



UNITARIAN CONGREGATION OF NIAGARA

A Congregation for Everybody

UCN NEWS

March 2023

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

March, 2023

March 5 - Being Actively Engaged. The third of our five aspirations is presented by Reverend Fiona Heath from the Unitarian Congregation of Mississauga - service led by Beryl Stovell

March 12 - Altruism in Cuba presented and led by Susan and Jim Glassford - Susan and Jim discuss their numerous ventures to Cuba and how they, as well as many other tourists, have found effective ways to meaningfully contribute to the people of Cuba.

March 19 - Traditions and Meaning of Ramadan - service presented and led by Abu Hosein

March 26 - Being Theologically Alive: the the fourth of our five aspirations - service presented and led by LesLee Turmel

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Matt Virro

I began our AGM with a story of a ship, a shore and a sea. A group of sailors are about to set sail from a local port at the side of an indigenous lake in Ontario.

The crew has done this trip many times, setting sail each February on a year-long voyage. It follows an annual ritual practiced for more than six decades. The prospects for a good voyage would be weighed against considerable hazards and challenges of storms at sea, climate change and the condition of the aging crew. To take our boat to sea and to bring our blue boat home after a year would take resolve and planning. It would mean working smartly with care and commitment, and good provisions at hand. It would mean combining our many competencies and teamwork skills to make this a successful spiritual journey.

This year we were learning that storms at sea were becoming more frequent with changes to current and climate, and our rations on board were limited. It seemed all the more true that we were forced by an aging crew to become day sailors.

As I thought of this metaphor of a boat at sea and an ultimate goal of bringing a blue boat home to any shore, I can see that our congregation has plenty of sail remaining. As John Shedd stated in his famous poem.....“A ship in harbour is safe, but that is not what ships are for.”

Our commitment at UCN remains to be at sea and do what we can do, to find meaning in our lives and to build a better world, together.

This is what we know:

- We are not leaving Church Street. We are committed to being here and to working through the difficulties we may face financially. We know it's a pay as you go world and we will work with a budget that is fair and forward thinking.
- We want to be financially prepared to meet the task of spiritual and congregational growth and, with Brian Jones's help, we are achieving this. We are setting achievable targets that are meaningful and will, hopefully, put smiles on faces. Yes, we want new congregants in seats, but it's a process.
- We have come out of COVID and want to pursue a progressive agenda. We will be calling on the CUC with a grant proposal in March and The Trillium Foundation in August for monies that will be used for capital improvements.

- We want our sanctuary to be more than clean and colourful. We want it to mirror our core values and principles as Unitarians. We have an unnamed committee that will be taking a look at decor and infrastructure. The committee of LesLee Turmel, Liina Veer and Mary-lyn Hopper will be acting in the months to come as general contractors. Once we are aware of the monies granted, we can specify projects and timelines for building improvements. Last year Roy Blake and Karen Stovell spoke of physical and electronic enhancements to the building. With their input, we will ensure that AV improvements are factored into our overall grant proposal structure.
- We will eventually target an uptick to rentals which will, in time, invite more lectures, concerts and Sunday afternoon openings to the public for meetings or movies. It could mean more hosting of 50by30 Niagara which we did in February.
- We are a progressive congregation. We are averaging 75% of our congregational membership and friends attending Sundays in all weather conditions. This must mean the coffee is very tasty. And, perhaps, it is the UCN message which resonates and all its special people which attract others.

On a slightly different slant, I want to share some words that I think about when I consider UCN in my life. Have any of these words crossed your mind this last year?

Discovery	Connecting with Reason
Finding Meaning in Life	With Emotion
Love and Justice	Remembering
Gratitude	Colonialism
Peace	Principles
Honesty	Becoming Visible
Joys	
Concerns	

These are some of my words. What are yours?

To me it adds up to the interdependent world we live in, the intersection of cultural life and politics. Its why my mind wanders. Its what Lao Tzu had to say about living an integrated life. His famous words that we can all live by:

Watch your thoughts, they become your words;
 Watch your words, they will become your actions;
 Watch your actions, they will become your habits;
 Watch your habits, they will form your character;
 Watch your character, it will form your destiny.

And now we sail on.

