



874 York Street, Fredericton, N.B., E3B 3R8 (506) 451-0919

Sunday Service 11 a.m.

Web Site: <http://www.uff.ca>

Email: office@uff.ca

Newsletter editor: touchstone@uff.ca

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Worship Services - Calendar

January Theme: *Creation and Stories*

Sunday, January 1, 10:30am: The Fellowship will be open for New Years Day Brunch. Bring your family and friends to start off the new year with food, fun, and festivities. Do you have a New Years resolution? Share it with others! If you have a musical instrument ...bring it along and play a tune. Contact Sheila Moore if you have questions. 450-9021

Sunday, January 8, 10:30am: *Creation Stories.* Carlos Gomes will share stories of the creation of the world from his own people and Indigenous peoples around the world.

Sunday, January 15, 10:30am: *Multigenerational Theme Service.* Opportunities to create and tell stories will be available for children and adults. Bring a favourite story from your life experiences to share with others or use for an art activity, or create your own paper bag character.

Sunday, January 22, 10:30am: *Halifax Service.* We will be 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 Creation. There will be an opportunity for Fredericton participants to share announcements and Joys and Sorrows as usual.

Sunday, January 29, 10:30am: Speaker: Dorothy Diamond. Service Leader: Joan McFarland.

In the summer of 2016, Dorothy Diamond, a mother and a grandmother, took a four day hike along the Dobson Trail

from Moncton to Fundy National Park. She was alone and carrying everything that she needed on her back. This did not include a tent.

With our January theme of 'stories', Dorothy is going to share with us the story of her hike: how she did it, why she did it and what it meant to her, especially in a spiritual sense.

February Theme: *Love and Justice*



Women's Monthly Pot Luck

The next Unitarian Fellowship women's pot luck will be held Friday, January 27th. Sheila Thompson will host the gathering at her home, 35A Carol Ave. We gather at 6 PM and eat at 6:30 PM. The topic for discussion: What is your 'go to' place when asked to think of a calm or happy place to try to relax. Are there specific memories associated, or is it an ideal? I will email directions to Sheila's home. For further information, contact Joan Brewer at jebrewer@rogers.com



Creation Stories:

A Reflection on our Theme

Jo-Anne Elder-Gomes

There are so many different stories about how the world began and how our ancestors came to live on the planet. Some are based on science and observation; like maps drawn by explorers and surveyors at different times, these stories may be recognized as being true and accurate for a time and then modified, and they may become accepted as fact after observations and evaluations have accumulated through the ages. Other creation stories are passed down through generations, written down in Holy Books, depicted in art work or music. Calling them stories does not mean they are not true, any more than our life story is not based on real experiences. But because we experience life and the world as they are today, creation stories often combine history and science with a different kind of truth: metaphor. Metaphor is often a way of bringing together

something ordinary and real, in the here and now, with a deeper and more universal meaning. Creation stories are the sacred narratives of the planet and of human life, investing them with an importance that goes beyond their utility and current form.

This month, as part of our theme of Creation, we will be talking about creation stories and personal stories. The two are more connected than we may think, especially when we view our role in the world and the meaning of lives through a UU lens. We have a sacred responsibility to take care of our planet, and to be conscious of the effect of our actions on the interdependent web. Some of our UU ancestors felt that they were called to be co-creators of the reign of God on earth, and this vocation can be seen in our efforts to serve others and to create beloved community in our gatherings. While we have differing opinions about how much (if any) free will we have, or whether we can actually send out and attract energy to manifest change, most of us do feel responsibility for acting thoughtfully and intentionally to contribute to a better world, and that, too, is a creative act.

Does it make a difference what we believe about how the world was created, or how human beings originated and evolved? It seems to me that our cosmogenies affect our understanding of human nature as well as our theology, and ultimately our view of our own lives. The Hindu belief in many gods and goddesses, who are aspects of the divine / Brahman, reveals that the divine spark will take different forms in each unique human being. Adrienne Rich, in *Woman Born*, writes about images of a Goddess creator in patriarchal society: “Let us try to imagine for a moment what sense of herself it gave a woman to be in the presence of such images... They must have validated her spiritually,... investing her with a sense of participation in essential mysteries... The images of the pre-patriarchal goddess-cults did one thing; they told women that power, awesomeness, and centrality were theirs by nature.”

Many creation myths suggest that individuals carry a divine spark, a unique gift, or a powerful awesomeness within them. (You may be singing “This Little Light of Mine” right now.) Universalists believe in the basic goodness of all people, and Unitarian Universalists in the inherent worth and dignity. How would your life be different if you had been raised in a culture in which everyone believed children and teenagers were whole and good? What would your life be like if you had been told you had a responsibility to kindle and rekindle that spark throughout your life? How do you choose, now, to share that awesomeness, to ensure that your deep-rooted humanity may grow and blossom?

Blue Boat Home: a Unitarian Universalist Creation Story

By Reverend Anthony Makar

“In our creation myths,” says David Leeming, “we tell the world, or at least ourselves, who we are. We describe

our ancestry, our conception, our first home, our early relationships with our progenitors, our place in the first world. In the process, we reveal our real priorities, our real fears, our real aspirations, and sometimes our real prejudices and neuroses.”

