



**UNITARIAN CONGREGATION OF NIAGARA**  
*A Congregation for Everybody*

# UCN NEWS

**April 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**

April 7 - Her Name was Margaret: Life and Death on the Street - service presented by guest speaker Denise Davy and led by Karen Stovell

April 14 - UU 7<sup>th</sup> Principle: Respect for the Interdependent Web of All Existence of which We are All a Part - service presented and led by Karen Stovell

April 21 - Earth Day - service presented and led by Mary-lyn Hopper

April 28 - Wellspring Cancer Support Niagara - service presented by guest speaker Susan Bernier and led by Karen Stovell

## **UPCOMING EVENTS**

Circle Dinner

Friday, April 26, 5:30

Everyone is welcome to this potluck dinner. .

It is always an evening full of fun, laughter and good food!

## **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

- Mary-lyn Hopper

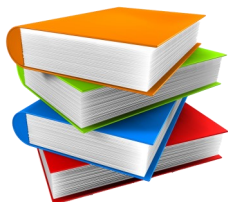
A Quote from Pry Me Off Dead Center by Ted Loder

“Deliver me from just going through the motions  
And wasting everything I have which is today  
A chance, a choice, my creativity.

Pry me off dead center  
So I am moved inside  
to tears or sighs or screams or smiles or dreams  
they will be real  
and I will be in touch  
with who I am and who you are.”

It is a blessing and curse. Leading provides the opportunity and excitement of moving in new directions, but conversely brings the disquiet of dealing with the cacophony of change. We appreciate the comfort of what we know even when there is awareness that the status quo is not the direction which best meets the needs of our beloved community. In dealing with conflict, I think that most of us instinctively know that we need to support and nurture each other, but in the midst of the storm we become embroiled in the emotions of the moment. My goal as I lead is to provide opportunities to step back and recognize our humanity as we navigate the challenges that face us. It is easy to do this with those we see eye to eye or are quick to come to an agreeable consensus. It is in difficult situations that it is harder to put aside our own ego and turn to those who sit on the other side of the fence.

We come to this community because we have a common striving for meaning. The principles provide the backbone of our spiritual search. Because of this we forget we are not alike and sometimes forget the core need to understand where another person is coming from. It takes time, but sometimes we just need to bridge the gap with a simple nonjudgmental statement, “Tell me more.”



### **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. A specific date will be provided later.

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

## **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.

## 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.



## WHO WE ARE

This is a regular feature of our newsletter. We strive to highlight newer members as a means of introducing them on a more personal level than the formal membership ceremony provides. It also allows a launching platform for further discussions with our new membership.

*This month's submission is by Kathryn Waugh.*



I was born and raised in New Liskeard in northern Ontario. I left home in 1969 to attend McMaster University, have lived in Toronto and Peterborough, and retired to Niagara Falls in 2017. I live in Niagara Falls-Chippewa near my son, daughter-in-law and grandson. It is the best being close to my family.

I have missed the North ever since I left home to attend university. Growing up there meant living and playing in the water, running through and exploring 'the bush', doing outside chores like feeding the chickens and pulling weeds from the vegetable garden, attending a one room school house until grade five, skating, tobogganing, skiing, snow shoeing, building snow forts and lying on the grass or in a snow bank looking up at the sky in awe of the stars. All of these are still some of my favourite things, even if I am not as spry as I once was.

My family was not a church going family, but I became interested in UUism in Toronto in the 1990's. I have been a Unitarian since 1994 and was a member of Northwest Fellowship in Toronto and Unitarian Fellowship of Peterborough. And now I have joined you! How lucky for me that there is a Unitarian congregation near by.

Since moving to Niagara Falls, I have found some volunteer work, joined a book club, attend a yoga studio, and play with a women's cribbage club. I am happy to be accepted as a member of this congregation and hope to contribute to our faith community by being part of the Program Committee.

## **CHANGE, CHALLENGE AND CHOICE**

- LesLee Turmel

I wrote this message several years ago. 'A March Walk', recounted here, is when Bennie and I went on our regular daily walk. The beauty of that walk has never been recreated on that pathway, at least not for us. I have often pondered if that reality is a function of climate change. Concern and despair for our planet continues and is, sadly, heightened by the increases of climatic changes and its accompanying chaos. I desperately hope the walk that awed me that day in March has been recreated for others.

The Times They Are A-Changin' - Bob Dylan

Come gather 'round people  
Wherever you roam  
And admit that the waters  
Around you are growin'  
And accept it that soon  
You'll be drenched to the bone.

If your time to you  
Is worth savin'  
Then you better start swimmin'  
Or you'll sink like a stone  
For the times they are changin'.

I find no better way to celebrate the awe of our planet than being surrounded by nature. It matters not whether the snow is falling, the rain is pouring or the sun is shining. It is not important if I am on my deck sipping coffee in the dead of winter or walking through puddles in my galoshes or tending my garden in my bare feet. Being outside with nature is always a blessing. And if you have a buddy to join you, all the better. Such is my luck. My stalwart canine companion, Bennie, and I recently walked along the old Welland Canal. As he wildly ran through the

burr-laden underbrush sniffing everything within his olfactory capacity, I sauntered between the bare trees and upon frozen grasses looking at the beauty that raw nature provides. At first glance Spring looked far off even as the calendar was heralding its near return. Yet, as I looked more closely, I began to see the signs of Spring were abundant. I saw the plumping of tree buds that had been set the previous fall. There was evidence of coyote tracks, possibly leading to potential den sites. The resident hawk, looking a bit lean and scraggly from a long winter, had uncovered voles beneath the receding snow. A Blue Heron, perched and huddled upon a stripped willow tree, studied the broken ice of the canal and seemed to be watching for a mere morsel that may be swimming a little too close to the surface. A ruby red cardinal sat among the grey branches, a glorious sight. Robins were checking out last year's nesting sites with the same fervour as squirrels were leaving their tree top homes and bouncing from limb to limb. A chevron of Canadian geese honked their Spring arrival against the blue sky and caught Bennie's and my attention. He was mostly curious. I was joyous. I offered them, as I do each year, a silent 'welcome home'.

