



THE Chalice

NEWSLETTER OF THE
ELORA & FERGUS UNITARIAN CHURCH
MARCH – APRIL 2007

A NEW SPRING, A FRESH PATH

Excitement is what I feel going through an awesome learning curve these months to become a Unitarian Lay-Chaplain. The workshops by the Canadian Unitarian Council (CUC) are excellent, interactive and inspiring, and over the next few months I will shadow chaplains "on the job".

Lay-Chaplains perform Rites of Passage: weddings, funerals, name dedications, the different milestones of coming of age, croning and saging, (a celebration for those who get to that point of achieved wisdom and freedom of silliness), even house-blessings and pet memorial services, and I am sure I will learn about other rites of passage in the upcoming workshops.

The lay chaplaincy bug bit me after Mary Bennett of the CUC suggested it was time for our congregation to go that route. A lay-chaplain could bring us increased service opportunities, and could help us to increase our involvement locally, promote our beliefs, and celebrate our own sense of community within our congregation.

Lay chaplaincy would be a service to the members and friends of our congregation, and also to those outside our Unitarian community. People have a need for an alternate kind of ceremony, especially when they come from different and sometimes conflicting belief systems. This way we would definitely reach out to the wider community. Undoubtedly there is a need, as we have to redirect about five requests for weddings, name dedications or funerals each year, without any advertising. We always refer them to the neighbouring Unitarian congregations in Guelph or Waterloo, who do have Lay-Chaplains, so it's not a loss to Unitarianism. However, these are missed opportunities for the Elora and Fergus Unitarian Church to be of service to our community and to get our name out there.



The implementation of the Lay-Chaplaincy is up to the voting membership of our congregation and the Lay Chaplaincy Committee at the Annual General Meeting on April 22. To that end, more information is available at the CUC website http://www.cuc.ca/lay_chaplaincy/index.htm with many links and documents, from our Lay-Chaplaincy Committee Chris Nye and Leigh Brownhill, or the area CUC LCC representative and coordinator Yvonne Greig: ygreig@ca.inter.net.

Please note that the congregation should NOT in any which way feel obliged to follow the path I envision. Commitment to chaplaincy is not an obligation but a choice. I hope you catch my enthusiasm for the project.

Extending my warm gratitude to many but especially to Dwight Pile for advice.

-- Ellen Papenburg



UNITARIANISM 101 FINDING YOUR OWN PATH

It is not surprising that our local Unitarian church is comprised of people with so many diverse backgrounds. After all, it is a 'home for religious liberals' in our community. Rather than dictating what another person may or may not believe, Unitarians seek their own spiritual path. Founded on the premise that each person's intuitive or spiritual experience is valid, this religious community offers a setting where people can worship, explore and share faith together in an atmosphere of freedom and mutual respect. It also offers a unique alternative to traditional mainstream religion, as well as an opportunity to engage the mind, the spirit, and the emotions.

The Fergus Elora community is fortunate to have its own local Unitarian church, first formed about 13 years ago. In 2000, the Elora & Fergus Unitarian Church became chartered as a full-fledged congregation, affiliated with the Canadian Unitarian Council (CUC) in Toronto. Today, it is a small but mighty congregation with a committed group of about 30 members who meet weekly at Victoria Park Seniors Centre. Guests are always welcome and encouraged to attend as few or as many services as they desire.

Unitarianism is nothing new. It dates way back to the 16th century to designate people who did not accept the dogma of the Holy Trinity. Unitarian ideas developed independently over time in several places around the world. A strong Unitarian movement had pioneers in Britain during the 18th and 19th centuries. In Canada, preachers from the British Isles established Unitarian congregations in Montreal and Halifax in the 1830s and '40s. They were followed by Universalists from the U.S., who spread their faith to the Eastern Townships, southwestern Ontario, and the Maritimes. Today, there are Unitarian congregations in every province of Canada.

