



THE Chalice

NEWSLETTER OF THE
ELORA & FERGUS UNITARIAN CHURCH
JANUARY – FEBRUARY 2011

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

We freely gather to explore spirituality, truth and meaning in our lives, and to provide a base for our children's spiritual growth. We welcome the free exchange of ideas in an environment of respect for diverse beliefs, backgrounds and theologies. We join together in fellowship to celebrate our uniqueness as individuals and to reach out to our community guided by the principles of Unitarian Universalism.



NEIGHBOURWOODS

Five years ago, we started NeighbourWoods as a community effort to plant and steward the trees in our community.

Turns out we were onto something; since then a growing body of evidence is supporting the value of trees from pretty much every angle. Public health departments recognize that shade from trees can play a vital role in combating skin cancer. Public works departments see that large trees slow run off so that rain can recharge our water table rather than rushing into the river or water treatment plants. Realtors recognize that trees add value to their listings and astute BIAs

recognize that shoppers pay more for goods on shady streets. Schools and parks departments are finding out that trees reduce bullying and aggressive behaviours. Nature lovers know, of course, that trees are home to all kinds of wildlife. And, some just love trees for their sheer beauty and majesty, which might account for why trees seem to dominate the coffee table book department.

In November at the Ontario Urban Forest Council conference, I had the pleasure of hearing Diana Berseford Kroeger, author and botanist, speak about the healing powers of trees. While the scientists in the room scoffed, the rest of us were mesmerized. As Unitarians, you may be open to her viewpoint. Let's face it, who has not felt rejuvenated and refreshed after a walk in the woods? In case you attribute this to "getting exercise" you'll be interested to hear that a growing body of research backs up the mental and spiritual benefits of just being in the woods. For example, research published in the June 2010 issue of the *Journal of Environmental Psychology* found that being outside in nature makes people feel more alive. "Nature is fuel for the soul," says Richard Ryan, lead author and a professor of psychology at the University of Rochester. Five different experiments involving 500 university students, determined that the vitality they felt from being outdoors was not attributed to exercise, but from experiencing nature. The paper

builds on earlier research from the University of Hamburg, Germany, which has found that people are more caring and generous when exposed to nature. "We have a natural connection with living things," says Ryan. "Nature is something within which we flourish, so having it be more a part of our lives is critical, especially when we live and work in built environments." These studies, concludes Ryan, underscore the importance of having access to parks and natural surroundings and of incorporating natural elements into our buildings through windows and indoor plants."

So as you ponder your new year's resolution to get more exercise, why not get out and hike the trails and enjoy the woods. Clearly it will do more for your well being than raise your heart rate.

- *Toni Ellis*

Toni Ellis was a founding board member of the Elora and Fergus Unitarian Church. She coordinates NeighbourWoods, a group of citizens who love trees, cherish them as gifts from past generations, and hope to pass on a healthy urban forest to future generations.



UPCOMING POD DUTIES

POD #1 Kelsye* & Paul, Janice, Carolyn
Dates: Jan. 16, Feb. 13, March 13, April 10, May 8, June 5

POD #2 Chris*, Ellen & Jim, Leigh & Terisa
Dates: Jan. 23, Feb. 20, March 20, April 17, May 15

POD #3 Deborah*, Margaret, Ineke, Margie
Dates: Jan. 30, Feb. 27, March 27, April 24, May 22

POD #4 Anna* & Don, Jill, Louisa & Nardo, Mairy
Dates: Jan. 9, Feb. 6, March 6, April 3, May 1, May 29

* denotes contact person for the POD

WHO YA GONNA CALL?

President	Leigh Brownhill
Vice President	Ineke Booy
Lay Chaplain	Ellen Papenburg
	Jill Davey
Secretary	Kelsye Coulter
Treasurer	Nardo Kuitert
Sunday Services	Jim Sannes
Social Action	Terisa Turner
Communications	Louisa Kuitert
Membership	Christine Nye



**A SUNDAY AFTERNOON AT THE OPERA
IN ELORA
WITH SOME UNITARIAN FRIENDS!**

The movie of Puccini's opera, 'Tosca' (filmed at the Met New York) is playing at the Gorge Cinema on Sunday, January 23rd at 1 pm. Thought it would be fun to see it together with a few other Unitarians. Several of us have never been to an opera and think it's great that we can attend in Elora! Here's the synopsis below:

Tosca

This work was first produced at Rome in January 1900. The libretto is an adaptation of Sardou's famous tragedy. The date is 1800, and the main facts are said to have a historical basis. The story centres round the doings of Scarpia, the chief of the police in Rome, himself the perpetrator of worse crimes than those he has officially to deal with.

