



The Newsletter of the Unitarian Fellowship of Fredericton

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Sunday Service 11 a.m.

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Worship Services - Calendar

Please note that our Sunday Services now begin at 10:30am, and a children's program is available at the same time. All are welcome!

November Theme: Covenant

Nov. 27: Another Perspective on Covenant. We are rightfully proud of the good work we did together towards building a Covenant of Right Relations last week. On Sunday, Sheila Moore and Heather Lunerigan will be presenting another view of covenantal relations by reading a sermon by Rev. Millie Rochester (former minister of the UU Church of Winnipeg).

December Theme: Expectation

Dec. 4: Expectation. We will be launching our version of "electronic circuit ministry" by streaming a service from the Universalist Unitarian Church of Halifax. Reverend Norm Horofker will be leading a service,

including story and hymns, on the theme of Expectation. There will be an opportunity for Fredericton participants to share announcements and Joys and Sorrows as usual.

Dec. 11: Multifaith Celebration. Many religions and cultures celebrate the loss and the return of light during the winter season. We will read words and stories from many traditions that remind us the light we seek is the light we share with people of many faiths.

Dec. 18: Join us for our well-loved holiday music service. Margaret Fitzgerald will lead and accompany us as we sing carols, hymns, and popular Christmas and holiday songs. The Children's Christmas party will be held at the same time.

Wednesday, December 21, 7pm: This annual service is for those who have tough times with the Holidays or want to share a time of sacred reflection in the midst of the social and commercial pressures of the season. We acknowledge that not everyone has joyful memories from childhood, and that others are mourning the loss of loved ones or of parts of their lives which they value. This is a quiet service of reading, reflection and candle lighting. We make room to touch and honour the pain that so many feel, and offer hope of finding light and warmth in the darkest night of the year.

Dec. 25: Please note that there will be **no** Sunday Service on December 25.

Jan. 1: New Year's Day Open House. Sheila Moore will be hosting an Open House at the Fellowship on Sunday morning. Enjoy a friendly, informal social time to welcome in the New Year. All are welcome, so invite your friends and family.



RE Children's Program December

Unitarian Fellowship of Fredericton 10:30 a.m.
Naomi Frooman, Facilitator

December 4th UU Principal #3: "We are free to learn together." The children will be discussing the third UU

principal and creating activities for us to do that relate to the theme.

December 11th LGBTQ + : As Unitarians we believe that everyone is important and accept them no matter who they are. The children will be learning about the LGBTQ+ community. Leaders: Naomi Frooman and guest speaker Zachary Robichaud.

December 18th UU Holiday Party: At the children's party there will be games, snacks, and plenty of holiday activities!



Stewardship Campaign Up-Date

We are nearing the end of our Stewardship/Pledge Campaign for 2017. December 4th is the planned conclusion for the campaign, but that does not mean that you cannot send in a pledge or a donation after that date. The Fellowship welcomes your financial support at any time !

This year members of our committee have contacted most of you – asking if you would like to meet individually for a conversation about how you are feeling about our Fellowship; is it a place of comfort and nurturing, is it meeting your spiritual needs? Thank you to those who have met with us either by phone, over coffee, or in your homes. It has been a rewarding experience with useful information shared.

Many of you have returned your pledge forms and we thank you. Many of you have sent in donations and we thank you. The Board needs to have an idea of expected financial support in order to develop the budget which will be presented for approval in the new year.

Sheila Moore



Reflections on our Monthly Theme: Expectation

When I hear the word expectation at this time of year, it has two rather contradictory meanings. The first is the idea of Advent, a time of preparation for new things that Rev. Herndon describes below. The second is the expectations from the outside that we have let into our lives. Reflections on our Monthly Theme: Expectation

When I hear the word expectation at this time of year, it has two rather contradictory meanings. The first is the idea of Advent, a time of preparation for new things that Rev. Herndon describes below. The second is the expectations from the outside that we have let into our lives.

