

Greetings to you all! I hope you've all been as lucky with the weather so far this month as we've been in Nova Scotia – eight straight days of sunshine, a rare delight!

First of all, here are the “check-ins” I've received, again in order of receiving them:

from Noreen:

This is Noreen Smith from Fort St. John checking in. I have enjoyed one of the nicest summers I can recall since we have lived up north (7 years). Everything has grown so nicely and trees are now just starting to show signs of changing colour for fall. My first year ever, I have tomatoes ripening on the vine- no frost so far...yeahhh! We moved from southern BC about 7 years ago, and I surely miss having fruit trees in my yard and lucious gardens. I find it a real struggle to grow my veggies up here, though the farmers market has a wonderful supply of beans, beets, carrots and onions. Maybe I am not quite doing things right, or perhaps not using the methods employed by the locals.

It's back to school time for my children (Grade 4 and 10). Most parents are happy about this, but I really enjoy having my kids at home with me, and always find myself melancholy when they are gone. We have a new puppy (boarder collie/cocker spaniel) addition to our family. She is a companion for our 8 year old lab. Our previous dog passed away at 12 years of age this spring. The new puppy has given us a lot of enjoyment, and encouraged us to go on longer (and faster!) daily walks, than we had been doing with our older dog. This brings our household up to 2 dogs and 3 cats!

We did a bit of local traveling this summer. Visiting family in Calgary (took in the Stampede), Lethbridge, Pincher Creek AB, and Nelson BC. My daughter is a competitive gymnast, so she attended a one week camp in Okotokes AB. It was her fist time away from home, but she did really well and only had homesick tears on her last overnight of the camp.

Upon returning home we went to work in our backyard. We've decided we really enjoy staying at home and find it the most relaxing compared to all the noisy campgrounds we attend (we are tenters). So we made a really large gazebo to encompass our fire pit and picnic table in the back yard. It is very private from our neighbours and gives us a little oasis in the city.

My husband was back to work this week at our local College after having the summer off. I quit my job at the end of June as I was feeling strained to the limit with work hours, managing my children's activities, and daily life in general. With school getting back in I will have to find another job, but only part time for now. We will struggle to make ends meet, but I just don't want to go back to being the crazy frazzled mom and wife of the last decade. I am really going to strive for peace in my life and I think it will filter down to the rest of the family as well! Well I hope this isn't too long and rambled.

Noreen

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from newest member Yvette:

This is my check in: Starting another school year as a teacher. Hoping for a happy year!

(Earlier – just after I sent out the August newsletter) Yvette wrote: *A little bit about me.....I'm a school teacher and I teach in Yarmouth,N.S. I enjoy reading, nevertheless it's difficult to read during the school year because of the hectic life. But I would like to skim through a book and read more about Unitarian Universalism. I also enjoy Yoga, exercising, and watching Oprah. I find I'm a person who enjoys the simple things in life. For example, my husband and I built a chicken coup over the summer and we now have 15 chickens. I cannot wait for them to lay eggs; it excites me!! These days, I love going in the garden and picking my own vegetables. Of course we have 2 small boys (one is 5 and the other is 2) and life is hectic and tiring at times. I'm leaving for New York next week with one of my friends. I have never been! This will be my first vacation without the boys and my husband. I feel I deserve to be away for a few days. We'll go see a Broadway play, China Town and other exciting tours.*

Anyway, I just wanted to tell you a bit about myself... Take care,

Yvette Surette 😊

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from Becky:

Here is a brief delayed checkin:

Life has been pretty hectic over the last several months, as my husband Scott and I conclude our 16 month journey with our final leg – riding our bikes across Western Canada back to our home in Ottawa. Crossing western Canada has been a joy but also a lot of work – we had a much more aggressive schedule than our crossing of Eastern Canada last summer. Throughout this ride, I have developed a great appreciation for our country and have met some pretty amazing people along the way.

I am looking forward to getting home, and hopefully I will be able to be home for a few months before life gets too crazy.

