join the family and friends for this event and be prepared to share your memories and stories associated with these two wonderful people.

The Service will begin as usual at 11:00 a.m. and will conclude at approximately noon. It will be followed by a "High Tea Lunch."

Every member of our congregation knows John and Doreen very well so we are hoping that if possible you will all be at this celebration of their work.

Yours in Fellowship,

Marie Belliveau and Joan Rothman

May 11

What Does it Mean to Have Faith?

– *Rev. Felicia Urbanski S.L. Julianne Momirov*

We all chuckle at the name chosen by the in-house band at the First Unitarian Congregation of Waterloo: "Blind Faith and the Lost Crusaders". The last thing we Unitarians would embrace is any sort of blind faith, and we certainly wouldn't want to go on a "crusade" to force our personal beliefs upon anyone else! However, the word "faith" can be full of deep meaning, even for liberal religionists. Authentic faith requires reflection and deep examination. Let's explore how this can be so for each of us.

May 18

Was Jesus Gay?

– *Brock Shaver S.L. Tara Dajka*

Northrup Frye made the interesting observation that Jesus was gay. After being celibate for 2000 years, and Mary Magdalene's boyfriend for the last few decades, it seems appropriate that Jesus be considered gay. After all, the only reference in the Bible of Jesus repeatedly loving someone specifically was John, his beloved.

As Frye pointed out, our very thought structure today is Christian. It created how we relate to reality, even for the secular, in subconscious ways. With the rise of the gay movement, a sophisticated analysis of how gender and sexual orientation affects society has developed. What are the implications if Jesus was in fact a homosexual, and how has this affected both Christianity throughout history, and its residue on modern secular thought? The Jesus Myth is nothing, if not filled with contradictions. This would be one more. Why is this issue avoided in both liberal religions and liberal society?

May 25

Change versus Transition

– *Vivianne LaRiviere S.L. Tara Dajka*

Inevitably, we all come face to face with change in our lives. Some changes are miniscule and others are quite life altering. How do we deal with change? Are we afraid of it? And what happens within-how do we face and cope with transition?

Unitarian Congregation of Niagara
www.unitarian-stcatharines.org

Fair Trade Products for Sale

April 27th & May 25th





**Unitarian Congregation
of Niagara**

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2008/2009

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Andrea Gravelle, Don Herne
James Wilson

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PASTORAL CARE:
Jenny Leach & John Berry

PHONE: John Inglis

First Ecofest Climate Action Now (CAN)



Jane Hanlon is the founder and chairwoman of the St. Catharines-based Climate Action Now (CAN). Two years ago, she saw Al Gore's An Inconvenient Truth, a documentary on the horrific aspects of climate change. When she couldn't find something locally that was being as vocal about the state of the world, she decided to form her own organization.

The St. Catharines CAN is an exciting community-based, not for profit organization with a mission to enable residents of Niagara to achieve environmentally-sustainable practices through education and actions. The 200-plus members receive newsletters that inform members of the upcoming events that are concerned with helping to keep our environment healthy. It provides a list of multiple projects in which they are involved. One such event was the Ecofest held in March with an estimated attendance of 1,000 people. Obviously, there is a great interest in Niagara about what people here can do about preserving the positive aspects of our environment. The festival was an educational, fun-filled family friendly day of local foods, presentations, an introduction to eco-organizations and a trade show of products and services that benefit the environment.

In the April newsletter, one is made aware of many activities occurring in the Niagara area. CAN was involved with Project Clean Sweep on April 19th, where the Clean City Committee was holding its annual community clean-up day. Volunteers are wanted for the gardening committee, which assists in the planting of the Community Care gardens for the needy. If a senior is moving and wants to take perennials with them to their new location, this group helps. If a high school student wants to gain their volunteer hours doing something that is fun and helpful to the environment, CAN will assist them in finding such jobs. The list goes on and on about activities of this nature in our area.

This Month's Tips

Remember to send children to school with litterless lunches and to turn down your water heater. Get your rain barrels in place for the growing season and prepare your composter for another season. Visit your farmers' market for what's in season. Let's do away with all of those imported foods and savour our own.

A single membership is only \$10.00. Call **Jane Hanlon** at **905-938-8882** or email her at janehanlon@cogeco.ca for further information.

Mah Jongg

I am looking for 3 people who would be interested in learning to play the wonderful, mysterious and addictive game of MAH JONGG. I will teach the game and hope that we can get together throughout the summer months.

Call **Pamela** if interested.

