

Hello, friends: this month's newsletter is not quite so late as the last one, so I hope we'll eventually be back on track – just in case any of you are eagerly looking for IMaUU at the beginning of each month! (My aim is to send it by the end of the first week, but .....)

September is an extra-busy month for many people, and I'm very appreciative that several of you were able to take the time to send in some notes to help maintain the connectivity of this group.

Here are this month's contributions:

from **Lloyd Ryan** ([execontrol@yahoo.ca](mailto:execontrol@yahoo.ca))

It's interesting to observe what people are doing to find/establish/create meaning. Here is what I am working on.



I am building a garage on the side of my house. Above the garage will be a study. My study/library is now located in the basement. We have had several floods during the past couple of years and I have had to throw out a substantial portion of my library (I figure about \$35,000 worth or more - and insurance covers a very small percentage.) So I am hoping that a move upstairs will reduce the potential for more water damage.

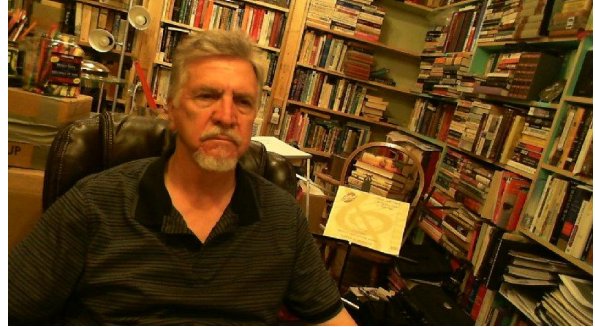
Besides, I am no longer 41 and all of the fun has gone out of shoveling the car out of the snowbank. (Well, to tell the truth, it never was a whole lot of fun!) So, a garage is vital! I am attaching a couple of photos to show what a mess my library/study is in at present - and me. Of course, I am not a part of the mess. I simply work in the mess.

I'll send you some more photos of the garage as work progresses. Best wishes!

Lloyd



Lloyd's library



and Lloyd in his library

from **Joy Rudd** ([jrudd@laurentian.ca](mailto:jrudd@laurentian.ca))

Thank you for the invitation to tell you something about myself. I live in Sudbury, Ontario with my husband and our elderly cat. I wonder if there are any other members in this area? My husband is a retired Mining Engineering Technologist, and he is very active in the community. I have two married children and four grandchildren ranging in age from 5 to 10. They are the delight of my life, and I am lucky to be able to spend lots of time with them, as they all live quite close by. I retired four years ago, after working for 26 years as Administrative Supervisor of the child care centre on the University campus here, so I read with great interest the submission from Noreen Smith in the August newsletter. Noreen, I hope you will feel that you can continue with your studies. I believe that a career that helps families and provides care and education for young children is very worthwhile indeed, and one that can only be enhanced by your level of commitment and maturity. I wish you the best of luck. (By the way, how old will you be in four years if you DON'T complete your diploma?)

My hobbies include yoga, gardening, walking, square dancing, reading, and drawing, and I am trying to teach myself to play the ukulele. I volunteer on a regular basis at a local animal shelter - housekeeping for about 250 cats who, with few exceptions, are able to wander freely about their home. I am a member of the Order of the Eastern Star, which helps raise money, mostly for local charities.

I was born and brought up in England, and attended the Unitarian chapel in Walsall, Staffordshire, with my mother. My father was a member of the Church of England, so I went to that church too. My Dad joined the Unitarian church when my parents moved to Oxfordshire in 1982, and, at age 95, he still goes to services at Manchester College, Oxford, with my sister. I join them when I can, during my fairly frequent visits. My mother died two years ago at age 98. She was very active in the church for many years, and was president of the Women's League, and she also sat on the Board of Governors of Manchester College. Although my thoughts and ideas of spirituality have changed somewhat over the years, I have always believed in Unitarian principles, and I try my best to live life accordingly.

I look forward to learning more in the September newsletter.

Best regards,

Joy

*from* Noreen Smith ([smithfsj@gmail.com](mailto:smithfsj@gmail.com))

All is well with me and mine. Getting ready for back to school for the kids and back to work for me. Still keeping up with my course work as well.

