



UNITARIAN CONGREGATION OF NIAGARA
A Congregation for Everybody

UCN NEWS

May 2024

Our Covenant

We come in peace
To this place of fellowship and love,
Searching for truth and meaning,
Seeking justice and equity through action,
Supporting each other and serving our community,
Acknowledging and preserving the gifts of this world,
This is our covenant with each other and with all.

UPCOMING SERVICES

May 5 - A Celebration for the 70th Anniversary of the UCN

“What I took with me when I left St. Catharines” presented by guest speaker
Rev. Norm Horofker

Do you have memories of a time when church services were “soul-cheering” (spelled as intended) experiences? Too often today it seems the role of the UU minister is to commiserate with the congregation regarding all the problems of the world without holding much hope for the future. This service will explore the “good news” of Unitarian Universalism, and our responsibility to enjoy and celebrate our lives.

Service led by Doreen Peever

Lunch to follow



May 12 - WellSpring Cancer Support presented by guest speaker Susan Bernier. Service led by Karen Stovell

May 19 - Principle 8: *'We, the member congregations of the Canadian Unitarian Council, covenant to affirm and promote:*

Individual and communal action that accountably dismantles racism and systemic barriers to full inclusion in ourselves and our institutions.'

Service presented and led by Brian Jones

May 27 - Housing and Homelessness in Niagara - presented by guest speaker Syl Roach. Service led by Karen Stovell



- Petra Bucek



- Jenny Leach

FLOWERS FOR SPRING

- LesLee Turmel

Last month I asked the congregation if they had pictures of flowers and plants from their gardens and journeys through their lives. I had no idea what to expect. I was delighted that so many of you were happy to share your pictures.

These pictures have been dispersed throughout the May newsletter. If you don't see your contribution this month, it will be placed in June's newsletter.

Thanks so much to all of you. You have helped make the newsletter a colourful and joint venture.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

- Mary-lyn Hopper

As I shared during Joys and Concerns, in the past month I have lost two friends, both dynamic people who loved life, one a new friend and the other a friend with whom I had a special history.

At the celebration of life for Matt Chapman who died suddenly at 40, the bookmark asked: Tell me what it is you plan to do with your one wild and precious life? This theme carried through the Celebration of Life, not only referring to Matt's life which was a short one, but full of impactful moments challenging others to consider that question.

We are all at different stages in our lives and perhaps the long-term impact of that question is more profound. Yet, it can influence how we spend our days, from major decisions to small gestures. For me, a day has a special glow if I can make a stranger smile. What do you plan to do this month to enrich your life and that of others?



- Anita Miecznikowski

PROGRAM COMMITTEE

- Eva Schwartzentruber

On February 18, Rev. Linda Thomson presented a service at UCN where she raised important points as she posed questions that I feel our congregation needs to answer.

“.....the human need for connection and meaning-making is universal. Congregational life isn't intended to make me comfortable but rather it is about building a community where we are all challenged to explore together.”

She posed the following questions:

1. Why do you attend Sunday morning services at UCN?
2. Why did you choose to make this congregation part of your life?
3. Is there a deep need you hope it can meet?

The following are questions that, I as Co-ordinator of Program, asked our congregants:

1. Is there a topic or series of topics that you would like addressed on a Sunday morning? Current issues? Historical events? Is there a topic you have a particular interest in?
2. Would you be willing to assist in research and facilitating a given topic?

The summary of responses follows:

1. Why do you attend Sunday morning services at UCN?

- To belong to a faith community and hear Unitarian readings and songs
- Spend time with like-minded people
- To be inspired and challenged
- To give me hope
- To learn and experience spiritual growth
- Spiritual nourishment and to be challenged
- New ideas
- Fellowship
- To join with others who choose to explore a spiritual journey
- To satisfy my intellectual curiosity

2. Why do you attend UCN?

- UCN is my most important community
- Important to belong to a Unitarian congregation
- Had a positive experience with other UU congregations
- To be challenged
- Like the Principles
- Like a small congregation where everyone knows everyone else.
- Aligned with my views
- A community that is not doctrinal but talks about important things.