Salad Day Lunch

Kudos to **Hilde Wheeler** for organizing a very delightful "salad" lunch on Sunday, April 13. The meal was delicious! We appreciate your preparation and clean-up work as well.

What a wonderful way to get to know your fellow Unitarians!

Membership News

The Basics Weekend

What a successful weekend we had in Niagara! The weather was unexpectedly warm and we were able to recharge our spiritual batteries!

It was wonderful to meet Unitarians from across the province and one from Quebec. It was especially inspiring to know that our church members came forward to volunteer their time and energy willingly. Please check our website for photos of the event. There will be a display of photos at the church as well.

My sincere gratitude goes out the following participants and volunteers.

Rhonda Armstong
 Penny and Roy Blake
 my neighbours Jean and Lewis Ford
 Andrea Gravelle
 John Inglis
 Valerie Jaeger and Michael Petrocci
 Donna and Ed Lemon
 John Mayer
 Joan Rothman
 Bruce Millar and Beverly Russell
 John Northover for property arrangements
 Peter and Barbara Skelton
 John and Joan Storm
 Hilde and Al Wheeler
 Carl Beckett- for extra treasurer work

AND Participants
 Tara Dajka
 Valerie Jaeger
 Ed Gilbert
 Bruce Millar
 Julianne Momirov

Respectfully submitted,
Pamela Wilson

UCN group supports Moslem detainee at Brampton bail hearing

by Will Wilson

Would you be upset if your son were arrested in, let's say, Saudi Arabia or Mexico and held for almost two years without being charged of any crime? And what if you knew that he were being held in solitary confinement for twenty-three and a half hours a day?

Unfortunately, that has been the reality for the families of eighteen Moslems who were arrested in a June 2006 RCMP sweep operation. With a great splash in the press, sensational accusations were made about the terrorism and crimes planned by the arrestees. But since those arrests, the government has quietly released seven of the eighteen detainees without even laying any charges.

A group of six UCN members and friends drove to the Brampton courthouse on Tuesday, April 22 to show their support at a bail hearing for 20-year-old Moslem detainee Saad Gaya, a McMaster University student who has been held in jail almost two years despite not yet having been charged of a crime.

UCN members and friends Will Wilson, Sofia Vuorinen, John Berry, Jon Stahl, Peter Skelton and Horst Klaus joined a mix of about a hundred devout-looking Moslems, university students, scattered with a few fellow grey-hairs. We stood and listened to speakers reminding us that in Canada, all citizens are supposed to have the right to a presumption of innocence, due judicial process, a prompt and fair trial, and fair treatment while in custody.

Holding the Unitarian Congregation of Niagara's banner, the Niagara delegation was quietly thanked by many members of the crowd.

Since there is a government blackout of media coverage of the case, it is not easy to know exactly what is happening, but families of the accused insist that most of the detainees are being held in solitary confinement, and that many or most have yet to be charged with any crime under the criminal code.

Several speakers at the rally emphasized the point that the normal human ability to endure solitary confinement without serious mental damage is known to be about two months, but many of the young men of the "Toronto Eighteen" are in their teens and twenties have been held in solitary for almost two years.

While newsletter space does not allow their full story to be recounted here, those who wish to learn more are referred to read Sunday Star columnist Thomas Walkom's excellent April 6 article online at: <http://www.thestar.com/article/410676>



Website Updated

The website updates described last month have been implemented and another page has been added. The "Social Action" and "Eco-Facilities" and the "Weddings" etc. (a.k.a. Rites) are up and running. Also included in this update is a new "Photos" page. Thanks for feedback from Marie Belliveau, Jenny Leach and Valerie Jaeger.

New Pictures on our Website

When **Luke Kwiatkowski** (Communications) changed the sign at the front of the church he sent an image of the new sign to website. Communications and Website are working together to ensure that our web presence matches our physical presence. Now to replace the snowy church photo with a spring photo. Please forward any pictures of our spring flowers to the website mailbox.

Alan Weaver and **Pamela Spear-Wilson** took photos of the April 2008 Lay Chaplain Basics Weekend. The photos can be found in the new website "Photos" section.

Social Action Member Contributed News

The Niagara Congregation has a tradition of sending each other emails on social action items. Check out the new "Member Contributed News" section to see recent items. If you have a news item that you would like on the website please send it to the website mailbox:
(website@unitarian-stcatharines.org).

Biofuels Sham!

