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Sunday Services

Child care is available and all are welcome.

April Theme is Poetry and Creativity

April 5 Easter – Theme-based Ministry Service: “Poetry and Creativity.” Service Leader: Jo-Anne Elder Gomes. In celebration of Poetry Month, please bring your favourite poems on the theme of spring, seasons, or creativity to share with others.

April 12 Myron Hedderson will be speaking on Bill C-51.

April 19 Rev. David Hutchinson, UU minister from Houlton, Maine, will be leading the Sunday Service and a workshop to follow.

April 26 Gloria Paul will be speaking on “*CFB Toxic. The Environmental and Human Impact of War at Military Bases*”.

May 3 The Nominating Committee will speak about opportunities for service and involvement in the Unitarian Fellowship of Fredericton.



Adult and Youth Program

Most of our programs continue in April, although with a few changes of date. Please see the Facebook page, web-

site or weekly mailouts for updates and details, or contact Jo-Anne at eldergomes@yahoo.com.

Our Youth and Young Adult Justice group (YAYA.J) continues with meetings held on on April 8 and April 22, from 3:45 to 5:00 p.m. This group is for youth and young adults approximately 14 to 22 years of age. Najat, Jo-Anne, Carlos and others will be introducing young people to volunteer and social justice activities in Fredericton and around the world. All are welcome. Come after school and meet with others who want to make the world a better place. Information on our youth group page on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/FrederictonUUYouth/> A reminder for youth that CanUUdle, the youth con for youth across Canada, is happening on the weekend of May 16-18. The registration deadline is at the end of April, so I will have forms ready for you at the April meetings.

Please contact Janet Crawford if you are interested in attending Circle Conversations.

On April 19, from 4:00 to 7:30 p.m., our Popcorn Theology movie will be “Marching in the Arc of Justice,” the video of Mark Morrison-Reed’s talk at the Selma commemoration. This will be followed by Part I of a two-part workshop led by Jo-Anne Elder-Gomes, called “Love and Justice.” Details in another article.

April 16 (Third Thursday of each month, from February to June 2015), from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m.: Discussion Night with Jo-Anne Elder-Gomes. The discussion this month is on “Church and State” and will deal with our purpose and mission as a religious, charitable, and justice-seeking organization.

Theme Night (usually held on the Last Thursday of each month), will be cancelled this month, as we are starting a new series: “Theological Diversity.” We will meet on Wednesday evenings from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. on April 29, May 6, and May 16. Participants will have a chance to explore their beliefs and the sources from which they draw meaning and purpose.

We will be welcoming back Reverend David Hutchinson, from Houlton ME, on April 19 (Service and short workshop following) and also on the weekend of May 9-10. During his May visit, Rev. Hutchinson will be giving a workshop on Saturday afternoon; more details in the next Touchstone.

If you have suggestions for other activities, please let me know so I can coordinate and publicize them.

In faith and service,
Jo-Anne Elder-Gomes



Theological Diversity

This month, I will be starting a new series on Wednesday evenings from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. We will meet on April 29, May 6, and May 16. The series will be similar in format to the “What We Choose” I offered before Christmas, with a combination of information and interactive exercises. The series is designed for youth and adults 14 and above, but is open to all.

I’m excited about this series! In 2013, the CUC Annual Conference and Meeting in Calgary was organized around the theme of Diversity. I attended the Theological Diversity stream. I have also taken U*U Renaissance modules, designed for religious educators, on U*U History and U*U Identity. For a few years now, I have wanted to share some of my learning with the congregation.

Participants will have a chance to explore their beliefs and their worldviews. We will look at the sources of Unitarian and Universalist thought, and the sources from which U*Us draw meaning and purpose. We will look at how our ideas about the “big questions” of life and death have changed over our lifetimes. We will create a safe space to share our spiritual growth and support that of others.

I would encourage everyone to attend the first session on April 29, whether you are new to Unitarian Universalism, have never set foot in our building before, have already done a course like “Building Your Own Theology,” are a life-long U*U, or are a true “seeker” who wants to learn more about the influences on the U*U movement. Since each session builds on the previous one, the second and third evenings are geared to those who have attended the earlier sessions. However, if you cannot attend one, contact me and I will try to give you as much information as I can.

