



THE Chalice

NEWSLETTER OF THE
ELORA & FERGUS UNITARIAN CHURCH
MAY – JUNE 2009

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.

NEED TO KNOW?

When filling out any form, I am always careful about what answers I give. Name? Yes, I will give them my name because they will need to identify me but do they need my real name? They may send me junk mail. Address? Will they need my mailing address or do they need to know where I live? The answer to this next basic question will depend on who is asking.


Sexual Orientation? What would they need that information for? That is a VERY personal question! Are you a female trapped in a male body? Are you a male acting like a female or have you had a sex change operation? Perhaps you are taking hormone replacement therapy?

These are personal questions that only your doctor or those closest to you have the need (or the right) to know the answer to. Yet when we had our guest speakers come to give a presentation in our welcoming congregation series, I found myself thinking such very personal questions about our guests.

First they were introduced as Chris and Jack. I thought I knew which one was Chris and which one was Jack. I wiggled in my seat when I realized that I was wrong and had made the assumption that the person that looked the most masculine was Jack and the other was Chris. Wow, I had pre

judged them! What a wake-up call for me! But I had learned something about myself. I am not perfect and have a long way to go to be truly accepting of diversity.

I have no need to know if our guests are male or female. All I need to know is that they are folks who are here looking for a safe place to be accepted as themselves. A place where they can be free of fear and prejudice. We are not there yet but we need to take steps in that direction by facing these prejudices and changing them.

So let's wear our rainbow buttons and display our rainbow flag at each service. The LGBTQ identifies will know that we welcome them into our community and offer a safe place. The only question I will be asking is what committee they would like to be on! 

Catharina Walhout, President



OUR STORMY 15TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

Saturday night, April 25th, we had a good turn out for our Anniversary Dinner, and lots of good eats!

Due to the fierce storm that blew through earlier that evening though, it almost looked like we might have to cancel. Many of us were without power, and some of us with our cooking disrupted! The Senior Centre was also without power, so we had to change our venue at the last minute.

Thanks to the efforts and quick thinking of some, we managed to secure the Fountainhead Health Food store in the nick of time. Thank you Nathalie! And thanks to all who participated and helped make it an enjoyable evening.

Deborah Forman



Good food!



On Sat, April 25th the party went ahead even though the weather gods put up a protest. The storm hit about 5 pm and it blew down trees and there was no power at the Victoria Park Centre.

However, thanks to Leigh Brownhill and Nathalie, we were able to change the venue and have the party at the Fountain Head Cafe. There was so much wonderful food and Don Beals entertained us with his beautiful music. Many thanks to everyone for a wonderful celebration. A good time was had by all!

Catharina Walkout, President



Our knife-wielding President!

And yes, it was hot.

ADOPT A ROAD PROGRAM

If you drive towards Belwood from Fergus on Wellington Road 19, just past the 1st sideroad you will see a Blue sign on the righthand side of the road with the name of the Elora/Fergus Unitarian church on it. This marks the start of our designated strip of road which goes from the 1st to the 3rd sideroad.

Weather permitting I am calling on all our environmentally committed members, family & friends to come out on Sunday May 24th, from 12:00 noon onwards to help pick up trash as part of the church's commitment to a clean & safe community. Kelsye has offered her place for snacks/drinks after the cleanup.

For the cleanup, wear sturdy shoes & gloves. I will provide you with a plastic bag for filling & a safety vest & will coordinate pick up of bags & larger objects along the road. Children younger than 12 are not allowed to participate according to the Regulations. Sorry about that.

I hope for a good turnout. The more helpers we get, the quicker the job will get done. Last fall we had an enormous pile collected & Dwight even discovered a stolen safe (sorry no money) which necessitated a Police visit.

Chris Nye



ANNUAL CHURCH YARD SALE

A reminder that our annual church yard sale is coming up very soon. There will be a posting on the e-group as soon as a definite date is set.

Of course, volunteers and sale items are always welcome! You can donate your time, unwanted but useable stuff or your home baked goods.

Please call Louisa if you have any questions: 519-787-8701.

Thanks on behalf of the church!

SUNDAY SERVICES

Greetings, everyone. For most of you, it doesn't feel like we are anywhere near the end of the year. But for the Sunday Services committee, things are wrapping up. For us the planning and organizing part of our job is finished. All that is left is the easy part—the actual leading of the remaining services we've planned.

