



### Silver Bells Will Soon Be Ringing!

*published in Elora Fergus News Express*

'Tis the season! No, not that one, although that too is coming. I'm thinking of the wedding season to come next Spring. OK, so there is a segment of the readership who are scratching their collective heads and saying, yet again, "What is this guy talking about?" But there is a segment of the readership who know exactly what I am talking about...those folks who are planning a wedding next year. For them, this truly 'Tis the season...for being excited, being afraid, being overwhelmed, and looking towards the future with very bright eyes. Because for those planning a Spring wedding, this time of year is getting into crunch time.

Crunch to find the right location. Crunch to hire the photographer. Maybe a video person. Caterers. Lights, Camera, Action! You have found the perfect partner, so now it seems only natural that you want your wedding day to be equally as perfect and spectacular. It is not because you want to impress your friends. It is because you want to impress on your friends how important this is for you. And that is wonderful.

But a wedding can also become a juggernaut that quickly runs out of control and becomes something to worry about, something to spend way too much money on, and sadly--and I say this because I, as others who have performed marriage ceremonies have seen more than once--something to fight about.

I loved my time as a Unitarian Chaplain in the 90s. I was witness to some very special straight and gay ceremonies. And I also watched helplessly as one or two of the couples I was involved in lost perspective in the planning of their wedding. About the best you could

say about those weddings was that they were a learning experience for the couple.

For those looking forward to an upcoming wedding, I would like to offer the following suggestions. First, and foremost, do it together. If one of you seems to be the only one engaged in the process, that means that the other partner, somewhere along the way has lost a sense of being a real participant in their wedding. That can happen really easily, especially for the Groom. I can't tell you how often I heard complaints from the Bride that the Groom wasn't doing his part. I also can't tell you how often I heard the lament from Grooms that anything that they were imagining for their wedding was summarily dismissed.

That happens a couple of times and, guess what? The Groom feels like an accessory. And then guess what? He starts to act that way. Or it could happen the other way around, often when there is a strong and untamed MOG (Mother of the Groom) active, combined with a Groom who is suffering from major conflict issues. That's a fancy way of saying that he can't make a choice between his Mother and his Bride. If this is happening, you don't need a wedding, you need a pre-marriage counselor. Before it is too late.

Do I sound cynical? Really I'm not. A wedding is a time that can be full of wonder and joy and love. But it is important to stay focused on what you really want to create together. If you do that, nothing, not even the all-powerful MOB (Mother of the Bride) can get in the way. By the way, any potential MOBs out there, I would heartily recommend you read Robert Fulghum's story of a Mother of the Bride. You can find it at <http://www.wattpad.com/38383--It-MOTB-by-Robert-Fulghum-gt->. (or just google, "Robert Fulghum MOTB. That will get you there.) I also recommend

you read his story about doing a mixed marriage ceremony in his book, "It Was On Fire When I Lay Down On It". Robert Fulghum is an amazing story teller, and his stories about weddings came from his time as a Unitarian Minister.

Speaking of which, ironically, one of the last things that some couples think about when they are planning their wedding is who is going to do the ceremony. Now if the couple are members or are associated with a church, then of course they will want to be married by their Minister, Pastor, Priest, Rabbi or Officiant. But if the couple is not already part of a faith community, or if the couple doesn't share the same 'faith family of origin', then the choice becomes less obvious. Today, there are several options. You can 'shop' for a church and minister that offers a match of what you are looking for, you can do the City Hall marriage, you can go to some beach in the Caribbean, or you can connect with a Unitarian Lay-Chaplain.

If you both espouse Christian values, then the first option may work well for you. If you look at your wedding in a polar way, the legal marriage as one part, and the friends and family celebration as the other part, then City Hall is the way to go, followed by a really good party. If you don't mind asking your closest friends and family to fork out \$2500.00 to attend your wedding, then, dance on the beach in February. But don't expect a big wedding gift.

But if none of the above is the box you put a check mark in, the Unitarian Church may be an alternative for you. We offer the opportunity for you to be married in the location of your choice, with a ceremony that you and the Unitarian Lay-Chaplain create together. A non-creedal ceremony that reflects to your family and friends who you are, and what your relationship is based on.

