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Worship Services - Calendar

November Theme: Stories and Identity

Sunday, November 5, 10:30am: *A Fine Mess of Fish*
 Rev. Linda Thomson of the Canadian Unitarian Council will lead our service. Let's explore the questions: why do we exist and who do we serve? All are welcome and coffee hour follows at 11:30.

Sunday, November 12, 10:30am: Join Jo-Anne Elder Gomes as we mark Remembrance Day.

Sunday, November 19, 10:30am: Our guest speaker will be Tamara Lorincz and her topic is timely. "War or Global Warming? Comparing Canada's new Defence Policy and Climate Action Plan." She will stay for coffee and conversation after the talk.

Sunday, November 26, 10:30am: *GFAW, the Greater Fredericton Area Witches* The Fellowship makes its space available to GFAW as part of our outreach effort and in exchange for a free will offering. GFAW use the space for some of their ritual events and other activities. Members of GFAW will share with us a bit about who they are and what they do.

Third Thursday

The theme for November is "Identity or Story." Join Heather Lunergan on Thursday Nov. 17 at 7 pm for a short film and discussion on the topic.

Women's Pot Luck

The next Unitarian Fellowship women's pot luck will be held November 24th. Heather will host the gathering at the Fellowship House, 874 York St. We gather at 6 PM and eat at 6:30 PM. Topic for discussion: "Nostalgia." Share a story about your youth - involving an event, discussion, people, or lesson - that influenced who you have become? These can be funny, or tragic, or interesting, or odd, or all of these things. For further information, contact Joan Brewer at jbrewer@rogers.com

Reflection on Stories / Identity

Jo-Anne Elder-Gomes

Last year, in a service in which I looked at Creation Stories, I shared this story. This is a story that has been told in many ways, but this is my favourite version. It belongs to Thomas King. In his 2003 Massey lecture, award-winning author and scholar Thomas King looks at the breadth and depth of Indigenous experience and imagination.

"There is a story I know," King begins. "It's about the earth and how it floats in space on the back of a turtle. I've heard this story many times, and each time someone tells the story, it changes. Sometimes the change is simply in the voice of the storyteller. Sometimes the change is in the details. Sometimes in the order of events. Other times it's the dialogue or the response of the audience. But in all the telling of all the tellers, the world never leaves the turtle's back. And the turtle never swims away."

"One time, it was in Prince Rupert I think, a young girl in the audience asked about the turtle and the earth. If

the earth was on the back of a turtle, what was below the turtle? Another turtle, the storyteller told her. And below that turtle? Another turtle. And below that? Another turtle.”

“The girl began to laugh, enjoying the game, I imagine. So how many turtles are there? she wanted to know. The storyteller shrugged. No one knows for sure, he told her, but it’s turtles all the way down.”

Thomas King concludes by saying: “The truth about stories is that that’s all we are.”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wzXQoZ6pE-M>

In November, we will be looking at personal stories and identity/ies. In a sense, we are “stories all the way down.” The deeper or further back we look, the more connections we see between different events in our lives. When we look at our experiences, we sometimes see a series of interconnected stories, and sometimes an overarching narrative that traces a circle around a myriad of events, or strings them out in a timeline marked by different moments of significance. Details are added to the picture or history of our life, making it richer and fuller. Each time we see how another thing that has happened to us fits into an ever-changing pattern, each time we form (a) meaning out of our past or current existence, we tell ourselves a story about ourselves. We choose to tell certain stories in certain ways, while giving other memories or events the time and space to take shape before we put them into words.

Spiritual Exercises:

1. How many different titles could you give to a book or a film about your life to this point? For instance, I look at the deaths of my grandparents, my parents, my siblings, and look at the Story of Loss I am writing. I am learning about mourning, and each death brings me a new understanding of my own life and death. Or: instead of looking at a single Magnum Opus I am aspiring to achieve, but see that several different things could be defined as My Life’s Works.
2. Look at one situation you are struggling with right now. Is your present-day experience weighed down by the baggage of pain from similar experiences in the past?
3. Try to retrieve one or two early memories. Why do you think these events or images have remained in your mind? How do they relate to other experiences in your life since then? Often memories are connected by strong feelings and impressions rather than other similarities.



CUC Conference Proposals

As some of you know, I am the Conference Convenor for the CUC Conference, held every two years on the long weekend in May in a different location across the country. This year I am working with a great Host Committee from Hamilton as well as a national Program Planning Committee. I am happy to answer any questions you might have about the 2018 Conference at conference@cuc.ca. I wanted to send along this invitation to submit proposals for workshops.

Jo-Anne Elder-Gomes

Dear UU friends,

The CUC’s 2018 National Conference will be held from May 18-20 at McMaster University in Hamilton ON. The theme, “Invitation to Love and Justice,” captures our yearnings towards a more inclusive and just world.

In case you missed the information in the eNews (<http://cuc.ca/cuc-enews/>), excellent and experienced facilitators are invited to submit proposals for workshops on Saturday and Sunday. Find out more information at <http://cuc.ca/conference/> and fill out the proposal form on that page. Proposals will be accepted until Wed, Nov 15, 2017.

More information on the conference, Annual General Meeting (May 18) and registration will be available at the end of January 2018.

Thank you.

Vyda Ng
Executive Director
Canadian Unitarian Council
Conseil unitarien du Canada

The CUC is a beacon for Unitarian Universalist communities across Canada, providing them with leadership, support and connection as they strive to foster a just and sustainable world and to enrich the spiritual lives of their members



Yule Wreaths

Linda Sprague will be selling wreaths again this year in support of the Stephen Lewis Foundation, Grandmothers Helping Grandmothers. The usual wreath maker has retired but another wreath maker will be taking over. The wreaths will be undecorated and sell at last year’s price \$12. Please email her at spraguella39@gmail.com. She will get back to you with details about of payment and delivery.