Despite its rich history, Unitarianism is still not particularly well known or understood because it is a minority faith tradition. Rather than providing prescribed creeds and dogmas of faith, it encourages people to find truth for themselves. Unitarianism does not demand the common acceptance of any one belief about God, creation, humanity or spirituality. However, it is founded on the following Seven Principles:

- The inherent worth and dignity of every person
- Justice, equity and compassion in human relations
- Acceptance of one another and the encouragement of spiritual growth in our congregations
- A free and responsible search for truth and meaning
- The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large
- The goal of world community with peace, liberty and justice for all
- Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part

The Elora & Fergus Unitarian Church is a lay-led congregation offering a dynamic range of services from September through June. Typically there is an address, offered to listeners to use as they deem appropriate, with an opportunity for discussion and sharing of personal views. Topics might include, but are by no means limited to, social action issues, self-awareness/personal development, current events, world religions, and a dazzling array of educational issues. This spirituality also focuses on the natural world and the importance of living in harmony with it. It tends to be sympathetic to approaches that value the intuitive and the feminine. While the church engages with Christianity, it is certainly not bound by it.

The service also includes readings that come from a variety of sources including literature, philosophy, scriptures and other faiths. In place of traditional prayers, there are generally meditations or contemplative time. Music also plays a prominent role. There is almost always live piano and/or guitar music and participants sing songs from 'The Living Tradition', the Unitarian Hymn book. At each service there is a children's story, which often ties in with the address, and religious education is offered to the children, drawing from the Unitarian Principles and talents of the congregation. Unitarian worship begins with a chalice lighting, as the 'flaming chalice' is the recognized symbol of the Unitarian faith.

For most members the benefits carry far beyond what happens on Sunday mornings. Individuals treasure friendships that have blossomed and provide an invaluable support network for one another. Unitarians tend to "walk the talk" expressing their commitment in action. Social events such as movie nights, pot-luck dinners and outdoor activities take place on a regular basis. Many even go to Unicamp in the summer, a pristine 50-acre parcel of land located in Honeywood, Ontario on the Niagara Escarpment.

If you are seeking an alternative spirituality that is relevant to your life, Unitarianism may be for you. In fact, there's an excellent chance that you may be a Unitarian without knowing it!

-- Anna Contini

That Creation is too grand, complex, and mysterious to be captured in a narrow creed. That is why we cherish individual freedom of belief. At the same time our convictions lead us to other affirmations . . .

That every one of us is held in Creation's hand -- a part of the interdependent cosmic web -- and hence strangers need not be enemies;

-- William Schulz



THE REVEREND DEBRA FAULK

Debra Faulk joined Don Heights Unitarian Congregation as their settled Parish Minister in August 2006. Here are her welcoming words from their website.

"It is such a delight to have been called to serve Don Heights Unitarian Congregation as their settled Parish Minister. This congregation has a rich history of loving relationships and lived social justice with a creative flair uniquely its own!

As a life-long Unitarian I have found this religious tradition to be a solid foundation in my life. It was as a teenager in the 1960s, actively involved in my Montreal Unitarian church, that I first felt the calling - the nudge from my inner self - to ministry. Then life happened and there were a few detours enroute. Always there has been a knowing that ministry was in my future.

I have now relocated to Toronto from the west coast where I lived and raised my children for the last quarter century. On Vancouver Island I served as Director of Religious Education and Lay Chaplain with First Unitarian Church in Victoria and facilitator for Comox Valley Unitarian Society.

To complete my credentialing as a Unitarian Universalist minister I moved to Vancouver to serve as Student Minister with South Fraser Unitarian Church while completing my Masters at Vancouver School of Theology, my pastoral training at Vancouver General Hospital and half-time internship with North Shore Unitarian Church. My final internship was with First Unitarian Congregation of Ottawa and they chose to ordain me as well.

I look forward to the next chapter in both my and Don Heights life together with joy.

Our living faith has its beginnings as an organized religious movement in the sixteenth century. Unitarianism has deep roots in the radical wing of the Protestant Reformation. Today, our movement embraces a diversity of theological and philosophical outlooks, including religious humanism, earth-centred spirituality, and naturalistic theism as well as an appreciation of our Christian and Jewish heritage.

