



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

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Upcoming Services

Our theme for May is broader than usual, and that is because our themes come from various sources and sometimes, they overlap. So, this month we are featuring the somewhat unlikely combination of Truth, Meaning and Curiosity. This month's services will, it is hoped, help us all consider and reflect on these words in the context of history, our religious community, and our personal lives.

May 5 *Lay Chaplaincy Service* The CUC recommends that each congregation dedicate a service each year to the functions of the Lay Chaplain. This will be that service. Tony Fitzgerald, the retiring Lay Chaplain will lead the service and speak about some personal highlights of his tenure. Jenn Carpenter-Gleim, the newly appointed Lay Chaplain will be installed and speak of hopes and aspirations. Deby Nash, our senior Lay Chaplain, will share her experiences. Sheila Moore will speak on the function of Lay Chaplain committee which she chairs.

May 12 Guest Speaker Dr. Janet Mullin and Service Leader Heather Lunergan.

Dr. Mullin will discuss the Norse pagan beliefs of the Viking Age, and the ways in which those beliefs shaped

Scandinavian society in the last centuries before the arrival of Christianity.

May 19 *Search for Meaning Scavenger Hunt: Multigenerational Service.*

As Unitarian Universalists we assert no creed, but instead are unified by our affirmation of shared principles and sources, which encourage us in our search for meaning and spiritual growth. On Victoria Sunday, Jo-Anne invites our members, friends, and visitors of all ages to explore meaning and growth together. You may choose to reflect on your personal quest and share what gives meaning to your life, or you may look for clues to guide you towards new adventures.

May 26 *Truth, Meaning and Curiosity; How are they related and what do they tell us about man's quest for "the good life?"* Heather Lunergan will offer her thoughts, based on various texts and world events, to attempt a logical, if possibly imaginative, connection between these three powerful words.



Important Dates

We are nearing the end of our congregational year, and the UFF Board of Directors would like to make you aware of the following dates. Please mark them on your calendar.

Monthly Board Meetings: The May meeting has been rescheduled to Wednesday, May 8 at 6:30 pm due to scheduling difficulty. The June meeting will take place on its regular date of June 2 at 11:45 am. This will be the last regular meeting of the 2018-2019 board. The term of the current board ends on June 30.

Annual General Meeting of the Unitarian Fellowship of Fredericton: Our AGM will be held on June 16, 2019, immediately after a short service. The Notice of Meeting, containing the Agenda, committee reports, information about UFF business items, and the Nominating Committee's report will be included in the AGM package. Proxy forms will also be sent, in case you are unable to attend. You will receive the package by June 8 at the latest. If you are a committee chair, please ensure Jo-Anne gets a brief annual report by May 29 (with a copy to your VP) so it can be shared with the board and included in the package.

Our last service of the regular year will be held on June 23;

more details will be coming soon. The Fellowship will be closed on June 30, which is Canada Day weekend, to allow some of our members to attend Bunty Albert's funeral in PEI.

The Sunday Services committee already has planned some Sunday gatherings at the Fellowship during July and August. Most summer services are more casual and provide a great opportunity for us to get to know each other. There is no children's program over the summer, but parents or friends are welcome to take younger children upstairs to play.

Jo-Anne Elder-Gomes



Some thoughts on our monthly themes for May:

Truth is certainly a branch of morality and a very important one to society.

— Thomas Jefferson

“All successful networking is dependent on two key things: reciprocity and curiosity.”

— Phyllis Weiss Haserot

“If the whole universe has no meaning, we should never have found out that it has no meaning: just as, if there were no light in the universe and therefore no creatures with eyes, we should never know it was dark. Dark would be without meaning.”

— C.S. Lewis, Mere Christianity

“Me and my insatiable curiosity. If there's any justice in the world, I was a very good cat in a past life.”

— Rhi Etzweiler, Blacker than Black

Truth is mighty and will prevail. There is nothing wrong with this, except that it ain't so.

— Mark Twain

“Good Morning!” said Bilbo, and he meant it. The sun was shining, and the grass was very green. But Gandalf looked at him from under long bushy eyebrows that stuck out further than the brim of his shady hat.

