

Unitarians find solace and growth in the labyrinth

BY CHRIS MICHELL

Labyrinth walking is taking hold at many Unitarian congregations across the country, especially in the west. UUs are finding solace in the winding circular path of the labyrinth as a form of meditation, prayer or a tool for personal growth.

At least 13 Canadian congregations, fellowships and other UU organizations have some sort of labyrinth connection now. Here's a brief survey.

In 2003 the Unitarian Fellowship of Kamloops, BC, dedicated a permanent labyrinth made of interlocking bricks in a public

park as a special memorial to Dr. Karsten Iverson, prominent local doctor and fellowship member. Iverson developed ALS in his 50s and after he died, the men's group began organizing to construct the labyrinth, raising \$20,000 and getting permission from the city for its public location. There are two plaques beside the labyrinth – one explains how to use it and the other remembers Iverson.

In nearby Kelowna, the fellowship's labyrinth is actually painted on the floor of the sanctuary. It is available for use by members and non-members of the fellowship alike during the week.

Unicamp (in southern Ontario) installed a traditional, 11-circuit labyrinth last fall, constructed of sand and stones. It was a bequest from long-time Unicamper Betty Bean Kennedy. The Wild Ginger Witches, a group she was a part of, helped set it up and conducted a ceremony in her honour, and to welcome the labyrinth to Unicamp. It includes sculptural art at the centre



Henry Bosman stands at the entrance of the United Church's Labyrinth in Lethbridge. The Unitarian Fellowship held a potluck dinner, labyrinth workshop and walk when Mary Bennett visited.

and at the four cardinal directions.

Last summer, the First Unitarian Congregation of Ottawa mowed a grass labyrinth into the meadow behind Unitarian House, a UU retirement home on their property.

At the First Unitarian Church of Toronto, a tape labyrinth is used during the children's fire communion service (indoors) just before New Years, and stays around for several days so others can walk it as well.

The Unitarian Church of Calgary held a labyrinth retreat three years ago, at which point the youth group built a temporary labyrinth in a field using garden stakes and string for partici-

• see "Labyrinth Walking" page 2

View from Vrtbovska Garden, Prague reflections on the 9/11 disaster

BY M. ELAINE HARVEY

I sit in a regulated garden beautiful but formal plastic stalks below low hedges shaved in geometric patterns separated by pink and white begonias and balsams snipped as cones with perfect regularity.

Does the hedge fear its trimmer?
Do the flowers fear beheading?
Would a stray seed germinate
in this hostile environment?

As tribute to victims of terror the U.S. embassy is adorned with flowers and drawings by children, protected by gun-toting guards, cars searched before permission to drive past the building.

This is a more regulated world with some beauty but much ugliness, with people fearing more and building fortresses that separate and distance and conceal, that then create more fear and more control -- the American flag atop the highest point in Prague -- capital of a nation.

This gardener is creating a legislated world but it cannot be controlled: the more the domination the greater the resistance.

M. Elaine Harvey is a long-time member of the Kingston Unitarian Fellowship. She has been actively involved on its executive committee, and on those of the UU-UNO and CUSJ, and she is currently a member of the CUC Peace Monitoring Group.



Mary Bennett

CUC Executive Director

Step up, and lead Step back, and follow

In our UU youth communities, a common reminder is: Step up! Step back!

Step up! is often used as in, “Hey, Mary, can you step up to that?” This when I’ve volunteered or been “voluntold” to take on a role or task, especially one that I have not done before. Especially in a youth community, where leaders emerge, flourish and move on within a few years, stepping up is needed.

Stepping up requires support, encouragement, passing on of knowledge and a bit of latitude and forgiveness to boot. Our youth community is attentive to what’s needed in terms of support when someone has not yet “stepped up” because they just don’t see themselves as a leader.

Step back! is used to remind leaders and, especially (new) adult leaders that if they “step back” others will have some space to step into.

Stepping back if you think you know how it *should* be done, requires about as much courage and commitment (even faith!) as stepping up does sometimes.

Experienced leaders, they don’t have to “step back” everywhere, of course. In fact, “stepping up” to a new role or responsibility – possibly mentoring others, possibly doing something that feels like a risk – usually means “stepping back” from something else.