WORLD WATER DAY Wednesday, March 22, 2023

As we approach World Water Day, I am reminded of the hymn, Blue Boat Home:
“The wide universe is the ocean I travel and the earth is my Blue Boat Home.”

Two thirds of our planet is covered with life sustaining water. We speak of the beauty of this blue sphere, but it seems that we fail to fully recognize its importance and power until we are threatened by its absence or overwhelming presence.



We are travelling through this universe with more trepidation than we did a decade ago. The United Nations’ goal was to have potable water available to all by 2030. It is unlikely that this goal will be met. Some of the delay has been a factor of political, weather and health crises. This year, the emphasis on World Water Day is accelerating the process to create safe water and sanitation.

Water resources and climate change are inextricably linked and have contributed to landmark catastrophes. Dead lakes and rivers dot the planet. Droughts face many while flash flooding overwhelms others. We have overworked our lands beyond fertility and stripped others beyond usefulness. There are many communities around the world that have inferior or no reliable water supply, one of the most notable being Canada’s indigenous people. We recognize a need to do something. But what? Rather than focus on grand solutions, our small actions, individually or collectively, will incrementally bring change. Inaction is not a solution. If nothing more, we can be an example for commitment and integrity.

There are a few simple things we can do. None of these are new suggestions, but please read them to acquaint yourself with what can be done:

- Keep informed. Locally we will have a better chance of effecting change from a place we live and from what we know. Stand up for global initiatives, knowing there is power in numbers.
- Eat and buy locally produced food, and employ local services whether it is a licensed tradesperson or the kid down the street who wants an opportunity to earn some money.
- Stop wasting water. Take shorter showers, run taps less when brushing teeth or washing dishes. Repair leaks, refrain from watering your garden as much as possible and collect rain water.

- Stop polluting by flushing chemicals, medications, medical waste and food down the toilet.
- Protect nature. Plant a tree or create a rain garden.
- Participate in neighbourhood cleanups and pick up after yourself.
- Pay your taxes.
- Use your privilege and rights to contact authorities and influencers to facilitate change. Be determined.

Together we are strong. Together we make change. Together we can challenge ourselves and others to better use, manage and consume water. Together.

“Drifting here with my ship’s companions, all we kindred pilgrim souls,
Making our way by the light of the heavens in our Blue Boat Home.”

SOCIAL ACTION COMMUNITY CARE

The larders are always only half full at our region’s food banks. At UCN we have tried to keep our food hamper (below bulletin board) full and current to donate to Community Care. But lately, our efforts have waned.

The food items currently requested must be high in proteins such as canned fish and meat. Also required are granola bars, hearty soups and stews, canned fruit and vegetables, canned pasta, spaghetti sauce, baked beans and diapers sizes four and up.

We are all feeling the pinch of higher food costs. Our food banks are seeing greater demand for their services with these corresponding increases. Those with less income will feel this pinch more deeply and for longer. Please keep these people in your mind and heart when you donate. Your gift goes beyond donating a food product. Your contribution helps to create a sense of security and hope.



THE ADVENT SPRING
ENKINDLED SPRING
- D.H. Lawrence

This spring as it comes burst up in bonfires green,
Wild puffing of emerald green trees, or flame-filled bushes,
Thorn-blossom lifting in wreaths of smoke between
Where the wood fumes up and watery, flicking rushes.

I am amazed as this spring, the conflagration
Of green fires lit on the soil of the earth, this blaze of growing,
And sparks that puff in veiled gyration,
Faces all people streaming across my gaze.

And I, what fountain of fire am I among
This leaping combustion of spring? My spirit is tossed
About like a shadow buffeted in the throng
Of flames, a shadow that's gone astray, and is lost.



TIME CHANGE

It's time to Spring forward.
Day Light Saving Time begins Sunday, March 12.

**Unitarian Congregation
of Niagara**

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Jim Glassford, Erdwin Hueniken,
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SPRING (AGAIN)
- Michael Ryan

The birdies were louder
this morning,
Raucous, oblivious, tweeting their
teeny bird brains out.
It scared me,
Until I remembered it's Spring.
How do they know it?
A stupid question!
Thank you, birdies.
I had forgotten how promise feels.



**Deadline for April Newsletter:
March 24, 2023**

