



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

Sunday Service 10:30 a.m. Web Site: <http://www.uff.ca> Email: office@uff.ca

Newsletter editor: touchstone@uff.ca

Contents for January 2019

Upcoming Services	1
Tea, Laughter and Conversation (TLC)	1
“New U” Program	1
Quotes on Mystery	2
Faith Development for All Ages	3
Women’s Pot Luck	3
Joys and Concerns	3
Notes from the CUC Liaison	4
Where Do We Come From	4
Board Update	5
Dies Natalis Solis Invicti	6
Things Fall Apart	6
WhaleCoast Alaska 2019	7

get to know each other better and celebrate what’s unique about each of us and what we all share. For people of all ages.

January 27 Service Leader: Tony Fitzgerald. Speaker: Betty Daniels, the Executive Director of Fredericton Meals on Wheels, speaking to us about the new kitchen and the volunteer side of the venture.



Tea, Laughter and Conversation (TLC)

Wednesday, January 9th at 1:30 at the Fellowship

Join us for a fun and sharing time with the topic: “DO YOU LIVE MORE IN THE PAST, PRESENT OR FUTURE?” Invite your friends to have tea with us – what else could be more fun on a January afternoon?

Contact Sheila for more information



“New U” Program

The Membership Committee of our Fellowship is planning a New U program in January. This is a program for those who are new to our congregation, those who are interested in learning about Unitarian history and, especially, for those of us who would just like to get together!

The first session will be sharing a bit about ourselves and our religious backgrounds and how we found ourselves at the Unitarian Fellowship of Fredericton. The second session will be videos and discussion about the history of Unitarianism and Universalism (and the definitions of both). The third session will contain some history of our particular Fellowship and how it came to be established. There will also be discussion about what it means to be a member of our congregation. – the shared responsibilities and the joys!

Possible dates: Wednesday evenings Jan. 16th, 23rd, and 30th at 7 pm OR Saturday afternoons Jan. 19th, 26th and Feb. 2nd at 1:30 pm

Upcoming Services

January Theme Mystery

January 6 Service Leader: Heather Lunergan. “*Surrendering to the Mystery.*” Heather will introduce January’s theme of “Mystery” by reading a talk by Rev. Nica Eaton-Guinn of the Conejo Valley Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, Thousand Oaks, CA.

January 13 Speaker: Sabrina DeJong. Service Leader: Patrick Daley. Topic: Gay Straight Alliances (GSAs) in schools, and inclusive educational themes in the school system regarding LGBTQ youth. Sabrina DeJong is a trained Guidance Counsellor and a Transition Facilitator for the Visually Impaired. She is currently an employee of APSEA, Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority. She is a married mother of two from the Fredericton area.

January 20 Service Coordinator: Jo-Anne Elder-Gomes. “*Everybody’s Birthday.*” Apples, peaches, pears and plums... Tell me when your birthday comes! It’s time to celebrate YOUR birthday with your Fellowship family and friends. There will be tables designated for each season and a cake for each one. You’ll find out who else has a birthday in the same season as you and what else you have in common: that’s the Mystery part! This is an opportunity for all of us to

Please let Sheila know if you would like to attend and your preferred dates.



Quotes on Mystery

“Little more than one thing seems certain, and that is, we are, here, enveloped in a world of mystery, and can do no better perhaps, than gratefully to accept what little light we can gather, and wait patiently the promised period when we shall see as we are seen, and know as we are known.” – Hosea Ballou

“The important thing is not to stop questioning. Curiosity has its own reason for existence. One cannot help but be in awe when he contemplates the mysteries of eternity, of life, of the marvelous structure of reality. It is enough if one tries merely to comprehend a little of this mystery each day.” – Albert Einstein, “Old Man’s Advice to Youth: ‘Never Lose a Holy Curiosity.’” *LIFE Magazine*

“The possession of knowledge does not kill the sense of wonder and mystery. There is always more mystery.” – Anais Nin

“We need the tonic of wildness... At the same time that we are earnest to explore and learn all things, we require that all things be mysterious and unexplorable, that land and sea be indefinitely wild, unsurveyed and unfathomed by us because unfathomable. We can never have enough of nature.”