“What do you mean?” he said. “Do you wish me a good morning, or mean that it is a good morning whether I want it or not; or that you feel good this morning; or that it is a morning to be good on?”

“All of them at once,” said Bilbo. “And a very fine morning for a pipe of tobacco out of doors, into the bargain.”

J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Hobbit*



Notes from the CUC Liaison

Whenever anyone asks us what is a Unitarian or a Unitarian Universalist many of us struggle to come up with a

good answer. Because we don't have a credo set in stone and are so diverse in our beliefs, it's not easy to give a ready-made response.

But finally there is a source which may be helpful to us.

What We Wish People Knew About Unitarian Universalism is a booklet compiled by Rev. Steven Epperson of the Unitarian Church of Vancouver. It is a collection of commentary and quotes from UU ministers from across Canada, with their thoughts on what it means to be a UU congregant.

I won't take up the space (or your time) to extract too many here. But here is one example from Rev. Norm Horofker of the Universalist Unitarian Church in Halifax.

“I wish everyone knew that Unitarian Universalism is a faith tradition that is totally unlike any other. We do not define ourselves by a limiting set of beliefs. We affirm that people of good will, regardless of individual spiritual and religious orientation, can have their lives enriched, as we work to heal the world and learn from each other—building relationships across cultural, social, economic and religious boundaries.”

And here is short one from Rev. Wendy McNiven

“I wish the word “religion” was not so un-cool and dangerous to people that they fear checking us out. And at the same time, I wish that those who are looking for spiritual depth wouldn't dismiss us because they may think we are too loosey-goosey, or that “we can believe anything” and still be Unitarian. We do have boundaries!”

I am thinking of checking to see if this booklet is available in paper. In the meantime you can read more by visiting CUC.ca/enews-april-16/.

The 2019 AGM on May 11

All the buzz with the CUC board and staff right now is getting ready for the Annual General Meeting set for May 11 in Toronto. This is the year when there is no convention as a companion piece to the AGM. Our two delegates this year, Patrick Daley (the younger) and Jenn Carpenter-Gleim will be attending the AGM via the Zoom internet program. They will be doing this at the fellowship and other members are welcome to drop in and see what's going on. The only difference is only Patrick and Jenn can vote on the resolutions.

As a nominee to the CUC board I will be attending the AGM in person.

Two interesting motions this year are one on changing the formula for calculating our annual contributions to the CUC and one on setting up a study group on racism. Previously this last one was going to address creating an eighth principle. As far as I know it was kind of downgraded to a study group only due to feedback the CUC got from member congregations.

Our own response to that motion did not exactly favour the proposed eighth principle as it was first presented. It grew out of a move in the Unitarian Universalist Association in the US to create an addition to the seven principles in response largely to the Black Lives Matter movement. In our response we suggested that racism and discrimination in Canada is not an exact parallel with US society and that their eighth principle may not be a good fit with our society and our own unique racial issues, especially our relationship with our Indigenous population.

If you want more news from the CUC and learn what's going on nationally and across the country with other UU congregations you can sign up to have the CUC enews delivered to your own email address. Just go on the CUC website, find the e-news newsletter and then scroll down to the bottom. There you will find "Sign Up For Our Newsletter".

Glenna Hanley



Renewal for Ken and Sheila

Unitarian House at 874 York has been home to our congregation for nearly twenty years, after nearly forty years on Charlotte Street, and we have shared many events, pot lucks and celebrations both happy and sad, over that time. On Easter Sunday, 2019, many folks gathered for the 50th anniversary renewal ceremony of Ken and Sheila Moore. Their family was there: children, grandchildren, siblings, nephews; as well as members, friends, and some folks we hadn't seen in a while.



There was a short worship service that included readings, joys and concerns, and a love song, an English translation of "Bist du bei mir" by J S Bach, performed by Pat Daley with Margaret Fitzgerald accompanying him on piano. Then, as the service ended and we moved into the ceremony, there was a reminder that 50 years ago, 1969 was the dawning of "The Age of Aquarius."

A sense of celebration and love took over, and a cake waiting in the library. There were more yellow tulips than one could imagine. They were everywhere, shining so brightly that no one noticed the grey day outside. Then, we watched Ken and Sheila walk up the aisle for the second time.

