



The Newsletter of the Unitarian Fellowship of Fredericton

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Up-coming Sunday Services

We invite you to join us by ZOOM on Sunday mornings at 10:15 as we continue to provide thought provoking and meaningful programs. Not being able to gather in person has been difficult for many of us but through the magic of technology we can stay connected.

September 13 Janet Crawford - *“Creating Community During COVID-19”*. Janet is the Caring Committee Chair of our congregation.

September 20 Josee Owen - *“Local Sustainable Livelihoods”* - Josee holds multiple degrees in agriculture from McGill University, and a postgraduate certificate in Food Security from Ryerson University. She is passionate about complexity in food systems.

September 27 Sarita Gujar - *“A New Brunswicker talks about Hinduism Customs and Traditions”*

October 4 Ben Hong - *“A Chinese Immigrant in New Brunswick”*



Letter from the Incoming President

Thank you to the outgoing board, for steady leadership over the past year and particularly, over the last few months, unprecedented in UFF history.

Thank you to everyone who supported the roster of candidates for the 2020-2021 board of the Fellowship. And thank you for electing me as your President. For those of

you who are scratching their heads and asking, “Who?”, let me introduce myself.

In March of 2018, I retired after 25 years as set and costume designer for the drama program at Mount Allison University. Upon retiring, my plan was to move away from the wide spot in the road, known as Mount Whatley, where I had been living since 1997. Mount Whatley is located a few kilometres outside of Sackville, very close to the Nova Scotia boarder.

Fredericton was my first choice to re-locate to. It is a beautiful city, brimming over with possibilities for engagement. At the time I made this decision, I had no idea there was a nest of Unitarians resident in this city. Neither could I have told anyone what a Unitarian was. My plan was to join some version of a religious congregation in Fredericton, one that was very mild on the fire and brimstone scale while seriously committed to building and sustaining community.

Having been tipped off by a friend that I might find the Unitarians to my liking, I walked into the Fellowship building in early September of 2018. It was my great good fortune that the Queen of Welcomes herself met me at the door, showed me around and invited me to stay for coffee after the service. I was overwhelmed by the warmth and graciousness of Sheila Moore’s greeting, along with the welcome from others in the building. During that first visit, I felt that I had found my spiritual home, one I hadn’t known existed.

The UFF faces a number of challenges in the coming year. We are still making our way through the fraught landscape of Pandemic, having embraced the new world of digital gathering spots with our Zoom meetings. This technology has allowed us to stay in touch, with the added benefit of providing some congregants and guests with greater access to our community.

The newly acclaimed board faces additional trials. We are operating without a designated Treasurer. We have still to hire a bookkeeper. Our policy manual is very skinny, needing desperately to be bulked up with guidelines that will assist the board as well as current and future committees to do their best work. And our congregation is in need of the continuity bestowed by new and younger members.

The board and I resolve to do our best over the coming year. Please keep in touch with us to share your ideas,

suggestions and concerns. With your support and encouragement, we will prevail.

Decima Mitchell
UFF President

Postscript:

Since submitting this letter earlier in the summer, I am very pleased to announce that firstly, we have acquired a very capable treasurer, in the person of Suzanne Lanery, we have hired Kelly Richard bookkeeping service and the policy guidelines have been updated.



TUFF Caring Circle

Joys and Concerns

Good Luck to Alyssa Sankey and Jeff and Zach Frooman as they begin their one year sabbatical in Toronto

NEEDED: Members for the Tuff Caring Circle. We try to help people with their concerns and celebrate their joys. We often deliver food, but we are not doing food during the pandemic. We send cards and visit when appropriate and keep in touch with phone calls. If you would like to receive “caring” calls, please contact Janet at janetcra@nbnet.nb.ca

We have a private Facebook page to try to keep some community during these difficult times.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/247416469728195/>

Let me know and I can add you to the page.

We also host Tea and Conversation by zoom on Mondays at 2 pm. Let me know if you would like to be added to our list or watch for an announcement. Starting Sept. 14th.

For more information or to send a joy or concern, please contact Janet at janetcra@nbnet.nb.ca.