– Henry David Thoreau, *Walden: Or, Life in the Woods*

“Stars, too, were time travellers. How many of those ancient points of light were the last echoes of suns now dead? How many had been born but their light not yet come this far? If all the suns but ours collapsed tonight, how many lifetimes would it take us to realize we were alone? I had always known the sky was full of mysteries—but not until now had I realized how full of them the earth was.”

– Ransom Riggs, *Miss Peregrine’s Home for Peculiar Children*

“It is only through mystery and madness that the soul is revealed.” – Thomas Moore, *Care of the Soul: A Guide for Cultivating Depth and Sacredness in Everyday Life*

“Love is an endless mystery, because there is no reasonable cause that could explain it.” – Rabindranath Tagore

“The world, even the smallest parts of it, is filled with things you don’t know.” – Sherman Alexie, *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*

“The true mystery of the world is the visible, not the invisible.” – Oscar Wilde

“C’est tellement mystérieux, le pays des larmes.”

– Antoine De Saint-Exupery, *Le petit prince*

“Science cannot solve the ultimate mystery of nature. And

that is because, in the last analysis, we ourselves are a part of the mystery that we are trying to solve.” – Max Planck, *Where is Science Going?*

“The beauty and mystery of this world only emerges through affection, attention, interest and compassion... open your eyes wide and actually see this world by attending to its colors, details and irony.”

– Orhan Pamuk, *My Name Is Red*

Spiritual Reflection

Jo-Anne Elder-Gomes

Consider these two quotations, and the questions following them.

“The Cosmos is all that is or was or ever will be. Our feeblest contemplations of the Cosmos stir us— there is a tingling in the spine, a catch in the voice, a faint sensation, as if a distant memory, of falling from a height. We know we are approaching the greatest of mysteries.”

– Carl Sagan, *Cosmos*

“The most beautiful experience we can have is the mysterious. It is the fundamental emotion that stands at the cradle of true art and true science.”

– Albert Einstein, *The World as I See It*

1. Rather than define what mystery is, both Sagan and Einstein describe the experience of mystery or the mysterious. They suggest this experience has emotional, sensory, physiological components. Think about a time you have had goose-bumps or felt “tingly,” had a “gut feeling” about something or felt your heart beat harder or quicker. Can you feel these sensations again when you think of that time? Pay attention to your breath, your heartbeat, your skin, your blood. Now try to put these sensations into words.
2. When have you experienced the mysterious or felt that you were in the presence of a great mystery? Does mystery feel like awe, wonder, or reverence? (If you are in a group) Are you moved by the same mysteries as other people?
3. Carl Sagan speaks of the Cosmos is the same way as others might speak of God. How do you define the “greatest of mysteries”? What do you call that which others call God?
4. Art and science are often considered opposites, but Einstein often writes that they are closely related, as he does here. How have you reconciled the rational mind and the creative spirit in your own life and work?



Faith Development for All Ages

As you may know, volunteers from the congregation have been offering a children's program most Sunday mornings since mid-September. In the past, we've referred to this program as "RE," an abbreviation for Religious Education. Now it seems more appropriate to talk about Religious and Spiritual Exploration or Faith Development.

When we (finally!) posted the information on the children's program on the UFF website, we added the following note: "The children's program is part of our comprehensive lifespan programming at the UFF. Check out our Facebook page for programs and activities for children (up to 13), youth (14 to 18/20), young adults (18 to 35 years) and adults (over 35):

[https://www.facebook.com/unitarianfellowshipfredericton/.](https://www.facebook.com/unitarianfellowshipfredericton/)"

The note about lifespan program is important. In a growing number of U*U congregations, Faith Development is viewed as a lifespan learning process, involving people of all ages who engage in a lifelong search for meaning and connection. In our congregation, that would include activities of the Adult Program committee, chaired by Heather LunerGAN. As specified in the 2016 amendments to our bylaws, the mandate of the AP committee includes programs for youth and young adults. Youth and young adults have distinct and overlapping needs, and participate in a number of activities organized by the CUC through two staff members. At Conferences and regional gatherings, young adults have started to gather in "Chorus," similar to youth cons and CanUUdle, and have created strong connections with youth.

