



The Newsletter of the Unitarian Fellowship of Fredericton

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Sunday Service 11 a.m.

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text of the current decrease in knowledge and awareness of religious worldviews and their contribution to the public good in our secular society. John will argue that what is required is to create opportunities for the worldview communities, which wrestle with the larger questions of life, to make contributions to higher education. Before they can do so successfully, however, they need at the same time to undergo some enhanced self-understanding.



Kitsy Winthrop

We are looking forward to seeing Rev. Kitsy Winthrop again soon! She is planning to arrive on Saturday February 16 (or Friday night) and will stay through Tuesday morning (Feb 19).

During her visit, the Adult Programs committee is organizing a workshop on spiritual practices and personal growth (the exact title and description will follow) on Saturday afternoon (Feb 16, 2 - 4 p.m.) On Sunday, Rev. Kitsy will be leading the Sunday Service, and we will have a pot-luck lunch and a get-to-know-you/UU session following. Come and join us at the Fellowship; bring your food, appetite and questions, to share in these uncommonly good common goods.

It's always an uplifting and enjoyable experience to have Rev. Kitsy as a visiting minister, to lead us in workshops, services, and conversations. One of the gifts we appreciate the most is Rev. Kitsy's generosity and gentleness of spirit in one-on-one conversations with us. If you would like to talk to Rev. Kitsy individually, to explore your personal challenges, discoveries and concerns, please contact me to arrange a suitable time on Monday or between her other activities with us.

This year I am going to be looking after Rev. Kitsy's famous "dance card" and will be available by e-mail; I can also return your call (455-0413) so that you can book your dance. The Fellowship building is available, and we'll even turn up the furnace to make you comfortable there!

And let's make time for play and pleasure, too! Please let me know if you would like to invite Rev. Kitsy over for



Sunday Services

February 3 Dr. Nouredin Elbakali Kassimi will discuss his experience and knowledge of the Islamic faith and describe what it is like to maintain an active practice of his faith in New Brunswick.

February 10 "*Three Years Later*" Three years ago, the Fellowship began the final drive to achieve welcoming congregation status. Coincidentally, Tony Fitzgerald brought his closet out into the full light of day. Some retrospectives and observations on both events.

February 17 "*Epiphanies, Large and Small*". The reverend Kitsy Winthrop will be conducting the service as well as several workshops and will be available for pastoral care. Keep your eye out for further announcements.

February 24 "*The Fredericton Interfaith Dialogue*". Dr. John Valk will discuss the Fredericton Interfaith Dialogue and its objectives, framed in the larger con-

a meal, take her out for lunch, meet at the Fellowship for afternoon tea, or go to a concert together.

We'll be updating you soon on details of this visit. Don't hesitate to share any questions or concerns with me.

Blessings
Jo-Anne Elder-Gomes
and the Adult Programs Committee



First Thursday Discussion Group

Thursday February 7th 'Special Presentation of An Inconvenient Truth' - a project of our President Tom Hanley

Potluck at 6pm

Presentation at 7pm

Fredericton resident Carl Duivenvoorden will deliver former US vice-president Al Gore's global warming message with a live presentation of the award-winning slide show, An Inconvenient Truth at the Unitarian Fellowship, 874 York Street on Thursday February 7th at 7pm. All are welcome. Please join us for the potluck at 6pm or come along at 7pm for the presentation. Duivenvoorden was one of two Atlantic Canadians tasked with spreading Gore's message.

New, starting in February, we have arranged for Elisabeth Elder-Gomes to be available to baby sit during the discussion. If you plan to come with your children please contact allison calvern by Wednesday so that we can arrange for Elisabeth to be there.

Please forward this message to friends - we are hoping for a full house.

