



UNITARIAN CONGREGATION OF NIAGARA

A Congregation for Everybody

UCN NEWS

October 2023

Our Covenant

We come in peace
To this place of fellowship and love,
Searching for truth and meaning,
Seeking justice and equity through action,
Supporting each other and serving our community,
Acknowledging and preserving the gifts of this world,
This is our covenant with each other and with all.

UPCOMING SERVICES

October 1- Celebrating World Animal Day - Examining the magic of the animal world and our place in it. - service presented and led by LesLee Turmel

October 8 - Thanksgiving - Looking Backwards; Looking Forward - service led and presented by Shaun Ironside

October 15 - The Inherent Worth and Dignity - This services launches the first in a series of presentations and discussion of Unitarian principles. Service led and presented by Karen Stovell

October 22 - Angkor Wat and What We Believe - service presented by Fred Harland and led by Mardele Harland

October 29 - Transformation and Hope - Inspirational speaker, life coach and intuitive healer, Grace Cirocco, will address means in which we can move forward in our lives - service led by Susan Glassford

November 5 - Remembrance Day - service presented and led by Jim Glassford

UPCOMING EVENTS

CELEBRATION OF LIFE FOR DAVID JORDAN

Friday, October 13

6:00 – 8:00pm

St. Catharines Museum and Welland Canals Centre
1932 Welland Canals Parkway
St. Catharines

Many of you will remember David, who was a very active member of UCN before his retirement to British Columbia. More information about his life is in the September newsletter.

All are welcome. For more information and to RSVP, please go to the following website:

<https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/celebration-of-life-for-david-jordan-tickets-712575501507?aff=oddtcreator>

HARVEST FESTIVAL

Saturday, October 14

St. Barnabas (33 Church St.) from 10am to 3pm

This Queenston Neighbourhood event includes free food, music and activities for all ages.

They are looking for help making and serving tacos. If you can support the community by helping, contact Ashley at janetashley.pollock@gmail.com or call 905-687-6503.



BRUNCH

Sunday, November 5

9:30am

This brunch is an annual Fall event which coincides with the time change. It will occur just before our Remembrance Day service on November 5. The following list outlines the food item which each person or couple is expected to bring. It's a fun time. Hope all can make it.



Egg Dish

(devilled, quiche, hard boiled or ...)

Rhonda
Carol and Bill
Penny and Roy
Jacob and Nate
Fred and Mardele
Abigail Scott

Meat Dish

Karen and Abu
Anita and Adolf
Ann Monster
Moe and LesLee
Connie
Katherine

Fruit

Erdwin
Brian
Doreen
Peter
Shaun and Sarah
Kate

Bread

(muffins, rolls, bagels, Danish, non-gluten bread ...)

Jim and Susan
Mary-lyn
Eva and Paul
Guy Royal
Matt and Liina
Russ Baird
Eileen

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

- Matt Virro

The Canadian Unitarian Council, as many of you know, gave UCN a sizeable grant of \$5000 this past Spring. We were delighted that our application for financial support won out, perhaps in large part because there was an acknowledgment by us that this congregation would be celebrating its 70th anniversary in May of 2024. Those monies would go some way towards freshening the interior of 223 Church Street, a practical and sensible goal.

We wanted seed money to help freshen up the interior with paint, including the costs of masking, tarps, scraping, and cleaning walls. The Sharing the Faith Fund supports initiatives for Unitarian Universalist congregations anywhere in Canada that seek to enhance ministry, growth and vitality in their congregations.

At UCN, we will have a Sharing the Faith service on February 18, 2024 when Linda Thompson again visits from CUC. In practical terms, we will be passing the hat that day to collect money to give back, so to speak, to benefit other UU congregations who need similar grant money next year. Sharing the Faith cultivates a sense of community. It instills a sense of meaning and significance in our lives when we share commitments to program enrichment across the nation.

What I wanted to underscore for Linda Thompson's visit in February is that she hopes to see how our \$5000 grant is being used. What she will see depends on the following:

We are awaiting news, positive or not, from the Ontario Trillium Fund by the end of this September regarding our Capital Grant request from June 2023. A Grant Proposal Team of myself, Mary-lyn Hopper and Brian Jones composed an ambitious bid for capital funds earmarked for big ticket capital upgrades, including our sanctuary ceiling, audio-visual upgrades, assistive devices for entry and egress to the building and ceiling insulation which, ideally, will start in the late fall.

If the proposal is not supported (the competition for grant money was brisk), we will lick our wounds and press on with a more modest paint and putty project to freshen the look of the interior of the building to meet our May 2024 deadline of UCN's 70th anniversary.