Interesting thing happened that I didn't know how to respond to at the time. While in Vancouver last week I picked up a lovely original art canvas with a depiction of a Buddha Goddess of Mercy. I loved the texture and style of the painting; the colours and everything else about it. Excited, I brought it home to be framed by the only place in Fort St. John that does framing. Upon their examining the painting I was told that under no circumstances would they frame a picture that was anti-Christian. I was told that to have such a painting in my home was a direct assault on Christ and the church and that I was to take my 'art work' elsewhere. I honestly didn't know what to say - I just sheepishly left the store with my canvass.

I will take my art to a large city next time I am out of town; however, I am really quite upset at how these people reacted. To me they seemed to display none of the charitable or kind qualities that their religion should ask of them. I suppose if a person wanted to they could make a fuss about being refused service based on religious reasons, but I just feel a real sadness for these people. I can't imagine following a belief system that would make me feel justified in judging and condemning others.

It's also upsetting that something I found so beautiful could fill them with such instantaneous revolt and anger. Anyway, perhaps some of you have dealt with something similar and have an answer that I could have provided...I'd be interested in hearing your opinions.

Take care all,

Noreen

*from* Kim Stark ([starttle@gmail.com](mailto:starttle@gmail.com))

As often happens, I wonder what I am doing here given that I rarely contribute and have been having a crisis of faith for at least 3 years (a strange and difficult thing given the texture of UU "faith"). But I am sort of in need of spirited conversation right now, so I thought I might check in this time.

My Mom died two weeks ago after a battle with colon cancer. Even though they didn't catch the cancer until stage four, and even though the doctors were very optimistic, and even though, at then end we knew she had two months to live, it was still a shock when she died. Why is that do you think? At the beginning of July, she found out that the chemo had not worked, and that there was nothing else to do. She was given two months to live, so she went to the east coast of Spain with my brother and his wife for three weeks. When she got back home, she went to Disney with my sister and her babies and her husband's family for a week.

..... Sorry, I'll finish that later. I meant to hit save and hit send instead.

Kim

From Janet Vickers ([janetvickers@shaw.ca](mailto:janetvickers@shaw.ca))

September air is like a fresh new year to me. I become more energetic and my dreams are more articulate.

More and more I appreciate the community spirit here on Gabriola. Two book stores on this island have copies of Lipstick Press books on their shelves - The Island Book Shoppe and Page's Resort and Marina Book Store. Lipstick published another book of poems in August - The Picket Fence Diaries by Al Rempel. You can find information on our poetry chapbooks at <http://lipstickpoetry.blogspot.com/> and [www.lipstickpress.com](http://www.lipstickpress.com).

The next CUC Chapbook call for submissions can be found in the Canadian Unitarian Summer 2010 issue on page 6 here [http://www.cuc.ca/canu/CanU\\_Summer2010.pdf](http://www.cuc.ca/canu/CanU_Summer2010.pdf), and I have pasted the call below here.

*Call for Poetry Submissions*

The Editorial board of the CUC Poetry Chapbook 2011 seeks submissions of poetry in English or French (maximum of five poems per submission, each poem 45 lines or less including title and blank lines), from Canadian Unitarian Universalists or UU residents of Canada, who are CUC congregational members, CUC members-at-large or self-identified Unitarians.

The theme for this fifth annual chapbook is Trust the DawningFuture/S'Ouvrir au Monde a Venir, and will be launched at the 2011 ACM in Toronto (celebrating the CUC's 50th Anniversary).

The editors also seek submissions of artwork for the cover.

Please submit unpublished material to: CUC Chapbook Editors at [keithwilkinson@telus.net](mailto:keithwilkinson@telus.net) or mail to Keith Wilkinson, #12-1820 Bayswater Street, Vancouver, BC V6K 4A4. If submitting by land mail include a self-addressed stamped envelope. Please also include a 50 word bio. Deadline for Submission is November 30, 2010. Acceptance or regret notification will be sent by March 21, 2011.

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Tony and I have been enjoying zucchini, cabbage, green and runner beans, tomatoes, garlic and lettuce from our garden, as well as going to the frequent performances of local grown talents.

Getting back to writing my own poetry has been a struggle this last few months, as I find it so easy to get distracted with other things.