At this time of the church year, it’s a good time to think about where we might step up and where we might step back – in our church communities as well as other areas of our lives.

We can all “learn to follow – learn to lead.” Let it be a dance we do!

Are you curious about what the Executive Director does? My biography, job description and monthly messages can be found at: www.cuc.ca/whos_who/ed/mary_bio.htm

Labyrinth Walking

• *continued from front page*
pants to use over the weekend.

The Unitarian Church of Vancouver has two types of labyrinths: a portable canvas one that was originally a stage prop for a play, and a seasonal one painted on the grass outside the church. The outdoor one uses a seven-circuit pattern, though slightly modified to include a chalice design. It gets frequent use in the summer, sometimes even by staff and people attending meetings in the church. As the church prepares to refurbish the courtyard surface, they are considering installing a permanent labyrinth.

The First Unitarian Church of Victoria built a 60-foot diameter turf labyrinth in the seven-circuit design in 2003. The pathways are lined by red clay bricks placed on edge into the turf. The labyrinth is used every Sunday by people of all ages, and it plays an important role in both the summer and winter solstice celebrations.

Groups or individuals in Fredericton, Lethbridge and South Fraser are also in various stages of considering, planning and fundraising for labyrinth projects.

There are also labyrinth workshops. Helen Iacovino led one at Unicamp in August called The Ways of the Labyrinth. **U**



Growing Labyrinth: Mary Bennett is leading a labyrinth workshop on October 6-7 in Bouctouche, NB, on the property of the Rev. Ray Drennan, retired minister from the Unitarian Church of Montreal. More information at www.cuc.ca/CUC_calendar.html

More information

• CUC Meditation Page: www.cuc.ca/worship_celebrations/meditation.htm

Letters to the Editor

WHAT COMMON THREAD?

The Winter 2006 Can U’s headline is: Discovering the Common Thread of Global UUism. I have read the article a number of times and have yet to discover what the “common thread” is. The picture suggests that it is somehow linked to Servetus, but the article is far from explicit on the matter. Can you enlighten your readers in the next issue? Or perhaps run a contest for the best answer to that question.

— Ken Morrison, Thunder Bay

OUR GOLD ISN’T PLUNDERED

As president of the Spanish Unitarian Universalist Religious Society and a participant at the ICUU Meeting in Montserrat (Spain) last November, I would like to congratulate you for your coverage of the event in the Winter 2006 issue.

I would only like to respond to a section in the main article where one of the Canadian visitors, Ms. Evelyn Frain, commented about the objects of gold found in the Montserrat basilica, that she thought they were the product of plundering of South America during the colonial era.

The gold items in Montserrat are mostly donations from private individuals to the Black Madonna and to the monastic community. However, they are not the product of plundering because, of the two main kingdoms that joined to create Spain at the end of the 15th century, only the Kingdom of Castille, and not the Crown of Aragon (where Montserrat and the rest of Catalonia are located) was entitled to the lands and possessions of the American colonies. Our ancestors in this region of Spain, the inhabitants of the Catalan lands, were not allowed to participate in the conquest, and therefore they were not guilty of plundering.

— Jaume de Marcos, Montserrat

Asian Pilgrimage

by Beverly Carr



The 33 Canadian Unitarian visitors in Dharamsala, India with the Dalai Lama (centre-right).

Real compassion requires patience and detachment, says Dalai Lama

IN MARCH, 33 UNITARIANS and friends from 11 congregations journeyed together to India. The pilgrimage, led by Beverly Carr and Rev. Wayne Walder of the Neighbourhood congregation in Toronto, was a chance to learn about three of the major world religions – Buddhism, Islam and Hinduism.

Each day included a morning meditation roughly-based on one of the three religions. At the end of the day we reflected on what happened, helping to connect us as a group.

We traveled between cities by bus, giving us a chance to see the rural landscape of India. People were surprised at how cows, dogs, camels, bicycles, pedestrians, rickshaws, cars, buses and trucks all move together along the national highway!

For many the high point was meeting the Dalai Lama at Dharamsala where he was giving public teachings. He greeted us individually, shaking everyone's hand and wishing us well. We asked him what we could tell people back home about his form of Buddhism.