The other important aspect of lifespan faith development is the "whole church" approach: integrating everyone, from babies to sages, into the full life of the congregation. Our multigenerational Sunday mornings involve inviting people of all ages to participate in one or more activities together. These activities are organized on the monthly theme and often are hands-on (and hearts-on!) programs, art or music activities, or small group conversations in which people have an opportunity to learn from and about each other. Creating connections through generations and life phases is arguably one of the most meaningful tasks of a spiritual community. Multigenerational programs also help children to learn about worship in an organic way, by observing or participating in the Chalice Lighting, Joys and Sorrows, stories, and, of course, singing. We also engage in worship upstairs.

The Unitarian Fellowship of Fredericton welcomes youth, as well as children over 3, to join us on Sunday morning. Parents, siblings, and grandparents are welcome to visit any time or bring babies and toddlers upstairs to play. In our program, we do what we all do as a "whole church": we strive to engage and support children in their personal and

spiritual growth, encourage them to think about important issues and big questions, sustain their sense of wonder and curiosity, explore ways to help others, and learn about themselves and their community.

We will be talking more about opportunities for volunteers in the next *Touchstone*. Meanwhile, contact us at eldergomes@yahoo.com for more information about the program.



Women's Pot Luck

The next Unitarian Fellowship women's pot luck will be held Friday, January 25th, 2019. Linda Sprague and Sandra Shield will host the gathering at the Fellowship, 874 York St. We gather at 6 PM and eat at 6:30 PM. The topic for discussion is Bucket Lists: Do you have one now or have you had one in the past? Maybe you have goals or dreams instead. Talk about the things you'd like to do or see before the end of your life or the things you wanted to do and have already done or seen. For further information, contact Joan Brewer at jebrewer@rogers.com



Joys and Concerns

The Caring Circle again delivered cookies to some of our members. It was a great joy to be able to do the cookie delivery again this year. Thank you to those who cooked and delivered

Pat Daley is recovering from a visit to the hospital to have a new pace maker installed. Those of us who attended his concert missed him but were happy to hear "O Holy Night" at our carol sing.

Geneviève was in the hospital for a short stay and is doing fine.

The Sankey-Frooman's are happy to have Naomi and Tamara home for the holidays.

Congratulations to Pat Fawson on his recent retirement.

Many of us were delighted to hear Jenn Carpenter-Gleim and Deby Nash in their concerts

HELP is always appreciated for our caring circle. One need is for drives to our services.



Notes from the CUC Liaison

By Glenna Hanley

As reported from the latest CUC e-news changes are afoot that will have a positive impact on UU congregations that want to be engaged in political activism and social justice. You may recall that in 2015 the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) forced an audit on the CUC itself and that caused a chill and a lot of concern among our congregations across Canada about what they could and could not do in the areas of political activities, social justice, advocacy or any actions that touched on politics and government.

Federal Finance Minister Bill Morneau has tabled a proposal to change the Income Tax Act, (Bill C-86), so that “political activities” would be redefined as “public policy dialogue and development activities” making it easier for the CUC and its member congregations to influence government laws, policies and government decisions both within Canada and in foreign countries.

This attention from the federal government should help remove that fear of being penalized by the CRA, and to losing charitable status. We can and should not fear taking action on issues that flow from our principles. Of course the actions must remain non-partisan.

I feel the CRA rules and guidelines were fuzzy at best, making it difficult to know what was allowed and what was not. We should keep an eye on this and see if things improve.

Sex Ed

When Ontario’s new premier Doug Ford made the public schools in that province roll back changes to the sex education program, returning to a 1998 version of the program, the CUC stepped up to fill the gap. They advertised to Ontario parents the OWL (Our Whole Lives) program. The UU-produced course addresses such issues as relationships, gender identity and sexual orientation, topics the 1998 version of sex ed does not.