This Sunday Services committee has been together for the last two years. For the last few months, work and life commitments have forced some of the members of the committee to take less of a role. I appreciate all their work, and I appreciate those who have stepped up to help share the load. Despite the changes, however, our commitment as a committee to bring you worthwhile Sunday morning church services remained.

Even though putting on a church service is a lot of work, what many who create services have come to realize is how much you learn in the process—not only about the subject you are presenting, but of your own deeper understandings of your own worldview.

The person who stands up before this congregation on a Sunday morning is changed by the process. They have spent quiet time alone thinking about what they want to say. They have done their best to separate what comes from their ego from what comes from their heart. It doesn't always work, and when it doesn't, it is the congregation's role to understand that. But when it does work—when a Sunday morning service is delivered from the heart, it becomes a worship service; worship as in its original Middle English sense—worthy, and with honour.

It is the kind of service we receive when Linda Reith comes to visit. It is the feeling we got when Rev. Lucy Reid used to be a regular guest, before

she moved to the West coast. There have been many moments on many Sunday mornings with that kind of feeling. It happens whenever there is a moment of clarity of heart. Clever words or artful presentation might massage the message, but what I've come to realize for myself is that without the heart, wordplay is just a clanging symbol (with apologies to Paul of Tarsus).

We are also fed by the wise words and thought-provoking ideas of those that seek clarity of the mind, while still honouring that which we hold sacred in the heart. Challenging speakers, compelling ideas, thoughtful discussions, and alternative styles of presentation are very much part of what many of us come for.

This is the classical division of the spiritual journey in Unitarian and Universalist worldviews. For years congregations like ours have been working, sometimes wrestling with this heart/head balance. The two faiths were married in the early 60s, and we've been in marriage counseling ever since!

Certainly the Unitarian focus is different from the Universalist focus. They attract different kinds of seekers. Each challenges the one, while comforting the other. One is a process, one is a practice. I believe that we need both.

As it looks forward to next year with a new Sunday Services Chair and committee, I hope this church will continue to seek to create worship services that will nurture those seeking a relationship with the divine and those trying to understand it.

In faith,

Dwight Pile, Sunday Services Chair



WE ARE BECOMING WELCOMING!

On Sunday 26 April 2009, we marked the half way point in our Becoming Welcoming series.

1. We began the series on June 18th last year with a video on the life of Bayard Rustin, contemporary and confidante of Martin Luther King; a black man, a great orator, chased out of the civil rights movement leadership by homophobia.
2. We have also had a guest lecture, by Paul Dekking, a co-founder of the Gay Straight Alliance at Fergus high school.
3. Sid Barret provided a candid, first-hand account of 'coming out' to his parents and of being a man of the clothe.
4. We discussed in other services the meaning of the rainbow flag, the brown striped bear, the pink triangle and the acronym, LGBTQQ2A (lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, trans-gendered, trans-sexual, queer, questioning, 2-spirited and asexual).
5. And in January, we connected sexual rights to the inherent worth and dignity of every person, and celebrated that each of the seven UU principles teach us how to live harmoniously with all life.
6. Some of us saw the film, *Milk*, in February, and had a good discussion afterwards over potluck snacks.
7. On 26 April, we had two "trans" youth, Jack Vulpe and Chris Yang, present a service on trans-gender and trans-sexual issues. It was an informative and eye-opening inquiry, which allowed for meaningful and varied discussion and reflection.

As a congregation, we have undertaken this process with commitment and genuine interest and care. Those who have participated in the various events and services have commented on the good impact it is having on them, offering spiritual and personal growth. While we are proceeding well in this series, it is pertinent to remind members that we need a quorum at each Becoming Welcoming Event.

In the interest of inviting all members to re-commit to Becoming a Welcoming Congregation, I would ask that anyone who wishes should please write a note with suggestions about how it would be easier for you to attend a Becoming Welcoming service or workshop. What would help motivate you to attend? Is there a time or a topic that would increase the likelihood of your involvement? Is there anything that is keeping you from attending these services and workshops? Please write an email to me (lbrownhi@uoguelph.ca), or drop an anonymous note addressed to Leigh or Ellen into the collection basket on any Sunday, so that the Becoming Welcoming committee can take your suggestions into account.