If this is the kind of wedding you are hoping to create, you can connect with a Unitarian Lay-Chaplain and see if you have a match. Most Unitarian churches have Lay-Chaplains who are licensed to perform all marriages that are legal in Ontario. Our own Lay-Chaplain, Ellen Papenburg can be reached in Drayton at 519 638 5444 or 1 800 565 2353

Good luck with your wedding. And work hard to make sure it stays your wedding. You and your partner deserve nothing less.

*-Dwight Pile*

## The Pledges are in...

The Canvass is now complete and I am happy to announce that we have over \$9000 in pledges for 2008. Thankyou to all members & friends for their co operation & generosity.

It is now possible to plan for another year of Unitarian fellowship in Fergus/Elora for which the Sunday Service committee is already hard at work engaging speakers for the coming months.

I predicted a shortfall of income over expenses for the year & to date we are approx \$1000 in the red. This was to be expected with the loss of several members moving away but since we have some savings in our account this does not present a problem in the short term.

We are still actively seeking a professional to lead Religious Exploration for the Sunday school and it is hoped that this will attract new members with small children & serve our own families with children as well.

We go into the New Year with a sense of hope & pride that the coming year will be successful both financially and spiritually & that our community of friends will continue to grow & flourish.

*--Chris Nye*

## CUC Annual Conference

On behalf of the First Unitarian Congregation of Ottawa, I am pleased to invite you to the Canadian Unitarian Council (CUC) 2008 Annual

Conference and Meeting (ACM) "The Web of Life - In our Hands" "La toile de la vie - Entre nos mains" on May 16-19th, 2008. Please mark these dates in your calendar today. You won't want to miss this annual three day conference which brings together Unitarians and Universalists from across the country for fun, learning, worship and song.

Engaging lectures and workshops on peace, justice, the environment, building strong congregations, and other issues will be presented as well as interesting and inspiring programming for children, young adults and youth.

Visit <http://cuc.ca/conference/2008/> for more information and to register

## Whats on at Church

*Services start at 10:00 am*

**January 6, 2008**  
**No Service**

**January 13, 2008**  
**Welcoming the New Year**  
A New Year is often a time for reflection and resolve. Today's service will offer an opportunity for the members of the congregation to share their hopes and aspirations for 2008. This service will also welcome and recognize officially our very first Lay-Chaplain, Ellen.

Please bring something from your kitchen to add to our annual New Year's Soup that will simmer during the service and satisfy sublimely during the social segment.  
Service leader: Dwight Spile

**January 20, 2008**  
**The book that changed my life**  
Some books change the direction of our lives while others gently remind us how to live. Don beals will talk about Cannery Row by John Steinbeck.

**January 27, 2008**  
**Letting Go and Trying Harder**  
A sermon by Rev. Mike Young presented by David Steuernol. How do you get that "something more" that mystics and shamans, prophets and preachers talk about?

**February 3, 2008**  
**On Life and Thankfulness**  
**June Gilbertson and London Green**

Some titles need no description. June Gilbertson is a Chaplain at the Guelph Unitarian Fellowship and an adopted part of our congregation. London Green is foremost a communicator, both on stage and one on one. We welcome them both back to our church.

**February 10, 2008**  
**The Kettle comes to Church**

A number of members of our congregation have been long time performers at the round table jam sessions at the Old Copper Kettle every Tuesday. This Sunday the Kettle comes to church bringing songs both reverent and otherwise.  
Service leader Don Beals

**February 17, 2008**  
**Surprise!**

Being a dull month, we want to surprise you with this service. No peeking!

**February 24, 2008**  
**Guilt, Guilting and Guile**  
A sermon by Rev. Mike Young presented by David Steuernol.

## POD Duties

**POD #1**  
Members: Kerry\*, Karen and Rob, Dwight and Jill.  
Dates: Jan. 27, Mar. 2, Apr. 6, May 11. (June 15?)

**POD #2**  
Members: Anna\* and Don, Arwa, Miranda and Louise.  
Dates: Feb. 3, Mar. 9, Apr. 13, May 18

**POD #3**  
Members: Kelsye\* and Paul, Jennifer, Leigh and Teresa.  
Dates: Jan. 6, Feb. 10, Mar. 16, Apr. 20, May 25

**POD #4**  
Members: David\*, Ineke, Catharina, Julie and Kim.  
Dates: Jan. 13, Feb. 17, March 23, Apr. 27, June 1.

**POD #5**  
Members: Chris\* and Norm, Deborah, Jim and Ellen.  
Dates: Jan. 20, Feb. 24, Mar. 30, May 4, June 8.

*\* denotes contact person for the POD*