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Up-coming Sunday Services

We will continue to provide Sunday Services by ZOOM each Sunday. Watch for the ZOOM information each week which will be sent to the congregational email list. Contact the chair of the membership committee, Membership@UFF.ca, to be added to the mailing list.

January 3rd No Service

January 10th Tom Beckley will be speaking about the Spirituality of the Forests. Dr. Tom Beckley has been working in the field of natural resource sociology in Canada since 1993. He is a professor in Forestry and Environmental Management and a Board member with the Nature Trust of NB.

January 17th Jane Fritz - *“The Himalayan Buddhist kingdom of Bhutan, where Gross National Happiness reigns”* Jigme Singye Wangchuck, Bhutan’s 4th king (father of today’s king), took a defining step in the development of his isolated 3rd world country when he declared, early in his reign that began in 1972 that, “Gross national happiness (GNH) is more important than gross domestic product.” This, of course, reflects the Buddhist principles of compassion and contentment. GNH is seen as part of the Buddhist Middle Path, where “happiness is accrued from a balanced act rather than from an extreme approach.” In 2011 the UN encouraged the countries of the world to look to Bhutan’s example, calling happiness and well-being fundamental human goals. Following that, the UN began producing an annual World Happiness Report based on the Bhutan model and declared March 20 to be celebrated annually as International Day of Happiness.

In this talk Jane Fritz will discuss Bhutan’s approach to measuring and supporting the happiness and well-being of their citizens, as well as some of their very special challenges in moving to a modern society and modern economy while living in an isolated part of the world between two giants: India and China. Jane was fortunate enough to have traveled to Bhutan 3 times while helping that country establish a healthy computer science program. In addition, she taught a number of Bhutanese students who returned to be part of the emerging Bhutanese IT programs and workforce. She is a huge fan of Bhutan and their efforts to follow their own path.

Service Leader: Linda Sprague

January 24th *“Book Sunday”* Our zoom Sunday Service will be a sharing of a favourite book or a book that was life-changing. We invite you to share with us your thoughts about books that you found worth recommending. Send the title, author and a paragraph about the book to Sheila Andrew’s email: sandrew@stu.ca. We want to get as many of you as we can to talk for 3-5 minutes about your book. Looking forward to hearing from you. Please submit your email to Sheila Andrew by January 17, 2021.



The Joan McFarland Endowment

After dedicating 48 years to teaching at St. Thomas University, Dr. Joan McFarland is giving back even more to students. She has endowed a fund to annually provide three awards in her name – a scholarship and two prizes – for students marginalized by gender including women, trans, and non-binary individuals. “I wanted to give a gift to St. Thomas because they’ve given me a lot for 40 years. I wanted to encourage more students to study Political Economy, an approach to economics that I used in my research and teaching throughout my career. I worked very hard to develop courses using that approach and to have Political Economy included as an option in the Economics program at St. Thomas.” - Dr. Joan McFarland

Article from St. Thomas University Community Report 2020
 submitted to Touchstone by H. Miller



Imbolc

At sunset on February 1st begins the festival of Imbolc which will continue until sunset on February 2nd.

The areas of Europe around the North Sea, whence cometh many of our settler ancestors, benefit from the relatively warm waters of the Gulf Stream to have a somewhat more benign climate than we see in the Maritimes. The first signs of spring are starting to show in early February: snowdrops and crocus are poking up and even the first greens might be picked. Pagan cultures would pace their year to the repeating cycles of the Sun and the mid-point “Fire Festivals” between the solstices and equinoxes. With Roman conquest, the mid-point festivals were moved to the beginning of the month in which they occurred. Thus Imbolc is at the beginning of February.

The re-awakening of plants is a sign that the Goddess is re-awakening. She has been asleep since Samhain, the Celtic New Year at the beginning of November. Then, we celebrated her generosity and the gifts of the harvests as she left, as the “Crone”, to sleep and rejuvenate. Now, at Imbolc, she awakens as the “Maiden” and may be called Brigid in Ireland.

So beloved that the Church could not demonize her. Rather, she was demoted to saint and her ritual day to Candlemas. *Sic transit gloria mundi.*



Leave a cross in each room leaving the kitchen to last and in this room recite:

*Mother of the Earth and the Sun
Keep us safe and keep us warm,
As over our home you extend your blessing.*

Some notes from research for this article for you to pursue: Pagans do not and never did have a central authority responsible for establishing dogma and ritual practice. Even the names of the Goddess/Mother and the god varied from locale to locale. Some pagan conventions set Imbolc as the beginning of the year rather than Samhain as the end. The Chinese new year is based in a lunar rather than a solar calendar so moves around within a month but tends to occur near Imbolc. There is a nice serendipity about this timing. The Chinese new year features the Dragon Dance. Celtic Pagans also use the dragon as a ritual symbol. Remember it was a dragon which St. George slew in a symbolic act similar to St. Patrick driving the snakes out of Ireland. Both legends had more to do with repression of the Pagan faith than actual mythical animals.