CBC Favourite Plant

The CBC Information Morning program recently had a “contest” which asked listeners to submit their entry for a favourite plant. The only restriction was that the submission should conform to the limit on Twitter messages (280 characters). Your humble servant was, eventually, inspired to submit the following. At 256 characters, including spacing and punctuation, well within the limit. A number of Fellowship congregants (two, actually, of whom I am aware) have suggested that the entry had some artistic merit and deserves wider circulation.

The inspiration was a homework assignment given when the author was taking the GFAW introduction to Paganism classes. The assignment was simply: “hug a tree”.

*The ancient hemlocks of Odell.
Late-winter pagan homework: hug a tree.
Beside an icy trail,
the trickle of melt-water in the background.
Arms around the trunk: an expected sense of solidity,
an unexpected sense of warmth.
Tension departs: a tree hugged.*

In Fellowship
Tony Fitzgerald



Love and Death

My Journey Through the Valley of the Shadow
by Forrest Church

The sermon by David Seale we heard earlier in the year was a useful introduction to this book, but as I was in the middle of it at the time I thought I could still share a few more of Church’s thoughts. A bit of repetition is inevitable! As readers probably know, Church wrote this book when he was dying of cancer. He based it partly on sermons he had written on topics related to death and its spiritual significance and thanks his congregation for the inspiration they had given him.

Religion, he says, is our human response to the dual reality of being alive and having to die. The purpose of life is to live in such a way that our lives will be worth dying for.

As a Unitarian minister he says God is not God’s name but our name for that which is greater than all and yet present in each. It is a mystery, not a puppet master but the cosmic ground of our being. In times of disaster God is commingled with the victim’s tears. Theology is poetry, not science. To get closer to interpreting the mystery of creation we rely on our own experience drawn from our society, the Bible and our study of philosophy. We can not look God directly in the eye anymore than we can look directly at the sun. The continuing search counsels humanity and confirms our oneness.

So God within us is love. The most important aspect of life that lives on after death. Church says he does not know what happens after death but there can not be hell because love forgives. Sharing love is a sacrament bringing humans and God together. The Bible gives us strength and insight, especially Jesus’s commandments to love God and love your neighbour. For Church, Jesus’ teaching clearly illustrates the union with God as love.

The image of different religions and philosophies as windows on aspects of spiritual truth is beautiful. I especially liked his idea that as we get older and more limited in what we can do our focus through these windows becomes clearer because of the limitations.

Death can come at any time to us and those we know if we fall through the “trapdoors”. So we must be ready. He

gives advice on “bedside manners” when visiting the dying: stay for 5-10 minutes, touch, bring some laughter, find a remembered story and remembered love. For ourselves, there will be much ongoing business, but no unfinished business. Acceptance makes us free to die, so do what needs doing now. Begin by doing what you can, clearing the slate, turn the page, look for new questions not old answers, begin with possible dreams. Death is not life’s enemy but the hinge on which life turns, like birth.

Salvation should mean peace with life and death, making peace with ourselves and our loved ones, saying yes to the cosmos, embracing our lives and death to make peace with God. Surely, there is love after death, the love that we give away before we die. Death is peaceful, according to his experience. The dying do not want to return to their suffering bodies. So to prepare for death we should “be who we are, do what we can” (meaning the best that we can) and “want what we have”.

This is one of the best books I have ever read. There is more to it than Seale or I have shared and you are welcome to borrow my copy.

Sheila Andrew



The Double Seventh (Qixi) Festival

On August 25th, people doing Google searches might have noticed that the “Google Doodle” featured the “Chinese Valentine’s Day” or the **Qixi** / 七夕 (literally “Evening of Sevens”) Festival which falls on the 7th day of the 7th month of the Chinese lunar calendar (i.e. the double seventh festival).



From Wikipedia: The general tale is a love story between Zhinü (the weaver girl, symbolizing Vega) and Niulang (the cowherd, symbolizing Altair). Their love was not allowed, thus they were banished to opposite sides of the Silver River (symbolizing the Milky Way). Once a year, on the 7th day of the 7th lunar month, a flock of magpies would form a bridge to reunite the lovers for one day. There are many variations of the story.

This space wants your material!
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