



UNITARIAN CONGREGATION OF NIAGARA

*A Congregation for Everybody*

# UCN NEWS

**October 2022**

## **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 2 - UCN Artwork - service presented and led by Doreen Peever  
Doreen will introduce us to the artwork collected and donated to UCN over the years, its sources and significance.

October 9 - Thanksgiving - service presented and led by Mary-lyn Hopper

October 16 - CUC Matters - service presented by Rev.Linda Thomson  
Reverend Thomson will explore CUC history, its accomplishments and relevance for today. - service led by Karen Stovell

October 23 - Homes for the Homeless - service presented by Mo Constantine  
Mo will discuss initiatives underway to meaningfully address homelessness in the Niagara Region. - service led by Karen Stovell

October 30 - Letters to a Stranger - service presented and led by Russell Baird

November 6 - Remembrance Day Sunday - service presented and led by Jim Glassford

November 13 - The Underbelly of Evil - service presented and led by LesLee Turmel

November 20 - Conspiracy Theory: Part Two via Zoom - presented by Max Kenel; service led by Eva Schwartzentruber

November 27 - UCN History - service presented and led by Doreen Peever

December 4 - Myths We Live By - service presented and led by Karen Stovell

December 11 - Hope - service presented and led by Brian Jones  
A Potluck lunch will follow the service.

December 18 - Enacting Hanukkah - service presented and led by Penny Blake

December 21 - Winter Solstice Service - service led by Eva Schwartzentruber

December 24 @ 4:30 pm - Christmas Carol Service - service presented and led by Karen Stovell and Susan Glassford

December 25 - No Service

The Program Committee is always looking for UCN congregants who want to speak of something important to them or UCN. If you are interested in speaking or leading a service, please contact Karen Stovell, Eva Schwartzentruber or LesLee Turmel.

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## FALL AND WINTER EVENTS

### CIRCLE DINNER

Our next Circle Dinner will be on **Saturday, October 15 at 5:30 pm** at the UCN. As always, it will be potluck. This year the Social Committee is not assigning dishes. We simply ask participants to bring a dish of their choice to share with others.

Circle Dinners are a great way to let loose and get to know your fellow congregants in a fun and non-threatening gathering. All are welcome. No RVSP

## ADULT DISCUSSION GROUPS

These small guided groups are designed for meaningful discussion, connection and reflection on a variety of topics. They meet virtually once a month.

Class 1 will meet on Thursday, October 20 at 10:30 am

Class 2 will meet on Tuesday, September 18 at 10:30 am

October's topic will be "The Good Old Days vs Now." Reading material to help you prepare for discussion will be issued at least a week before the class.

If you are interested in exploring and attending these discussions, please contact Karen Stovell.

## AGE-ING AND SAGE-ING

These classes will begin in October and will be led by Brian Jones.

Details of dates and times will be announced later.

## IN TRIBUTE OF THE NATIONAL DAY OF TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION

Canada Wide POW WOW

Saturday, Oct. 1

Meridian Centre (inside)



This national Pow Wow is an all day event. It will host a variety of Indigenous performances, crafts and food. All are welcome and admission is free.

Truth and Reconciliation Day has also been called Orange Shirt Day. The day was founded by Phyllis Webstadt to create an opportunity to discuss the effects of residential schools and their legacy. Phyllis will be honoured at the Pow Wow for these efforts.

Phyllis, at the age of six, was given an orange shirt by her grandmother, a gift expressly purchased for her as she excitedly waited to go off to school. Upon arriving at school, her long hair was cut short and the orange shirt, which meant so much to her, was stripped away from her to never be seen again. The colour orange is a symbol for Phyllis of the invalidating experiences of residential schools.

Phyllis is also founder and Ambassador of the Orange Shirt Society. She tours the country speaking of her story and addressing the impacts of the residential school system.

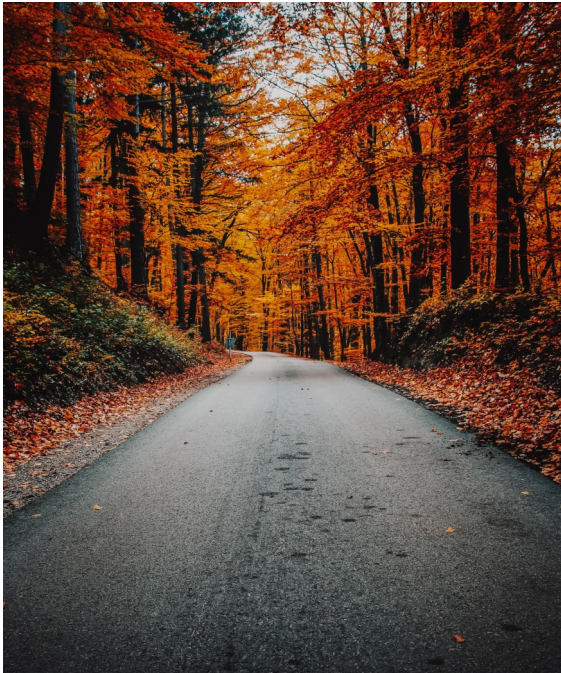
For UCNers, this is a grand opportunity to take another step on our journey to greater understanding of Indigenous peoples' history, culture and challenges. Hopefully, we can all show up! And if you have an orange shirt, wear it!