Editor's note, additional details in the Climate Project article in this issue



LOVE AS YOU LIVE

Put down your pocketbook
Open your mind
Wake now your conscience
Learn to be kind
Squarely in front of you
Someone is screaming
Trapped in such torment
Blood and tears teeming
Your heart has a purpose
So much to give
Fear not emotion
Love as you live

Nasnan



Hombalamma's story

Seeds of Survival in action

Hombalamma, a 70-year-old widow from Karnataka State, India, has five children and a band of grand children. Five years ago, she was experiencing a rough patch in her life - no food, sick kids and no cattle. Her children were sent as labour to the village headman's house.

With a few seeds and inputs from the GREEN Foundation (GF) and USC Canada, she started to grow local crop varieties. GF has helped her enhance her knowledge in seed conservation and adapted sustainable agriculture practices.

"I am always busy. Crops mature one continually. After feeding our family, I sell nearly 400 bags of ragi (millet), as well as extra rice, vegetables, peanuts and tamarind."

Though she has to walk 2 km for water, this has not curbed her enthusiasm for cultivating vegetables and field crops. She has formed a self-help group with other women farmers and initiated a village seed bank for better seed access. In her community, five varieties of finger millet and about 25 varieties of vegetables have been conserved and distributed to farmers. For more about USC's program in India, contact Kate Green, kgreen@usc-canada.org or 1-800-565-6872



Joyful Noises Director

The Joyful Noises choir is searching for a new director. Is there anyone at the Fellowship who would be interested in this position? If so, please contact either Linda (452-0982) or Margaret (454-5319).



I'm doing fine in Alberta!

Hi Everyone,

I guess, by now, you have heard, that I have left Fredericton! It was a very difficult decision to make but I left an abusive marriage, and felt I had to move away to have a new start. Luckily, there are many xray positions available in Canada and since I have never really spent much time in Western Canada, I decided to come to Calgary. I've been here almost a week now, and I love it! Mind you, I still have a few blue moments but for the most part everything is going well. My three beautiful, grown-up children have been very supportive to me, in this, life change, that I am embarking on. It was extremely difficult to leave them

behind, but since they are all, “doing their own thing”, in different parts of Canada, my move was made a little easier. Thank heavens, for emails and good long distance phone plans it has enabled me to keep in touch with Rod, Vanessa and Alexandra, on a daily basis. I had to leave my two beloved companions, Howie and Hugo behind, but I think of them everyday and will always treasure our daily walks. I know it is hard to believe but, when I tried to pat them and say, “goodbye for now”, neither of them would have anything to do with that, and they simply turned their heads away and wouldn’t look at me maybe, that was for the best, as I couldn’t have stood the sad look in their eyes!!!!???

I wish I could have seen you all before I left, “Freddy Town”! I had to leave without much notification, so please forgive me for not getting in touch with you. I have enjoyed meeting and getting to know each of you, since I became a Unitarian, a year or so ago. I had so much fun, serving on the, Hospitality Committee. I looked forward to seeing you all, each Sunday and sharing coffee and/or soup, in your beautiful, bright, kitchen.

I know I shared a lot of joys and sorrows with you, over the past year and here, yet again, is another joy and sorrow from me My joy is, of course, sharing time and getting to know such a wonderful, diverse group of people at TUFF. My sorrow, is that I spent such a short time with you. Please light a candle for me and know that I think of you, whenever I light a candle. Trust me, I will never forget you and hope to visit you sometime, in the next year or so. Vanessa graduates from AVC in April, 2009 so I will be coming East, then, FOR SURE!!!!

I don’t have a residence or phone number yet, but as soon as I do, I will forward it on to you. It has been a great pleasure to serve the fellowship!

Please keep in touch it would mean a lot to me! My email address is: b_gruffydd@hotmail.com

I hope you are enjoying all the snow in N.B. I wish I was there to enjoy it, as well!!!

Ciao,
Betty



THE CLIMATE PROJECT
answer the call

Local resident will deliver Al Gore’s global warming message

Carl Duivenvoorden of the Fredericton region of New Brunswick will be one of only two Atlantic Canadians tasked with spreading Al Gore’s message on climate

change.

Duivenvoorden was in Nashville, Tennessee recently for a training program led by former US Vice President Al Gore. Now, he’s taking a one-year leave of absence from his job with Efficiency New Brunswick to spread Mr. Gore’s message about global warming across Atlantic Canada.