Please join me.
Jo-Anne Elder-Gomes



Reflection on Our April Theme Poetry and the Imagination

“Metaphor or not, there is a certain magic to this season which people have been celebrating for millennia - not out of ignorance, but out of joy and gratitude and hope. I wonder sometimes if we may have forgotten as much as we have learned.” Reverend Lynn Ungar, Church of the

Larger Fellowship

April is National Poetry Month both in Canada and in the USA. Established here by the League of Canadian Poets in April 1998, it is a month when large-scale and tiny events celebrate the insights and beauty of poetry. Literary festivals like the Blue Metropolis and the Frye Festival are held in April, in recognition of both poetry month and World Book and Copyright Day on April 23, a date chosen by UNESCO in 1995 because it was the anniversary of the death of Miguel de Cervantes and believed to be the death of William Shakespeare.

The connection between poetry and religion have been noted by many; the Bible is poetry as well as story. Robert Browning wrote that “God is the perfect poet,” which invites us to think about the two senses in which “creation” is used. Even Samuel Beckett, whose entire work seems to point to the impossibility of believing in a God of love, thought that all poetry was a prayer. Now, one of the interesting coincidences in making reference to Beckett here is that he claimed to have been born on Good Friday, April 13, 1906. The idea that he had been born on Good Friday pleased him; all the more so because it was Friday the thirteenth. This seemed to augur well for his feeling of the inevitable misfortune and suffering of human existence. Mind you, his birth certificate does not validate either his date of birth or that Good Friday was on the thirteenth of the month that year.

Moreover, Beckett wrote about memories of events which took place before his birth, and remembered his life in the womb. These ideas, for Unitarians, seem pretty irrational. There is no scientific evidence that babies can remember life before birth, or that anything happens in our minds before or after our earthly lives. And despite their evolution and their connection with time and tides and myths, we believe whatever we now find by searching the perpetual calendar on the internet.

However, poetic license should be allowed: in his autobiographical memory, Beckett was born on Friday the 13th, the day of the Crucifixion. The story he made of his life was closer to poetry than to history or science. Maybe that’s true of all of us. The narrative of our lives can be viewed in different ways. It is not just that the overall pattern can only be viewed only at the end of our lives; even then, I am sure that we will see it in different ways, a bit like a flow chart that has arrows towards different text and colour boxes. Each time it depends on whether we answer yes or no to a question. Did I make the right choice? Was it the right thing to do? Was I in love? Should I have moved / quit / done it? Do I believe in God? The problem is, we often haven’t decided upon the right answer. We look back and see the answer to each question could have been yes, no, both or neither. It all depends on everything.

Poetry is an ideal container for ambivalence. It often does so through metaphor: a metaphor connects two images

or ideas which are and are not the same. Liberal religions such as ours also make use of metaphors. Metaphors might be doubts given flesh. Are we or are we not who we say we are?

“When I say ‘God’ it is poetry and not theology,” wrote John Haynes Holmes. He continues: “Nothing that any theologian has written about God has helped me much, but everything the poets have written about flowers and birds and skies and seas and saviours of the race, and God - whoever He may be - has at one time or another reached my soul!...The theologians gather dust upon the shelves of my library but the poets are stained with my fingers and blotted by my tears.”

Reverend Lynn Ungar writes, “We’re UUs. We can doubt just about anything. We are the denominational flip side of Lewis Carroll’s Red Queen, who bragged that she could believe six impossible things before breakfast. The resurrection of Jesus from the dead - doubt it. The encounter of Moses with a blazing bush that was not consumed by fire - doubt it. Visitation from a magical bunny who carries around coloured eggs - same category, definitely doubt it.”

And yet, she continues, Easter somehow appeals to us despite our doubts. Eostara, the German goddess for whom the holiday is named, calls to us to reawaken even though we are not literally asleep. Maybe we cannot believe in physically rising through the dead, but at this time of year we see signs of new beginnings. Poetry, metaphors, of rebirth seem to be the only way to describe what we feel happening on the planet, and sometimes in our lives at this time, as well. We have a bit more energy, a bit more hope. We look forward to summer plans, smoother travel experiences, gatherings in the long light evenings. We can feel, as e.e. cummings, does, that: “now the ears of my ears awake and now the eyes of my eyes are opened”

Of course this is just metaphor, just myth, Reverend Ungar says. “There isn’t a real Eostara, any more than there is a real Persephone returned from the underworld whose joyful mother Demeter gives us spring in jubilation at her daughter’s return. It’s just a story made up by people who didn’t have a sophisticated enough understanding of biology to really grasp the truth of how seeds come alive into plants and trees open up out of their winter dormancy... We live, not in the ancient, circular world of myth, but in the linear world of history, of events unfolding over time.”