The renewal ceremony had been crafted by many people

working together to make this a memorable occasion. Ken and Sheila set the tone, and wrote various lovely bits of the renewal. They spoke of how, in 1969, they "had the good sense to marry one another."

The ceremony was overseen by our Lay Chaplains, Tony Fitzgerald, Deby Nash and Jenn Carpenter-Gleim, each of whom did a segment of the ceremony. The beginning of the event was moving; Ken and Sheila together lit a unity candle, a gold pillar candle that was encircled by 8 other candles. Deby had these words: "Sheila and Ken have chosen to affirm their love by the lighting of a Unity candle. It is a candle of Unity because both candles must come together to create the new light. Two fires, separate and individual, uniting their flames to burn as one."

The Moore's daughters, Kate and Darcy, and the grandchildren, Brandon, Nick, Alexandra, William, Erin and Ashley lit candles from the Gold one. Ken and Sheila addressed their family, and then Kate spoke for her and her sister, Darcy. They said that when they were children, their parents read many stories of history, fantasy, and ideas, but as adults, they understand that their parents taught them the really important lessons of life by the way they interacted with each other, and with Darcy and Kate, both at home and in public. The family hug was prolonged and meaningful.

Tony Fitzgerald then spoke of marriage, saying to the couple: "Marriage is a bond that is made up of many strands. The strands are woven into a web of love that begins with romantic love, then becomes devotion. Through these runs a constant— companionship. Marriage is spun of loyalties and dependencies, and shared experiences. It is woven of triumph and disappointment, of conflict and profound connection. It is a web of communication, in a language only the two of you have come to know. Woven from the substance of your lives; it is yours, and it is like no other. Ken and Sheila, even from the earliest days of being together, you have been faced with the challenges of what makes a true, honest and mature relationship. By being here today, you have reached this very special goal. In this setting, before your family and friends do you re-commit to each other?"

"We Do," they said, twice, in case anyone missed it.

After they had renewed their commitment to one another, Deby invited them to re-exchange their original wedding rings. After doing so, Ken and Sheila said this in unison: "There are three words that are stronger than 'I love you.' Fifty years ago, I stood in front of you to say 'I choose you.' Today, I stand in front of you to remind you that each and every day I choose you over all others. I choose you to share happiness with. I choose you to care for. I chose you to have a family with, I choose you to grow old with and I choose you to love forever."

Our newest Lay Chaplain, Jenn Carpenter-Gleim, concluded the ceremony by inviting the couple to share a kiss,

and then asked everyone to congratulate Ken and Sheila. As the couple and family led us out to the library, the ceremony turned into a party. Recorded music took us back to 1969 while we ate and chatted and hugged and enjoyed all those yellow tulips.



Entre amies

Between Friends

LGBTQ+ immigrants and refugees face many challenges when settling into life in Canada. Between Friends is a new group offering a safe and supportive social place for LGBTQ+ refugees and immigrants in Fredericton. The group meets the last Tuesday of every month from 7-9 pm. This month's meeting is April 30th. For safety reasons and to respect some of the challenges faced by newcomers the location is not made public. Folks wanting to attend the Tuesday evening gatherings can email betweenfriendsfred@gmail.com or instant message for more information. Facebook page is [Between Friends Fred](#).



Women's Pot Luck

The next Unitarian Fellowship women's pot luck will be held Friday, May 24, 2019. We gather at 6 PM and eat at 6:30 PM. Presently, we do not have a host or a topic. But I suspect someone will offer to host before the date arrives. I will let you know when I know. For further information, contact Joan Brewer at jebrewer@rogers.com



Tea, Laughter and Conversation (TLC)

Join us for some fun on Wednesday, May 8th at 1:30 when we delve into the question:

"Which deceased friend or relative would you most like to talk to?" Would you want to settle old arguments? Or would you want to try to understand that person better?

Questions? Call Sheila at 450-9021



Joys and Concerns

Good luck to Betsy and Anne-Louise in their new apartment.

Congratulations to Ken and Sheila Moore on their 50th wedding anniversary. It was a joyous event for those of us who were able to be there Easter Sunday.