We will soon know what the final capital project will look like, and I will update you in the UCN November newsletter.

WHO WE ARE

*This month's submission is by
Shaun Ironside*

I was born in Niagara Falls nearly 45 years ago to young parents. My childhood years were transitional, but really good for the most part. My single mom was putting herself through college and working as a receptionist, and would still find the time to be the best mom any kid could ask for, sometimes by just carting me around to college or to wherever we had to go. We never had much material wealth when I was a kid, but it was a childhood full of love and happiness. I never really wanted for anything. We moved around a lot in the Falls, which got me used to all its different neighbourhoods, cementing the city in my soul for life.

When I was 12, I went in to Don's Convenience on Montrose Rd. I had earned a couple of bucks helping my aunt and I decided to treat myself. It was there I picked up Detective Comics # 612. Mom had previously bought me the odd comic from Biway or Bargain Harolds, but this was the first time I bought one myself. It was that issue that started a lot. More on that later.

I grew up wanting to tell visual stories. Originally this meant movies, taking after my favourite Uncle Joe, who works in the film and television industry. I went to Niagara College for Film and found out that the magic of filmmaking was more business deals and hounding people to get what you need than creativity. That wasn't for me.

In my 20's I fell into the draw of the "big city" and moved to Toronto. After a year there, I moved to Hamilton and stayed for five years. But in the end, you can take the boy out of Niagara Falls, but you can't take Niagara Falls out of the boy. So in 2009 I came back home, and just in time too. I started working for Apple Support which was where I met the future love of my life, Sarah. We were just friends during that time, but we left an impression on each other that would come to fruition a few years down the road.

Careers are things we sometimes fall into. Working for Apple Support for 5 years, and then Tucows (a company that deals in web domain registration) for nine years, I eventually worked my way up to management within both companies. I love leading people and helping them be their best selves, and making the place I work the best it can be. I found a niche for myself. Since August I enjoy working for Eldis (fix.com).

But my work doesn't define me, and in my spare time I love working on creative things when I can. I like to compose music on keyboards (I'm not fantastic, but I'm learning), I like to work on many projects and stories and other creative pursuits, but my favourite that I wish I could devote more time to is my comic. I've grown up collecting comics since that fateful day at Don's Convenience (told you I would come back to that). I have an entire room in the house called The Library which has all my comics and books I've acquired since that day. I would love one day to put my own comic out into the world. One thing that has never changed is I have always wanted to tell visual stories. So I work on it when I can and one day hope to get it published.

Life is never perfect and we all have struggles, but overall I'm the happiest person in the world. Sarah and I found each other in late 2020, and since then have found our lives' greatest love in each other. No matter what the day holds, I still feel that excitement at getting to see her after a long day of work. More than my work or my comic or the house or all other future happenings, I'm most excited for our life together.



A PROPOSAL

- Eva Schwartzenruber

“ The City of St.Catharines and Niagara Region is the traditional home to many First Nations, Métis and Inuit Peoples. The land is the traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe peoples, many of whom continue to live and work here today.”

Statements like the above, recognizing Indigenous rights to territories seized by colonial powers, may be well-meaning. Some Indigenous leaders fear they become a token gesture rather than a meaningful practice and must be followed up by concrete acts to the acknowledgement.

For this reason, I am proposing, when considering the coming year’s budget, that we include a line in our monthly budget a set amount to the Nii’kinaaganaa Foundation (Yes, you can pronounce it if you take the time to try!).

This foundation is locally based and takes money, cheekily called rent, from people living on Indigenous land and distributes it to Indigenous organizations doing a wide range of land-based abolitionist and cultural work. It might seem like a token amount but it sends a message of understanding of the spoken acknowledgement to our Indigenous neighbours. This would not replace any other funds through the Outreach budget to Indigenous programs that UCN will continue to support.

The following books I have read have brought me to make this proposal:

- Becoming Kin by Patti Krawec
- Unreconciled by Jesse Went
- Valley of the Birdtail: An Indian Reserve, a White Town and the road to Reconciliation by Andrew Stobo-Snideman and Douglas Sanderson.

This last book I strongly recommend. It gives a glaring picture of the injustices still faced by Indigenous people.

NOTEWORTHY

This is the section of the Newsletter which provides a forum for UCN congregants to contribute material that is of interest to them. This may include personal reflections, experiences or general information consistent with UU principles and interests. *This month's contribution is by Molly McClintock and submitted by Doreen Peever*

JOURNEY TO THE ALTER

A reminder of what Canadians have and what can be lost

On December 21, 2005 I got married. It was a simple and short ceremony complete with vows and the exchanging of rings. We sent out announcements and received hordes of cards and flowers. My mother hosted a bridal luncheon. My father wept.