He wanted us to understand that compassion is not a spiritual sound

byte, but rather a developed practice "When we have to deal with difficult people, recalling our real compassion for their simple humanity is necessary," he said. It requires patience and detachment from wanting things "our way." He laughed as he told us, "we are all in the same sauce."

We visited a poor and packed Islamic community on the way to the tomb and mosque of Nizamuddin Aulia. Most of us had never been that confined by thousands of other people and it felt both frightening and deeply moving as Muslims taught our group how to "fit in" along the way. Then a Sufi Shaykh welcomed us into the mosque and invited us to sit and meditate. We could smell the rose-covered tomb and hear the Quwali singers warming up as they left through a winding street amid thousands of people.


Some of our group were profoundly moved watching the sun rise on the Ganges River. The bathing people on the steps, the burning bodies and the loud Hindu chants from the Ghats, reminded them of the complexity of life and of their loved ones. Many lit candles

of memory for deceased loved ones and floated them into the river hoping to release their souls to Mother Ganga. For some the din of sounds and the funeral pyres were like a scene from the film *Apocalypse Now*. For others, the sun rose softly and the water lapped quietly as the day began.

At the Taj Mahal, many were moved by its simple beauty and symmetry. The first view, framed within a darkened and arched doorway, takes your breath away.

In Sarnath, we were surprised by 4th century B.C. Buddhist statues of grace and beauty. None were behind glass or protective barriers and many people touched them or kissed the feet.

In Delhi, the group offered lunch to children from Child Haven. The children and the adults spent an afternoon learning about each other.

Janice Tait, a writer in Toronto, said, "This trip was so filled with life, that I think I am no longer afraid to die." 

Neighbourhood is sponsoring another trip next March, this time to Santa Fe where we'll learn about the art and culture there and learn more about meditation. www.nuuc.ca



**Brian
Kiely**

CUC Past President

We're in this together – so let's go 4 it!

In this final presidential column, I want to thank my fellow Board members (past and present), the CUC staff and all the delegates and individuals who have supported the CUC over the last six years. Together we have made the CUC into a viable, autonomous organization with great people and a great forward-looking attitude. Whatever lies ahead for me, being part of the new CUC will be a highlight.

Lately, I have stepped back to make room for new CUC leaders. Retiring Board members Christine Johnston and I belong with the past, with leaders like John Slattery, John Hopewell, Kim Turner, Elizabeth Bowen and Mark Morrison-Reed. They dreamed of an autonomous CUC and negotiated with the UUA. Much of my presidency has been devoted to completing that work.

It's time for a new vision, and "the new kids" have it. Building on the work of the Visioning Task Force, Calvin Drake has developed a strategic planning model. It's called *Go 4 It!* It was featured at the Saint John ACM last spring, to be followed by significant stream discussions at the four Regional Gatherings next Fall. It has four points:

- **Go On!** Keep doing – and improving – the good things we have been;
- **Go Deep!** Enhance opportunities for spiritual development and connections;
- **Go Out!** Tell the world our "good news" in a clear and consistent manner; and
- **Go Big!** Look for new growth opportunities by expanding our "target market".

Some of this can start immediately, some will take years to even begin, but I believe this model will give the CUC and our congregations great tools for building our future faith.

Testimony

by Dianne Heise-Bennett

Looking for an authentic way to live and worship

When I was growing up, our family attended the Lutheran church in our village every single Sunday. I learned important things and filled a suitcase with unhelpful things and left that religion when I left home. As a young adult, my spirituality was expressed in paid and volunteer work for various social justice causes.

I encountered religion again in a profound way when I spent six months on an exchange program in Nepal as a young adult. It was blissful to experience Tibetan New Year with dramatic story-telling and singing and circle dancing all night long in the community that I'd become some part of. And I was moved by the authentic way people lived and worshipped as part of daily life. That's when I began to unpack my suitcase of religious baggage and open to new possibilities.

My daughter Samantha, who is now 13, proudly takes full credit for finding a UU home for my husband Ed, our son Ben and herself six years ago. Her Big Questions and insistence that she needed a church too, led us to seek a place. At the first service we attended, I remember crying for joy that such a community existed. And I've grown to cherish this UU faith and community of fascinating people.

