



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.caNewsletter editor: touchstone@uff.ca

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Service Leader – Janet Crawford*Tech* – Myron Hedderson

Up-coming Sunday Services

Sunday Services 10:30 am at 874 York Street

We are very pleased to be able to provide Hybrid services now. With the wonderful technical help from a few of our members we are able to have both Zoom and in-house services. The Sunday Services are being recorded for viewing later, however, the sharing of Joys and Concerns will not be recorded for reasons of confidentiality.

Dec. 5th As part of our recognition of Human Rights Day on December 10th, UFF has invited the Acting Director of the Atlantic Human Rights Centre (AHRC) to speak with us about the work of the Centre.

Guest Speaker – Dr. Shannonbrooke Murphy

Service Leader – Joan McFarland

Tech – Myron Hedderson

Dec. 12th *Climate Change: What Happened at Glasgow, and What Needs to Happen Over the Next 9 Years*

Speaker – Myron Hedderson

Service Leader – Haifa Miller

Tech – Kurtis Langevin

Dec. 19th *Advent and Christmas Music.* We will be hearing a variety of special music chosen by members of our congregation. Singing joyfully together (with masks on)!

Please send requests to janeloughborough@gmail.com

Service Leader – Jane Loughborough

Tech – Myron Hedderson

Dec. 26th *No service*

Enjoy your Boxing Day! See you January 2nd and Happy New Year.

Jan. 2nd *A New Year, A Time of Renewal*

Musical Request Service

The Sunday December 19th service at UFF is going to feature Advent, Christmas and Yule music. What are your favourite Christmas carols to sing at a Sunday service? Do you have a favourite piece of choral music for Advent or Christmas that you would like to hear? Are you familiar with Benjamin Britten's Ceremony of Carols?

We won't be signing choruses from Handel's MESSIAH but we will be singing (with masks on) with piano accompaniment, listening to CD's and perhaps using DVD's to bring you special Advent/Christmas music. Tell us about your favourite Advent or Christmas season music so we can include it on December 19th.

Send your requests to janeloughborough@gmail.com or leave a message for Jane at 506-459-0913

Sunday Services Committee

Sunday Service December 12

Some interesting observations for his service on Climate Change from Myron.

While there is broad agreement that climate change is a serious problem that needs to be addressed as soon as possible, when you start digging into the details, there are areas of significant disagreement. Some people say we have all the tools we need to solve this, and all that is lacking is political will. Others say we're doomed and the "keep 1.5 alive" rhetoric is a fantasy. Some tout the agreements reached at Glasgow as a major step in the right direction, others see them as meaningless political posturing. As those of you who have been to one of Myron's presentations before may be able to guess, this will be an information-packed 40 minutes where Myron digs into these different perspectives, and lays out the facts as we

currently understand them about where we are, what was agreed at the Glasgow climate conference, where we need to get to by 2030, and how we might get there. The plan is that similar presentations will be made at least annually from now until 2030, tracking how we do as the decade progresses.



President's Summary from the Board Meeting of November 14, 2021

UFF Pledge Drive planning has begun, with fifty copies of the Pledge Letter being made available to members and friends of the Fellowship.

\$69 per member will be the cost of our fee for next year's membership in our national body, the Canadian Unitarian Council.

Our application for funding in support of our energy retrofit has been submitted to the West Trust.

The Board passed a motion to instruct our delegates, Jenn-Carpenter-Gleim and Myron Hedderson, to approve the 8th principle at the Nov. 27 CUC AGM. This decision was guided by the congregational response to the proposed 8th Principle at the meeting held October 16.

A draft Safety Policy for the UFF was discussed. The next step in developing the Safety Policy will be to consult with Committee Chairs and other members of the Congregation.

Budget requests for next year's programs and activities will be obtained from Committee Chairs.

The next Board Meeting will be held after the Sunday Service of December 5, starting at 1 PM. We will meet in person at the Fellowship. All are welcome to attend.

Submitted by Decima Mitchell



Further to "What Does It Mean to be a Unitarian Universalist?"

Our denomination is unique because every Unitarian Universalist has the right to develop a personal philosophy of life, without being told what to believe. We can learn from all philosophies and religions, and also from science and the arts. We explore important life issues in a caring community, united by shared values rather than by shared theological opinions. And no matter what we do believe about theology or philosophy, we try to live a good life and leave the world better than when we found it.

Rev. Chris Schriener
– Mission Peak Unitarian Universalist Congregation
of Fremont, California



The Father of Christmas

This is a month to celebrate Charles Dickens, British Unitarian, and author of A Christmas Carol. When Dickens wrote A Christmas Carol in 1843, many Christmas traditions had almost died out, and the holiday was hardly celebrated. England was becoming more and more industrial, and people leaving farms to work in factories had left their old customs behind.



