



Hello, friends – and oh, how I wish that the blossoms above indicated the real state of affairs here in Nova Scotia. We've had about four times the normal amount of rainfall this month (and this year to date) -- enough already! And I know it's been as bad or worse in other areas of Canada, so I'll try not to complain any more. Instead, I'll turn to news from network members, and much of it is more cheery:

from **Noreen Smith**

smithfsj@gmail.com

May 3 -- Well it looks like spring may finally arrive in Fort St. John. The centres of the yard both front and back are snow free but very soggy and muddy, with some frozen ice and snow piles in the shady corners. I can even see the rocks around my homemade pond now! I've learned my lesson from last year's disaster though, and won't be putting up my gazebo or my greenhouse till after the May long weekend! I started another school semester this week; it is a condensed 8 week session so I am anticipating a heavy workload. Also starting another work practicum next week.

I took my daughter to Grande Prairie last weekend for the Western Canadian Gymnastics competition. She was chosen to represent Northern BC on the Team BC team. Very proud of her to be chosen as she was the only girl north of Kamloops who qualified. She did pretty good at the event and competed against the top girls from BC, AB, Sask, and Man. She is 11 years old.

With the arrival of spring my snowshoeing adventures have come to an end, however; my husband presented me with a kayak for my birthday and as soon as the lake thaws I will be out there giving it a go. Any advice on the sport is certainly welcome as I have always wanted to try this out but never had the opportunity!

I have my husband's parents visiting now for the next two weeks and expect my parents to arrive for a two-week visit after the May long weekend. It's always nice when family can make the drive up here to see us -- just wish they would come in the summer when the yard is dry and we can be outside instead of in so much.

Noreen

Come on, folks – I bet we have some experienced UU kayakers here with advice to offer!

from Janet Vickers

janetvickers@shaw.ca

For my part I report that the CUC Chapbook to be released at the 2011 ACM has now been published and will be delivered to the conference. Also I want to mention the beautiful service for Rev. Antonia Won's ordination on May 1st - so inspiring as it played against the election. I am hoping that Antonia will tell us more about it and particularly the sermon.

Unitarians and Universalists must develop courage and stealth to educate the people around them about what is happening in the Western "democracies" about how we are being manipulated by a faceless and nameless power. How power for power's sake has upstaged civil society and threatens to decimate it entirely. In light of these two contrasts my small details of life on Gabriola are not worth reporting.

Regards, Janet

I beg to differ, Janet – reality is found in the details of everyday life, I believe. It's knowing what your life is like, and the lives of others, that gives us a clearer "big picture". I'm guessing that you could tell us stories of how the election played out on Gabriola Island – and the way you and your neighbours live there is an essential backdrop and illustration. Never feel that your life is trivial; although it's true that most of us in this network are incredibly lucky in the details of our lives, however mundane they may seem, we each have to work out what the late Forrest Church called "*our human response to the dual reality of being alive and having to die.*"

If you'd like to know more about Rev. Forrest Church, here's a good link, with a short video:

<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/episodes/february-27-2009/forrest-church-profile/863/>

With just a little googling (or your browsing equivalent) you can find some great sermons by this Minister, as well as information about his books and other material, all of which I can highly recommend, and all of which belong in the category of "things which may help us feel less isolated".

Janet mentions Antonia Won: for those of you who're not familiar with the name, let me introduce you to Antonia, a newly ordained UU Minister, who is also a member of the Canadian Unitarian Council staff – she's the Congregational Services Programmer for the West and British Columbia. Antonia asked a few months ago to be included in our network, so she receives this newsletter, and I'm sure she'd be glad to hear from you any time, at antonia@cuc.ca

On a similar theme, Linda Thomson contacted me recently (several of you know Linda – who also receives this newsletter -- because when you inquired about finding other UUs, she steered you to our network) to encourage me to communicate with CUC staff. Here's her note and my response:

From: Linda CUC [<mailto:linda@cuc.ca>]

Sent: May-11-11 12:45 PM

To: 'Ariel CUC'; antonia@cuc.ca; Helen Armstrong; kelly@cuc.ca; Karen Claney; ben@cuc.ca; 'Jennifer Dickson'; Jorge Moreira; Phil CUC; kathleen@cuc.ca

Cc: treadwell@ns.sympatico.ca

Subject: Introductions!

Hi Anne and staff;

Please 'meet' one another. Anne it would be great if you'd fill staff in on what you do and how they can connect folks with you.

Please note this is independent of the Individual Membership which allows people to become official members of the CUC. If people have questions about Individual Membership, please talk to me.