I relate Advent to the winter Solstice; it is an opportunity

to go deeply into myself, to retreat or hibernate. “Advent, which encompasses the four Sundays before Christmas, is a season rather than a specific moment or a particular day; a mood rather than a story or a doctrine; a time of expectation and preparation rather than fulfillment.” Rev. Dr. David Herndon, First UU Church of Pittsburgh. Winter is a time of peaceful reflection, and this year, for which my theme is “Deepening,” it will lead me through the “spiritual inventory” I plan to do as an exercise of atonement and learning.

I have included a Facebook post on the other side of holiday expectations elsewhere in this issue. The sense of being burdened by expectations at this time of year can lead to overwhelming guilt and resentment. When I give communication classes, I note that neither of these feelings are true “gut” or primary feelings. They proceed through a series of cognitive acrobatics that come from inside. We feel disappointment and our mind reacts by judging us or those around us. Denial and blame go together, as Margaret Trudeau noted in her talk at the Wu Centre on November 23, and are part of distorted or unhealthy thinking. It is easy to blame others for our unreasonable expectations of ourselves, and obviously a society where advertising and messages about consumerism are everywhere, it is hard to sort through and understand what we ourselves and what the people we love are hoping to do and have during the season. “Buy Nothing Day” is celebrated on Black Friday, which has just passed. As well as avoiding unnecessary purchases that day, we can reduce our consumption and waste throughout the season by replacing gifts of “things” with shared experiences. New traditions can also help us to lower our expectations of what “must” be done during the winter holidays. Because we are aware of the tensions caused by the multiple families each of us belong to, our family celebrates “Second Christmas”: children, partners, grandchildren get together (usually after Christmas, but this year before!), take out Chinese food, and gather at my son and daughter-in-laws house to open Secret Santa presents and other small gifts.

Whatever we choose to do or not do during the season, we have to be gentle with ourselves. It is so easy to think we don't and can't live up to the expectations others have of us. Practising radical acceptance of ourselves and our lives may lead us to an understanding that we are good and worthy human beings, designed for joy and love.

(Jo-Anne)

“We all know the common mantra: “You get what you expect.” That's part of what it means to be a people of expectation from an UU perspective. We UUs believe that human beings have tremendous power to shape and create their own experience. So if you expect people to be good, you will discover and notice goodness. If you believe life is on your side, you'll see opportunities unfold over and over again. We like this way of relating to expectation because it reminds us we have control. It's about noticing

we have options. It's about taking hold of the situation and putting our stamp on it.

And yet, sometimes holding too tightly to our desired expectations leaves us blind. Sometimes getting what we expect leads to expecting to always get what we want, and then we are left gasping when we don't! Being a people of expectation is also about realizing that our human control is limited. It means asking ourselves, "Are you willing to let go of expectation and be led by the Unknown?" Are we willing to dance in the rain when we expected sun? Can we welcome the stray dogs that amble onto the stage when we're waiting for applause? Letting go of expectations is good for the soul!

Another way to look at it is through the lens of trust. Do you trust that this wildly unpredictable life of ours won't lead you astray? When your expectations get turned on their head, do you see that as a threat or do you have the faith to live into it?"

(from Soul Matters, December 2015)

Spiritual Exploration:

Listen to this podcast of a sermon by Reverend Roger Jones, of the UU Society of Sacramento. So much happens in December, so much to look forward to-or so much to get through. Can you wait? What if waiting itself might be an authentic spiritual experience?

[http://www.uuss.org/sermon/
the-spirituality-of-expectation-what-are-
you-waiting-for/](http://www.uuss.org/sermon/the-spirituality-of-expectation-what-are-you-waiting-for/)

It is often hard to wait for something we want to happen. When waiting is a challenge, what is happening in your mind and heart? How can we let go of our impatience to do something rather than sit with a feeling or a situation? When has waiting been an opportunity to open yourself up to spiritual possibilities?



Principles and Promises:

Don't Expect Perfection, Hope for Forgiveness

Jo-Anne Elder-Gomes

"This is who I am, and this is who you are and I've been wrong and you've been wrong and look how perfectly human we both are."

Anne Lamott

"The First Principle is really hard. It's not a get-out-of-jail-free card. It's not an affirmation that all people are "good." But it's a call to make the world better by treating everyone with respect and doing your best to get others to do likewise, for the sake of all of us."