And yet, and yet, “Spring is a season which demands that we operate by faith - not faith as a passive acceptance, simply giving into things as they are, but rather faith as the ability to see beyond what is immediately present, the courage to trust in the possibility of new life and to make that new life real.”

Jo-Anne Elder-Gomes



Love and Justice

On Sunday, April 19, you are invited to view “Marching in the Arc of Justice,” a video of Reverend Mark Morrison-Reed’s talk at the Selma commemoration. Following the film, I will be leading Part I of a two-part workshop (Part II will be held in May) called “Love and Justice.”

The focus of the workshop will be rooted in a quotation by Reverend Morrison-Reed (whom some of us know as former president of the Canadian Unitarian Council, and a retired minister at Toronto First Unitarian. He has also written books on Selma and on the history of diversity in the Unitarian Universalist movement. During his talk, Reverend Morrison-Reed asked some core questions: “With whom are you in relationship? Or what is in the way of you making that relationship? With whom are you in relationship, a relationship that would compel you to take risk?”

In our workshops with Reverend Linda Thomson and Reverend Dave Hutchinson this year, we have been exploring healthy congregations and right relationships. Reverend Morrison-Reed’s talk emphasizes, once more, that our relationship with others, whether different from us or role models, influence our vision of the world and what is possible. It is our relationships that compel us to act, that transform us as individuals, and lead us to bend the arc of our lives towards justice in the world.

Part I of the workshop will look at the legacy of Selma, and explore the way Unitarian Universalists have built social justice upon the foundation of relationship. Part II will continue the exploration of how U*Us can build loving and compassionate relationships on the foundations of peace and justice, and on how we can truly value the inherent worth and dignity of all people.

We will meet April 19 at about 4:00, and start the video at 4:30. Following the video (which lasts about 50 minutes) we will break for supper; we’ll bring pizza, and I hope others will bring food to share. We’ll resume promptly at 6 for the workshop. If you would like to watch the video at home and join us for the workshop, that’s fine; you’ll find the video here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0WD5TkWP8GE>

Jo-Anne Elder-Gomes



Thoughts to Share

from Rev. David Hutchinson's
service and workshop
March 29 2015

Rev. David Hutchinson began his talk by reading the poem "The Guest House" by Jelaluddin Rumi, (translated by Coleman Barks)

This being human is a guest house.
Every morning a new arrival.
A joy, a depression, a meanness,
some momentary awareness comes as an unexpected
visitor.
Welcome and entertain them all!
Even if they are a crowd of sorrows,
who violently sweep your house empty of its furniture,
still, treat each guest honourably.
He may be clearing you out for some new delight.
The dark thought, the shame, the malice.
Meet them at the door laughing and invite them in.
Be grateful for whatever comes,
because each has been sent as a guide from beyond.

Dave shared with the kids in all of us his "Easy button" with its 5 directions for use:

- 1) identify the situation
- 2) press the easy button "Well that was easy"
- 3) reassess the message
- 4) smile and get on with your day
- 5) repeat the first four steps as often as necessary!

The challenge is to avoid the avoidance of bad stuff, not to freeze up, but rather to start working on it, to do your best, and let the rest take care of itself. Try to find others who will help, for trouble shared is trouble halved, while joy shared is joy doubled. Sometimes the hardest part is to recognize that we may not always have the best take on whatever is going wrong. Rev. Dave drew on the parable of the husband who wanted to test how hard-of-hearing his wife had become. Four times he asked the question "What's for dinner?", each time moving closer as he heard no reply, until finally he was right behind her. She replied in exasperation "For the fourth time, I'm telling you it's chicken". Dave also quoted extensively from the book by Shawn Achor (2010) "The Happiness Advantage: The Seven Principles of Positive Psychology that Fuels Success in Performance at Work" The essential message is that we need a ratio of positive to negative feedback of about 3:1 to counter the debilitating effects of negative feedback and move forward. Criticism and negative feedback is inevitable and necessary at times, but groups work way better when negativity is embedded in a broader atmosphere of affirmative recognition.

