



UNITARIAN CONGREGATION OF NIAGARA

A church for people
with enquiring minds

September 2008

Sunday Services

Sept 7 Valerie Jaeger /Julianne Momirov –
Water Communion

Water is the basis of all life. We use the co-mingling of waters from all over the globe to celebrate our coming together as a community after the summer. The importance of water as a symbol in the Unitarian and other faiths will be discussed.

Important Note

*Change to Ingathering Service: **no breakfast***

*Welcome back! Our first service this year on Sept 7th is of course an important one as we come back from vacations, greet one another, and get back to our fall routines. This year however **we will not start with a breakfast**, but at the usual time 11:00 am.*

In lieu of breakfast there will be special snacks provided after the service - and as usual, during the service, there will be a water communion.

Sept 14 Ed Gilbert – In the Name of the Father:
Leviticus 18:22

Matthew Shephard was crucified on a fence and beaten to death because he was gay. Could it have been because of what is contained in Leviticus 18:22?

Sept 21 Nazim and Mabubha
– Project Bangladesh

Both have visited the projects in Bangladesh in the past year and they will give you an update.

Sept 28 John Mayer – Comparative Religions

Women of Distinction

Joan Wiley honoured twice in May

Joan Wiley was honoured to be part of two ceremonies in May 2008 that recognized advocacy being done in the Pride community.

On May 8, Joan received the YWCA Niagara Region Women of Distinction award in the category of public affairs and communication for her efforts in establishing TransParent Canada, a support and resource network for the parents of gender-variant children. Parents from across Canada and internationally have contacted her, and the organization has received local and national media attention.

Later that month, Joan was thrilled to receive, on behalf of the Unitarian Congregation of Niagara, a special plaque from the Canadian Unitarian Council recognizing the church's official status as a Welcoming Congregation. Joan was one of a team of facilitators who successfully led a series of workshops that enabled UCN to receive its official designation.

At the YW event, Joan was the only recipient in the six categories to thank her church for the important role it played in her life.

Nicola Inch, YWCA special events co-ordinator, said the YW looks for women who have the courage to break down barriers.

In 2007, Joan was one of three Canadians to receive a National Champion Against Homophobia award from PFLAG Canada. In 2006, she was honoured to receive the award for Outstanding Individual Contribution to the Niagara Pride Community from OUTniagara, the umbrella organization for the gender- and sexual-diverse community in Niagara.



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2008/2009

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LAY CHAPLAINCY:
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TRUSTEES:
Andrea Gravelle, Don Herne
James Wilson

RENTAL : John Northover

PASTORAL CARE:
Jenny Leach & John Berry

PHONE: John Inglis

Book Club

The Book Club is reading the "Kite Runner" and we are scheduled to meet for discussion on **September 30th**. The location is Andrea Gravelle's home: **36 Else St., St. Catharines @ 7:00 PM.**

Please "bring a book" to recommend for our next reading selection, so we can see and talk about which ones are to be on our reading list. We will also be setting the dates, times and locations for our next meetings, so you may wish to bring your day calendars. See you then!

Daughter of Earth

(my first poem, for Kim)

Spring winds flowers in her hair
Summer finds her feet are bare
Dancing in the harvest leaves
Her ready for the coming of winter
Which brings her wind-whipped self
Home to the hearth for warming.

Donna Bothen

Niagara Raging Grannies

There will be a Labour Day march on Monday, September 1 in Niagara Falls. It begins at 11:00 a.m. at Stanley and Dixon and continues for approximately two hours. It ends at St. Paul's Lutheran Church at 5488 Victoria Avenue. The Niagara Raging Grannies - Erika Cronin, Ria Laskarin, Marguerite Bastarache, Donna Bothen, Miriam Holmes, and Sofia Vuorinen will be accompanying the march and raging at the church later. For further information, www.niagarahotelworkers.ca/labourday or 905-354-2027.