“Carl will be spending the next year making presentations around his region, discussing how individuals, businesses, schools, and other organizations can be a major part of the solution to the growing crisis of global warming,” said Gore.

“I read his book, ”An Inconvenient Truth”, last summer, and it had a big effect on me,” Duivenvoorden says. “Finally, here was a credible author echoing my own concerns about our climate crisis. It was like Global Warming 101, explaining the problem and describing solutions in a clear, simple way.”

Then he found out that Mr. Gore would be training 1000 people to be ‘climate change messengers’, presenting the “Inconvenient Truth” slideshow in their own communities to build awareness and action. “So of course I had to apply!! And luckily, I made it into Class 6, the final group.”

The training program was led by Mr. Gore and a team of renowned scientists and environmental educators. Each trainee received an intensive tutorial about issues surrounding global warming, plus technical training on how to present Mr. Gore’s computer-based slide show, which became the basis of his best-selling book and Oscar-winning film, “An Inconvenient Truth.”

“He is an incredible presenter, with broad knowledge and a deep passion for the issue,” said Duivenvoorden. “He was compelling, entertaining, touching and convincing.”

Duivenvoorden joins a small group of 20 other Canadians who have completed the training with Mr. Gore, including just one other Atlantic Canadian, Peter Corbyn of Fredericton.

And now, he’s looking forward to delivering the presentation to as many audiences as he can over the next year. In fact, he’s taking a year off of work to do it.

“I have 2 young sons, and I’m deeply concerned about the kind of world they will inherit from my generation. I believe solutions to the global climate crisis are within our reach. However, these solutions require action, and action will only come when more people understand the threat of global warming. So my goal is to spread the word as widely as I can, to motivate as many people as possible to take personal action and be part of the solution.”

Duivenvoorden plans to focus his efforts on teachers and students. “Our youth have the greatest stake in the future of our environment, and they can be leaders of change in their families too.” Of course, he’ll welcome the opportunity to speak to any audience. “To me, there is no more

important message to share.”

Introducing
Carl Duivenvoorden



Carl Duivenvoorden was raised on a dairy farm in northern New Brunswick, and attended the NS Agricultural College. His diverse career has taken him to over 25 countries, from New Zealand to Vietnam to Brazil.

Beyond cows, potatoes and other things agricultural, Carl has always had a deep interest in the well-being of our planet. His elementary school was nestled between the smokestacks of 2 large industries, and somehow it didn't seem possible that all that smoke could just go 'away' without consequence, never to be seen again.

Last year, Carl read "An Inconvenient Truth", the book that catapulted climate change to the top of the global agenda. In April, he became one of just 21 Canadians trained by Al Gore. Since then, he has presented "An Inconvenient Truth" to more than 4000 people across the Maritimes, in English and French.

Carl is a longstanding member of Toastmasters, and has spoken before more than 150 audiences of all sizes. He works at Efficiency New Brunswick, but is on a year's leave of absence so he can present Al Gore's message about our global climate crisis to as many audiences as possible. He looks forward to sharing his passion with you.

❁

Leadership Development for Youth

Saint John will be hosting a Leadership Development Conference for Youth and Youth Advisors on the weekend of Feb 22nd - 24th. Youth must be 14 and up to attend, Youth Advisors must be 25 and up. This is a great opportunity to build some leadership skills in our Youth and our community. Cost is \$75 until Jan 25th, at which point it rises to \$90. Final registration date is Feb 8th. You can download the registration forms by following the link on our homepage at UUCSJ.org.

❁

Northern New England District

First Joint Annual Meeting of the Northern New England District New England Center, Durham, NH on April 11 & 12, 2008

As some of you may know, the NorthEast District of the UUA (NED), to which this congregation used to belong, has now joined with nearby districts to form the Northern New England District. The 74 congregations in the district, from Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont, are planning an inauguration of the new district in April. You may want to attend to wish them well. If so, you will have an opportunity to hear Rev. Bill Sinkford, keynote, reminisce with former district staff and past presidents of both districts, browse the exhibits and vendors (including the UUA bookstore) and be part of a new day dawning.