3. Is there a deep need you hope it can meet?

- Belonging and mutual support
- Connections and spiritual support
- Stimulation and inspiration
- To be part of something trying to make difference in the world
- Community values that are good for Niagara

4. Is there a topic or series of topics you would like addressed on a Sunday morning?

- Reflection on world events
- Earth-centred traditions and celebrations
- Early Canadian history
- Near-death experience
- Hope: people who are making a difference
- Science and how it affects the search for meaning
- Humanist perspectives
- Anything to do with social consciousness
- Diversity/equity/inclusion/anti bias

I thank all of you who took the time and thought to answer the questionnaire. Your responses are pivotal in directing the service content over the next year. Without services, there is no UCN.



- Mardele Harland

ADULT EDUCATION CLASS

- Karen Stovell

It is somewhat astonishing to realize that it was four years ago this month that we in Canada and the rest of the world were in the middle of the pandemic around Covid-19. How our lives changed during those almost two years of lockdown, masks, Zoom services and, for some, loneliness. We managed to get to the other side and, for the most part, we feel normal again. However, the ordinary habits of many people's lives have been altered, some forever.

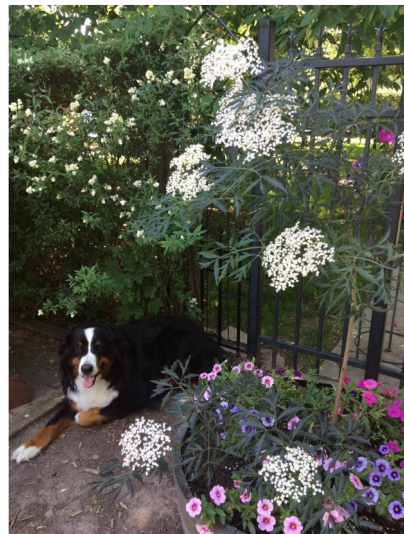
Our regular Sunday services were moved online during lockdown as well as the Adult Education Program. The first group formed led to a second group as more people became interested, and then a third group emerged which fortunately could meet in person when we were able to use our building again.

There are quite a few new members and friends who have indicated interest in joining these classes. I can foresee the need for four groups in the fall. Each group would have no more than eight members so that everyone is given the opportunity and the time to express their answers and opinions on the month's topic. One of the original members has indicated a desire not to meet on Zoom anymore. However, there are a few people who still like the Zoom format because of time constraints, distance or "just because".

I suggest this September we begin with groups comprised of people who agree on a time and place to meet. The UCN building is available most evenings, but only one Sunday after church each month. A group could meet in someone's home in an afternoon, a morning or whenever the group decides. One group will continue to meet on Zoom for those who would prefer it. I also suggest that each group has its own facilitator – someone to make sure everyone has their turn with questions. The topic would be the same for all groups each month. The facilitators could also take turns choosing and preparing the background material; for example, Karen in September, Matt in October, Mary-lyn in November, etc. (I chose these names because both Matt and Mary-lyn have acted as facilitators in the past). This way the work of coming up with a topic, background information and questions is distributed among several people and not just one. And, with more input, it creates a greater opportunity for a wider selection of topics to be explored.

Please let me know if this is of interest to you.