It was a traditional even mundane event. Except that I had to leave the country to do it.

My partner and I are both women. We love each other and have been in a committed, monogamous relationship for 21 years. We own a home, we pay taxes, and we fight over the TV remote. We are good neighbors (sic) and active community volunteers. You'd like us.

And we'd like you. But what you can do by taking your driver's license to the county courthouse along with \$30, I am prohibited from doing. What Britney Spears can do numerous times with numerous people, I cannot.

My partner and I drove 600 miles to Canada to obtain a marriage license that is worth exactly nothing legally in Virginia or anywhere else in the US. If you had chosen to get married abroad, your marriage would be valid and fully recognized here at home. Not so mine. Both Virginia and the United States have Defence of Marriage laws that specifically prevent my marriage from having any legal standing.

Virginia went even further passing the Affirmation of Marriage Act in 2004. This law says, again, same sex marriages are not recognized and neither are civil unions (available in Vermont and the United Kingdom) nor domestic partnerships (common in California and New York City). And now the General Assembly is considering amending the Virginia Constitution to reiterate the point. Just in case I didn't get the message the first two times.

When you get married, you become next of kin to your spouse. I didn't. You automatically receive the many legal benefits of marriage. You can make medical and financial decisions for your spouse. You inherit his or her property tax free. You receive his or her pension and Social Security benefits. I get none of these tangible benefits of marriage.

So why did we bother? Why did we pay \$500 in fees and travel to Canada in the dead of winter to obtain a worthless piece of paper? Because, finally, we could. Because there are increasing number of places in this world that recognize love is love and family is family. They include Spain, the Netherlands, and if you live there, Massachusetts. Because marriage is what people expect of a committed couple. And, perhaps surprisingly, it is what we expect for ourselves.

I had no idea how meaningful this process would be. I never expected to get married but once we began to consider it, I wanted nothing less. I am thrilled to be married and I have cried joyful tears many times in the last few months. The strangest time was at the Canadian Customs and Immigration station at Niagara Falls. The middle-aged, gruff civil servant asked us the usual questions.

"Citizenship?" "US," we chimed together. "Destination?" "Niagara Falls," my partner replied. "Purpose of your trip?" "We're getting married," she said. He finally looked up at us and with a wide smile, he said, "Congratulations!"

We were stunned and grateful. This was not Mars. This was Canada. Not exactly a hotbed of liberalism. But a place where we could walk into St. Catharines City Hall and apply for a marriage license as two consenting adults.

Now, I don't want to live in Canada or denounce my citizenship. I am a proud and loyal American. But we are behind the curve on this one and we are losing ground. The land of the free is becoming less and less welcoming, even to its own. We don't need constitutional amendments. We need strong public schools, solid transportation systems, and vibrant economic development. As an American, that's what I want my elected representatives working on.

I guarantee my marriage has not and will not affect yours in any way. I think

what we've done strengthens, not weakens, marriage as an institution. I'm a proponent of marriage and my 21-year relationship demonstrates my commitment to creating a stable family. There is nothing about my marriage to be afraid of or disappointed in. You're free to marry whom you love. So too should I be.

McClintock lives in Christiansburg and serves on the Board of Equality Virginia. Since she wrote this, she and her partner were married in Virginia after the state amended its laws to allow same same sex marriage.

GIVING IS ALL WE HAVE

One River Gives Its Journey to the Next

- by Alberto Rios

We give because someone gave to us.
We give because nobody gave to us.
We give because giving has changed us.
We give because giving could have changed us.
We have been better for it,
We have been wounded by it

Giving has many faces: It is loud and quiet,
Big, though small, diamond in wood nails.
Its story is old, the plot worn and the pages too,
But we read this book, anyway, over and over again:
Giving is, first and every time, hand to hand,
Mine to yours, yours to mine.
You gave me blue and I gave you yellow.
Together we are simple green.
You gave me what you did not have,
And I gave you what I had to give.
Together, we made something greater than the difference."

This Thanksgiving let us all take the time to thank those who have given to of us, not just because it is the right thing to do, but because their gifts enriched us in some way, in ways, sometimes, the giver is unaware.



**Unitarian Congregation
of Niagara**

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Thanksgiving

*It is not happy people
who are thankful,
It is thankful people
who are happy.*

Anon.



**Deadline for November Newsletter:
October 20, 2023**

