



THE Chalice

NEWSLETTER OF THE
ELORA & FERGUS UNITARIAN CHURCH
JANUARY – FEBRUARY 2007

LIFE THROWING CURVE BALLS

It is inevitable that life will throw curve balls at us. It is not a question of IF something unexpected will happen in one's life, but more a question of WHEN. We can be fortunate and healthy all our lives, but perhaps a loved one is not. It could even be a favourite pet, suffering or passing away.

The more we open ourselves to friends, pets and responsibilities, the more open we are to encountering these curve balls. To avoid this we could live as hermits, but then we would stagnate and lose out on all of the wonderful experiences that friendship, love and companionship give us.

Still, solitude can also be a friend at times, no doubt about it. Darkness can be a welcome moment of tranquility and peace.

Christmas and Hanukkah are coming, Solstice also, all with stories and symbols of hope in dark times. This lovely season can be a horrible time for some of us, missing significant people, or just being alone. Reaching out with kind word or a smile can make those bad times less harsh and severe. This should not only be our way of life within the holiday season, but an ongoing quest of making our own path in life, meandering between the blocking boulders or climbing over them and possibly helping others over those boulders as well.

In darkness and in light, in the spirit of this season, we wish you all a wonderful and meaningful time.

-- Ellen Papenburg



BEANS, BEANS, BEANS...

We have received a cheque from the Coloured Bean Growers Association for \$1500 as a contribution to our ongoing bean project where we combine the money from the farmers and donations from our other Ontario Unitarian-Universalist Churches to send beans to the Daily Bread Food Bank.

As well as sending 20 tonnes of beans to Toronto, we also help out in our own small way by bringing 100 pound bags of beans to selected soup kitchens in our area and to food banks in Cambridge, Hamilton and St Catharines. These are locally grown, non-genetically modified romano beans which usually travel to Europe and South America. Two pounds of beans costing less than a dollar can supply protein for 20 adults or 40 children.

During the summer we raised money by giving "books for beans" at Unicamp. One of our supporters has packaged the beans in one-pound bags and sold them for \$2 at the Hamilton church raising over \$200. We have several other non-Unitarian donors who regularly contribute to our programme.

--Jim Sannes



MID-WINTER RETREAT 2007:

Our Unitarian group is not the only one and if you would like to experience meeting other Unitarians, why not plan to come to the Mid-Winter Retreat 2007 on Friday February 9 to Sunday February 11 in Bolton?

More info: <http://donheights.ca/mwr/index.htm> \$200 for the whole weekend including meals, attending just part of the weekend is possible too, see the online registration form for rates: <http://donheights.ca/mwr/registration.htm>

I am going there for sure and it would be fun if more of you would join us! We could carpool as well if anyone is interested.

Read more below... Cheers, Ellen

Roots hold me close, Wings set me free!

Come to Midwinter Retreat 2007, as we explore the roots that hold us close to our communities, ourselves and Mother Nature, and the wings that set us free through creative expression. Each activity – from music and dancing to drama and discussion groups – will show how roots and wings come together in unique ways

To get you into the spirit here the line up of the Workshops and Activities:

Transforming Food Systems: Challenging the “bigger is better” paradigm, Ed Bennett has started community based food systems in the Waterloo area. Travel with him as he explores the farm practices, locally owned manufacturing, free trade exchanges and spiritual values that are vital to this journey of transformation.

Drama with Wings: Grow roots or wings or devilish horns through fun drama exercises and improvised scenes. Actress/director Ilene Cummings has led many successful workshops at Midwinter Retreat. Sing-a-long: Brian Norman and fellow Unitarians celebrate with music and song.

Collective Roots: Steve Watson, a social activist and union educator, (who was a speaker/singer at Elora Fergus for our dinner for Mary with Father Hernan) will look at the roots that keep us close to our community, and the wings that help us to express our individuality. Share your insights on how they work together.

CUC – Go 4 It! Go on, Go deep, Go out and Go BIG. Explore the CUC’s “Go 4 It” strategic plan, and how you can be involved. Led by Mary Bennett.

Roots and Routes: Explore the golden age of liberal thought with Rod McLeod, and consider where tomorrow’s paths may lead. (Includes rare video snippets).

Lay Chaplains’ Workshops: Lay Chaplains training will be offered on Saturday, with the Lay Chaplaincy Committee (LCC) offering a workshop. Bring useful material to share on Sunday.

Council of All Beings: Experience the interconnected web of nature through creative dramatics, mask making and exercises developed by John Seed and Joanna Macey. Please attend both sessions to complete the process. Led by Ilene Cummings.

Saving our Water: Based on 5 Things You Can Do For Your River, this workshop explores what individuals can do to preserve this vital resource. Led by Judy Clarke, former director of Riversides Stewardship Alliance.

Living Our Lives Consciously: Why are you living your particular life? Become fully conscious of your choices, and explore ideas and strategies on how to slow down, overcome obstacles, and create richer, more passionate lives. Led by Ellen Jamal & Margo Holland .

Walking the Labyrinth: The twists and turns that make up life are reflected in the labyrinth. Join Elizabeth Cuthbertson for a look at labyrinths and the chance to walk one.