Janet

from **Elisabeth Michnick** ([bert.michnick@sympatico.ca](mailto:bert.michnick@sympatico.ca))

I just finished reading Reading Lolita in Teheran, by *Azar Nafisi*, a very worthwhile book about the insidious growth of dictatorship in a country. Now I am working on Suite Francaise, by *Irene Demirovski*, which deals with the Nazi occupation of France. It reads very quickly and is enthralling.

I am preparing for a knee replacement in October. Perhaps after that I may have more time for writing. Today is Rosh Hashanah, and I attended services at my Humanist Jewish congregation, Oraynu. So a happy New Year to all of you.

Elisabeth

and from me, Anne Treadwell ([treadwell@ns.sympatico.ca](mailto:treadwell@ns.sympatico.ca))

On September 1<sup>st</sup>, my husband John O'Connor left for his annual three months of volunteer work in Guyana, South America. (Along with other involvements, he teaches psychology, sociology and medical ethics to student nurses. If you're interested in knowing more, take a look at his blog, <http://revjoc.blogspot.com/> ) Saying goodbye to him for a quarter of a year never fills me with joy, but I always think it will at least be a good opportunity to catch up on long-postponed tasks and interests. Funny how that rarely turns out the way I anticipate, but it certainly confirms an observation which maybe some of you have also made, that "*work (or any project) expands to fill the time available*"!

It's an interesting experience being alone here. I don't mean that I'm isolated in any major physical or even social way – I have good neighbours within a few minutes' walk, and many friendly acquaintances within a short drive. But, as I may have mentioned before, this is a small and extremely close-knit Acadian community, with everyone related to everyone else, literally -- and people in my generation, though not the next (I'm 70) often have 8 or 12 or even more siblings around, so their lives are abundantly filled with family! I don't think there's anyone else here without blood or marriage relationships to MANY others in the community. John and I have met with unfailingly kind friendliness – but we will never be part of the family. I'm specially conscious of this when I'm "*lone-ly*" – it's not acutely painful, but sometimes uncomfortable, even for an introvert and lover of quietness, as I am.

It would be fairly easy for me to find ways of escaping this aloneness by being somewhere else, literally or figuratively, but I think it's probably better (for me, at least – might not be right for everyone) if I can let the reality be, without trying too hard to distract myself from it. As at some other crucial points in my life, this reality makes me ask some vital questions: *What's my life about? Who am I when I'm alone? What makes relationships essential or optional?* And more .....

I'll be very interested to know your responses to these musings, and I'm guessing others who've contributed here will be glad of responses too. Let me encourage you once more to be in touch with each other one-to-one as well as through this newsletter. Meanwhile, here are a few photos from our garden ..... again .....



*August 19<sup>th</sup> – anachronistic primula!*



*Arrowheads in the pond*



*dying Queen Anne's Lace*



*our house, right, from a neighbour's boat*

Warmly, Anne

**Lloyd Ryan** has generously sent another short discussion piece for this month's newsletter, on the theology of one of our early-19<sup>th</sup> century Unitarian forebears. Here's Lloyd's introduction, followed by an excerpt taken (correct me if I'm wrong on this, Lloyd) from Channing's own introduction to his collected works:

*It is commonly understood that Unitarians have no creed. However Unitarians do have a theology, one with deep roots and long history. Moreover, Unitarianism has, and has always had, some outstanding theologians one of whom is William Ellery Channing ... One of Channing's themes was to take strong issue with Catholicism's teaching to the effect that humanity is born sinful, and to Calvinism's teaching that humankind's state is one of absolute depravity. Channing rejected both ideas, saying that such teachings were anathema to humankind's mind, soul, and spirit. One doesn't have to be a Christian or even a theist to appreciate how fresh are Channing's words, even now, 150 years after they were written.*

*I have removed some of the masculine terminology, typical of almost discourse 150 years ago, and used the neutral term humankind. However, I have hesitated to be politically safe for fear that muddling overly much would compromise the flavour of the piece. The reader might keep in mind that although Channing uses exclusively masculine pronouns, the tenor of his work is such that there cannot be any doubt that this man was thinking about humankind, in general, in all of its variety and glory.*

*It will be noted that in the first two paragraphs, Channing provides the commonly accepted view of humanity (even the common view of today's mainstream Christianity and the predominant view of other major world religions!); in the last two paragraphs Channing resoundly rejects the common view and proffers a much more rational and, one might say, a more humane one.*