Our basis of union is not one of doctrine. Thus there is no requirement for members to all think alike or to believe the same things. Rather, ours is a fellowship of mutual support that encourages thoughtfulness, freedom of conscience and the transforming power of love. As a religious movement without a creed that everyone must adhere to, individuals are free to search for truth and meaning within a caring and supportive community. We care deeply about our world, too, and are involved in efforts to actualize our humanitarian values in this city, in Canadian society, and in the global sphere.

If you are looking for an open-minded faith community, I invite you to check us out in person. I look forward to welcoming you at a Sunday service or other event!"

Debra will be speaking to us on March 11, 2007. More information about the Don Heights Unitarian Congregation can be found on their website at www.donheights.ca.



UPDATE FROM CUC TECHNOLOGY TASK FORCE

(This item missed the last edition of the Chalice but it is still interesting reading)

Speaking of Wikipedia (No, it has nothing to do with our Sixth Source of Earth-centred Spirituality!), I have discovered "Wiki's" (which is an acronym for What I Know Is..).

In November half a dozen CUC volunteers and staff met in Edmonton to "talk technology" for the weekend. On the Friday night, board member John Michell of Calgary said, "It's just nice to spend time talking about this with people who are interested!" Two others immediately agreed. We had a fruitful time, sharing tools we'd used, and exploring together both online (UCEdmonton is wired with internet connection in every room) and with human-to-human conversation, not to mention food breaks and hugs. Just like a real Unitarian meeting.

I had just started experimenting with how "Wiki's" (we're using the free service from Peanut Butter Wiki) after seeing a posting on a UUA email list by Margy Levine Young, co-author of *The Internet For Dummies*, now in its 10th Edition. "I'm a big fan of wikis," she said, and then Phil Strapp reminded me that one of our Technology Task Force members had suggested Wiki's for some of CUC committee work some time ago. So, a month ago I didn't know what WIKI stood for and now I have a dozen that I've set up myself.

If you are interested in how CUC can support our congregations in effectively using electronic communication and technology, please send myself or Mich a note with your ideas.

A lot of ideas were generated at the Edmonton meeting (I told you it was a real Unitarian meeting.) Too many to operationalize right away, but your comments can help us focus on what's most important.

Meanwhile, stay tuned-we'll keep you posted as things develop.

Take care,
Mary Bennett
Executive Director
mary@cuc.ca

YOUNG ADULTS

Are you - or someone you know - between the ages of 18 and 35??? We are hoping-and planning-for the largest contingent of young adults ever at this year's Annual Conference & Meeting (May 18-21 - Vancouver, BC). Target group is 18-35 year-olds! Contact young-adults@cuc.ca for more information about how you might participate.

A NEW GROWTH RESOURCE

For congregations looking to provide a new way for their newcomers to make connections with other Unitarian Universalists, we're piloting an email list specifically designed to meet the needs of new people.

Newcomers, after joining the list, will be encouraged to introduce themselves and to participate in discussions on topics of interest to new people. This is a good way to help new people in your congregation feel like a part of the UU community and give them a chance to explore what Uuism means to them. As an added bonus, it doesn't add any tasks to the plate of the membership committee!

New people can be added to the list by sending a blank email to cuc-newcomers-subscribe@yahoogroups.com. Feel free to put an ad for the group in your newsletter or visitor's materials. Contact Liz James at lizjames@shaw.ca for more information.

DEADLINE EXTENTION

As reported in the November-December issue of the Chalice, USC Canada, in collaboration with the Canadian Unitarian Council (CUC), has launched a nationwide writing contest for young Canadians. If you're between the ages of 12 and 20, we'd like to hear your opinion.

The deadline for the Contest has been extended to April 16th, 2007. Full contest rules and contact info are available on the church website at www.efuuc.org/chalice_061112.php.