To our Pagan friends, a blessed Imbolc.

Tony Fitzgerald



Think About Running in the 2021 Municipal Elections!

Editor’s Note: Among the items that come into the Fellowship’s Office email address are postings from the Fredericton Chamber of Commerce. This is adapted from an item in the December 24th letter. Remember, municipal councils in many ways have a greater impact on our day to day lives than the other levels of government: keeping streets in good condition, providing public space, safeguarding our water, fire and police protection. Unitarians pride themselves in helping the less fortunate. There are also incentives this time round to get more women involved in politics.

Municipal Elections will be held in New Brunswick on 10 May 2021 (after being delayed for a year) and now is the time to start thinking about putting your name forward! We encourage all of our members to consider running for various positions as your experience as a human being would be a very valuable perspective to bring to the City.

To learn more about the upcoming municipal election, including how to become a candidate, visit the Elections NB website at:

<https://www.electionsnb.ca/content/enb/en/MDECRHA-2021.html>



Brigid’s Broom

At Imbolc, the Maiden aspect of the Goddess might be represented in a great variety of ways... by a simple ear of dried corn, a figure made of grain at Lughnasadh, or straws of wheat braided into an intricate design. One representation of the Goddess is Brigid’s Cross

or Broom. Although the original design may well have been made from rushes, wheat versions have been recreated for centuries. Make a cross for each room of the house to invite the blessings of the Goddess into them.

A possible Brigid Cross Rite might consist of placing a red pillar-sized candle center to the front door. With cross in hand light the candle, open the door and say:

*We welcome in the Goddess and seek the turning of
the wheel away from winter and into spring*

Close the door, take up the candle, go to each room, and say:

*Great Lady, enter with the sun and watch over this
room!*



The Edict of Torda

Celebrating the anniversary of religious tolerance

On January 13, 1568 one of the world's first statements of religious tolerance was proclaimed in the city of Torda, in what is now Romania. At a religious gathering, Unitarian King John Sigismund proclaimed:

"...in every place the preachers shall preach and explain the Gospel each according to his understanding of it, and if the congregation like it, well. If not, no one shall compel them for their souls would not be satisfied, but they shall be permitted to keep a preacher whose teaching they approve. Therefore, none of the superintendents or others shall abuse the preachers, no one shall be reviled for his religion by anyone, according to the previous statues, and it is not permitted that anyone should threaten anyone else by imprisonment or by removal from his post for his teaching. For faith is the gift of God and this comes from hearing, which hearing is by the word of God."

Unitarianism was officially recognized for the first time in the history of the world in the Edict of Torda. And, that proclamation is the beginning of our legacy to be a spiritual tradition that resists hatred, oppression, and the narrow view that there is only one way to be faithful, to be religious, to be free.

*Another source gives the date as January 28, 1568. Google Edict of Torda.

Sheila Moore



Joys and Concerns

Welcome Robin Stanley to Fredericton. Robin is living surrounded by Heather, Haifa and Gail who live in the same building.

Heather was very happy to have Suzanne for a Christmas sleepover.

Best wishes to Betty Ponder who is recovering successfully at DECH

Sympathy to Glenna and Tom Hanley and their families on the death of their niece.

Happy New Year to our president Decima Mitchell who is in Florida with her sister, and sympathy on the loss of her dog Jou Jou,

It was also joyful for the Caring Circle to deliver holiday bouquets since we didn't do our cookie exchange during COVID.

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@gmail.com or 454-0441.

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

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

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

We also host Tea and Conversation by zoom on Tuesdays at 1:30 Let me know if you would like to be added to our list or watch for an announcement.

For more information or to send a joy or concern, please contact Janet at janetcra@gmail.com



Online Bookstores

Editor's Note: Among the items that come into the Fellowship's Office email address are notices of new publications from a couple of (usually) liberal leaning religious sources. Occasionally there are titles which may be of interest to Unitarians, however, I am reluctant to circulate promotional material to the congregation. Members may wish to browse the offerings so I am providing links.

inSpirit UU Book and Gift Shop

This is the online store of the Unitarian*Universalist Association, a primarily U.S. organization at this time but at one time Canadian Unitarian*Universalist congregations were also members of the UUA and they still have information which many may find relevant. Their online store is at <https://www.uuabookstore.org/>.

