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Upcoming services

Our theme for March is Risk. Elsewhere in Touchstone you’ll find some reflections on our theme. Here are the services planned for March.

March 4 *International Women’s Day Service: RISK.* Jo-Anne Elder-Gomes

Every year, the Canadian UU Women’s Association (CUUWA) asks congregations in Canada to run an International Women’s Day service in March, and the CUUWA prepares theme materials for the service. This year, the CUUWA chose the theme of RISK, and Jo-Anne will be talking about some examples of contemporary risk-takers and Mary Ann Hayden Church, a Universalist believed to be the first woman preacher to form a congregation in Canada.

March 11 *The Seeker:* Heather Lunergan

Heather Lunergan: Talk about a late bloomer; at age 40, I left my job and became a full time university student. At about the same time, I discovered this group of folks called Unitarians. There are risks involved in mid-life endeavours, but sometimes, as with me, the outcome is worth it all. Find out what I risked to become a seeker both intellectually and spiritually and share your own stories in talk back.

March 18 *Taking Risks: The Art-Making of Dawn Steeves.*

Dawn Steeves is a contemporary artist living and working from her studio in downtown Fredericton. With a background in fibre arts, graphic design, printmaking and digital art, over the last three years Dawn has dedicated most of her artistic practice to oil painting. Her subjects range from portraits, still life and scenes of everyday life, to recently, more conceptual works depicting societal structures as solid objects in nature, riffing on ideas surrounding mythological towers and gilded cages.

March 25 *Risk or Risqué: Living Openly as a Cross-Dresser.* Tony Fitzgerald

It’s been over a decade since Tony came out to the congregation. He will try to look back at the risks that entailed and benefits realized.



Board Meeting

The regular meeting of the Board of Directors will be held Sunday, March 11th at 11:45 AM.

All regular meetings of the Board of Directors are open to members of the Fellowship, or to invited guests or friends.



Reflections on the Monthly Theme: Risk

Jo-Anne Elder-Gomes

Every year, the Canadian UU Women’s Association (CUUWA) asks congregations in Canada to run an International Women’s Day service in March, and the CUUWA prepares materials for the service on a theme. This year, the CUUWA chose the theme of RISK. (It is no coincidence that this is the same as UFF’s monthly theme). A package of materials for this year’s service and for study throughout the month of March is now ready and available at:

<http://www.cuuwa.org/2018/01/11/international-womens-day-packet-2018/>

I will be sharing some of the materials in our IWD service

on March 4. Here is a sample of thoughts on RISK.

Some Risk-Takers we highlight in the package (most identify as women and live(d) in Canada):

Dr. Lotta Hischmanova The founder of the Unitarian Service Committee of Canada, who made our movement popular through advertisements on TV in the mid-20th century.”

A new book by well-known feminist Judy Rebick is coming out in April 2018. In *Heroes in My Head*, Rebick documents two major decades in her life: the 1980s, when she became a high-profile spokesperson for the pro-choice movement during the fight to legalize abortion; and the 1990s, when she took on her biggest challenge as a public figure by becoming president of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women.

Born to Colombian-Canadian parents in Toronto in 1991, Jessie Reyez attracted national attention with ‘Figures’ in 2017. Watch ‘Gatekeeper,’ a powerful video and song which breaks the silence about women in the music industry.

Eco-feminist visual artist and poet Erin Robinson’s debut collection, *Rag Cosmology* deals with the intimate relationship between the self and ecology. ‘Late Prayer’ begins: ‘May our weapons be effective feminine inventions that like life. / May we blow up like weeds, and be medicinal and everywhere. / May the disturbed ground be our pharmacy.’

Audrey Siegl (ancestral name *sx̣ṭeṃṭəna:t*) is a Musqueam warrior and protector involved with Idle No More. Audrey was the speaker at our CUUWA Green Tea in May, 2016, and also closed the Conference with a wonderful talk and ceremony.

Spiritual Exercise

This spiritual exercise is not in the package, but relates to our own experience of risk: To Do Is To Be

To laugh is to risk appearing the fool.

To weep is to risk appearing sentimental.

To reach out for another is to risk exposing our true self.

To place our ideas—our dreams—before the crowd is to risk loss.

To love is to risk not being loved in return.

To hope is to risk despair.

To try is to risk failure.

To live is to risk dying.

—Anonymous

Question for Reflection: Think about a time when you felt you were not being ‘true to yourself’ or living authentically, and then decided to do so. You may have come out, stood up for something or someone you believed in, said something that you thought would be unpopular or hurtful. How did you make your decision? What were you risking by hiding your feelings, and what were you risking by showing them? When you look back at that experience

now, how do you feel about your situation? Alternatively, what has held you back from taking a risk? What would it take for you to feel able to come out, speak out, or show your feelings?