Lay Chaplains: ucnlaychaplains@gmail.com
Valerie Jaeger: 905-262-1345
Julianne Momirov: 905-356-7726



James S. Curtis

1932 – 2008

Jim, as most knew him as at the Unitarian Church, passed away peacefully on July 5 at home in Fonthill. He left his dear wife Audrey of 48 years, and four children, Stephen, Philip (myself), Aaron, and Anna, and eight grandchildren. Jim and family attended the Unitarian Church weekly in the 1960's and 70's. Thereafter, he and Audrey attended occasionally up until his passing, keeping dear friendships from the church throughout. He is especially remembered in my mind for having friendly weekly debates with John Mayer and sometimes Michael Hornyansky. Dad enjoyed conversations with everyone he met at the church, of course including Monica Hornyansky, and all who knew him. I remember myself and two brothers taking Religious Education in the 'house' beside the church and then running back to the church for milk and cookies. When older, we were allowed to stay for the service and I remember the debate my Father initiated about turnips being able to think. Whatever your opinion is on such, the discussion has stuck with me for nearly forty years.

Dad was known to play his harpsichord at the church sometimes, and John Mayer would argue, "How can a materialist play with such delicacy and feeling". Dad also gave talks over the years at the church about philosophy and music theory. His selected readings accompanied by music with Molly Hancock, or alone, are still remembered by some.

It may be interesting to note how Dad became a Unitarian. Jim was raised from birth in St. Thomas, Ontario, an only child, steeped in Catholicism and always expected to become a priest. He completed a degree in Philosophy from St. Peter's Seminary at the University of Western Ontario, and continued with the theology portion on the way to priesthood. However, doubts about some of the Catholic doctrine led to his leaving the seminary. This was a very difficult decision, one that had a profound effect on many of his family and himself.

By chance and good fortune, Dad started teaching at Pelham High School in the 1950's. Not too much time later, at a harpsichord recital he was giving in Welland, he met Audrey Harrison, which led to marriage and the birth of twin boys in 1961 and another boy in 1962. Jim and Audrey did not wish another boy, so five and a half years later, they adopted Anna.

So now the four greatest loves of Jim's life had been set up: Teaching; Writing; Music, and Family.

Teaching

Starting at Pelham High in 1955, Dad taught mostly History, and a course called Man In Society, as well as Music (taught music theory at the Faculty of Education at Brock University), and English. When

Pelham High closed in 1974, he then spent the rest of his career at E. L. Crossley High School in Pelham, retiring in 1988. At Crossley he taught all four of his children History. Part of his love of history and of teaching was his passion for collecting rare books and manuscripts, especially of philosophical and theological significance from the Renaissance.

Writing

Jim was published globally (before the internet) in 'History Today'. He authored "Our Living Past", an exhaustive teaching manuscript for the intellectual and artistic achievements of the Western World. This was used as a text book for perhaps thousands of students throughout his teaching career. Jim also authored dozens of essays and hundreds of letters, many to the editors of newspapers. The largest document by far that he wrote was his daily journal, spanning his late teens to the end of his life, **nearly four million words**. Not someone to use the computer, he created a **fifty volume index of the journal all by hand**, itemizing page numbers for all persons, places and events in his life.

Music

At the age of 18, (1950) Jim became an Associate of the Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto by achieving the ARCT for performance. He was also selected as a student of the world renowned harpsichordist, Wanda Landowska. He performed many concerts during his lifetime (harpsichord and piano) and sang with the Bach and Niagara Symphony Choirs. He was a strong supporter of the Niagara Symphony Orchestra and served on the Board from 1979 to 1992, and was recognized with a Life-Time Achievement award in 2002. Dad was a life-time listener of music, and

was especially fond of the performances of Bach by Glenn Gould, who knew Dad, and corresponded and visited with him.

Dad always played music very loudly. Everyday was a concert of music of some kind in the house, usually the classics from the baroque, classical, romantic eras. Sometimes I kidded him that he turned them up to a volume of 11, as they did in the movie, Spinal Tap. He did have a very large and varied collection of music, however, including the entire 30 year discography of the rock band, RUSH, and much of jazz, blues, and other popular music.

Family

Of special importance for Dad was that in 1986 one of his heart valves failed and very nearly meant his demise. After open heart surgery, he lived another 22 years, meaning he was able to attend all four marriages of his children, and the birth of all eight grandchildren, now aged 5 to 20. This fact due to recent medical procedures was never forgotten by Dad, as he enjoyed his extended family immensely (and his own Father passed away of a similar heart problem just before the birth of his grandchildren).