But the story, which was wildly popular, brought enthusiasm back to practices like singing carols and feasting on special foods. The picture of the Cratchit family celebrating their Christmas together inspired people to find a way to celebrate Christmas in the cities, and the change of heart which comes to Ebenezer Scrooge reminded people that Christmas was traditionally a time when the wealthy folk shared with the poorer people.

In fact, Dickens was very concerned with the conditions of poor people at a time when the gap between the rich and the poor was getting wider and wider. Many of his books deal with this theme, and he became a Unitarian because, as he said, they "would do something for human improvement if they could; and practice charity and toleration".

As Unitarian Universalists, we do not turn away from noticing the gaps that separate "haves" from "have nots". To work against inequity, we know we first have to see it. Unitarian Charles Dickens saw it. Born poor, he later earned a living as a writer and joined a more comfortable economic class. Dickens used colourful character portraits and complex, often humorous plots, to expose tragic inequities in 19th century British society. He showed that people at opposite ends of an economic spectrum belong to the same "we", united by our common humanity and destiny – a lesson which resounds with our contemporary Unitarian Universalist Principles.

Submitted by
Sheila Moore

* This article comes from Quest For Meaning, a program of the Church of the Larger Fellowship which is a UU congregation with no geographic boundary. The CLF creates global spiritual community cultivating wonder, imagination and the courage to act.



Inclusion

What does it mean to be inclusive? While there have been some great strides in how society includes people compared to other historical periods (based on race, religion, gender, etc.) it seems as though we, as a society, have recently regressed. Even churches and faith communities are excluding their own members. I am speaking, of course, of the treatment of unvaccinated persons.

Now let me preface this essay with a few caveats. First, is that my reasons for remaining unvaccinated are based on creedal/religious beliefs. I believe it is inherently wrong to intentionally harm animals for any purpose, even for one's own benefit. Animals are given souls and spirits by God. This is a Biblically grounded and divinely inspired belief. This is also a deontological belief system. It, therefore, cannot be circumvented by any sort of appeal to 'utilitarian calculus' or another ethical frameworks. It would be like someone saying they are against slavery but then buying products of child or slave labour because of some benefit to them or others (i.e., usually cost savings). One needs to revolt from the entire industry if one is to be truly opposed to a practice they abhor. Unfortunately, no vaccines are made without significant harm to animals. They were tested using fetal cells. Something I am also opposed to. I also recently became aware (although I had many suspicions) that the testing products being used are also products of animal harm. I cannot, in good conscious, use any of these products, despite possible risk to myself. This is my cross to bear.

The second caveat is that people who are unvaccinated have essentially lost the freedom to associate in person with their religious communities is not entirely the fault of the churches. Government mandates are being imposed upon them. But is following orders a reasonable ground for discrimination? It has not been a justifiable reason throughout any period in history. In fact, Jesus purportedly healed a leper by touching him. According to the Levitical laws, people with leprosy should be locked up and segregated too. They were unclean. But Jesus ignored this institutional order because he had compassion for sick people. Christians are commanded to visit sick people in the Bible. Not let them die alone and frightened as the government would have us do.

And being unvaccinated does not even inherently make one sick. In fact, there is little evidence that being vaccinated significantly reduces spread. A recent Lancet study cited vaccination only provides a slight reduction in initially contracting the virus, but once contracted, the transmissibility and peak viral loads for the variants were the same regardless of vaccination status. We have been told that getting vaccinated will get us out of this, but this is apparently a carrot being dangled on a stick. New Brunswick has one of the highest vaccination rates and yet cases are rampant. They have now stopped disclosing the status of cases now. This is likely because in other heavily vaccinated country, like Israel, vaccinated cases and deaths are making up most of the cases as well. Governments should be taking a science-based approach, not a fear based and discriminatory approach. But governments need scapegoats to function properly. It has always been this way: the "in crowd" versus the "other".

I know my reasons for being unvaccinated may differ from that of many other unvaccinated persons. But I just wanted to let people know some of the moral ramifications of simply following orders. And it really should not matter what someone's beliefs are that prevent them from willingly taking the vaccine. The level of coercion from all forms of government to exclude the unvaccinated are disturbing. Should we just remain silent and hope it will be different than the last time? Austria already announced, beginning in February, it will start jailing and fining unvaccinated persons. People do not think these atrocities can happen again, but they are. And the comparison to previous forms of discrimination is apt. Persecution based on my creedal/religious beliefs now preclude me from many activities I may otherwise wish to engage in. Seeing my wife's concert, attending a worship service, dining with friends and family at a restaurant, leaving the country, and even my employment are all things that I am now barred from. All things that have been barred in the past to other discriminated groups. I have even repeatedly wished death for myself as it feels like my most deeply held beliefs (and therefore my innermost being) do not have a place in society any longer. People who thought we would have vaccine passports were deemed conspiracy theorists a year ago. But look where we are now. We are that country, despite our Prime Minister's admonitions several months ago. This time it will be different, right?

Chris Grant

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