

THE Chalice

NEWSLETTER OF THE
ELORA & FERGUS UNITARIAN CHURCH
SEPTEMBER – OCTOBER 2007

OUT OF IT...

Change can be a frightening experience, but only if we react to change that way.

A whole summer has come and gone. I hope yours was a good and well spent summer. I however feel like I am totally out of it and I am.

I have been very busy running around at the glider club for many weeks as ground crew with four air cadet courses instead of the usual two and also had some flying with friends as I am still waiting for the medical to come through. It takes a long time.

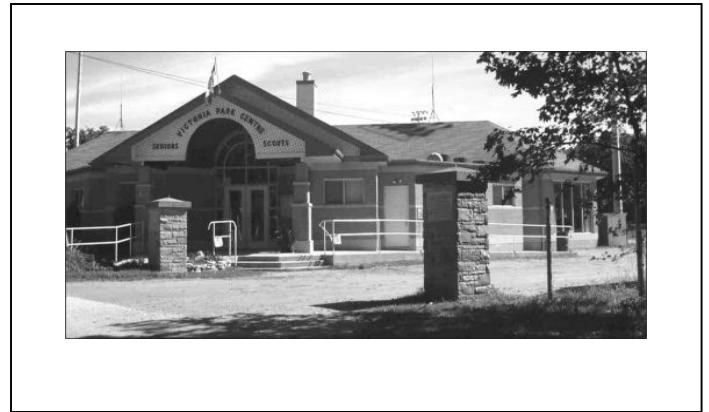
Unicamp has thus hardly been in the picture this summer. But as VP I lead their annual general meeting last Saturday, which is quite a different ball of wax than the AGM at our church. Cat lover like I am, it was the experience of herding cats and I survived.

With the passing of Labour Day weekend, the colouring of the trees and kids returning to school, the realization of getting back to normal hit a welcome home. Recovering from a busy summer. But... Normal? No, not quite, change is afoot at our church, and accompanying it a possible reaction of slight apprehension of what to expect.

As I am not involved in the organisation, I will be a mere Happy Receiver. What I have seen on the website looks promising and it carries the air of a positive change, renewing, nurturing, refreshing and still picking up where it was left off.

Change can be a wonderful experience. Let's embrace and see what happens.

Ellen Papenburg, past president



CUC APPROVED & MARRIAGE LICENCE

It has been brought to my attention that Ellen, our Lay Chaplain in waiting, has now been approved by the CUC. That means we can look forward to her being installed into our church as our Lay Chaplain in the very near future.

Ellen has also received her licence to perform legally binding marriages in the Province of Ontario.

Congratulations Ellen!

-- Catharina Walhout



POD DUTIES for the upcoming year

POD #1

Members: Kerry*, Karen and Rob, Dwight and Jill.
Dates: Sept.30, Nov.4, Dec.9, Jan.27, March 2,
Apr.6, May 11. (June 15?)

POD #2

Members: Anna*and Don, Arwa, Miranda and
Louise.
Dates: Oct. 7, Nov. 11, Dec.16, Feb.3, March 9,
Apr. 13, May 18.

POD #3

Members: Kelsye* and Paul, Jennifer, Leigh and
Teresa.
Dates: Sept.9, Oct.14, Nov.18, Jan.6, Feb.10,
March 16, Apr.20, May 25.

POD #4

Members: David*, Ineke, Catharina, Julie and
Kim.
Dates: Sept.16, Oct.21, Nov.25, Jan.13, Feb.17,
March23, Apr.27, June1.

POD #5

Members: Chris* and Norm, Deborah, Jim and
Ellen.
Dates: Sept.23, Oct.28, Dec.2, Jan.20, Feb.24,
Mar.30, May 4, June 8.

* denotes contact person for the POD



FINANCIAL CHALLENGE

This coming year promises to be both exciting and challenging. New Board members bring changes in focus and direction with more emphasis on Religious and Spiritual growth.

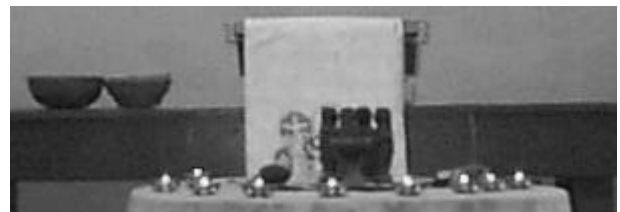
Thus we are exploring the possibility of hiring a professional trained Religious Education Leader to guide the fellowship in a new direction, recognising that it is through innovative programs that we can hope to grow and attract new families to our church.

It will require some investment of savings to fund this new phase of our development but trust that future growth in membership will balance expenditures in the long run.