Persepolis

by Marjane Satrapi

I never thought I'd be reviewing a graphic novel, but this surprise birthday present proved very interesting. The title is never explained. My guess is that the ceremonial capital of the Achaemenid Empire in Iran, reduced to magnificent ruins by Alexander the Great, is used to symbolise power and its devastating changes. At least one of the illustrations resembles the carvings on its walls.

The drawings in the book fit the idea of a child's view of power and how it affects her, her friends and her family as she grows from six to fourteen and sees the change of power from the Western controlled Shah to the Islamic Revolution of 1979 and the disastrous war with Iraq. The people become dressed like black figures to be moved at will, but stay individual and as defiant as they can.

Her family is among those particularly affected because her great-grandfather was an Emperor before the Shah; her parents became Marxists and she is an intelligent child ready to stand up for human dignity. She sees God and Karl Marx as practically equivalent except that God has straight white hair and Marx has curly white hair. To begin she sees herself as their prophet, but as she begins to understand how much is beyond her control, this passes.

The Shah's regime imprisons anyone who disagrees with his acceptance of British dominance of the oil industry. Understandably she only sees this through her parents' protests and later stories. The Revolution brings controlling power closer. She has to wear a headscarf and long black dress whenever she is in public. There are touches of humour to help survival, including her father's comment to the school teacher that if women's hair sends rays that arouse lust in men the teacher had better shave her moustache! There are also increasing bans on music, dance, parties and alcohol as the desperate regime tries to survive the war.

So we see the author trying to cope with this, losing friends and their family members killed by Iraqi bombs, learning that boy soldiers her own age are being lured to walk out through landmine fields so troops can follow when the boys have been blown up, hearing the experiences of imprisoned, tortured and exiled individuals.

But this is not just a tragedy. She shows how people cope and develop and maintain their moral standards, even through appalling abuse of power. We see the devotion to education, honesty and clear thought that can help to end this abuse eventually. Her parents send her to Vienna for education at the end of the book. My daughter promises me volume 2, "Return" for Christmas.

Some of you will already know my own experience in the café by the entrance to Persepolis. In the shadow of these

images of power I talked with a group of Iranian school girls and their teacher. They told me their ambitions to learn and to graduate with skills to help their country and asked me to tell them about Canada. Then the teacher said "See, you may not like what a country's government does, but when you meet the people, you realise how much you have in common." This book shows the continuing lives of ordinary people and helps the reader to feel the common humanity even when living through very different circumstances.

Sheila Andrew



Fellowship as Pokemon Go Gym

Editor's note: The following was received to the office email address. I am printing it for general information. Pokemon Go often uses religious shrines as locations of interest.

Good morning,

I am reaching out to you today about some information concerning the mobile game Pokemon Go, which has a point of interest located at the Unitarian Fellowship of Fredericton. I am a player of the game, and I am a little worried that our presence near your church might cause some tension, so I would like to explain what is going on and what action you can take, if need be.

The goal of Pokemon Go is to get out, explore and make friends, and we have a strong community of respectful players in Fredericton that I am proud to be a part of. One way Pokemon Go fosters community is through small events called "raids", where several players get together close to a landmark (a "gym") and work together to earn a special Pokemon. These happen at random points during the day between 8am and 8pm. There is a gym at your church's location, so if an especially good raid happens to pop up, a group of players might arrive, stand around in a group while they do the event (maybe 10-15 minutes), then disperse. While we are there (or at any gym), we try to be courteous, quiet and not make any impact beyond our presence. We are all very aware that while we play our game, we are existing in the real world, and we need to be conscientious.

However, I understand if our presence is uncomfortable for you. It can be very suspicious when a group of people stand around, especially in a somewhat enclosed drive, and especially after dark (which happens more and more the closer we get to winter!)

I have great respect for Unitarian faith, and as a queer individual, it warms my heart every time I meet up for a Pokemon event and see the rainbow flags in your windows. It seems like you have a very accepting and community-based congregation, and I am glad to live close by. And it

breaks my heart when I feel like we might be making you uncomfortable.

So, there is action you can take if you don't want Pokemon players meeting up at your location. You can submit a form to remove the gym, and the developers will manually and completely remove it from the game. Then you will never have to worry about a circle of Pokemon players forming in your driveway ever again. It would be disadvantageous to us (especially to me, since I'm a pedestrian who can't reach many gyms), but obviously, your safety is infinitely more important than some video game. *Instructions for removing Fellowship from Pokemon Go elided by editor.*

Alternately, you can leave the gym present, and we will continue to be as courteous as possible when we visit. And we would be willing to open a dialogue and make accommodations! (For example, we could agree to not meet up after dark.)

If you have any questions or would like any more information, please feel free to ask me anything.

Thank you,
Cubie

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



Ten Thousand Villages

Gifts With a Story!

The Fredericton Mennonites are hosting a sale of beautiful, fairly-traded gifts benefiting artisans from more than 30 Developing countries.

The 17th Fredericton Festival Sale will be held Friday, November 17th, from 10:00 AM to 7:00 PM and Saturday, November 18th from 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM at Wilmot United Church, 473 King St., Fredericton. Admission is free.

The gifts you buy at the Ten Thousand Villages Sales will give the blessings of steady work, fair wages, and a better life for struggling families around the world. For more information call Jill Bateman at 459-5685. Your purchase makes a difference!

The link for our Facebook event is:

<https://www.facebook.com/events/1986923231596611/>

Another world is not only possible, she is on her way. On a quiet day I can hear her breathing.

.....Arundhati Roy

As referenced by Stephen Lewis,
honouring Jack