



UNITARIAN CONGREGATION OF NIAGARA

*A Congregation for Everybody*

# UCN NEWS

December 2024

## 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

### THE DECEMBER THEME OF MYSTERY

December 8 - Karen and Penny and the UCN Choir will present a service filled with music for the season called 'Christmas is a Feeling and a Song'

December 15 - Paul will present 'Words and Music for Christmas'

December 22 - Liina and Kathryn guide us in the recognition of the Winter Solstice

December 29 - Mary-lyn will lead a service, topic TBA.

## ***UPCOMING THEMES FOR THE NEW YEAR***

*JANUARY— LIBERATING LOVE*

*FEBRUARY— JUSTICE AND EQUITY*

*MARCH— TRANSFORMATION*

*APRIL— PLURALISM*

*MAY— RENEWAL*

## EVENTS

### 34<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL UNITARIAN MIDWINTER RETREAT

January 31- Feb. 2, 2025



## 34<sup>th</sup> Unitarian Midwinter Retreat

@ Cedar Glen,  
Jan. 31-Feb. 2, 2025

Keynote Speaker: Dallas Bergen, Music Director at Toronto FirstU

Information: <https://uumidwinterretreat.blogspot.com>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/uumwr>

or Helen Iacovino, Registrar at [Midwinter@FirstUnitarianToronto.org](mailto:Midwinter@FirstUnitarianToronto.org)

This will be the 34th midwinter retreat, and we are back at the YMCA Cedar Glen Outdoor Centre, just north of Toronto. The retreat will run from the evening of Friday, Jan. 31, until after lunch on Sunday, Feb. 2, 2025.

This year's retreat theme will be "Welcoming the second quarter of the 21st century". We are delighted to announce that our keynote speaker will be Dallas Bergen, who has been the Director of Congregational Music at the First Unitarian Congregation of Toronto for over a decade. Workshops will be similar to previous years, with a choice of 3 or 4 workshops in each of 4 time slots, and will include

outdoor programs led by Cedar Glen staff as well as things such as yoga, improv, presentations on UU history, and more. A follow-up workshop by Rev. Linda Thomson from last year's theme of "Becoming Acquainted" will focus on new and emerging practices from our congregations to counter separation and loneliness. A Saturday night cabaret, games and euchre, and a Sunday service with our usual Chocolate Communion will round out the weekend.

You can find more details about the retreat at our website, at

<https://uumidwinterretreat.blogspot.com>.

You can also contact us at [midwinter@firstunitariantoronto.org](mailto:midwinter@firstunitariantoronto.org).

*It's time to learn more about Reverend Pat Trudeau. Here is her story in her own words:*

## **Reverend Pat Trudeau**

Rev. Pat Trudeau has been a Unitarian Universalist since 1998 when her family joined the First Unitarian Church of Pittsburgh. There she participated in the Dance Choir and the Family Choir.

When the family returned to Canada, they joined the Neighbourhood congregation, where she served on the Board of Directors and as Chair of Sunday Services, a position she held for five years. Rev. Pat also assumed the role of Interim Director of Lifespan Learning for a brief period in 2011.

In 2012, she entered seminary at Emmanuel College where she completed a Master of Divinity degree. Following approval by the Ministerial Formation Team of the UUA, she was ordained as a Unitarian Universalist Minister by Neighbourhood Congregation on Oct 27, 2019. This milestone marked the culmination of her journey in ministerial formation. That journey also included training in spiritual care and pastoral counselling at Baycrest Health Sciences Centre over a period of five months and a year of training at Lombard Theological School.

Since her ordination in 2019, Rev. Pat served as Minister at the Unitarian Fellowship of Northwest Toronto for four years and at NUUC from September 2023 to June 2024. She extended her ministerial reach to the broader Unitarian community, offering sessions, workshops, and sermons focused on dismantling racism. Alongside her husband, Wilburn Hayden, and her son, Donovan Trudeau Hayden, she has been instrumental in promoting anti-racism awareness within Unitarian Universalist congregations across Canada.

For part of the year, she serves as Minister in Residence at Unicamp of Ontario, where she conducts Sunday services and facilitates children's programs. Recently she has joined the Unicamp Board of Directors in the role of Ministerial Advisor.

Rev. Pat is pleased to be working with UCN to offer meaningful Sunday Services once a month and to help the Program Working Group to plan Sunday services.

## A Letter from Pat

Dear Members and Friends of UCN:

It has been more than two months since I began to visit and to do monthly Services at UCN and it my pleasure to be here with you and learn more about the congregation's history and goals. There is a refreshing sense of fellowship here and a commitment to caring for each other. I feel gratitude and a sense and anticipation about the work we can do together.