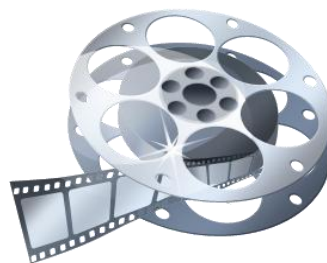
Mario Cavaradossi, an artist at work in a church, encounters Angelotti, a friend and an

escaped prisoner seeking sanctuary. Mario befriends him, helping him away in the of a woman. Floria Tosca, Mario's fiancée, and a famous singer, suspects Mario of a flirtation, and the suspicion is fostered by Scarpia, who is able to show her a fan dropped by Angelotti in his flight. In the second Act, Scarpia arrests the artist for complicity in Angelotti's escape, and Mario is being tortured in a room beside that in which Scarpia sees Tosca, for whom he has conceived a violent passion. In her mental distress Tosca tells the whereabouts of Angelotti, and the torture of Mario ceases. Scarpia now presses Tosca to yield her honour, and at the price of Mario's life she consents, but suddenly murders Scarpia with a carving-knife and escapes. After a scene between Tosca and her lover in the prison, Scarpia's treachery is revealed; for Mario, in spite of Scarpia's promise to order blank cartridge, is really shot, and the preconcerted plan by which he was to feign death and then escape comes to naught. Whereupon Tosca throws herself from the parapet into the Tiber.

- Carolyn Crozier

MOVIE NIGHT

Please reserve Friday February 18th for a film night at the Gorge Cinema. The film featured is *The King's Speech*, starting @ 6:30 pm. Afterwards everyone is invited at Chris Nye's place (353 Geddes St. in Elora) for discussions and snacks.



- *Chris Nye, Membership*



After the death of his father King George V (Michael Gambon) and the scandalous abdication of King Edward VIII (Guy Pearce), Bertie (Colin Firth) who has suffered from a debilitating speech impediment all his life, is suddenly crowned King George VI of England. With his country on the brink of war and in desperate need of a leader, his wife, Elizabeth (Helena Bonham Carter), the future Queen Mother, arranges for her husband to see an eccentric speech therapist, Lionel Logue (Geoffrey Rush). After a rough start, the two delve into an unorthodox course of treatment and eventually form an unbreakable bond. With the support of Logue, his family, his government and Winston Churchill (Timothy Spall), the King will overcome his stammer and deliver a radio-address that inspires his people and unites them in battle.

Based on the true story of King George VI, *THE KING'S SPEECH* follows the Royal Monarch's quest to find his voice.

Having anything funny, important, moving, interesting to say? Do you want to share something with the rest of the congregation?

Your article could have been in this edition!

Contact Louisa for more information (louisa@u-cwebs.com). It's free, so you have nothing to lose, only to gain!!

This article by Irshad Manji (Globe & Mail, Dec. 23rd, 2010) addresses the need for more respectful and knowledgeable discussion between both ends of the religious/spiritual spectrum. A good way to start the New Year by remembering our U.U. principles of compassion in human relations, acceptance of one another and a free and responsible search for truth and meaning. Now if only we could apply this in Parliament.

Janice Ferri

CIVILITY, HUMILITY PAVE THE ROAD TO NIRVANA

Readers of The Globe and Mail have given me a gift. In my previous column, I called for fresh substance and more civility in the debate between atheists and people of faith. My e-mail inbox overflowed with comments that met both aspirations.

The very first e-mail came from Nicholas, who has “scientific and mystical inclinations.” He celebrates both because “life and its mysteries are far too important to be reduced to a frame, and in the process of refusing to do so, the power to impose through dogma is mitigated.” He ended by suggesting we learn to appreciate uncertainty – “the rich field where discovery and great art are born.” Tony chimed in with another bridge-building thought: The word “atheist might be misleading. “When I look up into the heavens,” he reflected, “I do see and feel a greater power” than that described in religious scriptures. “God only knows what else is out there beyond our comprehension! Does this make me an atheist?”

Moreover, Elsje asked, what do we mean by “God”? Absolutists on each side tend to

emphasize a force that judges us from on high, embracing or rejecting God’s existence on this basis. But, she proposed, “let’s try substituting a few other names: Universe, Life, Nature.” Then “the whole debate becomes ludicrous” because “all of these are undeniable.”

In pushing a related point, Robert made me smile. “If there was only one god,” he mused, “Wouldn’t she have got the message out correctly the first time? ... I don’t think She’ll hold it against me for doubting Her existence but doing the best I could to live a good life.” Even the meaning of “faith” should be contested, wrote Brian. “We talk about ‘faith’ communities as if the only people who have faith are those who belong to an organized religion. In fact, everyone has faith in someone or something at various times.”

My interpretation of the comments so far? There’s a difference between the suffocating boundaries of organized religion and the liberating potential of personal faith.

Another reader drew that distinction in no-nonsense language. “Just because the major religious institutions of the world refuse to adapt does not mean all of [their] followers are cursed to the same narrow-mindedness,” Josh affirmed. “I’m a believer who challenges those who tell me I have to believe and who impose uncivilized and self-indulgent rules on top of it.”

