



THE Chalice

NEWSLETTER OF THE
ELORA & FERGUS UNITARIAN CHURCH
MARCH – APRIL 2008



MESSAGE FROM OUR NEW PRESIDENT!

A few years ago I found a community in this congregation that supported me in my social and spiritual growth. At first I was afraid to go to the front of a service and light a candle. But I took that step and kept coming back and doing it over and over until it was no longer a challenge but something I looked forward to doing.

Then I joined the Sunday Services Committee and was asked to lead a service. After attending a service leading workshop and getting all sorts of encouragement from the many friends I had made, I did it. The first time was very difficult. But I kept doing it. Yes, it is still hard for me to stand in front of a crowd and share my thoughts. But if I can do it anywhere, it is here in this wonderfully supportive group.

And now I am taking another huge step in becoming president of this spirited congregation. It is both an honour and a bit overwhelming to be asked but if I can do this anywhere, it is here in this community of friends, a community that is so full of potential.

With our new Sunday School program in full gear, a new Lay-Chaplain and the Welcoming Congregation program about to begin, our future is looking very bright. Our small but gifted church can offer an alternative to so many who are searching for a spiritual home. We just have to let them know we are here!

Catharina Walhout, president



FROM THE EDITOR

Well, here it is: my first Chalice Newsletter. Although I did not change a whole lot about its appearance, I tried to give it my own little twist.

Many thanks to Catherina, who did an excellent job before me! Now that she has taken on the role of President she had to pass most of the Communication Committee work on to me (she still will be looking after the website, though). I know I speak for everybody when I say that we are confident that she will do a great job too, being President!

Although I can always fill The Chalice with many pretty pictures, I do prefer a lot of written text. Therefore I hope that people will send me many good articles! But you can also expect me to knock on your door for some much needed editorial input. Consider yourself warned! 😊

Louisa Kuitert, communications

BECOMING A WELCOMING CONGREGATION

The Fergus Elora Unitarian church is making preparations to join the 92% of Canadian UU congregations which have already become "Welcoming Congregations." A "Welcoming Congregation" is a congregation that is specifically inclusive and expressive of the concerns of bisexual, gay, lesbian and transgendered people at every level of congregational life, including in worship, programs, social occasions and other activities.

At our 2007 AGM, the membership voted in favour of undertaking a program designed to make our congregation more inclusive. The program, which is being spearheaded by the Social Action and Sunday Services committees, involves a number of workshops, special Sunday services and other activities. The program is designed to encourage members and the congregation as a whole to unlearn homophobia and heterosexism, to adopt inclusive language, and to generally expand the boundaries of how we see the world.

It is expected that the program for becoming welcoming will take some 18 to 24 months to complete. We do not want to rush through the necessary steps. We also want to maximize the opportunity for personal growth and congregational interaction and consensus-building. Once the program is complete, the congregation is officially recognized as a "Welcoming Congregation" by the Canadian Unitarian Council.

More news on activities associated with "Becoming a Welcoming Congregation" will be circulated via the church website, e-lists and newsletters in the weeks to come.

Leigh Brownhill, welcoming congregation



MEMBERSHIP NEWS

March is showing lots of potential for fun, so keep some Saturday nights open! Depending on what is showing at the Gorge next month, we will be having a movie nite with wine and cheese afterwards.



Since we had so much fun at our last potluck supper in the fall, I think we should do something similar again. This will depend of course on the availability of the senior centre and the musicians. Anyway, things are only in the planning stage but I will keep everybody posted on egroups.

Deb Forman, membership



WHO YA GONNA CALL?

Our current Board of Directors of course....
Here they are:

| | |
|------------------------|-------------------------------|
| President | Catharina Walhout |
| Secretary | Kelsye Coulter |
| Treasurer | Christine Nye |
| Sunday Services | Dwight Pile |
| Social Action | Leigh Brownhill Jim Sannes |
| Communications | Louisa Kuitert |
| Memberships | Deborah Forman |
| Sunday School | Miranda Holmes |

UPCOMING POD DUTIES

POD #1 Kerry*, Karen & Rob, Dwight and Jill.
Dates: Mar. 2, Apr. 6, May 11. (June 15?)

POD #2 Anna* & Don, Arwa, Miranda, Louisa & Nardo.
Dates: Mar. 9, Apr. 13, May 18

POD #3 Kelsye* & Paul, Jennifer, Leigh & Teresa.
Dates: Mar. 16, Apr. 20, May 25

POD #4 David*, Ineke, Catharina, Julie and Kim.
Dates: March 23, Apr. 27, June 1.

POD #5 Chris* & Norm, Deborah, Jim & Ellen.
Dates: Mar. 30, May 4, June 8.

* denotes contact person for the POD



LAY-CHAPLAINCY, ELLEN'S RITES OF PASSAGE

It took me about a year to become a Lay Chaplain. I attended numerous workshops and courses for weddings, funerals and name dedications. And I learned how to deal with the more challenging memorial services. For instance in case of a suicide, a child's death, people who perished in a terrible car accident or a death due to violence. What if a murderer died and you were asked to do a ceremony for him or her? Even that murderer was someone's child too ...