The four points that Rev. Dave drew from the book echoes the four agreements from Don Miguel Ruiz:

- Offer as high a ratio of positive reinforcement as you can before focussing on retraining and improvement.
- Self-reinforcement. Draw on basic self-esteem from your own experience and spiritual practice to create a stable core in a spinning world
- Group reinforcement. Accept and encourage spiritual growth in others. This is ultimately the primary reason why people come to Unitarians - to find support from others who both listen, and offer support.
- Universal reinforcement. Connect with the interrelated whole - nature, the planet from which you receive support with every step you take, and breathe in the sky that sustains us.

In evaluating a Unitarian service, the coffee-hour afterwards is equally as important as the service itself, with the conversation, the food, the networking, the sharing and connection. This is what keep us coming back. Each of us is a lonely soul on a journey. Holding in common something with another soul is precious. It involves love, respect, patience, commitment to work together to improve ourselves in the world, and recognition that we cannot do something alone as well as we can do it with another. In conclusion, Rev. Dave drew on two poems from Billy Collins - one a parable of how to respond to a neighbour's incessantly-barking dog, by playing a Beethoven orchestral piece until the dog's barking merges into the oboe section in the orchestra of life. Rev. Dave's concluding message: You cannot over-compliment another, but you can overlook and under-appreciate another. Work with both - there will be plenty of each, but strive to keep the ratio of positive to negative feedback about 3;1 or better.

In the following Workshop Rev. Dave returned to the theme of buoyancy, or bouncing back, and the importance of regularly checking in to evaluate the ratio of positivity in group activities.

He shared the "Bulletin Blurb" or Mission Statement from Houlton, Maine congregation, which reads as follows: We welcome and celebrate the participation of all people in the full life and ministry of our liberal congregation, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, family configuration, sex, race, ethnicity, past religious affiliation, physical circumstances or financial well being. We value and promote diversity as we encourage spiritual and intellectual growth in every individual. You are welcome here. Come again and often!

Houlton's welcoming letter to new members: We would like to welcome you as a member of our religious community. This is not a perfect place, but we're trying to make it a good place to be. We all need the consistent love and support that we can offer to each other.

The central emphasis of the message is inclusion, well be-

yond the regular meaning of a 'welcoming congregation'. We are a volunteer congregation, in which all contributions are equally important - financial, social, spiritual. Above all, we need to covenant together to create a safe place. This involves agreements to be mindful of our speech, to strive to be in right relations with each other in meetings, to be aware and conscious of others in the group, to recognize when negative relationships are happening and not to let fear or avoidance shut down the meeting, but rather to strive to ride with it, to recognize negative emotions and help to shift and direct it in more positive ways. If no one is willing to do this work, then the group is doomed. If one or more of us is willing to shift and re-direct negative energy, we can move forward.

People join Unitarians not because of our website, or the quality of entertainment we can offer. They seek connection to people, a sense of a welcoming group, a functional family, a supportive and yet challenging religious community. People come to be in relationship with others, to find love and justice. The Covenant IS relationship. That is what it means - to be in right relationship with each other. No one is expendable. All of us have the need to feel part of a community, to feel a sense of being involved, of our presence being valued.

Rev. Dave elaborated on four warning signs of a Fellowship that is not functioning well - fragmentation, fatigue, disillusionment, irrelevancy. Nagging questions come up: Why are we doing this? When everyone has an opinion and we try to listen to everything and do too much, people start to feel classic burnout. Frustration and confusion follow, and a sense that maybe what we are doing isn't worth the time and effort. Once we cross this line we feel increasingly that we don't need this.. We stop talking and listening to each other, and the temptation to give up, to walk away becomes stronger. Important check points to consider in response to these warning signs - sustainability, selectivity, integration and sanctuary. Take in and honour all the ideas, but select carefully among them, with respect to the community's collective resources and strengths, Come together to review what we can reasonably do so that we don't exhaust the group. Taking a summer recess can rejuvenate everyone, with renewed sense of anticipation about in-gathering, coming back. Providing sanctuary is the most important principle of all - that we establish and sustain a safe and trusting environment in which to explore our selves and others in a spiritual community. Sanctuary involves covenant to support each other, to be ready to help when individuals are expressing frustration, fatigue, disillusionment, to find ways to work on a problem together.