"Our Inherently Difficult First Principle,"
delivered by David M. Sargent
at Utah Valley Unitarian Universalists,
Springville, Utah.

"What Unitarians have always believed is that people have a spark of the divine within them and that the purpose of religion is to grow that spark and for our lives to grow in love and to love in ever-expanding circles. But we also must realize, if we're going to be honest with ourselves and honest with history, that there are lots of people who don't do that, for lots of different reasons... And a faith that doesn't face up to that is ultimately a faith that's going to let you down... We can be idealistic about the potential of the human being, its divine origins and its potential to grow and to love in ever-expanding circles, but we also need to realize that human beings can be corrupted too, for lots of different reasons. And so, I would still say that... a person who has committed great evil is a person who still as a human being has inherent worth and has dignity, as a human being, which is in no way condoning what they have done as a human being and the acts that they have committed."

Rev. Robert Hardies
of All Souls Church, Unitarian
in Washington, DC

"Come, come, whoever you are. Wanderer, worshiper, lover of leaving. It doesn't matter. Ours is not a caravan of despair. Come, even if you have broken your vows a thousand times. Come, yet again, come, come."

Rumi

"Every year on the Sunday nearest to Yom Kippur I preach on forgiveness and reconciliation. Our religion and the Jewish religion are very similar at root. We draw from the ethical and justice-oriented teachings of the prophets and the Hebrew Scriptures, just as Jesus did. Above all we share a sense that the purpose of faith is tikkun olam, the repair of the world."

"Though You May Have Broken Your Vows,"
by Rev. Thomas Perchlik,
First Unitarian Church of Saint Louis.

"The path to deeper spirituality begins in the experience of promises failed, covenant broken, hope suppressed. It begins with disillusionment, impasse, and grief. And it passes through the fire to a new revelation. This is the path we need to follow to find a new heart."

Reverend Dr. Rebecca Parker

"...We Unitarian Universalists have promised each other—have covenanted—to stay in relationship and work on loving each other even when we don't like each other very much. I'm sorry to break this to you folks new to Unitarian Universalism, but we come to this community, not to find people we love, but to love the people who are here. We are here—in this place—at this time—to love the people who are here. This is the essence of covenant."

In this close relationship, we will eventually and inevitably have disagreements and say things that wound. None of us are exempt from hurting and being hurt. That's why love means ALWAYS having to say you're sorry; not from a stance of groveling, but from an authentic attitude of humility and a willingness to restore right relations ... to mend fences."

"I'm Sorry,"
by Rev. Marni Harmony

(Excerpt, full text at
[http://www.uutarpon.org/
uutarpon_sermon_march06.htm](http://www.uutarpon.org/uutarpon_sermon_march06.htm))

And in the end, we are all just human. Both flawed and beautiful."

Linda Fliss



RE Children's Christmas Party

December 18th, 2016 at 10:30 a.m.
Unitarian Fellowship – 874 York Street

Naomi Frooman, our facilitator, and Haifa Miller will welcome the children to a Christmas Party at the Unitarian Fellowship on December 18th. Please bring your children and grandchildren, great nephews and nieces and come celebrate with us. The event will take place upstairs in the children's room during the Sunday Service. There will be games, snacks, and surprises. See you at the party!



Covenant Workshop with Linda Thompson

Linda Thompson, CUC Congregational Development person for Central & Eastern Regions, spent the weekend of Nov. 19th and 20th with us. She is a person with many skills and we benefited greatly having her lead us in our efforts to develop a Covenant of Right Relations for our Fellowship. In case you've forgotten, a covenant is a promise, or more precisely, a statement describing the ideals of relationship the members of our community have agreed to aspire to live up to. It is a commitment that can maintain appreciation and affection even in disagreement and conflict. It means everyone can think differently and still work together.

The sixteen members and friends who attended shared their thoughts, feelings, ideas and opinions as we developed a framework for our Covenant.

We read some hand-out material and had discussions about the implicit and explicit behaviour expectations in our congregation. We talked about how we want to be

together as a community of loving and caring individuals.