Dad was more athletic than most know, playing baseball with us, tennis, ping pong, etc. He had a very good golf swing but it was clear he did not have the temperament for that sport. Dad's instinct for teaching was obvious as he subtly injected knowledge in between our childhood banter. He was a very sensitive and gifted citizen. With either pen or speech, he rarely passed down chances on issues of importance, especially those regarding ethics and reason. He was usually graceful when dealing with his own sensitive genius while trying to cope with four

teenagers. Any growing pains jointly endured blossomed into very respectful, loving, and enjoyable relationships, highlighted by nuances of the finest music and philosophy.

Jim attended every season of the Stratford Festival (roughly 50 years) till the last year of his life. I attended with him, but my sister Anna accompanied him the most, along with her children, Nathan and Alyssa. He had an important influence on all of his grandchildren. Regarding world view he likely had the most impact on Nathan, now 20. Nathan and Dad had many long talks on many subjects and had a special relationship in this sense. By no means does this mean he loved any grandchild more than any other. Nor does it mean he wasn't always a beacon of knowledge for all family members to look towards and discuss with. Or does it mean he was loved any less by any loved one. Dad had an instinct for priority of importance in just about any subject and he was a gifted writer, especially of prose. But he did write a handful of poems, one of which I recited at his celebration of life at the Pedlar Funeral Home in Fonthill on July 10th.

Dad was loved and respected by many people. But he was most loved by his extended family. We will remember that he did some things very slowly. Such as shaving (an hour for a small patch of whiskers); eating (always, always last, and scraped his plate with his fork until every speck had been consumed). But I will always remember how he took such thought and effort to find the right gift for each family member, and would, yes, very slowly, wrap each one with heartfelt perfection. He always took the same time and care to find the perfect card, uniquely suitable for each of us. Dad never

gave out humorous cards. Love was far too serious to him for that. However, he could be very humble and playful with his children and grandchildren, often letting them see how many gift bows they could stick on his bald head at once.

Dad will be missed deeply by everyone who loved him, knew him, and perhaps were students of his. I will remember a very special person who taught me just about everything (except how to cook, clean, and do laundry – that was Mom!). He taught me greatness, and why it is important. He taught me how to be a mature citizen. But his greatest gifts were him himself, and how to be a loving Father. He was the best example I've ever seen.



MUSIC : New Directions and a New Accompanist

Hi! I am very excited about being part of the music program this coming year.

Our choir has not only been formed, it has performed, debuting at the retirement service for John Mayer and Doreen Peever. We have bought new music, namely "Singing the Journey" which has music from many cultures and styles. It will challenge us to expand the range of our music, and along with our old hymnal, inspire us and reflect the diversity of our Unitarian community.

I was pleased to introduce this new book, taking a little ‘tour’ of it during a summer service. But we still needed a new pianist to accompany us on this journey. I feel very lucky to have found Terri Pothier, a musician who has been active in this community for many years to fill this role. Terri has been a voice and piano teacher and also a teacher at St. Catharines Collegiate High School. For several years she was the organist for St. James Anglican at Merriton as well as other churches in the region. She has played at the Oban Inn, and if you want to sing along, you can now hear her once a month at Riverbend. With this wealth of experience we will be in very good hands with Terri. Please give her your warmest welcome.

OTHER NOTES

Choir will recommence soon – Sunday, September 21 at 9:45.

There is a special service on Nov. 2, featuring Ray Robitaille’s ‘A Cappella Niagara’.

Choir will add a new dimension to the services. It is scheduled to meet for somewhat more than half the services, and sing at least every month – and, who knows? – depending on our enthusiasm and preparedness, perhaps more often. Times when the choir is not scheduled, but there is room and need for special music can be an opportunity for those with a soloistic ability to perform. I will make those times known, and if you have ideas or are interested, please contact me.

Speaking of contacting me – Choirs, soloists, new music & a great pianist All this is pretty exciting, but it also needs more co-ordination than before. When most of the service topics have been selected I will try and get a choir schedule together and I will

post it for the various service leaders. Hopefully, this will make your lives easier. Lest something like a musical traffic jam occurs, communicate with me and Terri - we want to make sure everyone knows what you need and that the choir or solo pieces that are planned are what you want. Keep in mind that choirs and soloists need time to rehearse and prepare. As usual, of course, the accompanist also needs to know which hymns are planned. I am sure things will work out, if people keep in mind each other’s needs and the effort everyone is putting forth to make things happen.