- LesLee Turmel



HAIKUS FOR SPRING

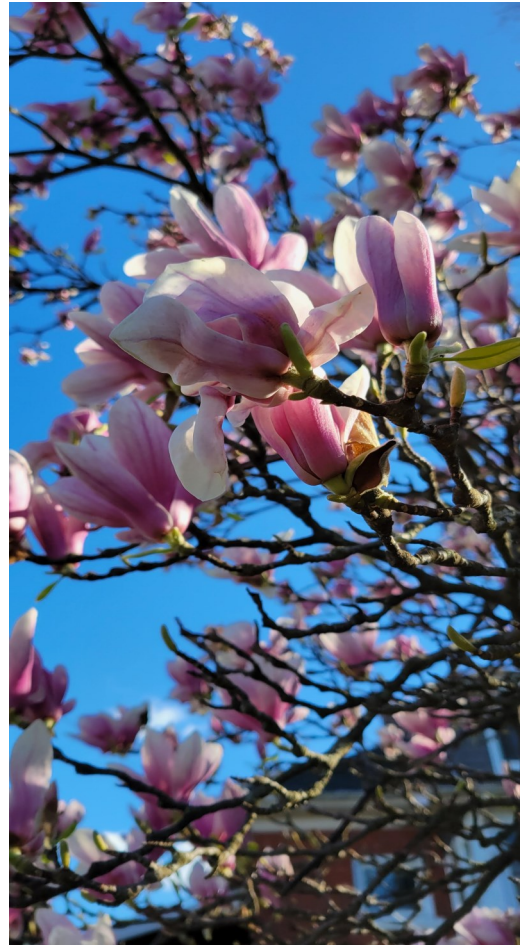
- Russ Baird

He says my yoke is easy
and your burden light
Come to Me, be mine.

I am with you everywhere
Always with you, Yours.
Fear not, come to me.



- Penny Blake



- Jacob Santos and Nate Smith



Submitted by Roy Blake

THE IMPORTANCE OF CELEBRATING BIRTHDAYS

- LesLee Turmel

Each month we celebrate some of our congregants' birthdays. But in so doing, we have often and unintentionally overlooked others who are also celebrating their special day. It seems we have become reliant on the informal word of mouth to keep us informed.

We need to be more intentional about acknowledging and celebrating birthdays. We are required to be more inclusive.

Birthdays focus on the gift of life. Celebrating them can be a humanizing stroke. More-so, they acknowledge a particular person. For many of us, it marks a significant milestone in our lives and provides us with the opportunity to experience gratitude, and to reflect on the past and the hopes for the future. Birthdays provide the opportunity of surrounding ourselves with loved ones, building deeper connections, and experiencing the joy of those deeper connections. It is a day to celebrate ourselves and for others to participate in the celebration.

In this spirit, UCN wants to remember and celebrate your birthday. Once a month we will allot a time during our service to acknowledge those celebrating their birthday in that particular month. So that all can be included in this communal celebration, I will be asking congregants, members and friends, to share their birth date (year necessary only for bragging rights) so we can celebrate your day.

I know for some, birthdays are just another day among many days. And if this is true for you, we will respect your wishes. But, please, allow me to quietly share your birthday cake with your friends.

Our May Birthdays:

Andrea Crecco, Jenny Leach, Sue Velkers



Community Care Food Hamper

Please continue to bring a food item each week for the food hamper situated at the rear of the sanctuary. An item brought weekly by each congregant will provide the equivalent of a week's worth of groceries for a family.

We have received a letter of appreciation from Community Care for our last contribution which was in excess of 25 pounds of food. Let us continue with this trend throughout the New Year. We know our efforts benefit others and are deeply appreciated.



Niagara Mobile Closet



203 Church St (rear door)
Tuesdays and Fridays - open 10:00 am to Noon
Sunday - open Noon to 2:00 pm

They are currently in need of work wear, job interview clothing, winter wear including boots and, especially, men's coats. You can donate any of these items that are in good repair.