Good luck to Jenny Barnes on her move to Regina. It was a pleasure to see you at TUFF when you were able to be there.

Congratulations to our new lay chaplain, Jenn Carpenter Gleim



TUFF Yard Sale Revised date

Saturday June 15

Bring in your good used household goods and books. We'll sort through them and have tables for books, household items etc.

We also plan to have a bake sale and a silent auction.

More information: Janet Crawford janetcra@nbnet.nb.ca 454-0441



Board Update:

Linda Thomson's Visit and Social Action

Last month we had a wonderful visit from Reverend Linda Thomson, Congregational Life Lead for the eastern half of Canada. She arrived when we were in the middle of brainstorming our dreams for the Fellowship (more on that later) on Sunday, April 7, heard some of the ideas from our groups and joined in our delicious potluck meal. She also talked about her responsibilities with the CUC (which has made it possible for us to accomplish great things) and shared some upcoming events hosted by the CUC, including the CUC National Conference in Halifax in May 2020 and webinars and online events you will find here: <https://cuc.ca/events/>.

On Monday morning, Linda met with a number of leaders and members and helped us with some items we are working on. The UFF board has undertaken a rather large project to draft policies, write down procedures, and review bylaws. Rev. Linda's help was really valuable, in turning the rather unwieldy project I had presented to

the Board into clearer and more manageable processes. For instance, I made a first effort to draft a Safety and Emergency policy that covered the protection of children and vulnerable people, disaster and evacuation procedures, and disruptive people and threats. Linda suggested we could start with one part of the policy and explore the more complicated parts gradually. In fact, most of the content in the child safety policy simply describes what we are already doing, based on our review of Safe Congregations policies over the years. However, this policy needs to be finalized and written down (say I, who cannot understand anything I don't read several times). I am still collecting information on a number of matters, and Linda has pointed us in the right direction for input into our bylaws, policies, and procedures.

Another matter the board has been considering since the beginning of our term is the **social action bylaw** (pasted below). According to the bylaws of the Unitarian Fellowship of Fredericton, we are restricted in our actions on social justice issues and can only act by organizing a "duly constituted" special meeting (called by the president, three board members, or six members, and held after information has gone out to the congregation at least a week before). We must have a quorum, and instead of being satisfied with a majority in favour, the bylaws require two-thirds of those present to agree. To make matters more complicated, the "social actions" referred to are not defined, so this could mean a donation to a charity, holding a sign at a protest, or volunteering as a group at the Community Kitchen.

According to our governance structure, it is the role of the Social Responsibility Committee to take the lead in informing, discussing with, and encouraging support or action by the Fellowship's members on important matters such as environmental/climate justice, support for refugees, inequalities, diversity and anti-oppression, and LGBTQI2+ inclusion. We want the largest number of people to participate in actions that affirm **Justice, equity, and compassion in human relations and The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all**. Our first and last principles also affirm the importance of taking action to protect the earth and all its beings; actually, all the principles provide reasons to undertake social actions, as a people of deeds rather than creeds. I think many of us have joined the Fellowship because we want to take collective action, to represent our congregation when we work for a more just and compassionate world, and to make ourselves better known in Fredericton and elsewhere as a community that strives to change inequitable social conditions.

Here is one past example of our congregation's social action. In 2005, the Unitarian Fellowship of Fredericton voted to become a Welcoming Congregation. The Welcoming Congregation program is a volunteer program for Unitarian Universalist congregations that want to take

active steps to become more welcoming and inclusive of individuals with marginalized sexual orientation and gender identities. The program grew out of the recognition of existing prejudice and ignorance about LGBTQ (lesbian, bisexual, gay, transgender and queer) people in UUism resulting in exclusion from our congregations. The program was developed by the Unitarian Universalist Association. Congregations must complete the Welcoming Congregation program and pass a congregational vote to affirm that they welcome the membership and active participation of the LGBTQ community. Now, 99% of Canadian Unitarian Council member congregations are Welcoming Congregations.