Much work is yet to be done in the process of word-smithing the document using the suggestions and ideas from the workshop. This will become a living and evolving covenant.

Joan Brewer, Sheila Moore, Najat Abdou-McFarland and Gail Moore have agreed to work on the first draft. The draft will go to the Board and then, if accepted by the Board, will go to the membership for their input.

Joan Brewer and Sheila Moore



Third Thursday

On the third Thursday evening of every month, the UFF present a movie, documentary, or lecture which is followed by a discussion. This month, we invite you to watch a presentation of the Messiah.

For more than 35 years, the acclaimed Toronto-based Baroque Orchestra and Chamber Choir "TafelMusik" has produced Handel's famous work "The Messiah" during the Christmas season. A special highlight of the season is the annual "Sing Along Messiah" held at Massey Hall in Toronto. The conductor of TafelMusik, Ivars Taurins, appears on stage dressed as Handel, and speaks to the audience before and during the performance. This year, the UFF will present a DVD performance of the 2010 Sing Along Messiah at 7 pm on Thursday December 15. All are welcome. There will be warm cider and holiday cookies and the performance is suitable for all ages. There is no charge, but donations are gratefully accepted.



Women's Monthly Pot Luck

The Unitarian Fellowship women's pot luck is usually held on the fourth Friday of each month. In December that falls on December 23rd. We will not have a gathering on the 23rd, but if we decide to have one on the 30th I will make sure people are made aware through the email distribution list and the Sunday bulletin. For further information, contact Joan Brewer at jebrewer@rogers.com



The Fredericton Timebank

Timebanking is in some ways an old concept. It is similar to bartering, but with an emphasis on time spent. Essentially it is exchanging one hour of one's own time with one hour of another one's time. In this system all hours

of time are valued the same. The germ of the idea for a timebank originated with Edgar Cahn, a civil rights lawyer and speech writer for Robert Kennedy. He felt people who were marginalized in society such as the unemployed, youth, and people on social assistance, needed to be approached differently. Instead of viewing them as people with deficits, he articulated that these people should be seen as having assets. He asked how can we encourage the skills and strengths of these people and show they have something to contribute to society and to community.

The Fredericton Timebank is an initiative of a few social work students at St. Thomas. Timebanking is now an active program in multiple US cities that works outside the mainstream economy. If you are interested in joining the timebank visit and join Timebank Fredericton at <https://tbfredericton.timebanks.org/>



All-Ages Multifaith Art Workshop

Would you like to make crafts and ornaments together? Would you like to learn a bit about the many Holy Days and holidays celebrated during the winter? Do you want to share your family or cultural traditions? Would you like to help decorate the tree at the Fellowship? We are inviting all interested children, youth, and adults to a Multifaith Art Workshop on December 10, 2016, at the Fellowship. The workshop is organized and hosted by our youth and young adult group have been learning about world religions. We will be making tree ornaments and images celebrating the many celebrations of light which take place during the winter in faith groups around the world. The tree will be decorated and the artwork will be displayed at the Fellowship for the December 11 holiday service.

Please join us in the Children's (RE) room upstairs on December 10 from 1:00 to 3:00 pm. We will have supplies, stories, and snacks for you to enjoy!

Youth and Young Adults are meeting every Wednesday until December 14 (and probably in the new year as well) to do the UUA's Building Bridges curriculum. Since time and location occasionally changes, please join the UFF Youth Group on Facebook or send Anneke a Facebook message if you would like to attend.



Memorial Tree Lighting

McAdam's Funeral Home will be holding their annual Memorial Tree Lighting service, offering comfort and remembrance for those who will be missing a loved one this

Christmas. There are two services, one in Oromocto Tues., Dec 6 at 7 pm, in the chapel of the funeral home at 108 Winnebago St, and one in Fredericton on Wed., Dec 7 at 7 pm in the chapel of the funeral home at 160 York St.

All those remembering a loved one may join the service. You can also participate by placing a loved one's name on their Honour Roll and support the food bank by bringing in a donation of non-perishable food items.

For more information contact 357-5100 or 458-9170.