Calling All Readers

If you like to read and you like book clubs this might interest you. There is a proposal for the CUC to create an on-line book club. Participants would meet using the internet program Zoom. If you are interested contact Mary Maler of the Unitarian Church of Montreal, email is: mmaler@videotron.ca



Where Do We Come From

What Are We, Where Are We Going?

This song was rarely sung at our Fellowship before we were given the teal hymn books,* where it appears as #1003, but has become a favourite. You can hear it here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s7zEwa1XqUk&t=3s>

The lyrics of this song come from an oil painting created in 1897 and 1898 by Paul Gauguin, a French artist, in Tahiti, available with an analysis here:

<http://www.gauguin.org/where-do-we-come-from-what-are-we.jsp>

Gauguin began painting this work, his largest, when suffering from depression and a spiritual crisis which led him to ask these soul-searching questions about the value and meaning of life. The questions (in French) appear in the top left-hand corner. It was intended to be his magnum opus, a testamentary work created before his intended suicide. Gauguin writes, “I believe that this canvas not only surpasses all my previous work, but that I will never do anything better or even like it. Before dying I put into it all my energy, a passion so painful, in terrible circumstances, and a vision so clear, needing no correction, that the hastiness disappears and life surges up.”

The painting shows three groups of women who represent the three questions: The women with the child represent the beginning of life “Where Do We Come From?” The middle group represent the daily existence of adulthood “What Are We?” The old woman facing death is asking, “Where Are We Going?” In his own words, Gauguin describes the figures in this way: “To the right, below, a sleeping baby and three seated women. Two figures dressed in purple confide their thoughts to each other. An enormous crouching figure which intentionally violates the perspective, raises its arm in the air and looks in astonishment at these two people who dare to think of their destiny. A figure in the center is picking fruit. Two cats near a child. A white goat. An idol, both arms mysteriously and rhythmically raised, seems to indicate the Beyond. A crouching girl seems to listen to the idol. Lastly, an old woman approaching death appears reconciled and resigned to her thoughts. She completes the story. At her feet a strange white bird, holding a lizard in its claw [sic], represents a futility of words.”

Acclaimed by critics, the painting has been described as: “...A sorrowful work, for to understand it, to feel the shock of it, we ourselves must know sorrow and the irony of sorrow, which is the threshold of mystery. ...” (Octave Mirbeau). Renowned poet Stéphane Mallarmé wrote: “Il est extraordinaire qu’on puisse mettre tant de mystère dans tant d’éclat.” (“It is extraordinary that anyone could put so much mystery into so much brightness.”)

Mystery. Mystery. Life is a riddle and a mystery...

*The title of the teal hymn book is *Singing the Journey*; it was composed by a committee struck by UUA President William Sinkford in 2003 to create a “new resource that offered fresh hymns, chants or songs that enliven worship; music for marking the seasons in the lives of our congregations; and music in a number of different styles including jazz, folk, pop, spirituals, gospel, praise songs, call-and-response, chants, rounds and traditional hymns” and to address contemporary issues and styles. STJ was introduced in 2005. Our congregation purchased a small number of copies a decade ago and received a large set from the Universalist Unitarian Church of Halifax (some of them from the Saint John church) in 2016. The numbering of hymns in STJ starts at 1000, to distinguish them from *Singing the Living Tradition* hymns and readings numbered 1 to 733.

Jo-Anne E-G



Board Update

The Board of Directors met on Sunday, December 2, and will meet again after the first Sunday Service of the new year, on January 6, 2019. The 2019 budget was a major item of the December meeting and will be the almost-exclusive focus of the January meeting. Board meetings are open to all members of the Fellowship, and we have made a special invitation to Committee Chairs to attend the January meeting, where their budget requests will be discussed.

According to the UFF bylaws, which were amended in 2016 to update and clarify several items that were already in practice, the budget meeting is one of two regular meetings of the membership, i.e., a meeting at which all active members of the UFF may vote; active members are those who have signed the membership book and who have participated in the life of the congregation or made a financial contribution within two years.