As a young person, I named ministry and truck driving as my least likely occupations. But I have spent the last four years as the Director of Religious Education at the First Unitarian Congregation in Waterloo. (Samantha also takes credit for this job having found me.)



It has felt like a calling. The relationships are the best part. It is joyful to work with people in my community, and my family, day by day, creating together a learning and celebrating community of all ages. My favourite times are inter-generational drumming

and singing nights, and worshipping all together with rituals like Solstice and Beltane (including a May pole dance). I believe many of us yearn for ways to be spiritual that connect our bodies too. For many young people, it's the natural place to begin.

Attending EAGLES (Eastern Great Lakes Leadership School) and subsequently serving in a leadership role with the Canadian Unitarian Universalist Leadership (CUUL) School have been amazing experiences in spiritual community. The worship, connecting with other UUs, stretching and sometimes lots of laughing, is wonderful.

Most surprising to me, was returning from EAGLES with a compulsion (no will power needed) to play guitar and discover my own singing meditations. It's become a daily personal practice that nourishes playful spirit. At CUUL School you can grow in your skills and understanding of leadership and maybe something important will happen with your soul.

I am full of gratitude for this UU faith and community for all it brings to the world and to my family, and for helping me find my grounding songs for living. **U**

Dianne recently retired from the DRE role and is enthusiastic about working with youth as a volunteer. cuul@cuc.ca

Riding the UU Tide in Saint John

On the May long weekend, the tide came in—over 330 UUs spanning several generations arrived in New Brunswick for this year's CUC Annual Conference and Meeting. This year thirty per cent of those participating were involved in one of the children's or youth programs.

It came in over a period of days, rather than hours, with some arriving on the Wednesday or earlier. It brought religious educators to the annual Renaissance training program, the CUC board for two days of meetings; lay chaplains and social justice activists. On Friday afternoon and evening, the waves picked up strength and more people and banners and luggage flowed in.


And then, on Sunday evening, the tide started to ebb, as a few exhibitors packed up their wares. Monday morning included another selection of concurrent sessions and then the transitions ceremony of junior youth and youth transitioning to the next age group and a closing ceremony including the installation of the new CUC board.

And now, it may be low tide in Saint John, but some "flotsam and jetsam" were left behind. The congregation was 43-strong when they offered to host the ACM; 49 at the start of the weekend, and 50 members by the end.

One volunteer who confessed, he'd done it out of duty, was surprised to enjoy himself so much. He's offered



Jeannie Corsi and the Rev. Dr. Steven Epperson receive the container of soil from George Legris of Saint John. Each year, the host congregation adds soil from their area and passes to the next host congregation. Steven, in English and French, invited all present, especially the young people, to come to Vancouver.

more volunteer time to the congregation. Kathleen Webster, chair of host committee, was even moved to take on the role of chair of the national ACM program planning committee. 

Some special moments included:



Clockwise from top left: Director of Lifespan Learning, Sylvia Bass West with Lifespan Learning Service Consultants, Karen Mills, Diane Bosman and Audrey O'Callaghan led a workshop launching the new Lifespan Learning Community Program; Young Adults Erica Spracklin (top center) and Saille Bishop-Legowski (top right) were among the half-dozen youth who bridged to young adult. Erica said that although she shed tears at her last youth business meeting, she felt reassured to hear that young adults also have meetings; Transitions Ceremony (bottom right): Junior youth, including Steve Robertson of UUC Saint John, bridged under a bridge created by youth in CanUUdle including Chris Michell, Erica Spracklin and Paul Hunt; CUC Board Installation (bottom center): Vice-President, Calvin Drake, lights a candle as part of the closing ceremonies; Irene Baros-Johnson and Neal Anderson converse at the table for Concise Portraits of Unitarian and Universalist Women, a revised publication based on profiles of 14 UU women.

What are you doing on the May Long Weekend— for the rest of your life?!

Following the ACM, we asked participants to share their advice for those who have not attended before. Here's what they said:

If anyone out there feels they just belong to their local congregation, they need to go to an ACM. Attending an ACM gives a feeling of belonging to a national organization of like-minded people, and gives a sense of identity as Canadian UU's.