*One can easily detect the foundations of today's Unitarian values and beliefs in the thoughts of this unusually perceptive religious gentleman.*

From the direction which theology has taken, it has been thought that to ascribe anything to humankind was to detract much from God. This disposition has been to establish striking contrasts between humankind and God, and not to see and rejoice in the likeness between them. It has been thought that to darken the creation was the way to bring out more clearly the splendor of the Creator. The human being has been subject to a stern criticism. It has been forgotten that he is as yet an infant, new to his existence, unconscious of his powers; and he has been expected to see clearly, walk firmly, and act perfectly. Especially in estimating his transgressions, the chief regard has been, not to his finite nature and present stage of development, but to the infinity of the Being against whom he had sinned; so that God's greatness, instead of being made a ground of hope, has been used to plunge humankind into despair.

I have touched on a great spring of error in religion, and of error among the most devout. I refer to the tendency of fervent minds to fix their minds exclusively or unduly on God's infinity. It is said, in devotional writings, that exalted and absorbing views of God enter into the very essence of piety; that out grand labor should be to turn the mind from the creature to the creator; that the creature cannot sink too low in his own estimation, or God fill too high a sphere. God, we are told, must not be limited; nor are his rights to be restrained by any rights in his creatures. These are made to minister to their Maker's glory, not to glorify themselves. They wholly depend on him, and have no power which they can call their own. His sovereignty, awful and omnipotent, is not to be kept in check, or turned from its purposes by any claims of his subjects. Humankind's place is the dust. The entire prostration of his faculties is the true homage he is to offer to God. He is not to exalt his reason or his sense of right against the decrees of the Almighty. He has but one lesson to learn, that he is nothing, that God is All in All. Such is the common language of theology.

These views are exceedingly natural. That the steady earnest contemplation of the Infinite One should so dazzle the mind as to obscure or annihilate all things else, ought not to surprise us. By looking at the sun, we lose the power of seeing other objects.

It was, I conceive, one design of God in hiding himself so far from us, in throwing around himself the veil of his works, to prevent this very evil. He intended that our faculties should be left at liberty to act on other things besides himself; that the will should not be crushed by His overpowering greatness; that we should be free agents; that we should recognize rights in ourselves and in others as well as in the creator, and thus be introduced into a wide and ever-enlarging sphere of action and duty. Still the idea of the Infinite is of vast power, and the mind, in surrendering itself to it, is in danger of becoming unjust to itself and to other beings, of losing that sentiment of self-respect which should be inseparable from a moral nature; of degrading the intellect by the forced belief of contradictions which God is supposed to sanction, and of losing that distinct consciousness of moral freedom, of power over itself, without which the interest of life and the sense of duty are gone.

Let it not be imagined from these remarks that I would turn the mind from God's Infinity. This is the grand truth: but it must not stand alone in the mind. The finite is something real as well as the infinite. We must reconcile the two in our theology. It is as dangerous to exclude the former as the latter. God surpasses all human thought; yet human thought, mysterious, unbounded, "wandering through eternity," is not to be condemned. God's sovereignty is limitless; still humankind has rights. God's power is irresistible; still humankind is free. On God we entirely depend; yet we can and do act from ourselves, and determine our own characters. These antagonistic ideas, is so they may be called, are equally true, and neither can be spared. It will not do for an impassioned or an abject piety to wink one class of them out of sight. In a healthy mind they live together; and the worst error in religion has arisen from throwing a part of them into obscurity.

*William Ellery Channing, 1780 – 1842*

### **Your thoughts on this?**

Finally, a reminder that you can find an abundance of good material at the CUC website <http://www.cuc.ca/> and that all IMAUU past newsletters are available on the Independent Members page [http://www.cuc.ca/ind\\_members/index.htm](http://www.cuc.ca/ind_members/index.htm) Visit often – and please let us know of any other links you think likely to be of interest to IMAUU people.



Have a great transition from Summer to Fall; celebrate the Equinox and Full Moon on September 23<sup>rd</sup>; let me know of anyone else who might like to receive this newsletter – and warmest good wishes to you all!

In faith and love,

*Anne*