



UNITARIAN CONGREGATION OF NIAGARA

March, 2022 Newsletter

President's Message



Nature reminds us that new beginnings do happen and they are predictable. Lilac buds in my yard are just now emerging through the snow and so, too, is the contemplation of new beginnings at UCN. This is my inaugural contribution to our monthly UCN Newsletter as President of the congregation. I thank you all for the trust you have given me for this term of office. I will work to earn it.

Thank you so much, Penny, for your contributions and having weathered almost two years of "Zoom only please." Thankfully, you had a few weeks last fall to bring services back to the sanctuary. It allowed us to again share a microphone, a decent cup of coffee with a guest speaker, sharing with one and all, and to bring back music. Those were memorable weeks from Thanksgiving through Remembrance Day. It was a reminder of the power of community and the energy inherent in love and caring.

We will look to Dr. Mustafa Hirji, Niagara Region's Acting Medical Officer, for his definitive forecast to reopen. We anticipate it will be in March. Peter Skelton has been preparing the building for reopening. Thank you, Peter.

Looking forward to sharing soon our congregation's energy in-person!

Matt Virro

Upcoming Services

March, 2022

March 6 - International Women's Day

This service will be presented by seven women of the UCN. There will be a video presentation provided by CUC on the theme of International Women's Day. Service led by Karen Stovell.



March 13 - Dance of the Shiva - presented by retired Reverend Frances Deverell. Rev. Deverell will discuss the dance of the Hindu god Shiva which symbolizes the interplay of the dynamic and static energy flow of the divine. Please note that the service is at 10:30 am. This is a shared service with the Unitarian Fellowship of Northwest Toronto and will be led by their minister, Reverend Patricia Trudeau. The link to join is also different. Go to:

<https://yorku.zoom.us/j/99578487910?pwd=ZVBCSUhwYWJiQ29FZUFwRmpvOUgxUT09#success>

March 20 - The Pollinator Garden - service presented and led by Mary-lyn Hopper. Mary-lyn will discuss the importance of pollinators and how we can provide the ideal environment for them to thrive. She will also introduce plans and available funding for UCN's creation of our own pollinator garden.

March 27 - Why Humans Run the World - a YouTube presentation by Yuval Harari. Seventy thousand years ago humans were insignificant animals. As prehistoric creatures we were unimportant. Today, humans dominate the world. How did we get here from there? Harari explores the secret of our success that turned us from insignificant chimpanzees in a corner of Africa to rulers of the world. Service led by Karen Stovell.

NOTE BENE



MARCH 13— Dance of the Shiva
This service is at 10:30 am
Daylight Savings Time.
Be sure to 'Spring Forward' -
Daylight Savings Time starts at 2
am Sunday so set your clocks for-
ward an hour before retiring
Saturday night.

MEET OUR NEW BOARD FOR 2022

The UCN strives to create an open, inclusive and welcoming community to nurture personal and spiritual growth in accordance with UU Principles and Traditions. We are excited to welcome our new board members — both old and new faces — who will help us realize these goals and objectives.

President - Matt Virro



I have a 40-year professional career as an educator, vocational expert and psychotherapist. I have been a clinical supervisor both in the public and private sectors, and a certified mental health cognitive behavioural therapist.

In 2022, as I plan being President of the Unitarian Congregation of Niagara, I look forward to sharing my knowledge and teamwork skills, promoting prosperity for our members and friends, and a healthy spiritual home for all in the region of Niagara.

“Integrity, insight and inclusiveness are the three
essential qualities of leadership”

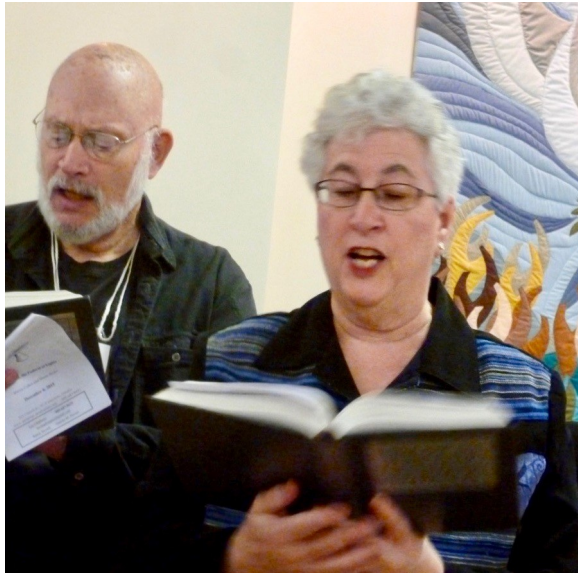
- Sadhguru

Vice President - Mary-lyn Hopper



I first discovered Unitarianism at Don Heights in Toronto in 1982. From 1991 to 2011, I was an active member of the Unitarian Fellowship of London, which included chairing many committees and serving on the Board. When I moved to the Niagara Region in 2018 to be closer to my family, I was pleased to find this small, active congregation. Other joys of my lifetime include hiking, gardening, reading fiction and nonfiction, traveling, singing and creating.