WoodLake Books of Spirit and Imagination:

A Canadian source. Many of the books appear to be Christian or Bible based in their content, however, even some of these titles are intriguing. It is probably worth at least a few minutes of your browsing. The online store is at <https://www.woodlakebooks.com/>.



Out of the Flames

by Lawrence and Nancy Goldstone

From the Book Jacket "The remarkable story of a fearless scholar, a fatal heresy, and one of the rarest books in the world."

The fearless scholar was Michael Servetus, the fatal hearsay caused him to be burnt at the stake by John Calvin, and the book was De Trinitatis Erroribus (On the Errors of the Trinity), published when Servetus was only 20 years old. Michael Servetus was born in Spain most likely on September 29, 1511 (his patron saint's day), although no specific record exists. He was a Spanish (Aragonese) theologian, physician, and humanist. He died

in October 1553, after evading both John Calvin and many other Church leaders for 20 years.

Though Jesus had been dead several hundred years before the word “Unitarian” came into use, the movement that eventually acquired that label began shortly after his death. Then, many who knew Jesus talked of his humanity and his teachings, while others who had only heard of him touted his divinity and began to construct a religion that was more about him than of him. This caught the attention of many young scholars, including Servetus.

Servetus was gifted in languages and studied Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. His interests included many sciences, astronomy, meteorology, geography, jurisprudence, study of the Bible, mathematics, anatomy and medicine. He is renowned in several of these fields, particularly medicine and theology.

At the age of fifteen, Servetus entered the service of a Erasmian Franciscan friar, Juan de Quintana. He read the entire Bible in its original languages from the manuscripts available at the time. Servetus later attended the University of Toulouse in 1526 where he studied law. There he became suspected of participating in secret meetings and activities with Protestant students.

The issue that polarized the inheritors of these philosophical differences was the doctrine of the Trinity, adopted in 325 AD by means more political than religious. The Trinitarians, who believed in, “God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Ghost,” said that those who stressed the unity of God (later known as Unitarians) were heretics. Many of the Unitarians were executed for their beliefs. Best known of these martyrs is Michael Servetus, who was burned at the stake in 1553 for writing “On the Errors of the Trinity.”

Servetus built a theology which maintained that belief in the Trinity was not based on biblical teachings but rather on what he saw as the deceitful teachings of Greek philosophers. In part he hoped the dismissal of the Trinitarian dogma would make Christianity more appealing to Judaism and Islam which had remained as strictly Monotheistic religions. In 1553 Servetus published yet another religious work with further Antitrinitarian views. It was entitled *Christianismi Restitutio* (Christianizing Restitution), a work that sharply rejected the idea of predestination and the idea that God had condemned souls to Hell regardless of worth or merit. God, insisted Servetus, condemns no

one who does not condemn himself through thought, word or deed.

On October 27, 1553 Servetus was burned at the stake just outside Geneva with what was believed to be the last copy of his book (*Christianismi Restitutio*) chained to his leg. Historians record his last words as: “Jesus, Son of the Eternal God, have mercy on me.”

Due to his rejection of the Trinity and his eventual execution by burning for heresy, Servetus is often regarded as the first (modern) Unitarian martyr. His strong influence on the beginnings of the Unitarian movement in Poland and Transylvania has been confirmed by scholars. One Unitarian Universalist congregation in Minnesota is named after him. A church window is dedicated to Servetus at the First Unitarian Congregational Society of Brooklyn, NY. In 1984, a Zaragoza public hospital changed its name from José Antonio to Miguel Servet. It is now a university hospital. Most Spanish cities also include at least a street, square or park named after Servetus. The Geneva district Servette is also named after Servetus.

The book is fascinating, detailing the rivalry and eventual battle between John Calvin (born Jean Chavin), who studied in hopes of emulating the great theologian Erasmus, the time of chaos and transition within the Protestant and Catholic Churches, and contains clear, concise information about important events within the early church, such as the Treaty of Nicea.

I have only scratched the surface of this deeply layered, faithfully documented, and historically significant book. The book is about more than Servetus, and is, by times, quite a heavy read. What happened to the 2 copies of his most famous book that escaped the flames makes up a good deal of the book, and the early history of Unitarianism completes this undertaking by the Goldstones. You may borrow my copy, if you wish. Heather Lunergan.

Final Postscript: If you are interested in the relationship between Calvin and Servetus, Robert Willis (2017) wrote a book titled *Servetus and Calvin. A Study of an Important Epoch in the Early History of the Reformation*. The Gutenberg Project has put it online:

<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/54226/54226-h/54226-h.htm>

Heather Lunergan

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Please send articles to touchstone@uff.ca