That does not mean that a Lay Chaplain always should agree to do a ceremony. We have the Right to Pass when feeling uncomfortable with what we are asked to do. But if I have learned one thing, it is this: we never know what is next and we also have to look at each situation, each ceremony, as a separate event, because each time there are different circumstances.

Becoming a Lay Chaplain took me a year, but the road towards seeing value in Rites of Passage took me much longer. It wasn't until my mother died (Friday Jan 11, 8 years ago and way too early)... and then my father, that I finally started to realize how important ritual was. Before that, I was quite against rituals and ceremonies. I didn't

care for all that fuss. But when my mom died and two years ago my father, who had Alzheimer's for ten years, I had to do both services. Being an only child there was no one else to take this burden off of me. It was the most difficult thing I ever did, especially my mother's cremation service. We always were so close, and I am so easily moved to tears.

But I made it through it, even with dry eyes, which I never would have thought possible. It was a healing moment for me and it somehow closed the circle. I miss her, but she is gone from this life and I can accept that now. I will keep her and my father in my heart and memory and I can celebrate both lives without feeling miserable.

I hope I can help others to have that same healing experience, by designing ceremonies together. Celebrating and remembering someone's life. Or be part of peoples life journey, by giving a couple a meaningful wedding service. One that reflects their view on each other and the world. A ceremony that includes the family and maybe children.

Ceremonies like helping Youth with a Coming of Age Rite, celebrating a middle-aged person's life and helping him or her to embrace the positive side of becoming older with a Croning and Saging ritual, a Separation Ceremony to go each their own way without ongoing hostility, Saying Goodbye to a beloved Pet who was part of the family for so many years and has died. Even something as mundane as a House Blessing Celebration can be tremendous valuable for somebody.

Life can go by so fast without us stopping and reflecting. Sometimes it is wholesome and meaningful to do the pausing and musing together, to prevent life and accomplishments to just slip by like sand through our fingers.

Ellen Papenburg, Lay Chaplain



INSTALLATION

On Sunday January 13 it was a great day: the installation service of yours truly as the first Lay Chaplain of the Elora & Fergus Unitarian Church. Ten years ago, our chaplaincy had been under the wings of the First Unitarian Congregation of Waterloo.

Dwight Pile, Sunday Services Chair and Ceremony Master, and the Lay-Chaplaincy committee (Christine Nye and Leigh Brownhill) successfully prepared for this day without revealing much to me and I have to admit I was somewhat nervous, being not in control of the event. So I just accepted whatever came my way.

It was a wonderful service and Dwight lead the event in his unmatched professional yet relaxed way, introducing Yvonne and Doug Greig who had come from Toronto to represent the Canadian Unitarian Council. Yvonne is the CUC Lay-Chaplaincy Committee liaison for our area.

Leigh asked me if I would commit to and take the position of a Lay-Chaplain of the congregation. It almost felt like a wedding ceremony, and I guess in some ways it also was. Of course I answered: "I will"!

For the occasion I returned in robes in front of the congregation. A unique opportunity, because Lay-Chaplains are only supposed to wear their outfit when conducting Rites of Passage. I gave a brief talk about how I arrived at this point in my life and that I would give it my best effort. Finally I thanked the members and friends of our congregation to entrust me with this position.

I hereby want to thank everybody again for this wonderful day. I hope I will be able to contribute to Unitarianism by service to our congregational members and to members of the community outside our church, who are looking for a meaningful Rite of Passage within the parameters of our Seven Principles.

Ellen Papenburg, Lay Chaplain



CLIMATE JUSTICE: TOWARDS THE DECARBONISATION OF THE ECONOMY

As the United Nations Climate Change conference began in Bali, Indonesia in December 2007, environmentalist and journalist George Monbiot summarized recent findings that are worth considering. “There is now a broad scientific consensus that we need to prevent temperatures from rising by more than 2°C above their pre-industrial level. Beyond that point, the Greenland ice sheet could go into irreversible meltdown, some ecosystems collapse, billions suffer from water stress, droughts could start to threaten global food supplies A paper in *Geophysical Research Letters* finds that even with a 90% global cut by 2050, the 2° threshold ‘is eventually broken.’ To stabilize temperatures at 1.5° above the pre-industrial level requires a global cut of 100%. The diplomats who started talks in Bali yesterday [3 December 2007] should be discussing the complete decarbonisation of the global economy.”

The “complete decarbonisation of the global economy” means the creation of an economy which is carbon-neutral, or one in which the amount of carbon and other greenhouse gasses emitted into the atmosphere is equal to or lower than the amount of these gasses that can be absorbed through natural processes. Massive reforestation campaigns would help. But not the monocrop plantation style of reforestation. The vast biodiversity of ‘natural’ forests needs to be preserved, extended and replicated.