Past President - Penny Blake



My studies and work reflect my varied interests. While at U. of T. obtaining an English and History degree, I pursued vocal musical studies at the Royal Conservatory of Music, attaining an Associate level. That background led me to work for libraries, become a religious soloist for Jewish and Christian congregations, and a chorister with the Canadian Opera Company.

When I moved to the Niagara peninsula, I focused my training so I could work and teach from my home based music studio while I raised my children. It was very rewarding being a vocal and Kindermusik teacher.

I discovered Unitarianism after coming to the Niagara Region, and eventually joined this warm and inclusive congregation. I have served this community as Choir Director and President. Now that my role as president has ended, I am attending to the duties of Zoom host for board meetings and formatting for our newsletter.

Member at Large - Eva Schwartzentruber

I live contentedly with my partner and friend, Paul, in a small house in the village of Beamsville. I like, in no particular order, trees, rocks, flowers, planting seeds in Spring, animals, small children, chocolate, all genres of music and a few good friends.



I dislike cold air in my face, snakes, smelly fish, selfishness, arrogance and being ignored.

Program - Karen Stovell

I was a teacher for the Niagara and the Toronto Boards of Education for 33 years before moving to China and Mongolia. I taught at a university in Luoyang and a pharmaceutical company in Ulan Baatar. I became an associate pastor with the United church in 2002 and then joined the Unitarian Universalist Congregation in 2009.



I have served as a lay chaplain for UCN for six years and have now resumed that role.

I am a mother of two and grandmother of five.

Secretary - Connie Scott

I was born, grew up, attended nursing school and was married in Quebec. In 1966, I moved to Ridgeway where I had two sons and a 24 year career teaching nursing at



Niagara College. While I was working, I earned a B.A, M.Sc. and M.Ed. I moved to St.Catharines recently after 50 years in my Ridgeway home.

I enjoy water-colour painting, curling, bridge and reading. Past interests include swimming, skiing, skating, wind surfing and travelling, which includes 35 trips around the world.

My joys are my two sons, Carl and Geo, their lovely wives and my nine grandchildren. I also enjoy my wonderful siblings and friends who have been there for me since I lost my husband 15 years ago. I take great joy in my Halliburton area cottage where I enjoy visits from family and friends.

Social Action - Beryl Stovell

While I was a home-focused mother for 18 years, I achieved my degree in psychology, was involved as a girl guide leader, was very active in many church organizations, and



cared for a number of young children of my employed friends. At 40, I began my first paid position, working for Probation and Parole for the next 18 years. After retirement, my husband and I taught English in China for three years. Since, I developed an interest in painting that continues to this day.

Treasurer - Brian Jones



I came into the world on October 20, 1951. It was a very fortunate beginning, born as I was in a country, Canada, that today is a stalwart of peace and liberty for so many people around the world. And yet, it has many challenges and scars that need to be repaired.

I have worked and lived for over 45 years in various geographic locations: USA, Denmark, China, Singapore, India and Mexico City. My roles were always as a Regional Leader. To aid in my time in the various locations, I acquired a working knowledge of Spanish and French languages along with my native English.



I am married to Dena and have four children, two are shown in this photo. At this point in my life, I am seeking a faith community that aligns with the values I hold: inclusion, trust and respect for all. The Community at UCN has been as welcoming a group as I have met since my return to Canada. I am pleased to serve in my new capacity as Treasurer on the board. I hope to add to the love and trust that we hold together.

Spring Equinox
Sunday, March 20, 2022 @ 11:30 am EDT



Be the branch that loses its frost
Only to show how its shoots comes to life.
Be the drop of ice that falls from the branch
one more time
To nurture with love the Earth one more time.

- Roxanna Jones

Intentional Aging

Brian Jones and Karen Stovell will be facilitating a group on intentional aging.