## DECEMBER HOLIDAY POTLUCK LUNCH

Sunday, December 11

Noon

This is scheduled for after Sunday's Service on the topic of Hope presented by Brian Jones. The luncheon format will be that of Circle Dinners and will be holiday themed.



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

- Matt Virro



My emotions were really put to work today.

Put your smile away.

The news from the United Nations is grim. Hunger and famine. Lying and misinformation from a Russian foreign minister. News that Russian men will be conscripted to serve in an army that has no moral reason to be in Ukraine. Violence in the streets of St. Petersburg and Moscow. On this shore a past president finally indicted for fraud. A historical hurricane has devastated Atlantic Canada. What awaits them as the toll of damage and lives taken mounts.

But bring your smile back out, will you!

We went to Port Colborne today with tickets to a local Canadian theatre. Thank you to Susan and Jim for gracing us with tickets as they explore Alaska. We enjoyed our time with the Stovell sisters and family. The show featured three fabulous singers, 8 guitarists, 5 as backup, and drummers regaling us with the music performed at the Troubadour rock club in Los Angeles. The music of The Eagles, Linda Rondstadt, Kris Kristofferson, Elton John, Gordon Lightfoot, Neil Diamond, Bruce Springsteen, James Taylor, Carole King, Cat Stevens, Jackson Browne transported me to my youth during the 70's. We were swept away on a magical carpet ride that reminded us again to put away our troubles and cares as we support our world, our Niagara.

As Alfred E. Newman, my youth's standard bearer, reminds me, "What me worry? Be happy!"

## SOCIAL ACTION

- Beryl Stovell

I am delighted that Erdwin Hueniken has offered to take over as Social Action Chair on a temporary basis while I am in the USA. He comes with great skills and dedication to UCN, and will be able to offer his leadership during the winter months when I am away.

On Friday, September 23, Erdwin and I toured a number of the downtown agencies and organizations in St. Catharines to get a clearer understanding of community outreach services. It is good to see that there are many agencies and people who are working diligently to meet the many needs of the people in our community:

- we toured Silver Spire Church which we donated to last year for showers, laundry and a drop-in respite centre for homeless people;
- we met staff at Positive Living, an umbrella agency of StreetWorks which provides outreach for those with HIV/AIDS and addiction;
- the donations gathered this month for the Food Bank were delivered to Community Care;
- The RAFT also works to meet the needs of homeless youth, for housing and a plethora of youth-related needs;
- Start-Me-Up-Niagara staff provided us with very helpful information;
- we were not able to meet with the staff of Westview Centre 4 Women, but we know that their work with women is greatly needed.

This tour was very helpful for Erdwin and myself as we recognized the great efforts being done to meet needs in our community and helped us assess where our donations are best directed. We believe our focus on charitable donations towards local needs is the best form of UCN outreach.

We ask members and friends of UCN to give us feedback as to the direction you feel we should be going. Do you have an organization you feel we should be addressing? Please email your feedback and suggestions to myself or Erdwin. We will be glad to consider your input.

I am delighted to know that the outreach of UCN has a capable leader in Erdwin to take over the reins during my six month absence from November to April. UCN and the St.Catharines' community will be well served.

## BEING AN ALLY

- LesLee Turmel

“A Social movement that only moves people is merely a revolt. A movement that changes both people and institutions is a revolution.”

- Martin Luther King Jr.

I am sure I am not alone in recognizing the vast number of social, political and environmental challenges that face individuals, groups, institutions and the planet. Further, we are inundated with messages of divisions and schisms. Vitriol has erupted as a prevailing tone in communication. Dialogue has been supplanted by monologue. Shouting overpowers conversation. What is false conflates truth or unabashedly asserts itself as truth. Intolerance is worn like a badge of honour. How do we navigate through this to move forward in a way that honours ourselves, our spirits and limitations, and work in a transformative way to address the issues present in our world?

There is no realistic way that one person, group or organization can address all the challenges of this world or override the negative messaging that tears down rather than builds up. There is a way, however, we can be supportive in our personal relationships with public acts of sponsorship and advocacy. We can be a powerful and effective voice for another. We can become an ally.

So what is the route to being a true ally?

An ally is anyone who supports another person or group. It requires action. We need to embrace what it means to be actionable. We are forced to challenge ourselves first, to open our minds and hearts to others' experiences and to challenge others to do likewise. We need to be comfortable with being uncomfortable in this process.