36. Annual Budget Meeting

The annual operating budget shall be presented at a general meeting of the membership to be held each year, during the month of January, at such time and place as shall be fixed by the Board of Directors.

For many of us, it seems a little strange to introduce a new budget in January, a bit less than half-way through the term of elected Committee Chairs. Because our fiscal year is the same as the calendar year, the amount in each committee’s budget is shared between the current chair and the chair who will take over in June. On the other hand, once a committee has begun its year, it is in a much better position to plan for the near future. During the transitional meetings held over the summer, the former and new chairs can discuss current and ongoing plans and

needs.

Setting a budget is an important way of determining our needs and our aspirations. A budget is one of the instruments that reflect our vision of who we are and what we do. It is a plan of action, an outline of the expected revenue and the expenses that we can foresee, which include the usual (if variable) expenses for heat and supplies as well as new or additional expenses the Board and committees have requested. For instance, several committees asked for a larger budget as part of our “growth strategy,” a congregational priority over recent years.

The initial and final responsibility for the budget exercise (and for that matter the Fellowship’s financial health and oversight) belongs to the Board. Committee Chairs play an important role by requesting and overseeing the portion of the budget they need to carry out their committee’s activities. There is always a back-up plan for unforeseen expenses, which in the past have resulted from occurrences ranging from leaks and breakages to the availability of a minister or a community social justice initiative; the Board can approve such expenditures. In the end, though, the budget involves all of us, and it is only possible to carry out the plans and dreams of the congregation if we are all contribute our time, treasure, and talents. The Board is especially grateful to all of you who responded to the Stewardship Campaign, which we completed on December 16. Making your commitments before the Treasurer and the Board draw up the budget allow us to determine what expenses can be approved in the 2019 budget.

The date and time for the Annual Budget Meeting will be sent by email. Your attendance is important to us, as this is your opportunity to ask questions about our charitable organization and its use of the money you donate. We also count on you to do your part in ensuring a quorum. “Quoring” should be a verb, meaning to show up, be counted, have a voice and a vote, and most importantly showing that you know the UFF belongs to you. It is active citizenship; it empowers the “quorer” and the membership.

The entire budget exercise, from the establishment of the Stewardship Committee to the Annual Budget Meeting, is an opportunity for all of us to adopt an “abundance” and “generosity” mindset as we consider the kind of space, programming, and outreach we want to offer. It is an exercise in optimism and in community-building, because we are able to make our dream of the kind of community we would want (and need) into reality. Please continue to dream along with us in 2019.

Jo-Anne Elder-Gomes
President, the UFF Board, 2018-2019



Dies Natalis Solis Invicti

Many thanks to Judi Day for this photograph of the Winter Solstice Sun of 2017, taken from the boat launch at Morell Park.



Yule began this year at sunset on December 21st and continues for 12 days to end at sunset on January 1st. The starting day is the day on which the Winter Solstice occurs, this year at 6:23 pm Atlantic Time on December 21st. Pagan days end and begin at sunset rather than the middle of the night.

Solstice comes from the Latin *sol* (the sun) and *sistere* (to make stand), i.e. the sun stops moving ever lower in the sky and pauses. Several days later it becomes apparent that it has begun to move higher in the sky each day and pagan societies would celebrate the rebirth of the Sun God or King. The Romans celebrated this as “*Dies Natalis Solis Invicti*”, “*Birthday of the Unconquerable Sun*”. What better day to celebrate the birth of the “*Son of God*” than the date of the rebirth of the “*Sun God*”?

For completeness, the nativity date of John the Baptist (arguably, the most significant of the Saints) was assigned to the same relative position, June 24th, with respect to the Summer Solstice. Historically, of course, there is no evidence for the validity of either Christian use. It was, however, highly effective to insert Christianity into the pagan societies of Europe and to ultimately supplant the legitimate celebrations by these appropriations. Of course, it leaves many difficult questions for Christian parents to answer about why various pagan traditions survive in the Christian feasts.