SIMPLE SOUPER SATURDAY SUPPER

This year's Annual Conference and Meeting will again include a Multigenerational simple meal on Saturday night. Bring your bowl! As happened last year, we are asking each congregation to send along a bowl full of money - the money to donate to a hunger-related charity and the bowl to exchange with another congregation. (You are, of course, welcome to bring back the bowl you got last year - by adding your name to it!) Questions? Contact souper-supper@cuc.ca

CUC ACM REGISTRATION FORMS

Are you coming to the CUC Annual Conference & Meeting (May 18-21 - Vancouver, BC)? Registration forms for various events are now posted at:
<http://www.cuc.ca/conference/2007/registration.htm>

WHAT'S YOUR ELEVATOR SPEECH?

Visiting Lakehead Unitarian Fellowship in Thunder Bay, a member came up to me at coffee hour and asked me, "What's your elevator speech?"

I said, "Our roots go back to 16th century Christianity. We were Unitarians as opposed to Trinitarians. Currently some, but not all, Unitarians identify as Christians. Our hymnal is called Singing the Living Tradition and it includes songs and readings from many world religions as well as those from our Christian and Jewish heritage. It also has readings from secular poets."

And then I said, "What's yours?"

You may never have had someone ask you, "What's your elevator speech?" unless you've attended a workshop at your congregation where creating a short, memorable answer to the question, "What is Unitarian Universalism?" was an exercise in the session.

I have lots of short conversations with people, especially when I'm traveling on CUC work and feel compelled to mention the purpose of traveling is because I'm heading to a Unitarian conference or congregation. In my experience, the question is more often phrased as something like, "What's the difference between the Unitarian church and the United church?" or "What do Unitarians believe in?" And it's asked on airplanes more than in elevators.

I've actually never been asked a question like this in an elevator, but I know people who have. If you're at a CUC Annual Conference & Meeting and there are signs all over the place about Unitarianism, there's a good chance that if you're wearing your nametag, you may get asked.

It can be surprising, how hard it can be to answer, even for people who have attended for a long time. Many people find it helpful to give some forethought to a UU "elevator speech"--a brief description they can use when asked. The following is an excerpt from a workshop presented by Art Brewer, a member of Toronto First. Art facilitated a workshop for the Unitarian Church of Vancouver on "Welcoming and Engaging Members and Guests."

Here are some tips that Art shared with the group of 30 or so:

DO:

- Make it short (maximum 30 seconds)
- Include a "hook"
- Write it and rewrite it
- Practice delivering it
- Project your passion, smile and maintain eye contact with the listener
- Develop different versions for different situations

DON'T

- Let it sound like "canned" text
- Ramble (maximum 30 seconds)
- Use terminology people won't understand (e.g., CUC, RE)
- Leave the listener mentally asking "So what?" or thinking "I have no idea what that meant"
- Rush your delivery
- Start it with the words "Well, we're not."

Following are three examples. Send me yours--I'd love to have a collection. And be assured that, yes, you can send me a revision after you change it. After all, we *are* the Living Tradition, right?

Rob Dainow, Unitarian Church of Vancouver

"Unitarianism is a liberal religion that draws from many traditions and sources. Each person is free to believe what they want - we have an active pagan group in our church; some members are atheists, and we are a Welcoming Congregation (optional: which means, among other things, that we welcome people of all sexual and gender orientations). What we all agree on is a group of sources for spiritual knowledge and a set of present day principles that North American Unitarians have discussed and agreed to. Let me give you this card that shows these principles and sources. I hope you find it helpful."

Bob Woodham

"Unitarianism is a religion that split from traditional Christianity about 400 years ago on issues of intellectual freedom and human dignity. It attracted me because it was ahead of its time on important social issues. It challenges me because it is often ahead of my time on current issues. I support it because Unitarians make a difference in this world."

Art Brewer, First Unitarian Congregation of Toronto

"It's a liberal religion which started in 16th century Europe. By 'liberal' I mean that people are free to hold their own theological beliefs. So, there's no doctrine or creed. We even have some members who are atheists! But we share common values and principles. A lot of us are very active in social justice issues." (Then I give them a Principles and Sources card).

Post your "elevator speech" at:

<http://x.cuc.ca/wordpress/>
(Click "Comments" to add yours.)