This is not easy to do. In a Fellowship like ours we don't have a go-to person like a minister to take charge for us, but then again, we have managed most of our 50+ years as a lay-led fellowship. We work on a different model. The overriding fourth principle is to always do your best,

under the circumstances at hand. Then you will avoid self-judgment, self-abuse and regret. As a Fellowship, we are not results-driven. What matters most are the relationships we have with each other.

Summary written up by
Sylvia Hale



Celebration of Faith in Diversity

Editor's note: The Celebration of Faith in Diversity at STU, organized by Dr. Alexandra Bain's religious studies students, was held on Sunday, March 29. Speaking on behalf of the Unitarian Fellowship of Fredericton was Tony Fitzgerald, one of the congregation's Lay Chaplains. Several people suggested that the text of that presentation be printed in Touchstone, and so it follows:

Good afternoon, I am Tony Fitzgerald and I am a Lay Chaplain with the Unitarian Fellowship of Fredericton.

During the planning phase for today's event, we were all asked whether the topic of hospitality would be one with which the individual faith groups could work. Without much thought, I said "sure". After all, Unitarians often joke that the coffee hour which follows the service is the most important part of the service, that it's their main reason for coming. As in any joke, there's a certain truth to it. The coffee hour is the best time to extend our hospitality to visitors and new comers, to get to know them and for them to learn about us.

The "hospitality" committee which coordinates the coffee hour and other social functions is one of the more important committees.

The promotional material for today's session indicated that the faith groups would be presenting songs and dance typical of each faith regarding hospitality. I couldn't find much with respect to dance but Unitarians do love to engage in self-mockery lest we get too full of ourselves, so in tribute to our hospitality committee and with apologies to the Salvation Army, here is:

Sung to the tune of "Holy, Holy, Holy"

Coffee, Coffee, Coffee,
Praise the strength of coffee.
Early in the morn we rise with thoughts of thee.
Served fresh or reheated,
Dark by thee defeated,
Brewed black by perk or drip or instantly.

Though all else we scoff we
Come to church for coffee;
If we're late to congregate, we come in time for thee.
Coffee our one ritual,
Drinking it habitual,

Brewed black by perk or drip or instantly.

Coffee the communion
Of our Uni-Union,
Symbol of our sacred ground, our one necessity.
Feel the holy power
At our coffee hour,
Brewed black by perk or drip or instantly.

Many a morning, I remember grabbing my books and rushing off to school as the strains of another song with the same music came over the radio from CFNB.

I would like to make a point of clarification. While I and most members of the Fredericton Fellowship refer to ourselves as Unitarians, in the 1960s, the Unitarian and Universalist churches in North America realized that we had more in common than in dispute and merged. Strictly speaking, we are all Unitarian/Universalists, or U.U.s. For old time's sake, many of us will fall back to self-referencing as Unitarian or Universalist depending on which theology we are tending to favour at the moment.

Both Unitarian and Universalist theologies had Christian roots although they were both considered to be separate and distinct heresies of Christianity. But, with those roots, we draw upon the bible of the Abrahamic religions as one of our "sources". While Unitarians reject the divinity of Jesus Christ, Peace be upon him, we do respect him as a wise rabbi from whose example and teachings, much may be learned. The bible has many references to hospitality, and I want to cite a couple, starting with Luke 14:12-14

Then said he also to him that bade him, When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbours; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompence be made thee. But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.

and Matthew 25:34-40 is an almost identical sentiment while Hebrews 13:2 very succinctly says

Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

The general message is that one should be hospitable especially to strangers or the misfortunate because you will be rewarded in the afterlife. Indeed, the offence for which Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed was in not showing hospitality to two strangers, who just happened to be angels in disguise.

Modern Unitarianism in North America does not impose a requisite set of beliefs on its congregants. In fact, a significant number of practising Unitarian/Universalists are avowed atheists. For us, reward in an afterlife about which we either have serious doubts or which we reject outright is little incentive to practise hospitality, nor anything else, for that matter.