With this in mind, listen to this important comment about the historical milieu in which early American Unitarianism developed. It comes from Peter Tufts Richardson’s 2005 Minn’s Lectures:

“Unitarianism in Boston and coastal New England grew its strength from a maritime base. There is a certain openness, a restlessness, a larger embrace among populations oriented to global trading. Awareness of Arabic, Indian or Chinese influences broadens one’s comprehension beyond the fencerows and forested hills of one’s immediate landscape. A certain confidence builds with the capacity to outfit global voyages, time appearances in faraway markets, manage the sustenance and survival of crews and ships for long-distance travel over the horizon from home port (all this long before the invention of the radio). Cosmopolitan awareness and confidence in individual judgment entered into the meeting house mix when Unitarianism was fermenting in coastal congregations.”

The implicit creation myth here is that we come from a courageous, seafaring, cosmopolitan, self-reliant people. The seeds are already planted for a William Ellery Channing, a Ralph Waldo Emerson, a Margaret Fuller, an Olympia Brown (I’ll include Olympia Brown here, even though she’s a Universalist)....

Spiritual Exploration:

Pablo Picasso believed “every act of creation begins with an act of destruction.”

When have you felt that you needed to let go of, get rid of, or break down something before you could start building something beautiful and fulfilling in your life? Has a negative experience nurtured the impulse to change something in your life?



I Am Malala

Malala Yousafzai

You have almost certainly heard of this book and it is well worth reading. She is the girl shot in the head by the Taliban in 2012 for attending school and for making many speeches in favour of female education. The book was written with the help of eminent journalist Christina Lamb and published in 2013, the year she won the Nobel Peace Prize and addressed the United Nations. She was sixteen then.

The title is her answer to the young men who boarded the school bus to shoot her and asked “Who is Malala?”

The book is a proud statement of all she and her father, both Muslims, had done to state the right of females to an education equal to that of males. Some find it too egotistical, but it can be seen as an understandable reaction to the devastating injury, the lengthy recovery time and the need to move with her father, mother and two brothers to Birmingham, England. The book also shows her as a normal, fallible human being arguing with friends and brothers and previously known for complaining about pain and sickness.

We get some glimpses of her mother's role as a woman who went to school aged six and left the same year! Ironically she was returning to study the day Malala was shot. She supported her school-developing husband and did not try to stop the work her husband and Malala were doing in spite of the danger they were running into.

There is very interesting information on the development of war-born Pakistan and in particular the Swat Valley where her family lived. This remote area caught between Afghanistan and Pakistan saw constant fighting, American interference and subsequent development of Muslim extremism and Taliban influence. The Pashtun people who lived there were very isolated and did not feel that Pakistan cared about them. Ironically, Pakistan recruited and trained boys for the army but did remarkably little to help the area, causing many of the boys to move to the Taliban. Extremists fed this by dominating the radio and destroying other media that might have provided distraction from anger.

Questions arise. Was it right for her father to put his daughter at so much risk? Why were the sons not encouraged to speak out for female education? A CBC programme I heard some time since said they resented Malala for having forced the family to leave all that they knew in Pakistan.

The biggest question is why are Muslim extremists against education for women. I consulted a Muslim friend and neighbour on this. She is a former teacher of Islamic studies who also consulted her niece, a professor in England who specialises in Arabic studies. Extremism against women often seems to come from a desperate group's need to sustain its population and provide more fighters. You will not be surprised to see that when the views are attributed to sacred texts, much of the problem lies in translation or interpretation. Arabic is a very complex language. The much quoted opening of "The Blood Clot" section of the Koran can either be interpreted as "Read, Read" or "Recite, Recite". The professor says it means

read and recite. The section goes on to extol knowledge, as do many others. There is also a much quoted line in the Hadith, the sayings of Mohammed written down by followers. It says men and women should seek knowledge. The professor says in other verses where only "men" is used this should be interpreted as all mankind.

Malala is still a devout Muslim, wearing her headscarf in the photos, Just as my friend is Muslim. She did not have to wear a burka at university; she chose to do so because it prevented pestering by male students. Yes, this shows problems for Islamic women, but she does not see Mohammed and the Koran as prejudiced. She pointed out that Mohammed was hired by the woman who became his first wife to work in her trading business and that his wife Ayesha taught his ideas to other women. She is also said to have lead 6000 of his followers in a battle charge after Mohammed's death.

The Swat Valley is still an area of contention: my friend's nephew in the Pakistan army says when sent to that area they never know who is the enemy. So the book is certainly of current interest.

Sheila Andrew



WhaleCoast Alaska 2017

Have you ever dreamed of visiting Alaska? If so, WhaleCoast Alaska 2017 is for you! Four Alaska UU fellowships invite you to experience our eco-cultural and spiritual program next summer. See Alaska through the eyes of local UUs



in Anchorage, Fairbanks, Juneau, and Sitka with friendly homestays and unique tour activities. See wildlife, including moose, bears, caribou, whales, bald eagles, seals, and otters. Visit Denali National Park. Experience Native Alaskan culture. Forget the cruise ships – our program is the best way to visit Alaska! Programs led by Dave Frey, member of the Fairbanks UU congregation and Alaska travel expert. Find out more about this Alaskan trip of a lifetime before our tours sell out! Visit www.WhaleCoastAK.org, email dfrey@whalecoastak.org, or call 907-322-4966. We would love to share our Alaska with you!

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