CAROL LEE ELLIOT, SAINT JOHN

My main advice to people would be to try to attend a future ACM. It's a good time and wonderfully rejuvenating.

I can also recommend bringing your children and youth. My son enjoyed the junior youth program, and it was a fun experience for us to attend the ACM

together. We were both busy at separate activities during the day, and then reconnected at night.

There seemed to be activities for all different types - from those who wanted to learn how to run an efficient meeting to those who wanted to circle dance. Personally I wanted to do both types of activities - from the practical to the more light hearted.

MARGARET INSLEY, WATERLOO

Even though you can find cheaper accommodation elsewhere, staying at the same venue as the ACM allows you more time to appreciate everything and everyone and reduce the stress of travel between where you're staying and where the ACM is happening!

DENIS BARSALO, UCMONTREAL

I would suggest that although it is a great experience to go to the ACM in any case, going with at least one other person from your congregation gives you someone to chat over what you learned and apply it to your own congregation as the conference moves along. And it gives you a connection when you get back so that there are two voices to bring new ideas back to your own congregation.

GAIL RAPPOLT, FIRST UNITARIAN CHURCH OF HAMILTON

Become an ACM junkie and attend the next meeting! You'll get hooked on meeting up with old friends and making new ones. Learning, networking, having fun, and worshipping together are only a part of the benefits. The host congregation and host city will make your visit a delight.

HEATHER & MITCH STEFANEK, KAMLOOPS 

CanUUdle VI

CanUUdle is the annual "youth con". Starting in 2001 in Montreal, it has averaged 50-60 participants. Since 2005, the youth join in at the main conference site on Saturday culminating in a youth-led worship at 9 pm—a highlight for many conference participants. Here's what some of our youth said about CanUUdle:

CanUUdle was my first Con, and I really loved it! So many amazing people. I am really looking forward to seeing them again, and others that I will miss a lot.

ANNIKA DENHOLLANDER, 14, UNITARIAN CONGREGATION OF SOUTH PEEL (MISSISSAUGA, ON)

It had that certain something that's been missing in cons since I started staffing them. It was so gratifying to find it that one last time. I will miss this community deeply.

SAILLE BISHOP-LEGOWSKI, 20, LAKEHEAD UNITARIAN FELLOWSHIP, THUNDER BAY

Five years of YRUU and five CanUUdles have given me so many good memories and amazing friends that I can't imagine my life without this annual event.

SARAH BAXTER, 18, SHERBROOKE, QC

CanUUdle is always the highlight of my year - a place to recharge, to reconnect with wonderful friends, and to make new connections too! I wouldn't miss it for the world!

CHRIS MICHELL, 18, CALGARY AB

CanUUdle is the most incredible event of the YRUU annum. Nowhere else can I find the same amazing community of youth from all across Canada. 4 CanUUdles make up only 10% of the cons I've been to, but 40% of my top 5 cons.

DALE BRYDON, TORONTO, ON




At the popular youth-led worship on Saturday night, a panel of all ages shared their perspectives on their age: Vivian White; Neal Anderson; Saille Bishop-Legowski and Michael Hyer.

After being at the first CanUUdle in 2001 in Montreal I've had the opportunity to watch the Canadian youth community grow and change into something very special.

RIANNON HORAN, 19, UNITARIAN CHURCH OF MONTREAL

CanUUdle was quite an experience – the first one I've been to. Meeting youth from all the way across Canada was so exciting, seeing the breadth and scope of both YRUU in Canada and the CUC as a whole was – mindboggling.

HAZEL GABE, 18, FIRST UNITARIAN CONGREGATION OF OTTAWA (YOUTH OBSERVER TO THE CUC BOARD) 

UPCOMING CUC EVENTS REGIONAL FALL GATHERINGS

Kelowna, BC – October 27-29
Saskatoon, SK – October 20-22
North Hatley, QC – November 3-5
Beaches, Toronto, ON – November 10-12

ANNUAL CONFERENCE & MEETING

2007 – Vancouver
2008 – Ottawa
2009 – Thunder Bay

Check our calendar for other upcoming events:

www.cuc.ca/whats_new/dates.htm

Unitaridées

par Nancy Labonté

Quelle belle marée UU avons-nous vécue lors de la ACM à Saint John...