Background: In late April I was asked to consider part-time ministry at UCN in order to help the congregation regenerate and transform. I met with the Program committee in early May to help define the role. On May 26, the Board approved the contract to work with UCN for nine months as a contracted guest UU Minister beginning September 2024 through May 2025. I have planned and participated in three Sunday Services as guest minister and attended three other Services. Working with the Program Working Group, I have attended meetings and have collaborated in planning some new directions for Services (to be reviewed by the congregation at a later date). While I cannot be at every Board meeting, I was able to attend the September meeting in person and the Oct 30 meeting via Zoom

One concern is that there seems to be a lack of clarity about the guest minister's role which has led to misunderstanding. The Board of Directors has set priorities for my ministry with you, as I am only with you once a month. The priorities are Sunday Worship within a Shared Ministry context. All other aspects of ministry will continue to be lay-led by board members, committee members, and those of you who say "Yes" and allow themselves to be a part of creating community.

The contract specifies:

Our UCN goal is to have the contracted UU Minister meet with our Congregation once a month to assist us in developing the best spiritual lay-led congregation we can achieve in 2024-25. The contracted Minister will provide in-person leadership, support, and guidance ...during a monthly Sunday service, and occasionally after with focus group sessions at UCN.

My role is unusual because guest ministers do not tend to have contracts but rather one-page agreements. I am a guest minister who has a contract. My context for ministry is Shared Ministry. The definition of Shared Ministry developed by the CUC Task Force is: Ministry is the act of serving. Shared Ministry is what we do to serve our congregation and the broader community, individually and together. Each individual brings unique gifts to contribute.

Specifically that means that no one person, including a minister is responsible for all aspects of a Service. In co-creating and sharing plans for a Service I have the opportunity of coming to know leaders in this community and sharing ideas/resources

My other concern is communication. As in any congregation or fellowship, there is a lot of “he said, she said” and “people are saying” at UCN. As a newcomer, it is essential that I serve all congregants by getting to know them as individuals whose inherent worth and dignity is respected. It may be well intentioned but it is not helpful when people tell me what others think or feel

Each communication creates community together. I covenant with you to communicate directly and to honour the UCN Covenant.

I covenant with you to:

- Adhere to the Contract.
- Provide a Sunday Service message on my scheduled Sunday. In case of inclement weather, I will try to be present within the limits of personal safety or provide the service through Zoom. In case of unforeseen circumstances, an emergency Script/Message will be at the Fellowship building.
- Assist the Program Working Group in presenting in planning and developing themes and services.
- Minister to all and not show preference.
- Have an open door policy for members to communicate directly in-person, phone or e-mail.
- Not engage/participate in conversations that reflect negatively or speak ill toward members within the congregation.
- Speak directly with people about any concerns that I may have or that they may have in respect to my work within the congregation.
- Implement directions from the Board of Directors.
- Communicate with the Board of Directors, in particular the President and Vice-President.

Please connect with me at [patrudeau@hotmail.com](mailto:patrudeau@hotmail.com) or preferably call me at 647-477-7993. I will typically respond to your messages on Tuesday–Thursday between 2 and 5pm, or the Saturday before I am scheduled to do a Sunday Service. I look forward to hearing from you. Note, if an e-mail is not in my Contacts, it may not reach me. If you do not hear back from me within a day or two, please call.

May we continue to pursue UCN mission, creating a beautiful, imperfect faith community where

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.



In faith,

*Reverend Pat Trudeau*



## **SOCIAL ACTION**

### **COMMUNITY CARE CHRISTMAS TREE**

- LesLee Turmel



Over the past years UCN has raised funds aimed at helping Community Care provide food and new clothing for marginalized seniors in our community.

This year at UCN we provide a lit holiday tree, a constant reminder of the light of the Christmas season and the joy of giving.

There are two ways you can give: you can bring food items, including the more festive foods such as shortbread and chocolates. Community Care asks for canned or preserved items rich in protein as well as canned fruits and vegetables. You can place this in the hamper box under the tree; or, you can make a financial donation by passing your gift to Maurice or LesLee Turmel who will ensure it is included with the food hamper. Just choose which is the best way for you to give.

A special thanks to Erdwin Hueniken who donated the tree from his Christmas tree farm, to Matt Virro and Abu Hosein who brought the tree to UCN and adorned it with lights, and to Doreen Peever who provided gold origami cranes to hang as ornaments. If you have any decor you would like to donate or lend to decorate our tree, please take the liberty of hanging the ornament(s), putting your name on it (them) if they are loaners. If there is a special story about the ornament you donate, we would like you to share it with us.

Please help Community Care offer gifts given in joy to the seniors in our community. Help put a smile on their faces and the warmth of love in their hearts.

***MERRY CHRISTMAS!***



## Winter Coats Needed

At a meeting of the Brock Ecumenical Chaplain's Committee it was mentioned that some international students come here unprepared for Canadian winters. The Ecumenical Chaplain, Rev. Krista Hilton, asked for donations of winter coats to distribute to students, as happens every year. If you have coats to donate, please bring them to Doreen Peever and she will pass them on to Krista Hilton.



## POEM FOR PEACE

The following poem, titled “A Very Short Poem for Peace,” was submitted by Gracia Janes. Gracia is a current member of UCN whom many of you may not have met. Do not be fooled by her absence in UCN activities as being an indication of her commitment to the principles of Unitarian Universalism. She lives the principles in all facets of her life, most evidently in her community awareness, and her social action initiatives and participation. She was the Unitarian Religious Education Director for six years at the Unitarian Fellowship of Northwest Toronto, and then of the Unitarian Fellowship of Niagara (now UCN) for 16 years.