This group is designed to address how we live through the aging process. In spite of how well we have taken care of ourselves to promote successful aging and to avoid disability or dependence on others, we are more often than not confronted with physical, cognitive or mental health challenges which are unanticipated.

Intentional aging is about the choices we make in how we live throughout the aging process. We cannot always control what happens, but we do have control how we address the change.

Contact Karen Stovell if you are interested in participating in this group or wanting further information about it,



UCN Summer Retreat
Bliss Haven Retreat Centre
Monday, June 20 to Wednesday, June 22

It is finally time to plan for a much-needed restorative summer retreat. The focus of this three-day retreat is to examine what we want for our congregation over the next five years. It will provide the opportunity for all to be reacquainted with our UCN family in an informal setting, attend workshops, explore and appreciate the outdoors and each other, and, weather permitting, a celebration of the summer solstice under the sky.



Bliss Haven Retreat resides on over 80 acres of land surrounded by hundreds of acres of conservation area. This gem is located in Dunnville, at a delta where the Grand River meets Lake Erie. There are many off-site areas to explore, including a provincial park, museums and beaches, all within walking distance. And it is less than an hour's drive from St. Catharines. Back roads only, if you prefer!

The facility provides fully-appointed private rooms for each guest or couple in a Victorian styled home. There are additional buildings available for our group to meet. All meals and snacks are provided and included in the package.

The price is reasonable at \$250.00 per person for a two night, three day stay. We would be arriving after 2:00 pm on Monday, June 20 and checking out post lunch on Wednesday, June 22. Arrangements may be made to attend for only a day.

What better way to break loose after two years of restrictions than to come together for fun, purpose and collaboration in a rejuvenating setting.

NOTE: Although the facility is pet-friendly, we ask that you refrain from bringing your furry friends as there are UCNers who have severe allergies to animals. Your cooperation will facilitate an inclusive and safe environment for all. Thank you.

Contact Karen Stovell for further information or to add your name to the list of participants. For details about Bliss Haven and pictures of the facility, just Google Bliss Haven Retreat.

Newsletter Survey



Within the next month I will be sending out a survey regarding the newsletter. In addition to advising you of upcoming events and the odd story I send your way, I believe this newsletter can be more dynamic and inclusive. The survey will ask you for your ideas and opinions. .

The newsletter belongs to the members and friends of UCN. So, in anticipation of the survey, please put on your thinking cap and help us grow our newsletter to something that all our congregants will want to explore.

Thank you.

- *LesLee Turmel*

International Women's Day

Break the Bias

March 8, 2022

International Women's Day is a global celebration of social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women. The day also marks a call to action for accelerating women's equality.

This year's theme is Break the Bias. Imagine a world free of gender bias, stereotypes and discrimination. If we truly want a world where difference is valued and celebrated, what work must we do to get there? How do we go about breaking the bias? Knowing that it exists is not enough. Whether bias is deliberate or unconscious, it restrains women from moving ahead. How do we confront it and change it?

Recently, I was preparing a meal in earshot of a television newscast. The newscaster invited the viewers to look at the "excited girls" celebrating their achievement. I turned to view the picture. What I saw was a group of Canadian women celebrating their Olympic gold medal win in women's hockey. My heart sank as my head shook in disbelief. It was enough to make me weep.

If this were the only way women are diminished, I may not have been so impertinent. I was unsuccessful in calling the broadcaster. It was just as well, I suspect. But, the next time the story was aired a correction had been made, properly referencing the champions as women. Somebody, I inferred, confronted the announcer on his inaccurate language.

There is not a woman I know who has not been a recipient of some sexualized, biased or rude comment that was based on her gender. Those comments are hurtful and demeaning. Each person has their own way of addressing such an assault, and yes, it is an assault. To believe it has no impact on a person is to misunderstand the nature of the psyche and personal development.

But what about those ingrained notions and beliefs that are expressed through language and behaviour, those that we use without reflecting upon their impact? You know them. The jabs and sometimes long held beliefs about women not being mathematical or mechanical, or being hormonal or over-sensitive, or being nags and bad drivers, or worse, teasers of men. Some will say they are just harmless comments, just words, or they are just joking. Apparently, in addition to math and mechanics, women don't understand vocabulary or humour either.

Let me be clear, men are not the only purveyors of these untruths. We, as women, have also contributed to the myths and biases that scar. To the extent we internalize them or project them on to other women and girls, we perpetuate the very conditions we wish to overcome. When we repeat something often enough, we come to believe it. Eventually we come to understand it as fact which we directly and indirectly teach to our children, daughters and sons, and anybody else with whom we interact.