Thanks – Linda

Linda Thomson
Director of Congregational Development

linda@cuc.ca

*Thanks, Linda, for encouraging communication! And hello to those of you I've not already "met". Below is a brief description of the IMaUU network. Hope it's helpful.
All good wishes, especially at this very busy ACM lead-up time,*

Anne

"IMaUU" network for Individual Canadian UUs (and others who wish to participate)

When I retired with John to rural Nova Scotia 6 years ago, I found myself, for the first time since becoming a UU, out of easy reach of a congregation – 3 hours' drive from the only one in the province. As the months went by, I felt this more and more. I had retained membership in my last congregation, but after a couple of years it seemed time to let that go, and I looked on the CUC website for the Individual Members program, to find it existed only in name. This was disappointing – but, I thought, not irremediable, and after consultation with the proper people I set about finding a group of people in similar situations to mine who might appreciate some connection with each other.

Another surprise was that there were actually almost NO official Individual Members, i.e., people who have applied to be Individual Members, been accepted, and submitted the annual suggested donation. That may have changed in recent years; I don't know – if there ARE paid-up IMs I'd love to add them to the network! In any case, I decided from the outset not to pay attention to formal membership or to act as a recruiter, and simply invited those I contacted to join an informal network, with a monthly newsletter and no dues or obligations of any kind. I also made it clear that I am not a Minister to the network, just the newsletter editor, and that there is nothing official about the group, though I appreciate the fact that, through Jennifer Dickson and Linda Thomson, there is "*CUC approval*" for it, and space on the CUC website for mention of it and posting of the newsletter archives. (Special thanks to Bert Christensen for his unfailing help with this, and to Ben Wolfe and others for their encouragement.)

I found my initial contacts through such sources as a listing of previous Individual Members of the CUC (the programme was much larger and more active at one time and Maureen Killoran acted as its Minister), Canadian members of CLF, and appeals to whomever I could think of for possible names. Since the first newsletter in January 2009, numbers have grown a little by people-telling-people, and when Linda receives queries from potential UUs looking for connections, who live outside a congregational “*catchment area*” she now routinely passes them on to me.

One thing that makes me a little uneasy is the lack of distinction (as I see it) on the CUC website (see http://cuc.ca/ind_members/) between official Individual Membership (comparable to joining CLF) and this simple network. I try occasionally (at least annually) to encourage those who might want to do so to join more formally as CUC Individual Members (I did so myself at the outset), but as there is no real IM program it’s not an easy sell! I would like to see some better way of encouraging membership, but I see it as unproductive to require membership, which entails a financial contribution, as a prerequisite for being part of the IMAUU network. I just like connecting people who have a UU turn of mind, and there are no expenses involved.

At the moment 37 people receive the newsletter. Some are already members of congregations. A few of us are Ministers. Fewer than half are active participants, sending in occasional contributions of “*check-ins*”, news, questions, musings, photos, joys and sorrows, etc. It’s only been a couple of years, so I’m not at all discouraged, but I would love to add many more people to the list, and of course to hear ideas for improving the network. I encourage you all to read the past newsletters (see link above) and contact me with questions or suggestions.

Thank you! Anne

from **Elisabeth Michnick**

bert.michnick@sympatico.ca

I received news recently that my granddaughter who lives in Israel will be marrying a young Israeli man. they will be coming here in July and we will hold a pre-wedding reception for them. The marriage will probably take place in Israel later.

I have been busy with my duties as chair person of the residents council at my retirement home and am looking forward to attending the CUC Meeting in my city. I will be staying at the hotel where the meetings are being held so it will be a mini holiday. Hope to see some of you there.

Elisabeth

Elisabeth mentions that she hopes to see some of us at the CUC Annual Conference and Meeting. Indeed, a few of us will be there, but most of us can’t be – we can, however, follow the plans and proceedings by exploring the CUC website. In case you haven’t yet marked the website in your “favourites” (which I recommend), it’s <http://www.cuc.ca/index.html>

(You can also discover the roles of the other CUC staff members here.)

from **Lloyd Ryan**

execontrol@gmail.com

No, I did not vanish off the face of the earth! I don't know what was more exhausting: dealing with all of the emotions relating to the death of my wife and trying to recover from the stress and trauma of providing long-term care on a continuing basis OR trying to become normal once again. It was a struggle! I am hoping that I have finally come out the other end - changed I am sure but, hopefully, whole once again and living with hope to which the next sentence will attest.