Cedar Glen Ramble: Enjoy an energetic nature walk with John Cummings.

Midwinter Merriment: If you can sing or entertain on our theme, come prepared to participate. Please limit presentations to five minutes. Tracey Szarka is our incredible MC.

Rootin’, Tootin’ and Skootin’: Put on a swishy skirt or string tie and enjoy some line dancing and other lively favourites. There will be a guest visit from the famous Cowgirls. Led by Cathy Brown.

A Midwinter Night’s Dream Cruise: Sail in the wake of Christopher Columbus’ transoceanic adventure, a unique video experience by Proud McLeod Productions.

Feedback Time: Grab a coffee after breakfast and join the feedback table on Sunday morning. This is your chance to share your ideas and concerns about Midwinter this year and next!

Nature Under the Snow: Even in February, things are growing and changing under the snow. Join Bill Dibble to stretch your legs and appreciate nature.

Earth-Centred Traditions: Explore a worldview, which connects us with nature’s elements and seasons, and integrates life and death as a cycle of transformation. Learn to cherish the wonder of simple realities. Qennefer Browne



COMPASSIONATE, CONTROVERSIAL AND ENGAGING: REV. BILL PHIPPS TO GIVE KEYNOTE SPEECH AT ACM 2007

A fearless social justice advocate and outspoken theologian, passionate about peace and a candidate who has gone toe-to-toe with Stephen Harper on the hustings.

The compassionate, controversial and engaging Rev. Bill Phipps will be the keynote speaker at the Canadian Unitarian Council's Annual Conference and Meeting 2007 in Vancouver this spring. Phipps is International President of the World Conference on Religion and Peace and a former Moderator of the United Church of Canada.

"I expect Rev. Phipps to challenge us as Unitarians about the work of truly living diversity within our religious communities," said Canadian Unitarian Council Executive Director Mary Bennett.

"He has walked the walk of speaking his truth and engaging with a diversity of responses."

Phipps experienced quite a diverse response when he spoke his truth shortly after becoming United church Moderator in 1997. He said he didn't believe Jesus was God, nor did he consider the resurrection a scientific fact. He was also agnostic on the question of an afterlife. This sparked a debate which continued to the end of his term in 2000.

In 2002, Phipps was the New Democratic Party candidate in the Calgary Southwest by-election contested by newly-elected Canadian Alliance leader (currently Prime Minister) Stephen Harper.

Phipps has also worked as a poverty lawyer, pastor, community organizer, hospital chaplain and an adult educator. He was trained as a lawyer at Osgoode Hall Law School in Toronto before entering theological college. He was ordained in 1969. Between 1974 and 1983, he was minister of Trinity-St. Paul's United Church in Toronto. He's been a minister at Scarboro United Church in Calgary since 1993. He's currently active with the Interfaith community's Faith and the Common Good project in Canada.

Bennett says Phipps will bring his wealth of experience in balancing conflicting and competing views to a diverse CUC crowd in Vancouver this May.

"In our very diverse congregations, where we welcome those who identify as Humanist, Christian, Pagan, Buddhist and more, we need to continually revisit our Living Tradition," Bennett says. "We need to meet the challenges that come with both speaking our own truth and truly celebrating the diversity of our fellow members and friends."

The 2007 ACM will be held May 18-21 on the scenic campus of the University of British Columbia in Vancouver.



BALANCED BUDGET

This has been a good year for the church financially. With only a few weeks left in the year we have received an unprecedented 90% of this year's pledge monies and without any major fundraising effort we will end the year with a balanced budget.

I would like to thank all those people who used post-dated cheques with monthly or quarterly payments, or paid in full at the beginning of the year. This allowed for a smoother planning process and less headaches at year's end looking for money to come in.

The November Canvass has now concluded and thanks to the generosity of our members & friends we have over \$10,000 pledged for 2007 which, together with money from those members who have chosen not to pledge an actual amount but who contribute regularly, means that we begin the New Year in a very healthy position.

With regular expenses covered, we feel that perhaps it is time to consider some type of PA system and perhaps there are other improvements that could be made.

If you have any comments or suggestions about any of the above please let me know.

Sincerely,
Chris Nye (Treasurer)



BRACE YOURSELF FOR CHRISTMAS

You never know where or when it's going to happen--that "aahh" moment when someone says something that crystallizes the essence of a conversation really well. You never know when, but I always find that such a moment has a certain magic to it. I think it has to do with the joy of being on the same page as someone else.

It happened to me the other day. I was talking to someone about our kids and high school and the pressure they were under to decide what they were going to do after grade 12. She said, "It's too bad that we spend so much time helping them decide what they are going to do, and so little time helping them decide who they are going to be."

I certainly couldn't argue with her, not only because it was so well put, but also because at the time she had very sharp objects in my mouth, and all I could do was listen, and say "Ahh" when prompted.

Such is the nature of conversation in the dentist chair. It is a conversation in stages; the natural rhythm of back and forth, to and fro, interrupted; truncated; irregular. Responses have to wait, silence is expected. And in its place, reflection on what has been said.