The Conference runs from 5:00 p.m. on Friday, April 11, to 4:00 p.m. on Saturday, April 12, at the New England Center of the University of New Hampshire in Durham. Registration opens at 5:00 p.m. and the Reception starts at 6:00 in the adjoining Acorns Restaurant (hot and cold hors d'oeuvres and a cash bar). Please note that you will need to register separately to attend the reception.

The festivities begin at 7:30 with a grand Banner Parade to open the evening's celebration in the Great Bay Room. All Friday's events are multigenerational, though nursery care will also be provided. Saturday's program begins at 8:00 a.m. with a continental breakfast (and all-day coffee, tea, and refreshments) for everyone. Ingathering and Opening Worship at 8:30 a.m. will be led by Mary Higgins. At 9:00 both districts will conduct their Annual Meeting(s) culminating in the final vote for consolidation. Simultaneous to the business meeting, Bill Sinkford will arrive for Conversations with Youth. At 11:00 a.m., the youth will join the adults for Bill Sinkford's Keynote Address welcoming the new district to the UUA.

A buffet lunch including vegetarian and meat entrees takes place at noon in the Acorns Restaurant for everyone registered at the conference. After lunch, ministers and religious educators will robe and process into the Great Bay room for the Closing Celebration being planned by Mary Higgins and ministers from both chapters of the Minister's Association. The program will include an anthem written for the event by Grace Lewis McClaren. A choir joining voices from all three states is being planned to provide music throughout the conference.

There is a full Children's Program and full youth participation. The Children's Program (ages 3-11) begins at 8:30 a.m. and takes place at the Durham Fellowship, a 0.4-mile walk from the conference center. Peter Bowden, a children's television producer, director, writer, artist, and consultant based in the Greater Boston area, joins Carney

Doucette, DRE from Rockland, ME, and Pat Gardiner, DRE from Brunswick, ME, for an action-packed day which includes lunch. The children rejoin the adults at 1:30 p.m. for the closing ceremony. Nursery Care for infants and toddlers will be available during morning and afternoon programming. Youth attending this event must register along with their family for full participation in the conference as a whole. A list of area motels and B&Bs will accompany registrations when they arrive at your church.

Registration details are available at
http://nhvt.uua.org/pdf/WNE_spring_conf_poster.pdf

Jo-Anne Elder-Gomes
Chair, Adult Programs



AND ANOTHER THING

It's hard to feel this kind of pain
To wonder if you're even sane
To always justify, explain
The silent hurt that has no name
If you think I manage badly
I will pass it over gladly
Here, you take it
It's all yours
Darkness oozing from your pores
Every day you'll make a choice
The warmth will fade from one more voice
And I'll sit back and maybe pray
Or send a beam of light your way
And on I'll go
About my life
And leave you screaming
Through your strife

Nasnan



Hot peppers and papaya

growing diversity in Kotinè's backyard

Kotinè Traoré lives in Safo a dessert-margin area of Mali in West Africa. In her forties, and already a grandmother, she says she was born into gardening. It was business as usual until she joined Seeds of Survival project of USC Canada. What did she gain from SoS?.....she points out diversity of crops in her garden.

Kotinè still grows onions like her mother, but now more varieties, white and red. Describing her garden she says, "We have papaya trees standing in the middle of tomatoes, okra, cabbage, eggplant, gourd, hot pepper, sweet pepper and sweet potato, and many varieties of each crop.

She links use of organic fertilizer with crop conservation. Farmers that use chemical fertilizers find their harvests quickly rot, whereas food grown with organic fertilizer will last for weeks.