Third Thursday

On Thursday, March 15th, at 7 pm, join Nick Fitzgerald for his book report on *Full Catastrophe Living* by Jon Kabat-Zinn and a discussion on how we can incorporate mindfulness practices into the Fellowship.

About the book: *Stress*. It can sap our energy, undermine our health, and even shorten our lives. It makes us more vulnerable to anxiety and depression, disconnection and disease. Based on Jon Kabat-Zinn’s renowned mindfulness-based stress reduction program, this classic, groundbreaking work (which give rise to the whole new field in medicine and psychology) shows you how to use medically proven mind-body approaches derived from meditation and yoga to counteract stress, establish greater balance of body and mind, and stimulate well-being and healing. By engaging in these mindfulness practices and integrating them into your life from the moment to moment and from the day to day, you can learn to live better with chronic pain, promote optimal healing, reduce anxiety and feeling of panic, and improve the overall quality of your life, relationships and social networks. *Full Catastrophe Living* is a book for the young and old, the well and the ill, and anyone trying to live a healthier and saner life in our fast-pace world.



Monthly Women’s Pot Luck

The next Unitarian Fellowship women’s pot luck will be held Friday, March 23rd. Haifa Miller and Sabine Campbell will host the gathering at the Fellowship building, 874 York Street. We gather at 6 PM and eat at 6:30 PM. The topic for discussion will be circulated at a later time. For further information, contact Joan Brewer at jebrewer@rogers.com.



CUC Conference

Registration is now open for the Canadian Unitarian Council’s National Conference (previously known to many of us as the ACM). It will be held at McMaster University in Hamilton ON from May 18 – 20. Find information on the conference site by going to our main page: www.cuc.ca, and clicking on the hyperlinks.

General Information including accommodations, accessibility, meals and travel is on drop-down tabs under General Information.

Accommodation is very reasonable; single beds in quads and two-bed rooms are available in residences.

Registration for the children's program, youth, and young adults is on a sliding scale.

Registration for adults is \$300 until April 7; please register early!

Need more information? Email conference@cuc.ca. (JoAnne's address as CUC Conference Convenor)



Martin Luther Netflix

;;Spoiler Alert!!

This programme gives details on the life of Martin Luther I did not know and claims every word the actor playing Luther utters comes from his writings. So we meet a charismatic, humourous, troubled and sometimes alarmingly outspoken sixteenth century boy, monk, professor, priest and leader of the Protestant movement who helped to change the world, including introducing secular education for boys and girls.

His protests started, as you probably know, against the Catholic Church selling "forgiveness" of sins to anyone buying indulgences. Luther's 95 Theses, or debating points against this benefitted from the invention of printing and "went viral" as we'd say now. His basic teaching was that humans must live through faith. That will lead them to the service of others and to a direct personal relationship to God through study of the Bible and prayer.

The Catholic Church and the Holy Roman Emperor, as the ruler of much of Europe at this time was called, Charles V called on him to renounce his objections and when he refused he was given five days to consider this before he was executed. Mysteriously, he was taken away to a castle by unidentified people. Charles may have feared a desperate reaction from the people if he had Luther killed. So Luther spent eleven weeks translating the Bible into German and finished that task,

Then he came out again because his followers were splitting behind different leaders and Luther sought unity. His teaching certainly spread and Protestantism was established. During the rest of his life he wrote many books, including a savage attack on the Jews that Hitler cited and vicious attacks on those who disagreed with him. He married, under intriguing circumstances I won't reveal, and had a family.

Michael King Senior found his legacy of equality and direct contact with God so powerful that he changed his name

to Martin Luther King and his son became Martin Luther King Junior.

I apologise for giving away so much of the story, but you should still find this revealing and well worth watching.

Sheila Andrew



Canadian UU Report

Posted on February 20, 2018

By Susan Ruttan

National board member,

Canadian Unitarian Council

(a version of this was presented at the Jan. 28, 2018 Sunday service of Westwood Unitarian Congregation)

On Jan. 17, in the regional public library of Morden, Manitoba, there was an open house hosted by a small group called the Pembina Valley Unitarian Universalist Community, which had decided it was time to let people know they existed.

The original group of eight adults in their 20s and 30s, plus two children, started meeting over a year ago in private. This area of southern Manitoba is deeply Christian, so they were cautious about letting people know they were exploring a different faith, one that dares to question quite a few things.

They had the quiet support of Joan Carolyn, the CUC's congregational support lead for western Canada. Joan, who is based in Winnipeg, helped them figure out what they wanted to do.