Gracia’s poem for peace comes with hope and encouragement at a most critical time in this world’s history.



### A Very Short Poem for Peace - Gracia James

If we could live in Peace,  
Just one more year, or three or five  
Perhaps some how, some place, some way  
We’d know we can survive  
By reaching hands across the void,  
And hearts, and souls, and minds.



## **A FAREWELL FROM LESLEE**

Dear Friends,

It is with great pleasure and great sadness that I step down as editor of our Newsletter. When I was first invited to assume this role, I was unsure what was before me. I found the task to be daunting. Under the tutelage of the former editor, Carol Riseing, and our publisher, Darcy Ewanchuk, I was quick to recognize the benefits I would glean. When UCN met with financial challenges we had to turn in-house for newsletter formatting and we relinquished publishing a monthly hard copy. I was most fortunate when Penny Blake stepped up to the task.

In the role of editor I learned much about Unitarianism, the workings of UCN and I developed many wonderful relationships with the people that make up our family. I learned how my type A personality was challenged by broached deadlines and the unpredictability of an over abundance of submissions followed by extreme drought. This forced Penny and me to dig deeper and find innovative measures to bridge the gap.

The time has come to pass the baton to another. I am no longer able to be an effective editor. My hopes were to expand the newsletter content, resurrecting past segments such as 'Who We Are' and reaching out to the community for their participation and contribution. Alas, that will be another's call. I look forward to seeing the Newsletter grow with diverse content and a new eye. I will make myself available to the new editor during the transition period.

I cannot go without extending a deep appreciation for Penny and Roy Blake. They have provided cover for me over the past months, most notably with this

December newsletter. Each has contributed mightily during my tenure, but during the past months they have done yeoman's work. This last edition would not have happened without them. For that I am most grateful.

My experiences as editor have been rich, sometimes messy and infuriating with its ups and downs and twists and turns, but most notably they led me on a journey of discovery and learning with all its accompanying joy and exhilaration. Thank you for the privilege of serving UCN in this way.

Sincerely,

LesLee Turmel



Thank You!



It is that time of year again when congregants are asked to determine how much money they can contribute to UCN over the next year. Your contributions are critical in keeping our church financially viable.

Your pledge money is directed to the many costs associated with our goals and objectives. This includes the more practical aspects of operation, including annual CUC membership fees and building maintenance and enhancements. Your contributions are also used for guest service speakers and musicians, educational materials and social action initiatives.

Brian Jones, our treasurer, has sent out pledge forms for you to complete before the end of 2024. You can contribute in one lump sum, monthly or any interval that works for you. Your pledge is a promise of what you want to give, but we recognize that your situation may change and so may your contribution. If so, there is no need to advise anyone.

Your treasurer and board work arduously to spend your money wisely and invest it in ways that help us build reserves for large initiatives or unforeseen costs. Brian provides a monthly statement of costs, expenses and investments which you can access by examining the minutes of our monthly board meetings.

Your pledge is confidential and only the treasurer knows what you give. Your financial gift is eligible for income tax deductions.

Please contribute what you can afford. Your contributions are appreciated and essential to keep our congregation functional, vibrant and relevant.

## HOW DO I GET MY MONEY TO UCN?

There are several ways of honouring your pledge:

- You can contribute at services via cheque or cash. There are small envelopes where you can insert your contribution and place it on the Offertory plate set out at the table at the bottom of the ramp. Please put your name on the envelope so we can issue you a tax receipt.
- You can mail your pledge directly to Brian Jones c/o UCN, 223 Church Street, St. Catharines, Ontario L2R 3E8.
- You can e-transfer your pledge using Interac. To do this you must be registered with your financial institution on-line. Just set up Unitarian Congregation of Niagara as an Interac payee using the email address: [treasurer.ucn@gmail.com](mailto:treasurer.ucn@gmail.com)



**Unitarian Congregation  
of Niagara**

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**Board of Directors**

President: Mary-lyn Hopper  
Vice-president: Shaun Ironside  
Past-president: Matt Virro  
Secretary: Sarah McLaren  
Treasurer: Brian Jones  
Member-at-large: Eva Schwartzentruber  
Program: Eva Schwartzentruber  
Social Action: Shaun Ironside

**Lay Chaplains:** Contact  
[laychaplainsucn@gmail.com](mailto:laychaplainsucn@gmail.com)  
Beryl Stovell, Karen Stovell

**Committee Chairs**

Music: Penny Blake  
Denominational Affairs: Jacob Santos  
Lay Chaplaincy: Doreen Peever  
Membership: Doreen Peever  
Pastoral Care: Doreen Peever  
Property: Peter Skelton  
Rental: Doreen Peever  
Social Action: Shaun Ironside  
Website: Jacob Santos

**Trustees**

Jim Glassford, Erdwin Hueniken,  
Doreen Peever



**Happy  
Holidays**