To develop a true understanding of how people see themselves and their unique qualities and challenges requires we listen and be open to learning. It sounds obvious, but to learn we must truly listen. And we must be aware of our own privilege.

Most of us have some type of privilege whether it be race or that we be straight, male, able bodied, educated or financially stable. This does not mean we have not had challenges and hardships in our own life. It means there are some things we don't have to consider; whether we will be racially profiled, whether people pay attention to what we say, whether we have the physical ability to access a building or service, whether we may be assaulted because of our gender

or sexual orientation, or whether we will have healthy food to eat or a safe place to sleep at night.

Being an ally requires we shelve preconceived notions, tired stereotypes and personal biases. In a truly cringe worthy and heart breaking moment, I learned the folly of making assumptions. One morning before the world had risen, I went to a bank ATM. On the floor in the bank foyer was a man sleeping. My presence woke him, and as I withdrew money from the machine I asked him if there was something I could get for him. His response was curt and simple, "I don't need your money, I need a good night's sleep." He left hurriedly. This experience continues to haunt and challenge me on making assumptions and how doing so that day may have resulted in a lost opportunity. Being an ally requires we be ever vigilant of our own beliefs and emotions.

Acting as an ally simply means being human. It is about forging relationships. When we lead with empathy and compassion we better know the unique qualities and challenges of another. It requires we be open to change in our thinking and action. It means finding the courage to reach out no matter how uncomfortable we might feel. It is a heart issue, not an intellectual one. We will make mistakes. With practice, we will become better.

An ally is a person of action. Oppression does not take breaks. After I donate to some group or individual, or spend time with someone, I can return home to my comforts. We are obliged to be ever conscious of this, not to feel guilt but to motivate us to simple action. We can do this in ways beyond developing relationships. We can write letters, educate ourselves, and stand up to others when they speak or act from a place of ignorance or cruelty. It means we must be courageous not just in reaching out, but in standing up.

Allyship is not about grand gestures like planning and implementing events and projects. Rather, it means your words are supported by your action. This involves taking smaller individual steps that contribute to a more inclusive world. It is not an isolated effort. Rather, it is consistent work over time to build relationships of trust, respect and accountability.

If it takes all members of society to make true acceptance, respect and change happen, then we, by speaking out and standing up, may be examples to others. We can actively participate in this revolution.

*As we express our gratitude we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them. - JFK*



## HOW CAN YOU HELP THE UCN?

By donating money or time or expertise!

Your financial gifts help UCN continue to operate and better serve you and the community. To make a monetary contribution you can give cash or cheque at time of service or make an e-transfer.

To make an e-transfer, set up Unitarian Congregation of Niagara as payee at your Bank with the e-mail [ucn.communications@gmail.com](mailto:ucn.communications@gmail.com). We are set up for automatic deposit so you don't need a password. If writing a cheque, make it payable to UCN and offer it at Sunday service or mail it to: Unitarian Congregation of Niagara

223 Church Street  
St. Catharines, Ontario  
L2R 3E8

You can also support UCN beyond your lifetime through a Legacy Gift. This enables the continuous message and work of Unitarianism to speak out and lays the foundation for a stable and exciting future for the congregation.

There are several ways to do this, and it is recommended you seek independent financial advice about legacy gifts and discuss it with those family members who need to be aware of your decision.

For the best future for UCN, please consider a Legacy Gift.



## NOTEWORTHY

This is a new section in our newsletter that provides a forum for UCN congregants to contribute articles that are of interest to them. These may include personal reflections, experiences and general information consistent with UU principles and interests.

STAY WITH ME - by Ayobami Adebayo

Book Review

- Anita Pfohl Miecznikowski



This first novel, set in Nigeria, tells the story of a couple's desperate attempts to have a child. Ever since they met and married Yejide and Akin have tried, consulting fertility doctors and trying unlikely cures. One day, Yejide's in-laws arrive with a young woman to be Akin's second wife! Furious, Yejide knows the only way to save the marriage is to get pregnant. Which, finally she does, but at a cost far greater than she could have imagined.

Margaret Atwood, a mentor for the author, calls the book "Scorching, gripping and ultimately lovely." I found the book a compelling, emotional journey and exploration of the pressures society often places on people and the secrets that can exist in marriage. It confronts our assumptions of what is acceptable. I saw the characters as flawed, hurting and totally believable.

I recommend this book, but expect to be shocked and challenged by it.

If you would like to borrow 'Stay With Me', let me know.

## A CHALK DRUM

- Paul Pipher

A 5000 year old chalk sculpture found in a grave of three children has been hailed as “the most important piece of prehistoric art” uncovered in Britain in a century. The British Museum said it was the “most significant” ancient discovery in the UK.