J'y ai présenté un atelier en français avec Hannelore Poncelet. Cet atelier suivait la forme d'une amphore : une embouchure évasée où nous sommes entrés par la lecture d'un texte d'Albert Schweitzer ; ensuite un col étroit où j'ai dirigé les participants vers la mémoire de l'expérience religieuse dans un exercice de visualisation ; dans le vase de l'amphore, nous avons réfléchi collectivement sur le terme "worship" et sa traduction en français ; finalement, par le pied étroit de l'amphore, nous avons créé deux rituels pour sortir ensuite par la base évasée et les performer en nous enrichissant du partage de roches et sable noir cueillis sur une plage de la Baie de Fundy.

MES MOMENTS FORTS

- Sacred Circle Dancing : Cassie Rawlinson nous a offert une occasion exceptionnelle de danser avec de très belles personnes dans un cercle teinté de traditions multiples.
- Riding the UU Tide : Discours d'Allan Sharp qui, passionné par

la Baie de Fundy, nous a servi une réflexion mémorable sur l'impact des marées et sur l'interconnexion entre toutes choses. Il nous a confirmé que la théologie UU est de plus en plus cosmocentrique.

- Our Own Voices, Canadian Contextual Theology : Rev. Carole Martignacco a présenté ses travaux en cours pour développer un curriculum qui sera divisé en 8 unités sur notre histoire culturelle, nos racines politiques, nos phares, nos paysages, notre mosaïque spirituelle, nos engagements sociaux, nos visions et rêves.

- Célébration finale où j'ai lu, en français, un poème de Anie Besant et où une douzaine de jeunes ont vécu la cérémonie du pont en passant du groupe des adolescents au groupe des jeunes adultes. Un rite de passage dont la sobriété et l'intensité m'ont fait regretté le fait d'avoir découvert l'UUisme à 35 ans! 

(n'hésitez pas à lui écrire à nanlab@vif.com pour plus d'informations ou pour jaser UUisme en français!)

Purple Shirts do it again! CU*UL school sells out at 35



Thirty-five participants plus leaders met at Carleton University in Ottawa for three and a half action-packed days in July. This was the third annual Canadian Unitarian Universalist Leadership School.

CUC has now created a framework for a certification in leadership. Contact the Director of Regional Services for your region for more information (contact information on last page.)

A cross-country staff team (wearing purple t-shirts) facilitated this year's event: Rev. Carole Martignacco (North Hatley), Art Brewer (Toronto), Aukje Byker (Hamilton), Linda Thomson, CUC Director of Regional Services, East, Sylvia Bass West, CUC Director of Lifespan Learning, Jan Schwarz, National CUUL School Coordinator, West, Dianne Heise-Bennett, National CUUL School Coordinator, East and Peter Scales (Victoria).

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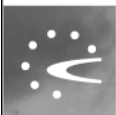
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Vyda
Ng
CUC President

Early warning signs that you might be Unitarian

What are some early warning signs that you might be Unitarian? During the CUC's May meeting in Saint John, some of us mulled this over in between meeting times. One person said, "being the one to ask the difficult questions in Sunday school". Someone else said, "always wanting to know why". A third said, "feeling slightly different from everybody else". It seems I was certainly a good candidate. I always felt slightly out of step with my peers as a child, as if an alien ship had dropped me into a human family without providing me with the "how to" manual.

I grew up in Malaysia and attended a Methodist church throughout my childhood and youth. I was also surrounded by family and friends who were Catholic, Buddhist, Sikh and Hindu, and so got an early taste of a multifaith world. More than ten years after moving to Canada, I attended my first Unitarian service in Saskatoon, and knew I had come to my spiritual home. Here was a place where I could comfortably ask questions, where people were fine with not having the answers and where they lived lives consistent with their beliefs. I became curious about these Unitarians. Why were they not more well known? Why were the principles of inherent worth and dignity and the respect for the interdependent web of life not catching on like wildfire? So I asked questions, read Phillip Hewett and Charles Eddis, and then "came out" as a Unitarian.