The use of biofuels to solve our climate and energy problems is a sham, concludes Prof. David Pimentel of Cornell University. Other scientists agree (SCIENCE, Vol.319, 29 Feb. '08). Gwynn Dyer does too in "A food catastrophe looms on the horizon" (Standard, 2 April '08). Already the use of corn for ethanol instead of for food has increased the US price of beef, chicken, pork, eggs,

bread, cereals and milk, a boon to subsidised agribusiness. The UN reports too it takes 22 pounds of corn to produce one gallon of ethanol causing food shortage for the world's poorest people.

The growth of biomass for fuel requires a huge lot of land, water, and nitrogen fertiliser. For example if the total US corn crop was used for biofuel it would replace a meager 7% of US oil consumption.

The production of ethanol is energy intensive, coming from fossil fuel use on the farm and in the manufacture of ethanol. Pimentel has followed the carbon and energy life cycles in producing corn in 14 steps and 9 steps in the production process of ethanol. Comparing these with gasoline, ethanol is less efficient.

Substantial PR for lignocellulosic biofuels (grasses and wood waste) have favoured these as feedstocks for ethanol. Pimentel has shown these are even less efficient than corn because of the high fossil fuel energy required to convert the cellulose to starch and sugars needed to make biofuels. In the net carbon balance, more greenhouse gases are emitted in the making biofuel than emitted by the replaced gasoline.

"The science is clear. The use of corn and other biofuels to solve our energy problem is an ethically, economically, and environmentally unworkable sham" concludes Pimentel.

Edgar Lemon, 7 April '08
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email: edgarlemon@aol.com

(The following article is printed with the permission of Dr. Charles A. Sankey.

Dr. Sankey is the only living founding member of our congregation. He is 102 years old.)

Reflections after the Assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King

A Masonic teaching is to boast of nothing; to have compassion and to give aid to those in adversity; to walk uprightly and with humility; for such is this existence that there is no station in which pride can be stably founded; all men in birth and in the grave are on the level."

The human situation does indeed call for humility. But the events of this week (Dr. King's assassination) have also brought into focus the immense potential in certain human beings. Arnold Toynbee has written:

"A human society is inherently incapable of playing an active, creative role in human affairs. The society is not and cannot be anything more than a medium of communication through which the individual human beings interact with each other. It is human individuals and not human societies that 'make' human history."

Then he quotes from Henri Bergson: "It is useless to maintain that social progress takes place of itself, bit by bit, in virtue of the special condition of the society at a certain period of its history. It is really a leap forward which is only taken when a society must have allowed itself to be convinced, or, at any rate, to allow itself to be shaken, and the shake is always given by somebody."

The politics and methods of Martin Luther King are matters of some

political controversy, not for consideration here. I submit, however, with respect, and in the strongest terms of which I am capable, that when a man demonstrates his greatness by living and dying in the cause of human brotherhood and according to the dictates of his conscience, no one ... can remain unaffected, can remain unmoved. Such careers are rare but form a glorious company as diverse ethnically as is the human race. Each such career is unique. More often than not it ends in violence or in great physical suffering. Let me name six such lives in the last twenty-five years, in reverse order of their passing: Martin Luther King, Albert Schweitzer, John XXIII, Dag Hammarskjöld, Gandhi, and Elizabeth Pilenko. All will be familiar to you, except, perhaps, the last. She was a Russian lady from a well-to-do family, who had a career remarkable for its humanitarian socialism during the Russian Revolution. She became a nun, and as Mother Maria, founded her own Russian Orthodox convent in Paris, devoted to the refugee poor. During the German occupation all her energies were directed to helping Jews. She was instrumental in saving hundreds of lives. She died on Good Friday, 1945 in the Ravensbruck concentration camp, voluntarily replacing a young girl who had been selected for the gas chambers. A tree is planted in her name and honour in Tel Aviv, at the head of a street called the Avenue of the Righteous Gentiles.

It is one of the greatest glories of the human race that there are such men and women. I use the present tense deliberately. It is not just the Poet, each one of us can discover who creates, who builds, who improves his milieu, who serves, becoming by conscious choice a music maker and,

like Martin Luther King, a dreamer of dreams.

"We are the music makers, and we are the dreamers of dreams,

Wandering by lone sea-breakers and sitting by desolate streams;

World-losers and world forsakers, on whom the pale moor gleams;

Yet we are the movers and shakers of the world, forever, it seems.

We in the ages lying in the buried past of the earth,

Built Niniveh with our sighing, and Babel with our mirth.

And o'erthrew them with prophesying to the old of the new world's worth,

For each age is a dream that is dying, or one that is coming to birth."

The challenge has been a continuing one all through human history. It is not symbolic, it is not speculative, it is operative. There is a wonderful ancient Jewish legend to the effect that when Moses threw his wand into the Red Sea, the sea, quite contrary to the expected miracle, did not divide itself to leave a dry passage for the Jews. Not until the first man had jumped into the sea did the promised miracle happen and the waves recede.