This and many other workshops are available through the CUC - funded by your congregation's annual contributions - at no additional cost to your congregation. Call us at 1-888-568-5723/416-489-4121/604-264-0088 or send an email to info@cuc.ca or fill out the online request form at: <http://www.cuc.ca/programs/regions/index.htm>

Take care of yourselves and each other,
Mary Bennett



WHAT'S ON AT CHURCH IN MARCH & APRIL 2007

All services begin at 10:00 a.m.

Mar 4 SINGING THE LIVING TRADITION

Through hymns and poetry we comfort and renew the human spirit.

Speaker: Dave Steuermol

Mar 11 BRING A FRIEND SERVICE

"Born again" is a term primarily associated with salvation and conversion, hardly language we would use in UU circles. There is another intention to the idea of born again, that of spiritual rebirth. Used in this context it includes those transcending personal experiences - from which we emerge feeling new, somehow different than we were the moment before the experience.

"As a life-long Unitarian I have found this religious tradition to be a solid foundation in my life. It was as a teenager in the 1960s, actively involved in my Montreal Unitarian church, that I first felt the calling - the nudge from my inner self - to ministry."

Address: Debra Faulk, minister from Don Heights Unitarian Congregation

Mar 18 THE USES OF SUFFERING

Through a sermon by Janne Eller-Isaacs of the Unity Church - Unitarian of St. Paul, Minnesota, we will explore the subject of suffering and how we can use it to strengthen us.

Address: Catharina Walhout

Mar 25 HOMEOPATHY CAN HELP

Homeopathy is all about Freedom! Freedom to choose our response to stimuli is in effect exercising our free will. But most of us are too limited by our fears to be truly free to make that choice.

Address: Marg Gollinger

Apr 1 A COVENANT-MAKING PEOPLE and Pot Luck Lunch

Our Unitarian Universalist Statement of Principles and Sources is described as a covenant. What does that mean--why call it a covenant? This service will explore just a few of the many statements and covenants we have made over the years. Expect to hear many voices from past and present as we find out what Unitarians and Universalists have considered important, and why it might matter to us.

Address: Karen Fraser Gitlitz, a candidate for UU ministry

Afternoon workshop: Workshop on the current Statement of Principles & Sources. What does our Statement of Principles mean to you, and how do you use it? This is an opportunity to think deeply about our principles, and how we use them in our lives.

It is also an opportunity to provide feedback to the Canadian Unitarian Council's Statement of Principles Task Force, which has been charged by the CUC Board with reviewing the current Statement. In previous Task Force workshops, Canadian UUs were asked to think about their values and what their religion means to them. Now it is time to bring those thoughts into dialogue with the existing Statement of Principles and Sources. This workshop is intended both for long-time UUs and for newcomers, for people who have participated in previous workshops Principles workshops, and for people who didn't even know that the Task Force existed. Your feedback will go directly to the Task Force -- come and have your voice heard!

Apr 8 SOCIAL ACTION AT THE WORLD SOCIAL FORUM

Leigh and Terisa will share their experiences in Nairobi on social justice, the environment and political will for change.

Address: Terisa Turner & Leigh Brownhill

Apr 15 THE PSYCHOLOGY OF MONEY and How to Fish in the Stock Market

Jack Wallas from Huronia Unitarian Fellowship will help us with the ethics of investing and the reasons he believes that you can not have spirituality without regard to the real world. He has been involved in investments for over 40 years and in the last ten has become somewhat more wary.

Address: Jack Wallas.

Apr 22 ARE RITES OF PASSAGE IMPORTANT?

We go through life passing several milestones, of which many are related to age and experience. Immediately some important events come to mind: birth, weddings and funerals. Then there are other important stages, to name a few: coming of age; graduation; name giving dedication; re-affirmation of wedding vows; separation; croning and saging; house-blessing; and saying goodbye to a dear pet.

What do we do with this? are rituals important to us? For each individual this will be different and Unitarianism can provide these rituals to its members and people coming from outside the Unitarian community looking for a different, but traditional ceremony. Ellen will talk a bit about what she has learned during the last year during chaplaincy training and apprenticing with other chaplains.

Address: Ellen Papenburg

Apr 29 To Be Announced