Letter to Prime Minister from CUC

The text of a letter sent to the Prime Minister from the CUC follows:

September 24, 2016

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau
Prime Minister of Canada
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A2
Dear Prime Minister,

As official representatives of the Canadian Unitarian Council, we are writing to voice our collective concern regarding your government's recent action at the Geneva Conference on Disarmament that had Canada voting against starting negotiations to ban nuclear weapons.

Our Unitarian Universalist principles call us to uphold the inherent worth and dignity of all peoples, and to work for justice, equity and compassion in human relations. Specifically, one of our peace resolutions passed in 2004 calls for the reduction of the immediate danger posed by nuclear weapons and urgent action on concrete steps for the abolition of nuclear weapons.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon has stated, "The consequences of any further use of nuclear weapons, whether intentional or by mistake, would be horrific. When it comes to our common objective of nuclear disarmament, we must not delay — we must act now." There are 22,000 nuclear weapons in the world, with several thousand on alert, capable of being used in under thirty minutes. The risk of one of these weapons being detonated is too high.

We urge you to take a strong position against the proliferation of nuclear weapons at the U.N. General Assembly in October by supporting the resolution establishing a negotiating process that will lead to the abolition of nuclear weapons.

Sincerely, Canadian Unitarian Council National Voice Team



CUC Call for Nominations 2017

Board of Trustees & Nominating Committee

Would you like to make a difference to Unitarian Universalists in Canada? Do you have an enthusiasm for the Unitarian Universalist faith? Our Canadian Unitarian Council is an intentional community of Unitarian Universalist congregations which jointly work to create connections, to be inspired, and to have a national voice.

One of the ways to make a difference to the Canadian Unitarian Council is by serving on the CUC Board of Trustees or the CUC Nominating Committee. The CUC's Nominating Committee is inviting expressions of interest from or on behalf of individuals in congregations who are interested in serving on the CUC Board or Nominating Committee beginning in May 2017. By encouraging diversity on the board and nominating committee, we are hoping to balance youthful perspectives with senior experience in leadership.

Please circulate the attached Call for Nominations to your congregation. Additional information is available by contacting the Nominating Committee.

Sincerely,



Joanne Green, Chair
CUC Nominating Committee
nominations@cuc.ca



Holiday Expectations

(I've copied this from a Facebook note by Glennon Doyle Melton. We can substitute any holiday we celebrate for (American) Thanksgiving, and I think it is a good lesson for us. It fits well with our December theme of Expectation. - Jo-Anne)

It's Thanksgiving Eve! It's the day that is MORE IMPORTANT THAN TOMORROW BECAUSE it's the day we set our THANKSGIVING EXPECTATIONS!!!

IT'LL BE LIKE THIS!: Tomorrow will be peaceful and everyone will gaze lovingly at each other in cozy precious sweaters and chuckle at witty banter while the fire crackles and Uncle Joe decides against talking politics and Aunt Bertha remains sober and vertical and organic Cousin Sarah eats the damn stuffing and Brother Tom puts it all behind him and just shows up and Lisa and Karen bury the hatchet and baste the turkey together and your mother-in-law finally notices your excellent parenting and

apologizes for being so short-sighted for so very long!!!

It will be JUST LIKE the commercials!!! This is the year!!! ACTUALLY. It'll be like this: Uncle Joe's gonna talk about politics. Very loudly and first thing, likely. Aunt Bertha's gonna wear her I'M WITH HER sweatshirt and drink like a saguaro cactus. Sarah's gonna talk about how much red dye is in the cranberry sauce and pull out her tofurkey at dinner while wearing her MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN hat. Even if you pray hard, even if you stare at that front door all day long, Brother Tom might never show up. Lisa and Karen are gonna go at it like the Real Housewives. Your mother-in-law is gonna notice that your middle kid really needs a haircut and shouldn't he know how to tie his own shoes by now, sweetheart?

Here's the terrible news: The best predictor of how a family's gonna act is how a family has always acted. It will never be like the commercials.

But here's the good news: Our crazy families aren't the problem. The commercials with the fake perfect families are the problem.