Now, take a moment to hold in your heart and mind all the beauty of the season, and then imagine, if you can, the absence of that beauty. For that matter, challenge yourself to imagine the absence of the beauty of any season. It is difficult to do. It is a chilling scenario to imagine with ramifications too brutal to consider. The simple truth is that we chose not to sufficiently confront the changing climate.

Today. Right now. Here, in this very moment and place, our planet is being transformed. What began as apparently insignificant changes have been magnified and manifested into a colossal challenge. Snow caps and glaciers are melting. The earth's waters are rising. Ironically, there are many places where there is too little water. Potable water has evaporated or has been polluted or so reduced it is not suitable for any living organism. Some areas of the earth are so drought-ridden that they have become charred wastelands due to fire or rays of unrelenting sun. People and animals are starving. There are increasing numbers of life forms that have become extinct or are becoming extinct. In some areas of the South American rain forests the insect population has been reduced by 95 percent with a similar reduction of the bird population. In other areas of our planet, there has been an extraordinary rise of invasive insects that

decimate crops, forests and other habitats which sustain life. And lest we forget, we are also an invasive life form which is contributing to habitat destruction through waste, haste, greed and indifference.

All these changes, and more, are challenging all life. That includes you and me. And if not you and me, the lives of our children and our children's children. And if not them, all life forms that provide biological significance. That is, all life.

Many people call climate change a crisis. I am not confident that all these people believe this. A crisis requires immediate action. A crisis is when your house is on fire. Your home's destruction is imminent. You stop. If you cannot manage the crisis by yourself, you call 911. You behave in a timely manner. After, you restore and recreate. A choice of inaction leaves you without a home, or worse.

If you believe that, as I do, we are facing a global climate crisis, then we must behave as if there is one. That means "action now." Right now! Choose a means of addressing this crisis as you are so able. Large or small efforts. Do something. Do it regularly and do it often. If you don't know what to do ask someone in the know or research activities and groups that recognize the urgency. Act singularly or find like-minded people and plunge forward collectively.

Mother Earth has nurtured life selflessly for millions of years. We have brought her to her knees. Is it not our responsibility to make honest attempts to heal her? The choice is ours. The consequences of inaction are grave.





## 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

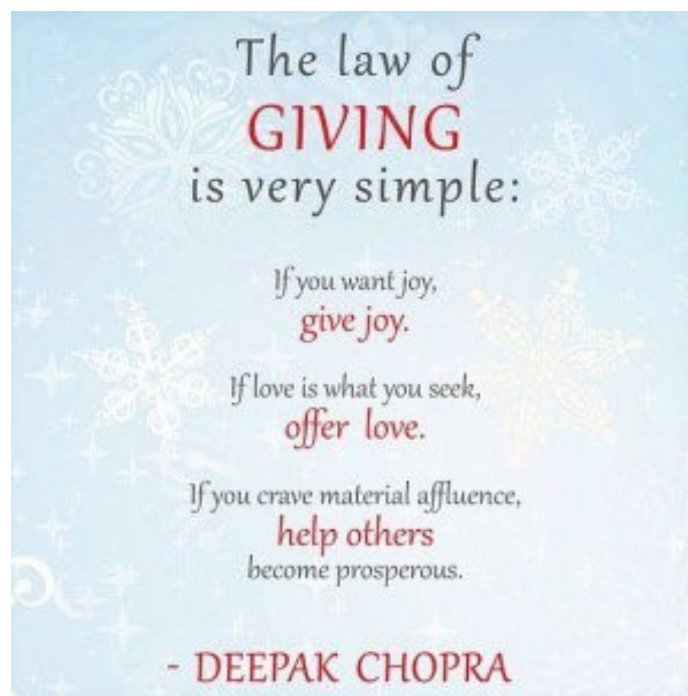
Sunday - open Noon to 2:00 pm

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.

## 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](mailto:ucn.communications@gmail.com).



## Unitarian Congregation of Niagara

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### Board of Directors

President: Mary-lyn Hopper  
Vice-president: Shaun Ironside  
Past-president: Matt Virro  
Secretary: Sarah McLaren  
Treasurer: Brian Jones  
Member-at-large: Eva Schwartzentruber  
Program: Eva Schwartzentruber  
Social Action: Shaun Ironside


**Lay Chaplains:** Contact  
[laychaplainsucn@gmail.com](mailto:laychaplainsucn@gmail.com)  
Beryl Stovell, Karen Stovell

### Committee Chairs

Adult Religious Education: Karen Stovell  
Music: Penny Blake, Karen Stovell  
Communications: Roy Blake  
Denominational Affairs: Jacob Santos  
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Membership: Doreen Peever  
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Social: Susan Glassford, Jim Glassford,  
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### Trustees

Jim Glassford, Erdwin Hueniken,  
Doreen Peever



Spring: a lovely  
reminder of how  
beautiful change  
can truly be.

– Unknown

**Deadline for April Newsletter:**

**April 19, 2024**