Well – it really looks like this is the start of an exciting year. During my ‘tour’ I was struck not only by the variety in the musical family, but by music’s connection with every part of our bodies. Mind – breath – hands – feet – ear & voice. These all have ways of connecting our hearts & souls to music. Three cheers for music! It moves the whole world.

Penny Blake – Choir Director

CUC ACM

a fabulous experience

Joan Wiley – July 2008

Earlier this year, I was privileged and proud to attend the annual congregational meeting of the Canadian Unitarian Council (CUC) as the official voting delegate of the Unitarian Congregation of Niagara (UCN).

Pam Wilson kindly drove us safely to Ottawa despite the map challenges presented by myself and fellow passenger Julianne Momirov. The three-day conference was held May 16 to 19 at Algonquin College in

Ottawa and more than 600 Unitarians from across Canada attended, the largest yet.

As the only voting delegate from our church, business meetings occupied a big chunk of my time at the conference, whose theme “The web of life – it’s in our hands” was played out in the many environmental workshops and addresses. For a general overview of the conference, including photos, go to <http://www.cuc.ca/conference/2008/index.htm>. A homily by Alex Campbell, also with an environmental theme, can be found in pdf format at

http://www.cuc.ca/social_responsibility/environment/WebOfLifeHomilyACM2008AlexCampbell.pdf

The following items were included in the business agenda of the CUC conference:

1. It was resolved that the Environment Monitoring Group act as a Study Group to review the Statement of Environmental Policy adopted by the CUC at the annual meeting in 1999 and to bring it forward for approval at the 2009 ACM. The Environment Monitoring Group will survey congregations and provide educational and discussion materials; packages will be sent to congregations at least twice between June 2008 and February 2009.
2. It was carried that the 2005 policy regarding sanctuary be affirmed and endorsed and it was noted with concern the prolonged sanctuary of Shree Kumar Rai, a Nepalese refugee who has been in sanctuary at First Unitarian Church in Ottawa since February 2007.

3. From the financial end of things, it should be noted that the CUC 2008 budget requires a contribution of \$91 from each congregant for its national work.
4. The CUC supports an ongoing national conversation and the development of longer-range initiatives as part of a strategic plan. At the same time, the CUC believes there are some practical initiatives that it can move forward on now using the Go-4-It! planning framework. For an explanation and further breakdown of the four "Goes" (Go On!, Go Deep!, Go Out! And Go Big!), go to <http://cuc.ca/strategy/>
<http://cuc.ca/strategy/>
5. The final report from the CUC Statement of Principles Task Force was also presented. Over the past five years, the task force reviewed the statement of principles and reported at the ACM that Canadian UUs as a whole affirm and accept the seven principles and the sources as currently stated. Among the seven principles, "the one area that showed some impetus for change," said the summary, "was that a significant number of respondents indicated that the current statement did not articulate strongly enough the need for **environmental stewardship**" (emphasis in the report). Affirmation about our sources (direct experience, words and deeds of prophetic men and women, wisdom from the world's religions, Jewish and Christian teachings, humanist teachings and spiritual teachings of Earth-centred traditions) was not as resounding as for the statement of principles, and the CUC has

decided to further explore the sources within our congregations.

That, in a nutshell, covered off my responsibilities in attending the business portion of the conference as a delegate of this congregation. Printed copies of some of the material will be available for church members to read.

I also had an opportunity to attend some valuable and meaningful workshops, hear some motivational and thought-provoking addresses, learn some wonderful songs, and make some important contacts and friends. The colourful banner parade was certainly a highlight, and the enthusiasm and commitment of the UU Youth was contagious and inspiring.

Each day was packed with activities, and a highlight for me was accepting on UCN's behalf the official certificate from the CUC in recognition of completing the requirements of the Welcoming Congregation process. What a joy!

I came away from the conference with a deeper understanding and appreciation of our faith and the important role it plays in the world, and I am proud to be a part of this liberal religious movement.