There are two ways to achieve holiday happiness, friends:

1. Make sure EVERYTHING GOES EXACTLY AS WE EXPECT IT TO. (With this approach we will be so full of woe ten times out of ten.)

OR

2. DRASTICALLY LOWER OUR EXPECTATIONS. (We might be pleasantly surprised!)

At speaking events, women often stand up and say this: G, I so badly want to be REAL with people. I want to stop acting and just be MYSELF in this world. But I feel I'll never have that because I can't even be real with my FAMILY. I don't even recognize myself with them. If I can't be ME with my family, what hope do I have to be authentic?

And I always say: Oh sweet fancy Moses precious girl, you've got it all backwards. NOBODY ON EARTH can be real with her FAMILY. When it comes to authenticity: Family is not the starting place - family is the FINAL FRONTIER. Practicing authenticity with family is like practicing cat grooming in a lion's den. If you'd like to practice being real and vulnerable and YOURSELF - don't start with your family, start with your mailman.

Because being real and relaxed has to do with going off script, with being a soul instead of a ROLE. Our families are where our roles are most deeply entrenched. Are you the "free spirited, flighty, irresponsible" one? Are you the "detail-oriented, boring, responsible" one? Are you the hippie? The clown? The scapegoat? We all have our roles, sisters. Families are but a stage, and we are all players. Families are living, breathing, ecosystems and it takes each to do his or her part to get the job done. Notice that no matter how much progress you make during the year, the second you walk into your home, you feel like

you're eight years old? So does everybody else! We all do! No problem! The show must go on!

So here's what we do tomorrow: We stop trying to be the director of the family show and we just become an amused audience member. We jump on stage when it's our line. We let everybody in the family play his or her role without being a critic. We let go of all that. We stop trying to change our people long enough to see them for who they are, and find some beauty in each of their characters. We remember that the reason there is so much food around on family holidays is so we don't say too terribly much. We stop fixing. We stop persuading. We stop cajoling and judging and disapproving and lobbying. We stop hoping so hard and start accepting. We stop directing. We stop stop directing. We let it all be.

We cement our "perspectacles" firmly to our faces. We find some gratitude for these crazy people who are OUR PEOPLE, dammit. We remember that family is just The Ones Who Keep Showing Up. We are grateful to and for the ones who show up. They are a mess, but they are OUR MESS. And thank God because we are a mess too, but we are THEIR MESS.

And maybe this afternoon we stop at the store and pick up a box of our favourite hot tea. We keep our mug filled all day tomorrow and every time our hands feel the warmth of that mug, we remember: I am loved, I am loved, I am loved. I am whole and beloved and I will bring my worth into this day with me and carry it out of this day with me. My worth and belovedness are not given or taken, proven or disproved by a mother or father or an in-law or a friend.



Why I Support the Fellowship

Myron Hedderson (Adapted from a testimonial given on Sunday, November 20, 2016)

Many of you know me well enough to know that I am someone without a lot of spare time (to put it mildly), and who has a spreadsheet going back to 2001 tracking every single cent I've spent. And you also may know that, to continue with understatement, I'm not the most religious person you'll ever meet. So it might be a question in some people's minds: why is this community one where I am willing to invest significant time as a member of the board, and to which I am willing to provide significant financial support? That's what I want to share with you today.

It started when I was very young, seeking and searching, and I noticed that many of the young people around me were into drugs, or alcohol, or consumerism, or... just weren't really in line with the way I wanted to be. And the only people who weren't like that, in my local area anyway, seemed to be religious. Some of you have heard

the story of how I had a few good friends who were Pentecostal, and I went to their church for a very short time, until I felt pressured to profess things I did not believe, and decided that I couldn't, because if there was a god, he or she might really not like it if I lied in church. So, going to religious places was out of the question for me, for a couple of decades. And yet, I really did like the community. These people were trying really hard to be good – and I'm into that. It's hard to do that on your own, and it would have been really nice to do it with the support of other like-minded individuals around me.

An NPR interview with a man by the name of Alain de Botton captured this very well. He's strongly atheist, but someone who has looked into religious traditions from around the world and finds there to be great value in them, so much so that he's started up a "school of life for atheists" which replicates and spreads what he regards as the valuable parts of religions. I'm going to quote from that interview with him for a bit.