Although the most significant objection to our decision to become a Welcoming Congregation was the belief that we already fully welcomed LGBTQI2+ individuals, the board decided to dedicate the energy necessary to do the program well, to develop knowledge and understanding in the congregation, and to make any necessary changes to our structures and our practices. This meant over a year of focused work, the completion of a dozen workshops, and a thorough application to the CUC, which included written commitments to action and change. We worked through many concerns on the part of individual members and raised the awareness of the entire congregation. We held a congregational vote and achieved a two-thirds majority. It was not unanimous. I am heartened by the presence of dissenting voices, and by the fact that those with varying levels of discomfort continue to participate actively in our community.

One of the changes we made was the addition of the following clause to our preamble:

AND WHEREAS by vote at the 2005 Annual General Meeting, the membership approved completion of the process to become a Welcoming Congregation, the Fellowship is recognized by the Canadian Unitarian Council as a Welcoming Congregation and affirms that the congregation welcomes and celebrates the presence and participation of those of all sexual orientations, gender identities and gender expressions, including lesbians, gay men, bisexual, trans-identified and inter sex people.

Becoming a Welcoming Congregation the year that the marriage equality law was proclaimed by the Government of Canada (and thus mandated in New Brunswick) meant that the Unitarian Fellowship of Fredericton was featured in *The Daily Gleaner* as a religious community that supported marriage equality. This was a wonderful public announcement of our commitment.

Nonetheless, our social action bylaw seems to preclude our participation as a congregation in the Pride Parade, and specifically to carry a banner of the Unitarian Fellowship of Fredericton when we march. We have felt that we should call ourselves "UUs for Pride" or "Unitarians for Social Justice." Thus, we are not publicly celebrating the presence of LGBTQI2+ outside our walls, although we are

a Welcoming Congregation and have advertised and performed wedding ceremonies for people of diverse gender expressions and identities.

The board would like to consider alternatives to our approach to social action and propose an amendment to the bylaw at this year's Annual General Meeting (June 16). **We welcome any options from our members.** We invite you to consider who decides a social action will be undertaken, how issues are discussed and specific actions approved, what types of actions we might support without further discussion, and how we make allowances for actions that are controversial according to a clear definition and process. **Please email your suggestions** to Myron Hedderson, chair of Social Responsibility (Treasurer@UFF.ca) with a copy to me (President@UFF.ca) by May 13. We also hope you will participate in our congregational conversation in May (date tbd).

At the meeting with Linda and the board meeting the following week, the consensus was that we are proud of our decisions and actions on important matters, whether the purchase of our building or supporting refugees or becoming a Welcoming Congregation. We want people inside and outside the congregation to know that the world matters to us, and that we will show up in public for love and justice.

Social Action Bylaw

24. Social Responsibility Committee

The Social Responsibility Committee shall consist of a chair and at least one other member or friend of the Fellowship. The chair of the Social Responsibility Committee must be a member. The Social Responsibility Committee shall:

- (a) Provide opportunities through forums, study groups, lectures or Fellowship newsletter articles for the membership to become aware of social issues within our community, our nation and the world;
- (b) Make known to the membership a variety of ways in which the membership can act within the community in ways which reflect the purposes and principles of the Fellowship;
- (c) Prepare public statements concerning social concerns for membership approval at membership meetings.

In any matter of social action, no resolution shall be passed nor any action taken in the name of the Fellowship except by two-thirds agreement of the members present and voting at a duly constituted general or special meeting; provided that notice of such proposed social action shall be included in the notice calling the meeting where such action is considered; provided further, however, that in cases identified by the Social Responsibility Committee as being of an urgent nature, the authorization of social action by the Board of Directors

shall be sufficient. (The bold type has been added to indicate the part of the bylaw we refer to as the social action bylaw.)

We look forward to hearing from many members of the Fellowship. Please share your vision of social action by our community.

Jo-Anne

Jo-Anne Elder-Gomes,
for the UFF Board of Directors
and Myron Hedderson,
Chair, Social Responsibility Cmte.



Congregational Conversation: UFF Governance

May 12, 11:45am to 1:00pm.

Following the Sunday Service on May 12, bring your coffee and join Jo-Anne in the library for a brief presentation and Q&A. Come and find out more about the role of the UFF board of directors and committees in making decisions, running meetings, organizing programs, and participating in outreach activities. This conversation will be of particular interest to people who want to become more involved in our Fellowship.