Letters to the Editor:

How about some good news for a change? "Niagara (region) sets the bar for waste disposal", so says a recent Toronto headline. Your recent editorial touches on Niagara's current stopgap plan to landfill its waste in an empty quarry, but makes no mention of the region's new report for future long term sustainable options.

The new report takes up the "true cost" of dealing with food and yard waste. "True cost" now includes health and environmental impacts as well as capital and operating costs.

To make such difficult assessments the researchers turned to computer models available from Environmental Canada and the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

The report takes up four options: composting; landfills that flare; landfills that make electricity from methane gas; and incineration.

It turns out that composting far and away had the least impact: landfills with flaring were 3.8 times more costly; landfills that produce electricity were 2.5 times more costly; and incineration was 3.2 more costly.

The new environmental impacts included potential costs of global warming, eutrophication of lakes and rivers, and acid rain. Health impacts included particulate matter, toxins like toluene which causes cancer and genetic damage and toxins like benzene that affect nerve transmission and hormone signals.

The final impact was ecosystem toxicity, assessing, for example, pesticides like 2,4D that can cause cancer and reproduction damage, particularly in wetlands.

The Region of Niagara has now set a standard that other municipalities should follow.

Edgar Lemon

Your headline to my letter about a new Region report on waste, July 31, 2008, could be misleading. The new report is epoch making

because it evaluates the "true cost" of managing municipal waste including health and ecosystem impact costs in addition to traditional capital and operating costs. Of the four options studied composting had the least negative impact on the "true cost". Landfilling where electricity is made was second where the impact was 2.5 times more costly than composting. Incineration was next at 3.2 times more costly. Finally, landfilling with flaring was the worst at 3.8 times more costly. The Region's present stop-gap landfilling may fall into this last category?

I favour incineration along with composting because of the greater potential of replacing fossil fuel for energy.

The Region can be congratulated for making the ground braking study of the 'true cost' of managing municipal waste including health and ecosystem costs.

Edgar Lemon



Meet Life Courageously

The First Unitarian Congregation of Toronto, in partnership with World Accord, invites you to help build schools in the mountains of Honduras or a home in Chichoy, a Guatemalan community devastated by Hurricane Stan. These are hands-on opportunities to make a difference in the lives of subsistence farmers and their families. Please join a two-week trip: beginning November 1, 2008, February 7 or March 7, 2009. Construction and Spanish language skills are not required but would be welcomed. For more information contact Richard Kirsh (416-767-5837 or richardkirsh@sympatico.ca) or see our poster on your congregation's bulletin board.

Eat, Pray, Laugh at Regional Fall Gathering 2008

Eat, Pray, Laugh offers UUs from all over B.C. a weekend of music, mirth and joyful community, Oct. 24-26. This Regional Fall Gathering hosted by Beacon Unitarian Church features workshops by presenters like storyteller Will Hornyak, poetry, prayer and laughter. Held at Simon Fraser University's main campus, on-site accommodation and home hospitality are available. Registration forms and details on the CUC website (cuc.ca/programs/gatherings.htm), Beacon website (beaconunitarian.org) or contact David Hamilton, Registrar, at 604-944-3113 or zatapog@telus.net.

Why I Fought for the Right to Say 'I Do'

By [Greta Christina](#), [The Blowfish Blog](#). Posted [May 26, 2008](#).

As you all no doubt know unless you've been hiding under the blankets for the last week and a half, the California Supreme Court recently ruled that the ban on same-sex marriage violates the state Constitution. In a little less than a month, same-sex couples will be able to legally marry in California.

My partner and I are going to be one of those couples.

And I want to talk a little bit about why.

One of the questions that gets raised a lot when the subject of same-sex

marriage comes up is, "Why is marriage so important? Why aren't civil unions or domestic partnerships good enough?"

The usual answers are practical ones. And I'll certainly second them. Marriage is recognized around the country and around the world, and all its practical and legal rights and responsibilities get carried with you everywhere you go in a way that is most emphatically not true for civil unions and domestic partnerships. Besides, it's a well-established principle that "separate but equal" is inherently not equal. The very act of saying, "No, you can't have this thing that everyone else can have, but you can have that other thing we created just for you that's almost exactly like it -- isn't that special?" It's the creation of second-class status, pretty much by definition.