Alain de Botton: There's a paradox, that often people who don't particularly believe will sometimes be drawn to ideas, or emotions, or activities, and then they might say, "Oh, that seems a bit too religious," and they might draw back from it.

I think that's an experience that many people reading this may have shared. But to continue, he says:

Particularly, for example, the teaching of ethics, or a moral code, or even certain kinds of ritual. These things can seem, to people who don't believe, a little bit too religious. And then what's fascinating is, if you look at the history of religions, religions Hoover up everything good or useful in the culture around them. They suck in all kinds of concepts and ideas ... a lot of what we find in Christianity comes from Greek philosophy. Even the concept of monasticism was taken from the Epicurean philosophical communities that existed in the Mediterranean world. So an awful lot that seems to us intrinsically religious is not; it's part of the treasury of mankind. These religions at their highest points, at their most complex and subtle moments, are far too interesting to be abandoned merely to those who believe in them.

He spoke later in the interview about something like a "moral atmosphere" which I thought was very relevant as well.

Alain de Botton: What religions do which is rather interesting is they recognize that we need to have constant public reminders of all this stuff about being good and kind that all of us probably sign up to in theory but often forget about in practice. And this is a real contrast to the secular world, which basically says "public space must be neutral. There must be no messages reaching people because that might be an infringement of freedom". To which I say, OK, that's all very well, but public space is not neutral, it's flooded by messages, most of which are commercial

messages. We don't live in the completely neutral public space that's often fantasized about by secular defenders of a kind of neutral liberalism. We are actually assaulted by commercial messages. So religions want to assault us with other messages, messages to be kind and to be good and to forgive and all these things. And they know that having [moral atmosphere in some public spaces, including ritual and repetition] can help.

Krista Tippett (interviewer): And the idea that we are rational creatures or could become rational creatures living in a rationally-run world was really a fundamental assumption that emerged in the course of the 20th century.

Mr. de Botton: Yes, and what's wrong with that? I think it's simply too mature. It's too reasonable. We're all a little bit crazier than that. I think it's kind of cruel to deny this aspect. You find this a lot in education. The modern secular education system is based on the idea that life is essentially a kind of fairly easy process to get through, so you need to teach people certain skills for the modern economy like accountancy and microbiology and all this sort of stuff. But what you don't need to teach them is how to live, because how to live is fairly obvious. All you need to do is separate yourself from your parents, and bring up some children maybe, and find a job you like, deal with mortality – all those really easy things – and then confront your own death, and it's just really simple. You don't need guidance. You're just supposed to know this stuff. And my question is, "How?" I don't know this stuff. And the fascinating starting point of religions, all religions, is the idea that we don't know how to live, and so that's why they need to teach us wisdom.

I agree, and I think this fellowship is an important space for teaching and promoting wisdom. I think of the example of the Death Café we held here earlier this year, where people of all beliefs and without belief had a space where they could come and discuss the hard topic of death. I think of some of the discussions we have around ethics on Thursdays. I think we need that, and as someone who tried to work those things out as an individual without a community, I know it can be done, but it really helps to have other people along for the ride.

And besides being wise, there's the quest to be good. Dr. Steven Atkinson, in his 2015 Confluence lecture at the CUC conference in Ottawa, spoke about his vision for our congregations to be "spiritual fitness centres, challenging us to move forward, towards more acceptance, compassion, and appreciation of difference." And to me that idea of a spiritual fitness centre has value – because we are in fact a bit crazy, we do need practice, and reminders, to do the things we need to do to be the people we know we should and could be. You can't just learn kindness in a class like you learn microbiology, and once you've had it explained that kindness is better than cruelty you'll go "oh, of course, yes" and be kind for the rest of your life. Personal virtues such as kindness are a practice, and like going to the gym

to keep physically fit, you have to keep going, or you'll lose your edge. As a part of the covenanting workshop we had on November 19th, we talked about implicit and explicit expectations, and the implicit expectation that coming here weekly was something that we don't pressure people to do. And... well, I do think it should be a free choice. But like getting exercise, I would encourage it, because I think it's good for us. So, that's what I think we should be and could be – a spiritual fitness centre. I know many people here have known each other for many years, and some people joke about this being a nice social club for people of a certain mindset, and maybe it is that, but that's far from all it can be. This place can be, and often is, pretty close to unique, in being a spiritual fitness centre open to people like me who find the word "spiritual" icky.