Book Riot

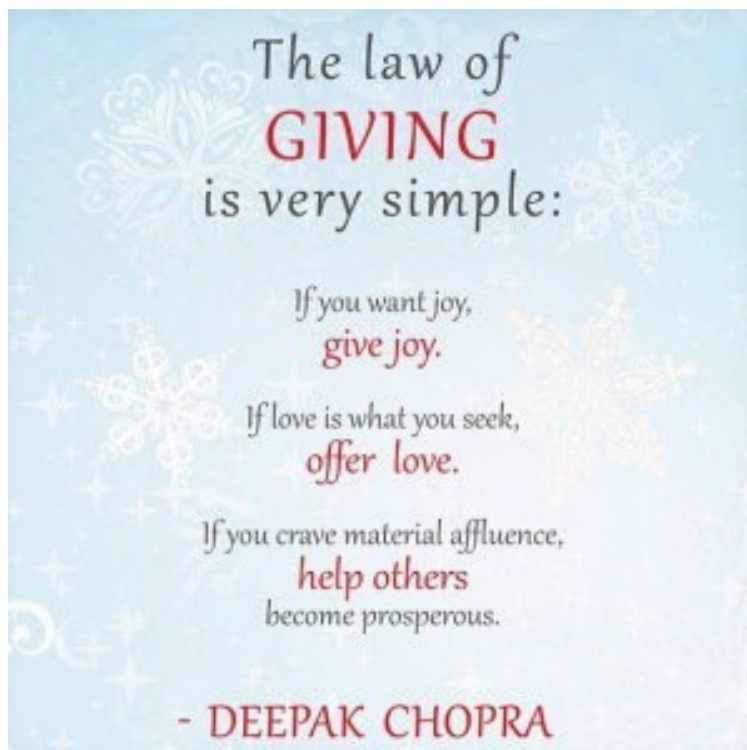
Book Riot is an annual event to raise money for Birchway, a women's shelter in Niagara Falls. This year's event is scheduled for June 4-9, 2024 at Gale Centre, 5152 Thoroldstone Rd, Niagara Falls. Cost: \$10, in support of domestic violence services.

If you have useable books that you would like to donate, bring them to UCN and place them in a box or bag in the back room, and be sure to label them "Book Riot". Mary-lyn Hopper will drop the books off at the Niagara Falls collection location.

HOW DO I GET MY MONEY TO UCN?

There are several ways of honouring your pledge:

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



Unitarian Congregation of Niagara

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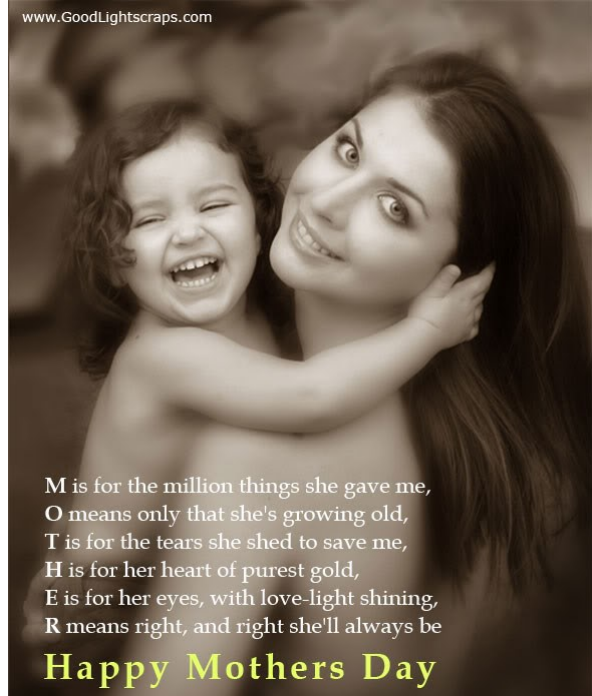
Lay Chaplains: Contact
laychaplainsucn@gmail.com
Beryl Stovell, Karen Stovell

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Communications: Roy Blake
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Karen Stovell, Abu Hosein
Website: Jacob Santos

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Jim Glassford, Erdwin Hueniken,
Doreen Peever



**Deadline for June Newsletter:
May 24, 2024**



- Matt Virro