The barrel-shaped cylindrical sculpture is only the fourth of its kind to have survived and still retains elaborate motifs of a British and Irish artistic style which flourished at the time Stonehenge was built. It was unearthed, along with the burial of three children, at a country estate in 2015.

The design has yet to be deciphered, but is thought to have either a symbolic or religious meaning. The chalk drum, which is not believed to be a musical instrument, was discovered lying above the head of a child which was holding the other two younger ones in a “moving scene.” It may have been intended as a good luck charm to protect the children. Three holes in the drum are thought to mark the presence of the three bodies in the grave. The two youngest children were touching or holding hands.

A chalk ball and polished bone pin were also found, and were next to the drum and underneath one of the children’s head. A spokesman from the British Museum said the emotions the drum expresses are powerful and timeless. They transcend the time of Stonehenge and reflect a moment of tragedy and despair that remained undimmed after 5000 years.



Happy New Year!  
- Penny Blake

This year is in many ways a new beginning for all of us. We have been through two years of Covid regulations that severely restricted our inter-personal and communal lives. Now, in person services, concerts, choirs and sporting events are starting up again, and we may never take this way of life for granted again.

I reflect upon this in my Jewish spiritual life as I enter upon the Fall season which is a season of beginnings. The most important of the high holidays starts with Rosh Hashanah, literally "head of the year" or, colloquially, New Year which ends with Yom Kippur, a day of Atonement. One is simultaneously urged to look forward with hope and to look back to reflect upon one's past year and resolve to do better.

There are many customs and symbols associated with this time, and many of them, such as blowing the shofar (ram's horn) and eating apples and honey, are well known. Like all important holidays and ceremonies - think of Christmas - the themes are foundational. The Torah readings deal with the creation story and the miraculous birth of Isaac to Abraham and Sarah who were well into their years. The blowing of a shofar, especially on Rosh Hashanah, calls us to wake up and take heed. It also recalls that Isaac was saved from sacrifice by a ram caught in the thickets. On Yom Kippur the story of Jonah is read. As a reluctant prophet, he was forced to journey in a whale's belly to warn a community of imminent disaster unless they repented. All ends happily as the community repents and avoids destruction. If only all our problems were so easily overcome!

All of this is done in the spirit of thankfulness that is so natural in the fall, the harvest season. It is a great contrast to the secular New Year in winter. Christmas, which is near the Solstice, has emotional significance due to the season. The world is at its nadir, but light will shortly start anew. In a season with little growth that feels as though it is going nowhere, a new babe is born. But secular New Year seems to come out of the blue and feels more like a technocratic and artificial holiday. Although New Year's resolutions are made and enrolment in exercise clubs temporarily climbs, it is primarily a time to take a break and party.

Whatever the reason, these Jewish high holidays have a very direct connection to nature and the seasons. It gives me an added reason to feel a sense of renewal as I go back to activities and routines that have lapsed in the summer. As I look at the world anew, reflect on my own life and interact again with all of you, I will simply say to all of us, L'Shanah Tovah!

Have a good, sweet, and happy New Year!



# Unitarian Congregation of Niagara

223 Church St.  
St. Catharines, ON L2R 3E8  
905-687-8433

[unitarian-stcatharines.org](http://unitarian-stcatharines.org)  
[ucn.communications@gmail.com](mailto:ucn.communications@gmail.com)

## Board of Directors

President: Matt Virro  
Vice-president: Mary-lyn Hopper  
Past-president: Penny Blake  
Secretary: Connie Scott  
Treasurer: Brian Jones  
Member-at-large: Eva Schwartzentruber  
Program: Karen Stovell  
Social Action: Beryl Stovell

**Lay Chaplains:** Contact  
laychaplainsucn@gmail.com  
Beryl Stovell, Karen Stovell

## Committee Chairs

Adult Religious Education: Karen Stovell  
Music: Penny Blake, Karen Stovell  
Communications: Roy Blake  
Denominational Affairs: Connie Scott  
Lay Chaplaincy: Doreen Peever  
Membership: Doreen Peever  
Newsletter: LesLee Turmel, Penny Blake  
Pastoral Care: Doreen Peever  
Property: Peter Skelton  
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Social: Susan Glassford, Jim Glassford,  
Karen Stovell, Abu Hosein  
Social Action: Beryl Stovell,  
Erdwin Huenikan

## Trustees

Jim Glassford, Erdwin Huenikan,  
Doreen Peever

## Gratitude

Gratitude unlocks the fullness of life.  
It turns what we have into enough,  
and more.

It turns denial into acceptance,  
chaos into order,  
confusion to clarity. It can turn  
a meal into a feast,  
a house into a home,  
a stranger into a friend.

Gratitude makes sense of our past,  
brings peace for today  
and creates vision for tomorrow.

*Melody Beattie*



**Deadline for Nov. Newsletter:**

**Oct. 21**