To change this, we, women and men, must be informed of our own proclivities. We can do this through self-reflection, education and confrontation. This requires we be open to change and that we resist hiding behind a veil of self-righteousness. Instead of asserting how well we confront our biases, we need to look deeper to uncover where other heretofore unrecognized biases lie. Hard work to be sure. Are we finally ready to do what it takes? Do we have the courage to confront and the openness and strength to be challenged? For our daughters and sons, our grandchildren and beyond, I hope we do.

- *LesLee Turmel*



Ain't I a Woman?

Sojourner Truth

Truth was born into slavery in 1797 in Ulster County, New York with the given name Isabella Bomfree. She changed her name to Sojourner Truth when she became convinced that God had called upon her to speak hard truths, testifying hope was within her. She was a powerful speaker and became a noted evangelist, American abolitionist and women's rights activist.

Her most famous speech, "Ain't I a Woman?" was delivered at the Women's Convention in Akron, Ohio in 1851:

Well, children, where there is so much racket they must be something out of kilter. I think twixt the negroes of the South and the women of the North all talking about rights, the white man will be in a fix pretty soon. But what's all this here talking about?

That man over there says that women need to be helped into carriages and lifted over ditches and puddles, and have the best place ever. Nobody ever helps me into a carriage or over puddles, or gives me any best place. And ain't I a woman? Look at me! Look at my arms! I have ploughed and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me. And ain't I a woman? I could work as much and eat as much as a man - when I could get it - and bear the lash as well! And ain't I a woman? I have borne thirteen children, and seen most all sold off to slavery, and when I cried out in my mother's grief, none but Jesus heard me! And ain't I a woman?

Then they call about this thing in the head (member of the audience whispers "Intellect"). What is that to do with women's rights or negroes' rights? If my cup won't hold a pint and your holds a quart, wouldn't you be mean not to let me have my little half measure full?

Then that little man in black there, he says women can't have as much as men cause Christ wasn't a woman! Where did your Christ come from? From God and a woman! Man had nothing to do with Him. If the first woman God ever made was strong enough to turn the world upside down all alone, these women together ought to be able to turn it back, and get it right side up again! And now they is asking to do it, the men better let them!

Obliged to you for hearing me, and now old Sojourner ain't got nothin more to say.

There is some question about the accuracy of this speech representing Sojourner's true spirit and actual words. First and foremost, it was rewritten to depict Truth's voice as a slave of the south, sounding more like she was plucked from the cast of *Gone With the Wind* than the bilingual Dutch-English speaking New Yorker she was.

There is much to examine in her speech. Overt and subtle stereotypes and biases are exposed, some within Sojourner's own belief system. Yet, it does not take away from the power of her message and the strength of her resolve. It is a reminder of the hurdles that women before us have overcome. It provides incentive and hope for all of us to stand up to the injustices, inequities and biases which have contributed to women's oppression. Throughout the world, biases continue to thwart and undermine women's progress and threatens their very lives. Sojourner's courage and chosen path can be a template for us all.

To learn more about Sojourner Truth (1797-1883) go to www.womenshistory.org

LesLee Turmel

In Memoriam
J. Robert (Bob) Janes
1935 - 2022

Bob Janes, husband to UCN member Gracia Janes, died peacefully on Monday, February 28, 2022. Bob and Gracia had been married for 64 years and together they had four children. In addition, Bob leaves behind many grandchildren and great grandchildren.

A private family picnic celebration will be held in the summer at Niagara-on-the-Lake. Donations in Bob's name will be graciously received and can be made to the Preservation of Agricultural Lands Society (PALS) at Box 1413, Niagara-on-the-Lake, L0S 1J0.

UCN extends our heartfelt sympathies to Gracia and family as they mourn the loss of their dear loved one.

To learn more about Bob's extraordinary life, refer to St.Catharines Standard Obituaries.

Unitarian Congregation of Niagara

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Past-president: Penny Blake
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Member-at-large: Eva Schwartzentruber
Program: Karen Stovell
Social Action: Beryl Stovell

Lay Chaplains: Contact
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Beryl Stovell, Karen Stovell

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Jim Glassford, Erdwin Hueniken,
Doreen Peever

they have no idea what it is like

to lose home at the risk of never finding
home again
have your entire life



split between two lands and become the
bridge between two countries

first generational immigrant

rupi kaur

Deadline for Newsletter:

Friday March 18

Send articles to LesLee Turmel at
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