So, why do we do it?

The central pillar, if such there be, in Unitarian/Universalism is probably the seven principles. Last year, our topic was neighbours rather than hospitality and I was able to show how each of the seven principles could be shown to bear upon how we define and are to treat neighbours. I believe that the first two principles also bear on hospitality.

We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association and the Canadian Unitarian Council, covenant to affirm and promote:

1. The inherent worth and dignity of every person

This is our first principle. Every person, not just other Unitarians, or other Canadians or other Caucasians. Inclusive regardless of gender, sexual orientation, race or any of the other arbitrary criteria we use to separate us from "them", our clan from various neighbouring clans. One way to acknowledge that inherent worth and dignity is to show strangers and the misfortunate the same hospitality which we extend to the learned and powerful or just plain friends.

2. Justice, equity and compassion in human relations

Having affirmed that every person has inherent worth and dignity, we express the ideal that our relations with these persons are to be characterized by justice, equity and compassion as we hope that others would be just, equitable and compassionate in their relations with one another.

While many Unitarian/Universalists do look to the principles as guides in right relationships and worthy ideals, strictly speaking, the principles are affirmed by the member **congregations** of the Canadian Unitarian Council and the sister US organization, the Unitarian Universalist Association. There is no explicit requirement for congregants to take them as commandments. So the principles give us institutional hospitality.

Showing hospitality is, moreover, simple plain good business sense from the point of view of the institution. People will be more likely to return to a place where they have had fun, have had their opinions listened to with respect and been treated with respect while alternate and possibly contrary views are presented for consideration.

In regional and national Unitarian*Universalist gatherings one often sees workshops with titles along the lines of "En-

couraging Repeat Customers”. Let’s say a person whose curiosity has gotten the better of them has decided to come and see what these Unitarians are about. What strategies can a congregation adopt so that this newcomer feels encouraged to come again, What common mistakes that discourage repeat visits should be avoided. Unitarian congregations are often small and without regular professional ministerial services so it is, sadly, the case that we often make mistakes. We’re human.

But, that’s why we attend such workshops. We learn and try to put into practice what successful congregations have found. Make the visitor feel welcome. Have a greeter who will recognize that the visitor is not a regular and who will welcome them, show them where the washrooms are located. If the visitor has children, the greeter can introduce them to the children’s religious education facilitator and explain that children are welcome in the service but are encouraged to go with the other children to activities more suited to their ages after the “story for all ages” part of the service. The parents are encouraged to ask questions of the facilitator about what the children will be doing. The greeter can show the visitors to a seat in the sanctuary and sit them near congregants who the greeter knows are sufficiently extrovert to be welcoming. After the service, these new neighbours or the greeter again, make sure the visitors get to where hospitality in the form of coffee and sweets are being served. Ideally, the people who were sitting near the visitors have gleaned from conversation a little of the interests of the visitors and can introduce them to other congregants who have similar interests.

The workshops also tell us to encourage congregants to wear their name badges. Yes, we know one another’s names, however, visitors do not. Name badges make good aids in remembering names and it’s just a simple courtesy to visitors who would otherwise be overwhelmed by all the new names. It follows that there is a supply of blank name badges at the entrance for visitors to make their own tags.

This congregational aspect of hospitality is a team exercise. As in any team effort, the different members of the team bring different talents. The extrovert who easily welcomes the stranger, the introvert who in smaller gatherings may bring perception and introspection that delights.

The Fredericton congregation has completed the “Welcoming Congregation” programme to become, officially, a Welcoming Congregation. This is a program endorsed by our national organization, the Canadian Unitarian Council, and the essence of it is that welcoming congregations make an especial effort to extend hospitality to members of the Gay, Lesbian, Bi-sexual and “Trans” communities. We are particularly mindful of our obligation of hospitality to this group because these people have been egregiously treated by religions of the Abrahamic grouping. Since Unitarianism and Universalism both trace their roots to Christianity, we share in this guilt. The Welcoming Congregation

programme is a small effort to demonstrate contrition, to extend hospitality to a group still hated and persecuted by so many people in so many places.