Over the summer we have been busy fundraising and have raised over \$300 at the garage sale in June and Jim has sold Books for Beans at Unicamp to the tune of close to \$400.

Overall, we are in a healthy financial position and with a successful Canvas in November we will go into the 2008 year with a positive outlook.

-- Chris Nye



RE NEWS

Wow, the summer really flew by. School has started again and that means for most of us that things are back to 'normal'. After a long break our Unitarian Church is also getting back into gear, but RE will look different. This will be a year of change for our church community.

Our numbers have shrunk because people have moved away, we lost our president (although we gained a chaplain!) and fewer people have been joining our congregation. But we all agree that our church is too good of a thing to just let fade away. We are at a crossroads, determined to survive and perhaps come through even stronger. For that to happen, change is inevitable.

This summer some brainstorm sessions have taken place to figure out what we could do to become a thriving church again. June Gilbertson, a Guelph Unitarian member and involved in their RE program, came on one session and explained how other churches have overcome similar issues.

For other congregations, the number one reason for long term and steady growth was the implementation of a professional and consistent RE program. The advantages of such a program work on two different levels

1. It will give our children the opportunity to feel more engaged and involved in our church, so when they have grown up to young adults they may continue to be part of, and contribute to, our Unitarian community. Currently we have a huge drop-out rate from our youth, because they cannot identify with our church.

2. It will attract young families with children, who seek an alternative from mainstream churches but want their children to receive some form of religious or spiritual education. If these new families feel positive about our church, they will spread the word, which in turn will attract more people, etc.

Word of mouth can be a very powerful ally, but it can turn into an enemy when you turn people away disappointed because of lack of a consistent RE program!

During the summer meetings the board has come to the consensus that hiring a Director of RE would be paramount for survival of our church, even if that would mean stretching our budget to the limit (no pain, no gain).

Determining the best practice is one thing, implementing it is another! Nobody in our congregation is able or willing to take on this huge task, so we have to look outside our own small circle to find somebody who is up for the job.

With the help of the Director of RE for the CUC, Sylvia Bass West, and the Guelph and Kitchener-Waterloo congregations we are currently exploring our possibilities and we will keep everybody posted on further developments. The Board sincerely hopes that everyone will support us in taking this important and exciting step towards securing the future of this unique church that means so much to us all.

-- Louisa Kuitert



FOR OUR YOUTH

Friday, September 14 is the first official gathering for the Fergus-Elora-Guelph youth. PLEASE PLAN TO ATTEND as we want to establish trust as a group, so we will be working together to review and agree upon our group covenant, as well as planning the specific activities we want to do as a group for the next few months.

***Note: If you have friends that you'd like to bring to the group, THIS NIGHT WILL BE THE ONLY OPPORTUNITY TO INTRODUCE THEM UNTIL NEXT FEBRUARY, so make sure they and you are there. (7pm til 9:30pm at the Guelph Unitarian Congregation)

We will continue meeting every other Friday evening for the fall, and we'll put together a description of the topics as they're decided on (September 28, October 12, 26, Nov. 9, 23, Dec.7).

Parents: Please keep in mind that you will likely be asked to assist every now and then with youth activities. We will get a schedule of fall activities and dates to you after our first meeting so you can see where you might be able to help out.

Don't worry - you won't be asked to be involved in planning, but to help me as the primary youth advisor. We need at least 2 adults with the kids at all times as part of our safe congregation policy, so thanks in advance for your help.

Please let us know if you have any questions or concerns.

-- *Rebekah Jamieson*
Youth Group Coordinator

Fergus-Elora contact
Kerry Boyle 519-843-3130



NEW WEBSITE DESIGN

Our website (www.efuuc.org) has a new look and feel. It now incorporates one of the best content management programs available on the web. It is open source and totally free!

This new program will allow members to contribute more to the content of the website so look for exciting changes there soon.

PHOTO CONTEST

The new website has a beautiful photo of a river running through the mountains. What river you ask? What mountain range would that be? We're not sure.

Our challenge is to find a photo that has relevance to our church. One that shows in pictures what we are all about.

The winner of this contest gets bragging rights! Their picture and photo credits will appear on the website for all to see.

Send your pictures to photocontest@efuuc.org and you could become famous!

-- *Catharina Walhout*

ON THE ROAD TO DAMASUS

A few years ago, I started to look for good things in the Bible. To explain why that is noteworthy, it didn't used to be the case. I used to be more inclined to hunt down selected passages from the bible to show myself how dark and repressive it could be. It's not a hard thing to do. There is lots of 'dark and repressive' there. And there is lots of 'good and freeing' there too. It all depends if you want to condemn or you want to nurture.