But I want to talk about something else today. I don't want to talk about the legal and practical benefits of marriage. I don't want to talk about hospital visitation rights, child custody rights, inheritance rights, tax benefits, all that good stuff. That's all important, but it's also well-covered ground.

I want to talk about something more intangible. I want to talk about why we're getting married apart from all that.

Marriage is an unbelievably old human institution and human ritual. My parents did it. My grandparents did it. My great-grandparents did it, and theirs, and theirs. The word and the concept carry a weight, a gravitas, intense and complex social and emotional associations, from centuries and millennia of people participating in it. And as far as I know (admittedly my anthropology is a bit weak), it's existed in one form or another in almost every human

society, in almost every period of human history. There may be exceptions, but I don't offhand know of any. Getting married means being a link in a chain, taking part in a ritual that's central to human history and society.

Yes, much of that history and many of those associations are awful. Sexist, propertarian, oppressive. But the evolution of the institution from its complicated and often terrible history into what it is today is part of what gives it its weight. The history of marriage, and its growth away from ownership and towards equal partnership, is the history of the human race's maturation. Participating in it means participating, not just in the history and the ritual, but in its growth and change.

Civil unions and domestic partnerships just don't have that.

Let's look at the recent Supreme Court ruling in California. Let's look at what it won't change for my partner and me and what it will.

On a day-to-day level, it probably won't change much. We're domestic partners, and California domestic partnership does afford most of the legal rights and responsibilities that marriage offers. Within the state, anyway. As long as we stay in the state, not much changes in any practical sense. And I doubt that much will change between her and me. We had a commitment ceremony two and a half years ago: a joyful, exuberant, larger-than-we'd expected celebration that we spent many months planning. That ceremony and celebration, and everything we went through to make it happen, *did* change our relationship, profoundly, and very much for the better. I doubt that our legal wedding in June will have anywhere near that same impact

on how we feel about each other.

But it will almost certainly change how we feel about society, and our place in it. And it will change -- officially -- how society feels about us.

When we get married in June, the State of California will officially recognize that our relationship has the same weight as our parents' did, and their parents', and theirs. It will officially drop this "separate but equal" bullshit. It will officially stop seeing us as kids at the little table, poor relatives who should be content with leavings and scraps, second-class citizens. It will officially see us as actual, complete, honest-to-gosh citizens.

Now.

Look at the patchwork of laws around this country regarding same-sex marriage. Look at the states that have banned it, and the ones that have gone so far as to ban the recognition of same-sex marriages performed in other states. Look at the fact that if my partner and I travel to Alabama or Michigan, Alaska or Pennsylvania, or any of over two dozen other states, our marriage will be seen as not having existed at all. Null. Void. Look at the Defense of Marriage Act, passed by Congress and signed by President William Jefferson Clinton in 1996, stating that the Federal government will not recognize same-sex marriages, even if they're completely legal in the state where they were performed.

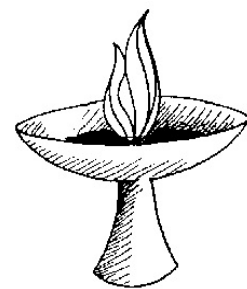
What does that tell you about how those states, and the country as a whole, sees us?

That's the weird paradox of the California ruling. It's thrilling. It's unbelievably great news. It's a huge historical step. But at the same time,

it throws the true meaning of this legal patchwork into sharp focus. It makes it that much clearer that queers in this country are, in a very literal sense, second-class citizens. We pay taxes, we serve on juries, we have to obey the same laws that everyone else does, but in a very practical, codified-into-law sense, we just don't count for as much.

Legalizing same-sex marriage isn't just about the legal and practical recognition of our love and our partnership. It's about social recognition. It's about being seen as a full member of society. Kudos for the California Supreme Court for understanding that. Let's hope the rest of the country figures it out eventually.

Important note: As powerful and historic as this step is, it could be undone. In November, there will almost certainly be an initiative on the California ballot, asking voters to amend the state Constitution and ban same-sex marriage. If you think this issue and this movement are important, please consider supporting [Equality California](#).



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of Niagara**

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