Diane sees the same need for humility among those who pour faith into scientific formulas. She finds it “amusing” that “we, as human beings, believe that if we do enough experiments, we will one day know it all.” And yes, experimentation might be the key to a grounded humility as well as ultimate wisdom. “If a person is a true scientist,” Bill e-

mailed, “then inviting criticism and questioning of our ideas is central to our search for truth.” For anyone with convictions, he recommends a “pinch of doubt.”

Paul practices that principle every day. In raising his children, he explained, “I don’t reveal to them my atheistic tendencies.” Instead, “I’ve taught them to read and think, and hopefully they will discover the benefits of faith and atheism.”

By loosening any attachment to preconceived definitions of faith and atheism, these readers might well be on their way to nirvana. Kirthi, a long-time globe reader, prompts my optimism. “Have you heard of Buddhists who do not believe in a God-Creator?” he wonders. “What you do to reach nirvana is work toward the eradication of your cravings that cause you to hang onto your life as you see it. In other words, your destiny is in your own hands.

I don’t know if individuals can completely control our destinies, but I do believe we ought to be agents of change in this life rather than sitting on our hands in fatalistic anticipation of the hereafter.

One of the final comments to land in my inbox sums up the journey I’ve taken with my readers. “The challenge,” Jim contemplates, “is to hold the fundamental tenets of my faith closely enough to allow myself to grow while avoiding the pitfalls of bias and dogmatism. This debate is a reflection of my own internal work to maintain faith and reason in balance.” Amen.

- *Irshad Manji*

NEW BEGINNINGS – AND ANOTHER FINANCIAL YEAR FOR OUR CONGREGATION.



I hope you all had a good Holiday Season. The end of one Year and the beginning of another is a time of reflection on the past, and planning the future. The same goes for the financial situation of our Church.

Pledges For The 2011 Financial Year

First of all I would like to thank everyone for their generous pledges for the upcoming year. I am proud to say that the total amount pledged for this year is higher than last year’s, although unfortunately it did not reach the 2009 level.

Actuals For The 2010 Financial Year

Last year’s financial situation (*read: balance in our bank account*) seems to have worsened a little, with a preliminary deficit of about \$1000. That number still has to be confirmed, as I will not have time to double-check everything before this Chalice goes out. The good news, though, is that the \$1000 deficit is much better than the more than \$3500 shortfall projected in our 2010 Budget.

2011 Budget Meeting

We are planning another early Budget meeting in February were the projected income and expenses for 2011 can be approved by the congregation – and then confirmed at our Annual General Meeting (AGM) on April 24th. The final date for the Budget approval meeting will be communicated via the eGroup and announcements during the upcoming services.

Thank you for your support so far, and your continued support in the year to come!

- *Nardo Kuitert, Treasurer*



For Rev. Ted Davey, who passed away peacefully on December 30, 2010, surrounded by his loving family and beloved pet Mira

For **Jim Sannes**, who had a successful eye operation in January.

For **Siebren Kuitert**, who will celebrate his 11th birthday on February 1st.



For **Nardo Kuitert**, who will celebrate his 45th birthday on February 18th.

WHAT'S ON AT CHURCH IN JANUARY & FEBRUARY 2011

Church service starts at 10:00 am

- Jan. 9 FIRE CEREMONY AND STONE SOUP**
Come and celebrate the first service in the New Year with us!
- Jan. 16 EQUINE FACILITATED EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING**
The use of the horse as a co-facilitator helps us gain better understanding of ourselves. Human-Horse relationships, with the horse as a teacher, have existed for centuries, but only recently it has become an actual therapeutic discipline
Guest Speaker: Marlyn Vaccaro.
- Jan. 23 SACRED CIRCLE DANCE**
Evolving from folk dancing, Sacred Circle Dance emphasizes participation as community building, rather than just enjoyable physical activity. All ages are welcome; ability to follow the steps is crucial. Most dances are done in a circle holding hands. After showing the steps, the facilitator blends back into the circle, indicating all are equal.
Instructor: Audrey
- Jan. 30 INTERCONNECTIONS OF EARTH RIGHTS AND HUMAN RIGHTS**
We focus on the concept and practice of 'Earth Democracy' in this report-back from the climate talks in Cancun, Mexico of November-December 2010. Bringing 'voices from below' into the debate on climate change, the peoples' forum that paralleled the United Nations talks in Cancun carved out a realistic path through a thicket of false solutions (such as carbon credits).

- Feb. 6 MUSIC SERVICE**
Our hearts respond to music in inexpressible and unquantifiable ways. Singer songwriter and multi-instrumentalist Guy Stefan and guitarist Don Beals will explore this through music performance and discussion.
- Feb. 13 THE SPIRITUALITY OF TREES**
The Spirituality of Trees and how important they are to our well being.
Speaker: Tony Ellis
- Feb. 20 WHAT IS THE MDS?**
Orlan Martin, Chairperson for Ontario will introduce us to the workings of the Mennonite Disaster Service.
- Feb. 27 LOCAL FOOD**
Chris Jess who teaches at the High School will talk about local food and its importance.