However you chose to celebrate or ignore it, we hope your Solstice Festival was peaceful and pleasant and wish you a Happy New Year.

Tony Fitzgerald



Things Fall Apart

by Chinua Achebe

This fictional account of a village in Lower Nigeria and the arrival of British colonial power in the time of Queen Victoria is an intriguing story of how religions are shaped and how they shape humans. Achebe’s parents were Christians and his information on the clan religion in their home region comes from their stories and Achebe’s own research.

The main figure in the story is Okonkwo, who adopts the fiercest side of the clan religion because he is ashamed of his father’s weakness. Okonkwo, who has three wives, is desperate to be respected as a tough and prosperous leader. He becomes one of the men who give the word of one of the many versions of God and as such says all beaten wives should return to their husbands while payment is made to their father’s family. Conveniently this would apply to the wife he has beaten. He is a leader in battle against other clans who deny the religious laws regarding territory or respect for his clan and a negotiator for settlements within the nine villages of the clan. But he is not the only power in the clan and others object to his frequent use of violence. After an incident where he commits “a woman’s crime”, meaning shooting someone by mistake, he is exiled to his mother’s village.

Questions arise from this, though Achebe does not address them directly. Is the religion shaped by fear based on an uncertain economy, in this case yam farming, dependent on weather? The size of the clan is important, small enough to manage on supplies but large enough to defend itself. Is this why twins are put out in the forest to die and those with swollen bellies and other limitations are ostracized? Is the polytheism a way leading to the supreme God, as one of the clan members suggests to a Christian missionary? Gods range from the personal “*chi*” who apparently says “*Yes*” when the man says “*Yes*” through various gods and goddesses such as Earth. A friend who lived in Nigeria for several years tells me many of the traditions are still observed in the villages.

The position of women appears to be lower in power in the earlier chapters, but we discover every male god has a female oracle who speaks for it and every female goddess has a male oracle. The women tell the gentler folk tales while the men talk of war and violence. Wrestling, for men only, appears to be the status symbol of the whole society.

There are parallels in what we see of the Christian missionaries. The first, who arrives before the civil powers of the British colonisers are known in the area, preaches a religion of love and acceptance. He attracts the gentler and ostracized members of the clan and some of the women. Then along with the civil powers comes a missionary who wants only the chosen few with fierce devotion in his church. When one of his converts commits murder,

the civil powers do nothing but go after Okonkwo and the others who sought revenge and killed a British official. They are released after paying a substantial fine in cowries, including a chunk for the prison guards who treated them brutally. In passing, the commissioner remarks that the Queen is head of the Church of England! He also plans to write a book on The Pacification of the Tribes of Southern Nigeria.

Many more questions are raised and the plot certainly keeps the reader involved!

Sheila Andrew



WhaleCoast Alaska 2019

WOW! Four Unitarian Universalist Fellowships in Alaska invite you to our awe-inspiring, 26th annual Alaska tour program.

TOUR #1: National Park Tour, June 8-18, 2019 – \$3,258

TOUR #2: All-Alaska Tour, July 5-17, 2019 – \$3,887

WHERE: From the coastal waters to the sunny Interior, from wilderness to modern cities. We experience the best of Alaska: Fairbanks, Denali Park, Anchorage, Juneau, Sitka, Seward

SEE:

- Wildlife: whales, seals, bears, moose, caribou, & more.
- Glaciers, islands, fjords, and mountain ranges.
- Native American artists and dancers.
- Alaska's finest museums.
- Spectacular travel by train, plane, and boat.



STAY: Real Alaska! UU homestays, meals, & dinner parties with Alaska UUs who treat you like friends.

Director: Dave Frey, longtime Fairbanks UU

More information: www.WhaleCoastAK.org

Email: dfrey@WhaleCoastAK.org

Telephone: 907-322-4966

Hurry! Each tour sells out when 40 guests register



This space wants your material!
Please send articles to touchstone@uff.ca