Dare we accept the challenge of Martin Luther King's words: "The question is not whether we will be extremists, but what kind of extremist will we be. Will we be extremists for hate, or will we be extremists for love? Will we be extremists for the preservation of injustice or will we be extremists for the cause of justice?"

Dare we deny today, two days before Good Friday, his affirmation:

"I believed that unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word in reality. That is why right,

temporarily defeated, is stronger than evil triumphant."

C. A. Sankey April 7, 1968.

Recent Services

April 6

Jim Glassford presented his talk on "**Searching For The Higher Truths**" (originally titled "Growing Up With The Lone Ranger") on Sunday. He first gave an overview of his generation (1930-1945) called the "Silent Generation" by Sociologist Gail Sheehy and historian, William Manchester. After outlining the happenings and influential forces on this group including those wonderful radio programs, movies and books of his era, Jim presented what he calls his personal higher truths:

1. Love, the great positive force of the world, including the emotions of compassion, sympathy, understanding – all the positive emotions. Love one another and love yourself.
2. Forgiveness
3. Live in the NOW! Live hard and fully; enjoy yourself; quit thinking so much of what others will think of you.
4. Develop your own truths by questioning and seeking.

Questioning has its rewards but also can have a high cost, especially if we are questioning society's mores and religious ideas –rejection by friends and family, shunning by religious groups and even death in some cultures.

This is why so many who find Unitarianism feel so blessed because they have found a community that welcomes seekers with open arms.

April 20

Canadian Mining Companies in the Third World: by Frank Fohr

In addition to its annual fund raising efforts to assist partner organizations in the Global South, Development and Peace (<http://www.devp.org/>) has an annual educational program to inform Canadians about the ways that we, as Canadians, are implicated in the causes of global injustice. In its work with partners in the Global South, Development and Peace became aware that Canadian mining companies were often implicated in human rights and environmental breaches in their operations overseas. A parliamentary committee investigated how Canadian mining companies were causing the positive reputation of Canada to be tarnished in some countries. The parliamentary committee recommended that the government take action.

Following a series of roundtables that were held last year, mining companies and a coalition of civil society groups called the Halifax Initiative came to a consensus. It was recommended that the government appoint an ombudsperson to investigate accusations against Canadian mining companies. Development and Peace and other members of the Halifax Initiative (<http://www.halifaxinitiative.org>) are asking the government to act on the recommendation to appoint an ombudsperson.

Short Project Update from USC Canada

The potatoes of Gatlang – a village in Nepal’s Rasuwa district – are renowned in Nepal for their flavour. Today farmers have a good market for their crops. But it wasn’t always that way.

Several years ago, district officials introduced chemical farming, hoping ‘modern’ methods would lead to higher yields and profits for farmers. The agriculture office provided free potatoes, fertilizers, and pesticides, encouraging farmers to use the new methods.

Many, including Polwasya Tamang, from Gatlang tried the ‘new’ methods. He says “there were higher yields at the beginning, but even with increased fertilizer use, production decreased year after year.” Aside from annual drops in yields, farmers found that potatoes produced with chemicals were of lesser quality. Their reputation suffered. The chemicals took their toll on the soil, and the costs for materials sent production costs soaring.

The Gatlang farmers, found an alternative through eco-farming training with USC Nepal. The village now uses only eco-friendly farming methods. Not surprisingly, it didn’t take long for potato quality to improve. The chemical-free potatoes taste better, stand up to storage longer, and are healthier. Today, the farmers are proud to call Gatlang a chemical-free village, and they’re determined to keep it that way.

For more on the Year of the Potato and other aspects of USC’s work, contact kgreen@usc-canada.org or go to <http://usc-canada.org/what-you-can-do/policy-advocacy/potato/>



Picnic

Annual picnic
at
Queenston Heights.

We have **Pavilion 2**
on **June 8th** at
noon.

Potluck, but people
should provide their own
drinks.

Visit our bulletin board or
access the web for information
on . . .

• **CUUL School**

If you are interested in learning more about CUUL School, please feel free to contact us at cuul-east@cuc.ca or to browse the information found at:

<http://www.cuc.ca/programs/leadership.htm>.

• **Lifespan Learning Consultant wanted**

Applications close May 14, 2008.

For more information, please contact Don Hauka, president, Beacon Unitarian Church, at ddclauka@shaw.ca or check out the Beacon website

(BeaconUnitarian.org) for details.

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