I have just returned from a month in Beijing where, among other activities, I interviewed for a number of jobs. I rejected several offers, but I have just accepted a position teaching English to doctoral students in the sciences at the Graduate University of the China Academy of Sciences. I will be returning to Beijing in late summer to assume teaching duties in September. It is an exciting prospect!

Lloyd Ryan

This is indeed an exciting prospect, Lloyd – congratulations on your prospective adventure! And please, do tell us about it along the way – I can just about guarantee that interest will be high in reading as much detail as you are able to give us!

from **Kim Rogers**

planetgemini@hotmail.com

Spring greetings from Whitehorse! But it's snowing as I write this (and heavy)....so not really sure what season it is anymore! So much for the crocuses that were just starting to appear this week.

One of the notable things about May is of course, Mother's Day. I find it kind of nice to be a 'participant' in this day, after so many years of being a 'spectator'!

For me Mother's Day is about being grateful for the privilege of being a mom. It's about being grateful to be blessed with such a monumental responsibility. Being grateful for the gift of my precious daughter. And praying for the wisdom and the strength to do the best job I can, in preparing her for life in this world.

I think in previous generations, motherhood was seen as an 'expectation' and a 'right'. I see a shift happening now. Motherhood is definitely more of a choice for women than it ever was. And as such, we often have the chance to put some serious thought into the implications of embarking on what is always a profound (and at times very difficult) journey.

While I enjoy the cards, the dinners out, and the special treatment that comes with Mother's Day, I know that I will also be celebrating these occasions in May by honouring my daughter, and thanking her for everything that she is teaching me, and bringing to my life.

I hope everyone's Mother's Day was a pause for reflection. And a celebration of what Motherhood is to you, whether you're a mother, or a child, or both.



*Warm regards,
Kim Rogers,
Whitehorse,
Yukon*

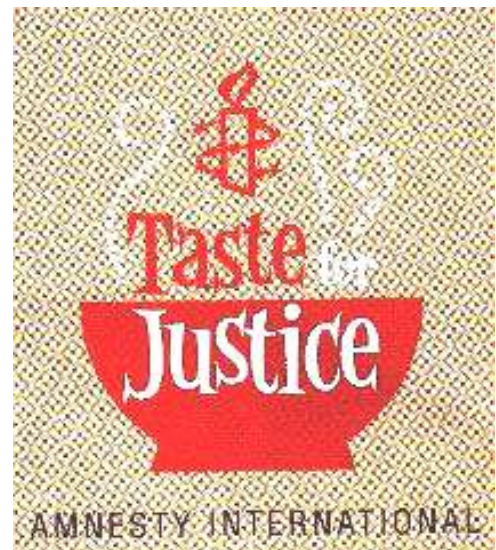
and from me, **Anne Treadwell**

treadwell@ns.sympatico.ca

A major event for me this month was the “Taste for Justice” evening our small Amnesty International Action Circle held on May 1st. Here’s the report I emailed to Amnesty:

Today I sent to you by Canada Post cheques for the proceeds of the **Taste for Justice** event held by Amnesty International Action Circle A87 on Sunday May 1, 2011. Our event was a concert, followed by refreshments, at Trinity United Church, Shelburne NS.

Both the great music and the delicious refreshments followed a Latin-American theme, in keeping with our Action Circle’s focus and particularly our Long-Term Action Case. About 60 people were present, including the musicians and volunteers, and in addition to the financial result, we feel that AI’s profile, and awareness of its work, were raised in our community. Equally important, everyone thoroughly enjoyed the evening!



We ended the event with a hearty “**Toast to Freedom**”. I’m attaching some photos to give you the “flavour” of the evening!



*(The **Toast to Freedom** was inspired by the story of Amnesty's founding, 50 years ago this month, by a British journalist who was appalled to read of the sentencing to seven years in prison of 2 Portuguese students who, in the repressive environment of their country at that time, dared, in public, to "drink to freedom".)*

Our evening was not a large event by most standards, but in a small, rural community where Amnesty International was unknown until our Action Circle began five years ago, it felt like a big success!

Enough for this time; I'll end with those words I've quoted before, similar to ones I used to say after the sharing of Joys and Sorrows in a Sunday service:

Whether the concerns of our minds have been expressed in words or remain in the quietness of our hearts, may our joys always be heightened, our sorrows lightened and our lives enriched by the connections and friendships we make here.

Here are pictures of our (wet!) garden. And this afternoon the sun came out – the world is a different place!!



Stay well, and be in touch with one another!

Anne