Another step we can take locally is to press for the “accounting” of the climate change impacts of local “development.” For instance, how much carbon will be emitted from the stone quarrying process at the gravel pit proposed for Inverhaugh? How much more will be emitted from the endless stream of massive trucks carrying the quarry over long distances? We must

press our policy-makers and politicians to “count” the climate effects of such activities.

We could also look to the half of the world’s population which already exists on a day-to-day basis with very little hydrocarbon use. According to Vandana Shiva, “ecological, organic agriculture reduces emissions both by reducing dependence on fossil fuels, chemical fertilizers and intensive feed, as well as absorbing more carbon in the soil. Our studies show an increase of carbon sequestration of up to 200% in biodiverse organic systems.

“When ‘ecological and organic’ is combined with ‘direct and local,’ emissions are further reduced by reducing energy use for ‘food miles,’ packaging and refrigeration of food. And local food systems will reduce the pressure to expand agriculture in the rainforests of Brazil and Indonesia. We could, with a timely transition reduce emissions, increase food security and food quality and improve the resilience of rural communities to deal with the impact of climate change. . . . The post-Kyoto framework must include ecological agriculture as a climate solution.”

Let us continue to enact Unitarian principles in ways that address the climate challenge we now face. Environmental justice helps advance our goal of a world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all, and deepens our practical respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

Leigh Brownhill



WHAT'S ON AT CHURCH IN APRIL & MARCH 2008

All services begin at 10:00 a.m.

March 2 WHAT IS SPIRITUAL HEALING?

Rev. Dr. Ann Osborne

How do we know when our spirit needs healing, and what can we do about it? Our speaker holds a PhD in Energy Medicine and a Doctorate of Theology. Service leader: Jennifer Hewitt

March 9 GRATITUDE

London Green and June Gilbertson

From earliest childhood most of us have been taught to express our thanks for "what we have." But there are also almost forgotten elements of our nature—elements that make us gloriously human and give us hope. Learn what great writers from the Greeks to our own day have said about these incomparable powers and gifts that we all have!

March 16 THE MEANINGS OF PRAYER

Kim Muller

Sometimes whispered, sometimes maligned. For some it is a daily habit, for others an act of desperation and yet others an absurdity. A reflection on the meanings of prayer.

March 23 EASTER

Don your Easter Bonnet and come to church for Easter. Traditional hymns and a fond look at Easter from a Unitarian perspective. Service Leader: Dwight Pile

March 30 SACRED SPACES

Jennifer Hewitt

The spaces in which we spend our time often have more impact on us than we're aware of. We will explore the relationships with our surroundings, specifically as they relate to the sacred, and how to create a sacred space of our own.

April 6 AT THE ROOT: WILLIAM ELLERY CHANNING

London Green speaks on William Ellery Channing, in his time (the early 19th century) the most inspirational liberal religious leader in North America, and the central figure in the formal foundation of the Unitarian movement there in 1819. Channing was also the chief philosophical influence on young Ralph Waldo Emerson, whose ideas of the world, God, and the soul remain central in Unitarian thought to this day. To read them both is to rediscover the roots of one's Unitarian convictions. Service Leader: Dwight Pile

April 13 AT THE ROOT: RALPH WALDO EMERSON

London Green gives the second in a series of talks on founders of modern Unitarianism. Emerson was Channing's great disciple and in later 19th-century North America the best-known intellectual essayist, inspirational lecturer, poet—and Unitarian minister: one of the great figures, along with Thoreau and Louisa May Alcott, in the New England Renaissance. To this day Emerson's influence remains central in Unitarian thought. Service Leader: Dwight Pile

April 20 EARTH DAY CELEBRATION June Gilbertson and London Green

Readings and poetry to celebrate Earth Day.

April 27 IN PRAISE OF CHAOS, SIN AND OTHER MISTAKES

A sermon by Rev. Mike Young presented by David Steuernol. "Let us learn to be gentle with one another, and our so human mistakes."

SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS

Our first two months of Sunday school have flown by. I have been enjoying the children's enthusiasm and creativity. We have focused mainly on the first 2 Unitarian Universalists principles with excellent participation from the kids. I am very happy to have Kelsey helping out as well. I don't know how I could have managed without her!

For the next two months I have lots of exciting things planned, as you can see in the schedule underneath. So bring your kids (and their friends!) for a great time at Sunday School!

Miranda Holmes, Sunday School Teacher

- March 2** Principle 6
Working for a peaceful, fair, and free world.
- March 9** Principle 4
Free and responsible search for truth and meaning.
- March 16** Celebrating St. Patrick's Day
- March 23** Celebrating Easter
- March 30** Another look at Principle 4
- April 6** Social Action project kickoff!
Must have all the kids if possible. More to come on this project.
- April 13** Principle 7 The interdependent web.
- April 20** Celebrating Passover
- April 27** Earth day!
We will be cleaning up garbage in sports field and playground. Please dress in 'dirty' clothes and for weather conditions.