It is easy to take a passage from a book written long ago that has been changed through countless evolutionary twists and turns, and use it to condemn. Some use it to condemn others who live different lives than they, and some use those passages to condemn the religion itself. The common factor between the two is the desire to condemn. It was one of my favorite pastimes when I was younger.

As I have gotten older I've become more inclined to look for the nurturing message. It requires a bit more imagination, but it does have its rewards. Condemnation just gets old after a while. Case in point: Saul.

Saul was a Christian hunter. He not only condemned the followers of Jesus, his job was to track them down and destroy them. On the road to Damascus, however, something happened. As the story goes, he was struck down by a powerful light, and lost his sight. A very loud voice, either from within or without asked, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?"

Some who have heard the story before assume that Saul instantly realized, right there on the road, that he had been doing bad things, and that he needed to change his ways. Bang, a bolt of lightning, and you're done! But that is not how the story is told. According to the bible, Saul was taken into town where he spent some time trying to sort out, none too successfully, what had happened to him, and what he was going to do now that he was blind. Eventually he was visited by a guy named Ananias who said that he had been sent by God to restore his sight. He said to Saul, "Brother Saul, the Lord hath sent me, that you might receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Ghost." At which point Saul's eyesight was restored and he began his new life as a person looking to nurture, not condemn.

Was it the power of the voice that spoke to him on the road that did it? Was it the shock of loosing his sight that made him change his outlook? I would say that those things were important. They certainly got Saul's attention. But what allowed Saul to change his direction was the very first word that Ananias said. He called him, "Brother". He let Saul know that he was loved and accepted by the very people he had been going after all those years. Maybe the shock of being offered fellowship, not condemnation was the true nature of Saul's epiphany.

Church can give you that kind of feeling of acceptance and belonging. Gathering as a group on Sunday morning, looking for the good parts of life, and being kind to each other can offer a fresh new way of looking at things. If you've never done church before, it might be a bit strange at first. If you've been away from church for a while, it might be a bit challenging.

Either way, as you look forward to the coming of another fall, with its mandatory clothes shopping and school supplies shopping, why not consider doing some church shopping for you and your family. Maybe see if there is a place for you. Whether it is down a Unitarian road with its liberal theology and open-minded, inclusive approach to the spiritual journey, or down one of the many other fine roads offered by the churches of our community, you just might find something you are looking for. And who knows, it might even improve your 'I' sight.

-- Dwight Pile





WHAT'S ON AT CHURCH IN SEPTEMBER & OCTOBER 2007

All services begin at 10:00 a.m.

Sept 9 THE PLANT NEEDS WATERING
What exactly is reverence, and how can we lay ourselves open to experiences of it?
an address by Phillip Hewett
presented by David Steuernol

Sept 16 CONVERSATIONS OVER COFFEE
Don Beals and Kim Muller
Unitarians are famous for their good strong post-service coffee and conversation. Two members of the congregation will share some of the conversations they have had over the years. Can a theist and an atheist have a fruitful conversation about faith (or the lack thereof)? Can the sharing of divergent viewpoints be humorous and fruitful?

Sept 23 LIFE, DEATH AND OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH CHANGE
June Gilbertson
June Gilbertson is a frequent and much loved guest of our church.

Sept 30 SPARKS FLY UPWARD: HOW OUR PASSIONS FUEL OUR SPIRITS
Jennifer Hewitt
Our hobbies and pursuits are more than just pass-times; those "sparks" of interest both reveal and renew the spirit within. Through an examination of our beliefs about hobbies, passions and just plain fun, we will look at the ways in which our interests connect us to our spiritual selves, and explore ways to enhance that connection for our spiritual enrichment.

Oct 3 THE RHYTHM AND RITUALS OF GIVING THANKS
Kim Muller
This Thanksgiving weekend service will explore some of the meanings of thankfulness and the rituals we often ascribe to them.

Oct 17 THE GIFT OF DISILLUSIONMENT: HOW FALLING APART IN EL SALVADOR HELPED ME SEE THINGS AS THEY ARE
Rev. Lucy Reid
Rev. Reid is a very popular guest at our church. She is an Anglican priest serving on the Ecumenical Campus Ministry team at the University of Guelph. This will be the second chapter of her experience in El Salvador.

Oct 21 WITNESSING DISCOVERY
Julie Corey
The moment of learning - whether mastering a new skill or grasping a new concept - can be both challenging and exhilarating. In our roles as teacher, coach, parent or partner we sometimes have the privilege of seeing discovery as it happens. Today we will explore why this sharing this moment is so valuable.

Oct 28 THE BETTER SOUL
Transforming people who transform the world into a place more characterized by love, compassion and justice. Sounds simple enough, right?
an address by Rev. Mark W. Christian
presented by David Steuernol