To get out of poverty, Kotinè says you have to be aware of the entire world around you. Women like Kotinè, are inspiring in their persistence and courage to turn challenges into opportunities. For more on USC's work in West Africa, contact Kate Green at Kgreen@usc-canada.org

Kate Green, Manager Public Engagement, North/South Linkages USC Canada, 56 Sparks St. Ottawa, ON, K1P 5B1 CANADA Phone: (613) 234-6827 ext 228, 1-800-565-6872 ext 228 This Holidays season, You can Give a Gift that Grows! Help people in the developing world build a better life for their loved ones. This e-mail is intended solely for the individual or company to whom it is addressed. The information contained herein is privileged and confidential. Any dissemination, distribution or copying of this e-mail, other than by its intended recipient, is strictly prohibited. If you have received this e-mail in error, please notify us immediately and delete from your records. Thank you.



The Other Side of the Coin

I know a young woman about 21 years old. For the sake of anonymity, I will not name her. She's not from here, nor is she a U or a U*U, so chances are, you don't know her anyway, but just in case...

She lives in Western Canada. She and I met in an online chat room for people with Depression. We've gotten to know each other a bit through e-mails, instant messaging and two or three brief telephone conversations.

I know her to be a sweet soul, full of humour and compassion. I know her to be an open wound, her pain hanging out obviously, for all to see. They are forced to make a choice. Acknowledge or ignore?

Her pain is as real as it looks. It is awful, unfair and true. She pushes on, stumbling, making mistakes and bad choices and good choices and human choices along the way. Still...she pushes on, terrified for herself, of herself. Brief moments of wonder tap at her darkness. Light finds and then winds it's way in, enough so she can glimpse it and maybe even try to crawl toward it.

I cannot always help her. I just can't. I love her and it is not about her not deserving the help, it's not that I doubt her pain, it's not anything like that. I just don't have it in me.

I send her e-mails now and then, checking in. I fill the page with parentheses, cyber-hug her. God, we haven't talked in so long.

She has taken copious amounts of medication again and again.
One day she may succeed. And here I sit, with my bloody limits and stupid Goddamn "boundaries".

What's wrong with me???

Oh
Yeah

I'm human

I wrote in yet another poem once:

I know when you read this
You might be scared too
I don't resent them
And I won't resent you
I've been down both sides of this difficult street
And sometimes I've worn
Running Shoes
On MY feet

In humility
Nasnan



Message from Mary for Artists

Happy New Year, Artists and supporters!

Here's a new year's poem for you to enjoy.

from: Helen Iacovino

THE FOOL - THE MAGIC IS THE MESSAGE

Questions are foolery
at the beginning of a journey.

Lo - the sun has climbed
almost to treetop height,
the flowers turn to him
with peaceful faces
& blades of grass
awaken.

And I - I set my face
towards this & future dawns,
my cap blown by the laughing wind,
& my idiot bells jingling.

Between windy trees the winding path
appears as the ladder
no one can climb.
Clouds sweep over it, obliterate it.
At the top a sunburst
laughs heartily at those
who step off cliffs in fairy-green costumes.

And how do I
initiate?

Will I fly or fall?
Or will I merely spin?
Is the ladder real?
Really a ladder?


Editor's note: for the entire article including information about artists' workshops at the ACM, a mailing list and other contact information, please contact me and I can forward the original article.



We at Unicamp are committed to providing just that; with 50 acres of meadow, forest and pond, as well as a dedicated team of staff and volunteers for whom the 7 principles lie at the heart of it all. Stay tuned for this year's Kid's Camp themes in the upcoming brochure!

Unicamp's Campership Fund, which is contributed to by Unicamp's member congregations, is available to help subsidize the cost of sending your child to camp. For further information, or an application, contact unicampfontario@hotmail.com.

A reminder to all aspiring staff members; Unicamp is now hiring for all positions. Visit www.unicampfontario.ca and fill out your application today!



Message from Mary Bennett

Resolution #1: Join Team CUC

I've been noticing the effects of the reflections that people do around the changing of the year. It seems that many people I know are going through big changes in their personal lives: ending or starting relationships; changing jobs; considering options for moving or retirement.