If you ever wonder why we need a national organization like the Canadian Unitarian Council, that's why. This group found each other, but they also found Joan and the CUC. They got help. They found a larger, national group of some 4,400 people who share their commitment to open minds and kind hearts.

Three provinces over, in Nelson, British Columbia, the new Nelson Unitarian Spiritual Centre has met all the requirements to become a full member congregation of the CUC, something that will be ratified and celebrated at the national conference in Hamilton in May. Again, this group has had lots of help from the CUC staff.

We are a national organization of roughly 46 congregations. I say roughly because there are a few that are dying and a few emerging. Nationwide, our membership has been slowly declining as we lose older members, but it's nothing to panic about. It is, however, something to



acknowledge and manage. And the CUC has been doing just that.

The national board has made the CUC's financial health a priority, keeping the budget as tight as we can. We have ramped up our fundraising efforts, trying to find UUs who will make a personal contribution to the CUC's sustainability. We are also raising the per-member rate we ask our congregations to contribute each year – to \$100 per member for 2018.

The national CUC office is the size of a large closet – a couple of desks and file cabinets, plus a printer, and that's about it. The one person who works there five days a week is our terrific administrator, Ahna DiFelice. Ahna is from the Neighbourhood congregation, so she knows our movement as well as how to organize things.

Our executive director Vyda Ng works from her home in Niagara on the Lake except for two days a week when she comes into Toronto. Our handful of other national staff live in Burlington, Kitchener, and Ottawa.

What this means is that national staff connect by phone and computer, and very rarely in person. That's the streamlining the CUC has done to live within its budget and keep our national movement going.

In the same way, the CUC offers more and more online ways for congregations to connect – online training sessions called webinars, and online meetings called roundtables. For example, there was a webinar a year ago on the topic of theme-based ministry, featuring the First Toronto minister, Shawn Newton. And of course, there has been webinar training of facilitators for our Truth Healing and Reconciliation program. Roundtables have been on topics like alternative worship and religious language, as well as practical topics like preparation for the national annual meeting.

Part of that greater online connection is the big project of rebuilding the CUC website. The aim is to have a website that gives congregations what they need, and that is a portal for those many people searching for a spiritual home. The goal is for a launch this summer.

In everything we do at the national level, we try to uphold and promote our UU values. Even though our finances are tight, the CUC finds money for things that speak to our values, like the continued rollout of the Truth Healing and Reconciliation project. Along similar lines, I've been on a small committee this past year coordinating a national sermon contest and an art contest promoting the new Canadian UU vision statement). Our lovely vision statement says that we envision a world in which our interdependence calls us to love and justice.

We want as many people as possible to join us in helping bring about this vision. That's why We are trying to make our national annual meeting an online event, so people who haven't the time or money to come in person can

participate. Last year's annual meeting was a trial run, and we learned from it. The top thing we learned is that you can't have a daylong meeting if people are watching it on their home computer. The goal this year is to have an afternoon national meeting this that is no more than three hours long.

The annual meeting and conference of the CUC is the Victoria Day weekend, and it's in Hamilton at McMaster University. I hope some of you come. It's such a great experience.

And I hope some of you will consider getting involved at the national level. I heard there's an opening for a Western member of the national nominating committee. Western means the Prairie provinces plus Thunder Bay. That's a job I did before I joined the national board, and it was a good first window into the national UU movement.

My experience of being involved nationally has been very special. I know Unitarians across the country My term on the national board ends in May, but I will never abandon my commitment to the national movement.

One of the great blessings of our home congregations is the deep, long-lasting friendships we build there. I want to remind you that there are lots of people like us – wonderful people committed to open minds and kind hearts – in the other congregations.

We are connected. We are family. We need to nurture those bonds that keep us one national family.

Blessèd be.

reprinted at the request of
Heather Lunegan



Starhawk Coming to Tatamagouche Centre

Join Starhawk and Charles Williams for their internationally recognized Earth Activist Training (EAT).

This two-week intensive is a Permaculture Design Certificate (PDC) course, offering the basic, internationally-recognized 72-hour permaculture curriculum with an additional focus on social permaculture, organizing tools, and spirit.

Where: Tatamagouche Centre, Tatamagouche, NS

Program Dates: August 18- September 1, 2018

Registration Deadline: July 18, 2018

Apply for bursaries by: June 18, 2018

Find out more and register here:

www.tatacentre.ca/index.php/programs/details/2509





Justice and Injustice

Slavery was legal.
Apartheid was legal.
The Holocaust was legal.
Residential schools were legal.
Peremptory challenges to reject jury candidates are legal
in Canada.
Legality is a matter of power, not Justice

Submitted by
John van Abbema

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Please send articles to touchstone@uff.ca