



THE Chalice

NEWSLETTER OF THE
ELORA & FERGUS UNITARIAN CHURCH
MAY – JUNE 2010

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.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN, 'A DEMOCRATIC CONGREGATION'?

The political position for the separation of church and state is laudable and, in our view, correct. But living within a democratic society, we have the right and, some might say, the duty, to bring democracy into our everyday lives. As Unitarians, we strive to involve ourselves in all of the decisions made within our congregations. Indeed, one of the seven guiding principles of Unitarian Universalism is to covenant and affirm the right to the democratic process in our congregations and in the world at large.

What does it mean for a church to be democratic? For the Unitarians in Elora and Fergus, it means being a self-sustaining church that operates solely on the contributions and fund-raising efforts of our members and friends (with periodic financial assistance from the Canadian Unitarian Council).

In our case, being a democratic congregation also means being a lay-led congregation. We do not employ a minister, although some Unitarian churches do. Instead we organize Sunday services ourselves, drawing speakers from within our membership and often bringing in invited guests. Our Sunday services, therefore, represent a wide range of perspectives that touch on such subjects as diverse as the spirituality of food, the spirituality

of music, nature worship, climate change and human rights.

We are also a welcoming congregation. We recognize and celebrate the presence and participation of peoples of all genders and sexual orientations.

Unitarians have several outlets for democratic participation within our congregations. The church is directed by an elected board made up of members in good standing. These members take up responsibilities for organizing services, religious education of our children, communications with members and friends and serving and enlarging our membership. Members are encouraged to participate in the board and in all of the activities and decision-making of the church.

As mentioned, members may lead Sunday services. We offer training so that members may feel confident doing so. We also support leadership training for members. We support the training and service of lay chaplains, who are legally entitled to perform major rites of passage, including weddings and funerals. We currently have two Lay Chaplains in our Elora-Fergus congregation, Ellen Papenburg and Jill Davey.

Members are invited to participate in the design and implementation of Social Action initiatives. Our social action program for the next year

centres on 'Becoming a Green Sanctuary,' which entails learning how to live out our commitment to the earth in everything we do. In these and in many other ways, we strive to bring democracy alive in our congregation. All of these are the kinds of initiatives I hope to facilitate and encourage during my tenure as president of this congregation.

The kind of democracy we practice is participatory and, we might add, 'grassroots.' And while we uphold the separation of church and state, we also speak out as members of a religious community when we witness the violation of the rights of others, including Mother Earth. For in our view, the church is relevant insofar as it ministers to the needs of its congregants, and lives out its religious principles not only within the four walls of the church, but within the larger church of the universe, not supplanting but supplementing (and, yes, sometimes challenging) the political processes of the state.

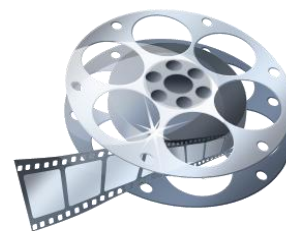
- Leigh Brownhill, President

~ advertisement ~



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MOVIE NIGHTS

Reserve Fridays May 14th & June 11th for film nights at the Gorge Cinema @ 6:30 pm followed by discussion & snacks (May 14th at Chris's - 353 Geddes St. in Elora, and June 11th at Deborah's – 3 Garlan St. in Elora).

On May 14th "The Last Station" features Academy award nominated appearances by Helen Mirren and Christopher Plummer in the story about Leo Tolstoy and his wife Sofya.

June 11th is "Oceans", the visual travelogue of the incredible inhabitants of the sea. This would be interesting for all ages and quite a spectacle.

- Chris Nye. Membership

YARD SALE

We will be having our yearly yard sale again soon. So if you have anything to donate, please contact Louisa @ 519-787-8701.

Any helping hands would be appreciated too!

Thanks!



YOUTH GROUP SLEEP OVER

Last month, the Unitarian youth group had a sleep-over at the yurt at the Fishleigh's, and it was awesome.

We started off in the house, waiting for everyone to arrive. After everyone did, we had a check-in and moved our stuff into the yurt. Some music was put on and some of us began to dance. Others went back to the house to make dinner; pizza!

After eating, we fooled around outside, playing 'person' hunt and a flashlight game willo' whisp in a very dark forested area. After this in-the-dark fun, we went into the yurt and watched *The Lady in the Water* on a tiny laptop screen because the projector wouldn't work, and we were squeezed in tight to see! Then we went to sleep, and woke up the next morning to a cold walk to a generous breakfast.

We packed up, played a couple games, said our goodbyes, and went home. Next outing we have will be at Unicamp for a weekend, and we're looking forward to it.

- *Jesper Kuitert*





FIRST PEOPLES CONFERENCE ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE RIGHTS OF MOTHER EARTH

In April I attended the first peoples conference on climate change and the rights of mother Earth in Cochabamba Bolivia. The three day meeting had an intense but short history. This involved about six months of internet discussion among some thousands of ecologically concerned people divided into some 18 working groups that addressed fundamental ecological issues and their solutions.

The conference itself brought some 30,000 people to the heart of South America, Cochabamba, and produced declarations and recommendations from each of the 18 working groups. These included undertakings that closely parallel the principles underlying Unitarian Universalism. The huge shift in consciousness represented by this meeting brings us from the dead end of neoliberal atomistic individualism (me-me-me as a unit of production and consumption) to the exciting reality of our interdependence and potential for group action.

The findings of the conference were passed to the United Nations climate change secretariat and will be on the table at the next conference of government parties (COP 16) to be held in Mexico this coming December. In the fall a

global referendum will be held to ask the people of the world their opinion on five questions on the environment, the ecological debt owed by the North to the South, and related matters.

This referendum is a great opportunity for us to network and promote real democratic participation with responsibilities to carry out the decisions of the people of the world. For instance, one of the five questions in this referendum addresses our position on the creation of an international tribunal to bring to justice parties engaged in environmental crimes.

- *Terisa Turner, Social Action*

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
Religious Exploration	Kerry Boyle

UPCOMING POD DUTIES

POD #1 Chris*, Ineke, Ellen & Jim, Leigh & Terisa
Dates: May 23

POD #2 Kerry*, Deborah, Mairy, Margaret P.
Dates: May 2, May 30

POD #3 Anna* & Don, Miranda, Jill, Louisa & Nardo
Dates: May 9, June 6

POD #4 Kelsye* & Paul, Jennifer, Julie, David
Dates: May 16

* denotes contact person for the POD