Cheers, Becky

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(n.b. the blog is still fascinating: <http://goingeast.ca/blog/about/>)



Scott and Becky reach a watershed



Becky, centre, with friends Suzanne Hansen, left,(also on this list!) and her family)

and from me:

I mentioned in August that John and I would be going to England for 10 days – we leave next Monday, 14th. Much as I'm looking forward to it, I'm never totally happy about going away from here. Part of that is reluctance to leave the garden, which calls to me several times a day in weather like this telling me what needs to be done! But as my daughter pointed out (when I was on the phone to wish my granddaughter a great time in Senior Kindergarten) there will be gardens to visit in England! I'll maybe have some photos of them to share next time.

A couple of days after we arrive back here, I'll be the guest speaker in Shelburne (about 45 minutes east of here) at Trinity United Church's special evening service celebrating their new status as an Affirming (i.e. Welcoming) Congregation – the only one in Nova Scotia outside Halifax Regional Municipality. I feel it a great honour to be invited to participate in this way and am looking forward to the occasion. (More about it in October, perhaps.) I was also glad that the Church selected a date before my self-imposed deadline for "last preaching engagement" – that last time will be in the First Unitarian Church of Hamilton, Ontario, on Thanksgiving Sunday. That's my "home congregation" – the place I began my Unitarian journey, and which supported and encouraged me as I entered ministry. I'll be in Hamilton with family for my 70th birthday (and my grandson's 8th) and am wholly delighted that I can give my last talk there, with my dear friend Elizabeth Beckett as service leader.

Enough already!

Anne

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And as I wrote last time, **“Whether our concerns have been expressed in this newsletter or remain in the quietness of our hearts, may our joys always be heightened, our sorrows lightened, and our lives enriched, by the connections we make here.”**

As I read through the check-ins, I was struck by the common theme of land – working in and on it, travelling through it, enjoying it, grappling with its challenges. Because this is a place where we can share other people's reflections and writings as well as our own, here's a piece in gardening vein by the late UU Minister Max Coots which is just as suitable for using in your own meditation as in a Sunday service. Perhaps reflecting quietly on each part of it separately over the next few weeks might be a good lead-up to Thanksgiving next month

Let us give thanks for a bounty of people;

For children who are our second planting, and though they grow like weeds and the wind too soon blows them away, may they forgive us our cultivation and fondly remember where their roots are.

For generous friends, with hearts and smiles as bright as their blossoms.

For feisty friends as tart as apples;

For continuous friends who, like scallions and cucumbers, keep reminding us that we've had them;

For crotchety friends, as sour as rhubarb and as indestructible;
 For handsome friends, who are as gorgeous as eggplants and as elegant as a row
 of corn, and the others, as plain as potatoes and as good for you;
For funny friends, who are as silly as Brussels sprouts and as amusing as Jerusalem
artichokes, and serious friends, as complex as cauliflowers and as intricate as onions;
 For friends as unpretentious as cabbages, as subtle as summer squash, as
 persistent as parsley, as delightful as dill, as endless as zucchini, and who, like
 parsnips, can be counted on to see you through the winter.
For old friends, nodding like sunflowers in the evening-time, and young friends coming
on as fast as radishes;
 For loving friends who wind around us like tendrils and hold us, despite our
 blights, wilts and witherings;
And finally, for those friends now gone, like gardens past that have been harvested, and
who fed us in their times that we might have life thereafter;

For all these we give thanks.

I'm guessing August was just too active a summer month for you to respond to the
Question Box invitation, or to provide your answers to the questions asked last time by Yvette
Surette, but it's not too late. Go back to your August IMAUU (you can look at it on the CUC
website if you haven't kept it),

http://www.cuc.ca/programs/individual_members.htm

and ask your questions, or respond to Yvette's.

On that note, I'll end – but with the usual plea for feedback of any kind, photos, files,
whatever you want to share.

Warmest wishes,

Anne