Being good and wise on your own because you don't subscribe to any religious dogma is hard, and more and more people are finding themselves in that situation, because they have turned away from what they understand religion to be and don't yet know we're an option. They have to try to be their best selves, while surrounded by commercial messages, a "moral atmosphere", that doesn't teach wisdom, but pushes individualism, competition, and self-help (meaning, figure out how to live by yourself, just read some books and watch some Youtube, it's not that hard). I think there's an important, not always articulated, but growing need which this place fills. I consider my support of the Fellowship to be a personal "spiritual fitness centre" membership – and if I'm willing to pay \$600 a year for a membership at the Y down the street, and I consider being a good person more important than being physically fit, what's my mental and spiritual fitness worth? But I'm not just helping myself - it is also an investment in making sure other people like me (and people who aren't like me, too, of course) will have a place that accepts them regardless of where they come from on the religious spectrum, and offers some important guidance that our education system disdains to provide. Which is why, even though I track both my time and my money far more carefully than any reasonable person would consider necessary, I'm willing to put a lot of both into this place.



St. Paul's United Carol Festival

The Annual Advent Carol Festival held each year at St. Paul's United Church (corner George and York) will take place on Wednesday, December 7 at 7:30 p.m. Local church and community choirs will present a program of new, as well as familiar, Christmas music. This is a fundraiser for the Fredericton Food Bank; a freewill offering will be received. The event has raised more than \$100,000 over the past 25 years.



Pizza Buffet Night!



Monday December 5th, Pizza Delight North (243 St. Mary's St) is hosting an all you can eat pizza buffet from 5pm-7pm! The buffet is \$10+tax (kids under 10 are \$5+tax) with \$4 going to Meals on Wheels!

When ordering, please specify that your combo is for Meals on Wheels

Buffet Includes:

- Selection of pizza slices
- Fountain drinks (free refills)
- Garlic Fingers
- Salad

The restaurant is accepting reservations for: 5:00 pm, 5:45 pm and 6:30 pm. Call 459-1707. Walk-ins also welcome. Bring your friends and an appetite! Thanks for your support!



After the Unitarian-Talk

On a plaque in the foyer just outside the sanctuary, the poem below may be found. I've glanced at it occasionally, however, a recent request by a former member to see if I could send them the poem led me to read it more carefully. I am told that long before I joined, the "talk-back" portion of the Sunday Service quite often descended into acrimony and it was that sort of occurrence which inspired the poem.

While our Sunday Worship Services tend to be more decorous these days, I have seen our business meetings on occasion be somewhat less so. Arguments meretricious

indeed with little movement towards any consensus. If adopting a covenant to which all agree would help resolve the occasional dispute which results in bruised egos and ill feelings, then perhaps it is past time for us to just do it.

Tony Fitzgerald

As a young lad I loved to shout
Words exaggerated vicious
To convince all who heard me out
That my voice meant deeds not wishes.
Though attention was delicious
It bought me much too little stock
I hold my tongue, washing the dishes
After the Unitarian-talk.

No longer young I learned to doubt.
A cawing crow has only wishes
And little else to crow about.
Since I'm not now ambitious
And much more surreptitious
I listen but I never mock.
I hold my tongue, washing the dishes
After the Unitarian-talk.

I joined the Fellowship, heard out
Good talk and better wishes
But at my age knew that to flout
Big words was meretricious
Unnecessary work. Thus it is
My voice is mum and my jaws lock
I hold my tongue, washing the dishes
After the Unitarian-talk.

Sunday starts with hopes and wishes,
First we gallop and then we walk.
I hold my tongue, washing the dishes
After the Unitarian-talk.

Fred Cogswell
Folds, 1997, 76-77
Borealis Press

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