In smaller ways, I often see at this time of year, people changing their roles in their congregations or the CUC. I'm a committed New Year's Resolution-maker, although for me, I more contemplate themes than commit to the normal standards of exercising more and eating less. Over a month or more I consider my past year and the one that is opening before me. And around the middle of January, I finally have a few goals that I think I can commit to, some words, quotations or questions that will provide a touchstone for the coming year. And as I try to add on things, I, like many of you, face the need to find ways to reduce the time and energy I give some places that are no longer as satisfying.

We've been actively recruiting for a few positions on our Social Responsibility Monitoring Groups (still space for more) and for course designers and facilitators for some new regional programs, and seem to have got the word out to people who were looking for more engagement in some areas. As one applicant put it, "I think this opportunity would increase my own skills and also bring back something to my congregation." Because our teams work primarily by email and teleconference, we've been making more of an effort to get bios and photos on the website so people can meet the people they "play" with. You can meet many of Team CUC including youth leaders at: http://cuc.ca/whos_who/index.htm.

If you've made some resolutions to increase your skills, meet Unitarians from other places, learn more about how other congregations "do church" while contributing to our national movement, browse through http://cuc.ca/whos_who/volunteer_opportunities.htm and then drop me or any of the staff a note. Whatever you are leaving behind or moving towards, may your journey go well,

Mary
Mary Bennett
Executive Director
CANADIAN UNITARIAN COUNCIL
mary@cuc.ca



CLF - KidTalk

KidTalk is CLF's site designed for kids. All online activities are monitored by CLF staff members, but kids should always get their parent's or guardian's permission before becoming involved. KidTalk has seasonal stories, fun information, quick facts, and more!

Each month:

Celebrate – Celebrating special occasions of the month

Honor – Honoring important people

Act – Ideas of things to do, places to visit, or even food to make

Practicing the Principles – Ideas for putting our UU Principles to work!

Nurturing Your Spirit – Finding quiet opportunities to nurture yourself

Ask Clif – An opportunity for kids to 'ask Clif' questions about religion or living a good life.

Why should you join the CLF?

The web page for KidTalk is one of many resources available at the Church of the Larger Fellowship. CLF membership offers you and your children UU spirituality, edu-

cation, and resources 24/7. Your membership also brings Unitarian Universalism to isolated UUs all over the world.

For more information about The Church of the Larger Fellowship and KidTalk:

www.clfuu.org/kidtalk/2008/02/index.html
www.clfuu.org
617-948-6150
clf@clfu.org



ACM Info

Editor's note, I've extracted bits of especial interest from this for local readers. See the January Touchstone for more information as well as the ACM website: www.cuc.ca/conference/2008 and/or contact me to receive the full article. Ottawa, May 16-19.

ACM 2008 Keynote speakers underline the importance of the Unitarian Community

This spring the political and geographical landscape of Ottawa will provide a fitting backdrop for the Canadian Unitarian Council (CUC) Annual Conference and Meeting (ACM) to be held in Ottawa from May 16th to 19th. The "Web of Life - in our hands" theme will focus on justice, peace and the environment - all issues which are regularly and hotly debated in our capital city. The Algonquin College location will provide a great opportunity for families to sleep and play close to the conference events and even members of the First Unitarian Congregation, who haven't participated before, to attend.

The conference is expected to attract over 500 Unitarian and Universalists from across Canada. The host congregation will be welcoming keynote speakers, mother and son, Allison and Will Brewer of Fredericton, New Brunswick - two dynamic individuals, who truly exemplify this year's theme in the lives they lead!

For over 25 years Allison Brewer has worked tirelessly for the rights of all people, particularly advocating for people with disabilities, the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered communities, and strongly defending a woman's right to reproductive choice. She has been a passionate fighter for social change through her work in journalism, community development, union involvement, and membership in the New Democratic Party. Allison won the Governor General's Award in Commemoration of the Persons Case for her work in human rights in 2004.

The mother of three children (Oliver, Will and Anna), Allison attributes much of her success and resilience in overcoming struggles to the support she has received from the broad Unitarian community. A life long member, Allison is one of the few children of members who stayed long into adulthood, and her son Will is a third generation member.