Individual hospitality is a joyous chance to enjoy one another’s company at a more intimate level. Unitarians take pride in embracing and trying to understand diversity. We understand that not everyone is comfortable entertaining even friends, let alone strangers. As a religion, Unitarianism does not command behaviour from its congregants, rather, it encourages participation as one is willing and able.

We believe that “right behaviour” is its own reward. The evolution of homo sapiens into a social animal has resulted in a brain in which social behaviour results in the production of neuro-chemicals which activate the reward centres of the brain. As in any characteristic resulting from evolution, there is a lot of diversity. Diversity is the fuel that powers the engine of natural selection. In short, some people are a lot better at social interactions than others and we accept that.

In conclusion I believe that extending hospitality to and accepting hospitality from others, especially strangers is central to human relationships and human relationships are core to the Unitarian faith.

I thank all for your attention and patience.

Blessèd Be ... Namasté



Basic Training for Lay Chaplains Designing and Leading Rites of Passage

May 14 - 15, Ottawa

The “Basics” workshop is for those considering Lay Chaplaincy, recently appointed Lay Chaplains and members of a congregation’s Lay Chaplaincy committee. It provides basic guidelines on the management of a congregation’s Lay Chaplaincy program and the training new Lay Chaplains need to begin their work.

This will be the only offering of “Designing and Leading Rites of Passage: Basic Training for Lay Chaplains” in the Central and Eastern Regions for 2015!

Facilitated by: Rev. Carole Martignacco

Cost: \$95 (Includes: lunches for both days are included; accommodations are not – the Algonquin residence offers a 2-bedroom suite with kitchenette and bathroom for \$89/night).

Registration: now open. *Editor’s note: if anyone is interested, I can forward the CUC newsletter with links to registration information.*



The CUC is Moving!

The CUC's lease on our current main office space is ending and we have decided to move to a new location. We are joining the community at Centre for Social Innovation. Please make the appropriate change – as of April 1, 2015, the new mailing address is:

Canadian Unitarian Council @ Centre for Social Innovation

215 Spadina Avenue - Suite 400, Toronto, ON M5T 2C7.

Phone numbers and emails remain the same. Any mail addressed to our old location will automatically be forwarded to our new offices for a 4 month period.

Please note that the CUC office won't be responding to phone calls or inquiries from Thursday, Apr 17 – Tuesday, Apr 21 to facilitate our move



Thanks and Love

Dear Community of George and Allison, Allison here, and the rest of the family, too,

Thanking you for your persistent and oh so useful support over George's illness and death. You were immediately kind in so many ways, each eMail, card, and phone call a warm breath over our frantic hearts. I (we) may not be aware enough to mention every act, but each has touched us, reminding us that community is the smallest unit of health.

For the countless offers of help, each one held close to our hearts, waiting for the perfect errand to match your



generosity, thank you.

For the flowers that surprised and touched at each delivery, and for weeks afterwards, thank you.

For the hours spent fiddling with technology in order to load the smart phone with Mozart and all Scottish country dances so George could be given the comfort of music during what were to become his final days, thank you to a master of the electronic gadget. (Who is Mark Kunkel, Rhonda's husband, in case any of you are in need of his skill.)

For the offers of beds and a place to go as family arrived in its unruly numbers, thank you. And though we decided in the end just to squish together in this big house, feeling your welcoming gestures were a comfort.

For the bedding you brought over, crucial to the serenity of the whole house during the visit, thank you so much! We had: the fun of pumping up the air mattresses, one of them repeatedly, and I hope it was not us who made the little hole; the fun of using the ping pong table, sheets, blankets, and sleeping bags, for a fort; and the great calm beauty of four grandchildren sleeping soundly every night—that is amazing! (George would have loved to have seen that.)

For the delicious food you delivered, the freezer pretty well full to bursting at the height of your generosity, thank you. (Some of your food is still feeding Iain and me, yum.)

For the book of poetry, brilliantly chosen to touch and soothe—how could you know?—thank you.

And so, Iain, Janet, Heather, Tom, Robyn, Andrew, Catie, Nick, Libby, and I, thank you all, for this 'down-filled comforter of a community' that has kept and keeps our hearts warm, even as we lose our great, lovely, and ever-dancing George to memory and the universe.

Love,

Allison (for Iain, Janet, Robyn, Andrew, Heather, Tom, Catie, Nick, and Libby) (and with George nearby)

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