Actually, a dentist chair is a great place to learn how to listen. With no ability, and therefore no perceived pressure to respond immediately, we can hone our skills at hearing not only what is around us, but also what is inside us.

It got me to thinking about the upcoming Christmas festivities. All that clamour and hubbub will be speaking very loudly to us about what we should be doing in preparation for the holidays. For some, it might be more accurate to say what we should be doing so that we can measure up to expectations from others and from the self.

It is easy to get lost in the list of what we want to do this holiday season. It takes a bit more work to figure out who we want to be this Christmas.

That takes listening. The sitting down and being quiet and not responding until the sharp things in your mouth have been taken away kind of listening. Real listening.

The magical moments of Christmas don't come from Santa's list. They come when we wrap ourselves around each other. When we are able to share the gift of listening. Listening together. In wonder. So that when the time comes, we can say, "Awe".

May we all have a Merry Christmas, and wish Happy Holidays to all!

--Dwight Pile

MORE R.E. FUN

We are very excited for more R.E fun. In the upcoming little while, we plan to focus on one subject every month. The subjects include: What it means to be a Unitarian, Different Cultures, Respect the Environment and Social Action.

We've had spirited discussions about the celebrations of Christmas, Thanksgiving and Halloween. Lately we have been doing many crafts and games, and teaching the kids about respect for these traditions.

Now that we have had more experience we are going to get more organized with our activities and include more educational subjects and activities.

We are very enthusiastic with this project and are enjoying the energy of our young people.

*Thank you,
Adabu and Mallory*



SUCCESSFUL SURGERY

June Gilbertson underwent cancer surgery at the end of November and I am happy to report that it went VERY well. All the cancer is gone and she will only require regular checkups. No further treatment is required.

When I visited her and brought an amaryllis on behalf of our congregation, she had just come home and was looking very well indeed! We had a wonderful visit and she asked me to express her gratitude for all the good wishes she received from you all.

-- Catharina Walkout



WHAT'S ON AT CHURCH IN JANUARY & FEBRUARY 2007

All services begin at 10:00 a.m.

Jan 7 A NEW YEAR CELEBRATION AND FOOD!
We are celebrating the start of the New Year with a Potluck Breakfast, music and Sharing of our New Years Ideas! Note: we will start with the breakfast and celebration. Then after we will have a Member Meeting to approve the Budget. Twelve members make a quorum, so please be there.
Presentation: Chris Nye and Ellen Papenburg

Jan 14 WHAT HAPPENED IN THE GARDEN OF EDEN? PART 1
The story is simple in its elements. Adam and Eve are happy in the garden, a sacred taboo is broken and they are cursed by God and banished from the garden. They endure the shame of nakedness and from their act, corruption and evil issue forth, leading to a further punishment by God, "The Flood"! "The Curse of Woman", punishment for the original sin, has been used to justify the systemic bias against women in Jewish, Christian and Islamic orthodoxy.
Speaker: Richard Wardell
Service Leader: Dave Steuermol

Jan 21 "THE CURSE OF WOMAN" PART 2
Most explanations of Genesis develop from a faith based approach. The problem with these analyses are numerous. The outcomes are more a result of religious views of the scholar than a rational treatment of the material. Which of the faiths has offered anything close to a rational explanation of the event?
Speaker: Richard Wardell
Service Leader: Dave Steuermol

Jan 28 OUR YOUTH LOOK AT AFGHANISTAN
This is a service put on by our youth group looking at Canada's involvement in the events in Afghanistan. Perhaps by this time we will be looking at an election based on the unfolding tragedy.
Service Leader: Kerry Boyle

Feb 4 SLEEPING CHILDREN AROUND THE WORLD
A Canadian Program, which sends bed kits to children of any race and/or religion who will benefit the most; typically being located in underdeveloped and developing countries. A bed kit that consists of a mat or mattress, pillow, sheet, blanket, mosquito net (if applicable), clothes outfit, towel and school supplies. Bed kit contents vary from country to country depending upon local needs.
Speaker: Ken Graham
Service Leader: Diane Wallace

Feb 11 BAHA'I SERVICE WITH FOOD
The Baha'i religion celebrates life and usually has food after the service so we will enjoy an explanation of their beliefs followed by a pot luck lunch instead of our usual coffee and snack.
Service Leader Miranda Holmes

Feb 18 THE BIG PICTURE
We share our faith with 50 other Canadian Unitarian churches, fellowships and congregations that are gathered together in the Canadian Unitarian Council. The CUC offers grants, worship material and resources and today we will celebrate our being part of the Big Picture. There will be a share the faith collection to support other upcoming churches, and we too are eligible for grants and we had one recently for hiring an teacher last year.
Guest: Nora Prosser, Secretary CUC
Service Leader Ellen Papenburg

Feb 25 PART 2 "AFTER THE MUDPIES"
Everything "out there" is temporary, fleeting, shadow-like. All of our comforts that are created of matter will return to the dust from where they came, including our bodies. Is there something of this life that is permanent? Is there anything we can take with us when we die? The answer lies in the Power of Now and in the heart of a child. Leigh will continue his theme first developed last year.
Speaker: Leigh Fishleigh
Service Leader: Dwight Pile