“It is very hard to do this kind of work if you don’t have the support of a broad community. Unitarian fellowship is a ‘calm in the storm’ that brings me energy to get through the rough patches and bring about positive change” says Allison. To her the Unitarian Church is indeed the “Web of Life” and she strongly believes that “the future is in our hands!”

Some of Allison’s accomplishments include: Egale Canada’s delegate to the Women’s Conference in Beijing where she was detained by Chinese officials; President of the New Brunswick Coalition on Human Rights Reform; founder and former manager of the Morgentaler Clinic in Fredericton; Communications advisor to the health and social services department and later - the senior advisor on women’s issues for the new government of Nunavut. After moving back to Fredericton in 2004, she became leader of the New Democratic Party in New Brunswick from 2005 until November 2006.

Currently, she sits on the organizing committee of “Nurturing Ourselves”, a women’s health conference held in Fredericton each fall and is a continuing member of Egale Canada. Allison can be contacted at allisonb@nb.sympatico.ca.

Seeing the world in a positive light is one of Will Brewer’s talents. Will was born with Down’s Syndrome and has worked hard in his 22 years to overcome adversity and make a difference in his community by fighting for social justice - particularly the inclusion of people with disabilities. Will won the 2007 New Brunswick Association for Community Living Champions of Inclusion Achievement Award, a prize usually given to the non-disabled community for allies and advocates.

“Something that’s important to me is being kind to people and always being as friendly as I can be,” he says. “I love helping people because it helps them reach out. I try to get the young people I work with to reach outside themselves.”*

Will grew up in Fredericton and moved with his mother to Iqaluit when he was 15. Despite this big move which saw new friends, new school and a whole new unfamiliar environment, he met the changes with optimism and excitement. As much as he enjoyed his time in Iqaluit, Will was glad to move back to Fredericton in 2004. Since returning, he has worked in a radio station, helped children learn how to deal with disabilities at Horizon College, and is now working as an assistant at the D. Brune Clavette Massage Therapy Clinic.

Will says he’s excited about all of the new things he will learn in the future and all of the new people he will meet. Looks like this year’s CUC conference will provide an excellent opportunity to do just that.

Both Allison and Will bring a wealth of experience and inspiration in overcoming challenges to the 2008 ACM in Ottawa.



A Pleasant Evening’s Observations

I was asked, as someone who has been around for several years and had some involvement with the Fellowship, to join the “New U” session this past Thursday evening, January 24. We spoke of how we “found” the Fellowship and why we stay as well as why we think it worth the time we put into it.

But, like many conversations at the Fellowship, the discussion often ranged somewhat off topic. At one point, several people mentioned that they are very cautious about telling relatives the nature of their current religious pursuits, especially when those relatives are of a conservative Christian persuasion. A few said that they are made to feel uncomfortable, especially by old friends or relatives who are aware of their “fall from grace”.

During this part of the discussion, I said that, when asked, I respond that “I am an atheist and a secular humanist who has found a religious home with the Unitarians.” I try to say it in as neutral and un confrontational a way as possible. I consider it the truth. But then, I’m fortunate, my close relatives tend not to be very “religious” and, when I was a child, religion was something that our family did just enough so that we were not “talked about” since it was the 1950’s, after all. I found it not at all difficult to become an apostate.

One of the great things about this country is that we have freedom of religion. Of all the freedoms of religion, the central and most important is, of course, freedom from religion. Without freedom from religion and the right to have nothing whatsoever to do with formal religion, there is no freedom of religion and the right to freely choose which particular dogma or karma or rite or ritual you wish to enjoy.

There were a lot of other good things said and I was tasked to include some of them in Touchstone as well, however, memory fails. I’m sorry. All I can say is, whenever there is a gathering at the Fellowship, come out, enjoy! It’s your choice and your right.

To our Pagan friends, a most blessed Imbolc. May Brigid grant us all an early spring.

In fellowship
Tony Fitzgerald

This space wants your material!