Third Thursday: Social Action Discussion

May 16, 6:00pm.

Please join us at the Fellowship for a discussion on Social Action. We invite everyone in the congregation to take part in a conversation about the current bylaw and options for amendments. Come with your questions about the article (elsewhere in Touchstone), your ideas about how the congregation makes decisions on important social and humanitarian matters, and your suggestions for collective social action. (Note the earlier time for this discussion.)



The Book of Joy

by the Dalai Lama and Archbishop Desmond Tutu
with Douglas Abrams

Desmond Tutu came to Dharamsala in 2016 to celebrate the Dalai Lama's 80th birthday. Douglas Abrams, who has written on the teachings of many religious leaders, was with them and helped to arrange the get-together and wrote it up. Tutu, aged 83, famous for his work on reconciliation after the end of apartheid in South Africa, was already the Dalai Lama's good friend. He was getting

treatment for a serious cancer.

Joy was evident from the moment the two met again, with friendship, love, humour, and the pleasure of discussion that continued their search for answers in life. For the reader, especially those of us getting older, there is an added joy in their acceptance of human limitations. This is no Shambala book of warriors, though they have coped with many problems in their lives, Their differing views on some topics encourage the reader to get involved.

Joy is defined as much bigger than happiness and not dependant on external circumstances. It is a state of mind much closer to both their understandings of what animates our lives and what ultimately leads to a life of satisfaction and meaning. The purpose of life is avoiding suffering and discovering happiness. Joy moves from an ephemeral state to an enduring trait, from a fleeting feeling to a lasting way of being.

The book is divided into 4 parts.

Part I discusses how to be joyful in the face of daily troubles: frustration, fear, anger, and grief. We must deny nothing and transcend inescapable pain and suffering. It further discusses how to be joyful in the face of world troubles: suffering, poverty, violence, terror, and ecological devastation.

Part II discusses the latest science on joy, such as the physical and mental effects of meditation. Science supports the work of joy practices and shows that the book is neither solely Buddhist or Christian but for all.

Part III gives stories of them being in Dharamsala together, from the first embrace to the final goodbye.

Part IV provides many joy practices.

There are 8 pillars of joy. Four come from the mind: perspective, humility (meaning seeing oneself as part of the world), humour, and acceptance (This includes acceptance of ourselves without pointless guilt and negativity). The other four come from the heart: forgiveness, gratitude, compassion, and generosity. They give deeper meaning to all these and how to obtain them. Gratitude and generosity, for example, are so important that the Dalai Lama says he would rather go to hell than to heaven as there are more people needing help in hell. Compassion is extending understanding of our own problems to see them in the context of other 's problems and the need for generosity.

This excellent book explains deeper meanings given to all these concepts and the way to use them to seek joy. You can borrow my copy when I can bear to let it go. It is a pleasure to read the conversations of these old men who have experienced so much, their jokes and their different views on some topics.

Sheila Andrew.



More Words on UUism...

We Unitarian Universalists are religious liberals who individually choose our own religious values and meanings based on lived experience, reason and our inner integrity. We meet in religious community to learn, exchange viewpoints, be accepted, make a difference, experience the sacred; to laugh and cry and sing together.

Rev. Jane Bramadat



Cats

Warning: the following article contains alleged humour. If you have experienced intolerance for humour or are ailurophobic, it is suggested you skip this article. You have been warned.



Bastet

There is no snooze button on a cat who wants breakfast.

Anon

Thousands of years ago cats were worshipped as gods. They have never forgotten this.

Anon

Cats are smarter than dogs. You can't get eight cats to pull a sled through snow.

Jeff Valdez

As every cat owner knows, nobody owns a cat.

Ellen Berkeley

Dogs come when they're called; cats take a message and get back to you later.

Mary Bly

Cats are rather delicate creatures and they are subject to a good many ailments, but I never heard of one who suffered from insomnia.

Joseph Krutch

People who hate cats will come back as mice in their next life.

Faith Resnick

There are many intelligent species in the universe. They are all owned by cats.

Anon

I have studied many philosophers and many cats. The wisdom of cats is infinitely superior.

Hippolyte Taine

Dogs believe they are human. Cats believe they are God.

Anon

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