Leigh Brownhill, Welcoming Committee





The Blue Water Bridges, Sarnia

WE ARE NOT ALONE

When we extinguish our chalice at the end of our Sunday Service, we say the words: "We know we are not alone." Why do we say this? Is it about us not being alone in the universe, other creatures looking back at us through their telescope, seeing our Sun as a mediocre yellow star and wondering if there is any life out there? It's definitely a nice thought, but the words "We know we are not alone" are meant to be a bit closer than that.

As Unitarian Universalists (UUs) we are connected to each other not only via our congregation but via the Canadian Unitarian Council (CUC - www.cuc.ca) and beyond that via the International Council for Unitarian Universalists (ICUU www.icuu.net). There is a bigger picture on Unitarianism and Universalism than just our group and our area. Perhaps you have visited other congregations on your travels or one of our neighbouring Unitarian churches in Waterloo or Guelph. If you have not done so yet, can I recommend to do so! Visitors are ALWAYS welcome, and even more so when I talk to people and bring greetings from our church.

Greater Toronto has five congregations: Neighbourhood, Don Heights, Toronto First and

North-West and the Unitarian Congregation in Mississauga. There are congregations in Hamilton, St Catharines and Barrie. On our journey to Port Huron for a Rotary Club District Assembly, Jim and I were happy to convey greetings from the Elora & Fergus Unitarian Church to the Unitarians in Sarnia. They are a small congregation of 40 with many members in Port Huron just over the border in the US. It was delightful to be present at a folk festival concert hosted by the congregation (who says there are no coincidences) on Friday April 17 and to enjoy the Sunday service two days later.

It was a pleasure to meet up again with colleague lay-chaplain Allan McKeown and getting to know other people as well. They told us to not miss out to have a visit "under the Bridge" before leaving Sarnia. So we did and we had a great time under the Blue Water Bridges that span the St Clair River to Port Huron in the USA, what a scenery. All these experiences were a bonus, since our main reason to be in Sarnia was a meeting about membership growth at the Rotary Assembly on Saturday. The knowledge we gained there will definitely be useful for our church as well.

When you have a chance, do browse the CUC website: www.cuc.ca and see what is going on out there. It's a vast website with loads of diverse information on Unitarianism in Canada and the people and activities involved. On your travels check if there is a congregation you could visit by going to one of the sub pages on the CUC site: <http://www.cuc.ca/congregations/index.htm> and say "hello" from us. If you travel in the States, check www.uua.org of the Unitarian Universalist Association. Have a great summer and we hope you will tell us about your Unitarian Adventures be it far or close, in the next newsletter.

Ellen Papenburg, Lay Chaplain

WHAT'S ON AT CHURCH IN MAY & JUNE 2009

Community Yoga class starts at 8:30 followed by the Church service at 10:00 am

May 3 THE FIRST SOURCE OF OUR RELIGIOUS TRADITION:
Direct Experience of that Transcending Mystery and Wonder
A sermon by Rev. Jane Bramadat presented by David Steuernol.

May 10 MOTHER'S DAY SERVICE
Melissa Rockenfield and Susan Deefholts from the Waterloo Congregation will be presenting a service with Mother's Day in mind.
Service Leader: Dwight Pile

May 17 SHORTENED SERVICE FOLLOWED BY THE AGM
The Worshipful Poetry of Rumi
Service Leader: David Steuernol

May 24 THE GODS MUST BE CRAZY
Reflections on the Healing Traditions of the Bushmen of Africa.
Dr. William Sutherland will be joining us this Sunday to talk about what he has learned from his experiences with the healers in Namibia.
Service leader: Dwight Pile

May 31 AT HOME WITH RELIGIOUS PLURALISM
A sermon by Rev. Jane Bramadat presented by David Steuernol.

June 7 THE SPIRITUALITY OF STEWARDSHIP OF THE EARTH
With Guest Speaker Ric Holt
Service Leader: Dwight

June 14 FLOWER SERVICE
June Gilbertson, Chaplain from the Guelph Unitarian Fellowship will lead us in our closing service of the year.
Location to be announced.



UPCOMING POD DUTIES

POD #1 Kerry*, Karen, Dwight, Kim and Deborah.
Dates: May 17

POD #2 Anna* & Don, Rob, Miranda, Louisa & Nardo.
Dates: May 24

POD #3 Kelsye* & Paul, Jennifer, Leigh & Terisa.
Dates: May 31

POD #4 David*, Ineke, Arwa, Catharina and Julie.
Dates: May 3, June 7

POD #5 Chris* & Norm, Jill, Ellen & Jim.
Dates: May 10

* denotes contact person for the POD