I got more involved denominationally after attending Leadership School. And when I was asked in December 2002, to join the board, I had no idea that this work would engage me and challenge me, and stretch me in ways I had not foreseen. It has taken over my internal life in such a way that I

always have my Unitarian "hat" on. The learning curve has been steep. I came on board at a time when the CUC was coming into its own, and I have watched with admiration and appreciation the many people who have contributed to the changes.

The CUC has done the nitty gritty work of putting details and structures in place to run valuable programs and services. The resounding success of the Endowment Campaign has been a testament to the commitment and generosity of our members. The Campaign's funds will power our programs in years to come. And now, it is timely to embark on our next phase.

We Unitarians have a good thing. Others need to know about this good thing that we have. Tom Harpur, in his Toronto Star article about the Hamilton ACM last year, provided us with some welcome impetus saying in the Toronto Star, "Unitarians Could Fill a Vacuum". We mean to run with it.

During the fall and winter, the CUC board will be engaging Unitarians across the country at every level in dialogue and action about how we Go-4-It locally and nationally, so look for the information coming your way. To keep up to date on the developing strategic plan, check www.cuc.ca/strategy regularly.

So, what were some early warning signs that you were Unitarian? We had our own singular ways of realizing that we are Unitarian, and there are other kindred spirits out there. We have room for more, many more. In this next year, it is my passionate wish that we, as individuals and communities, GO OUT and GO BIG and expand our reach.

In peace, Vyda Ng
vyda@cuc.ca

London fundraiser levels the auction field

BY REV. LEAF SELIGMAN

Fundraising auctions provide a fabulous opportunity for community building, but only if everyone can participate. So this year at the Unitarian Fellowship of London, we tried a radical new idea.

First I suggested we eliminate goods and focus on services. We talk a lot about resisting consumerism, so why encourage people who have enough to buy more of anything?

Secondly, I pointed out that people understand the auction is a fundraiser, so why not invite people to determine what they could spend at the auction, and ask for the money up front, at the door? In exchange for a contribution, regardless of amount, each person would receive \$500 worth of “Uni-bucks” – play money for bidding.

The person who stretched to give \$20 would have equal bidding power as the member who would write a cheque for \$300. That way, everyone in our congregation would be assured an equal opportunity to “purchase” the wonderful services people donated.

The donated services included: dinners in people’s homes, motorcycle rides, entertainment for a child’s party, home-baked bread for a year, massages, wills, yardwork and housepainting, concerts and canoe trips.

Some people were skeptical. Who would give money without knowing exactly what they would get in return? Wouldn’t it feel strange to receive the same amount of bidding bucks as the person who contributed a great deal more or far less real currency?

One of the committee members gently pointed out that the privileges of membership do not depend upon the amount one pledges, nor can we fully anticipate the benefits we will receive upon joining the congregation.

The auction was a great, community-building success. By far, the most gratifying moments came when generosity manifested itself in new ways. People seated next to each other collaborated on bids, pooling their resources. When a member bidding for legal services ran out of Uni-Bucks, others in the room rushed over and piled theirs in her hands.

Newcomers were eager to donate and purchase services that gave them the chance to get to know members, and people with little or no disposable income had just as much fun and went home with great services, some for the first time ever. In an evening of laughter, sharing and inclusive participation we exceeded both our goal and last year’s total by 20 per cent – raising \$5,900.

The next morning, during our candles of joy and concern, four people lit candles celebrating the joy they experienced at the auction. One woman said “I have never felt so loved in my whole life as I did last night.” The auction co-chair captured it perfectly when he said, “This year’s auction was a religious experience.”

We may not be able to redistribute global resources, but for a night we leveled the playing field – and discovered just how good it felt to live our values. That sold us on an auction that teaches how generosity and community go hand in hand. **U**



Across the Country

BLESSING OF THE BIKES

Jen Devine, the intern minister at First Unitarian and Capital Congregation in Victoria put out the call across Vancouver Island recently for “bike lovers and motorcycle maniacs” of all faiths to convene April 1 at the church.



That’s the day there were bands and folk musicians providing the backdrop to a unique family inter-faith event, which raised \$650 for a local homelessness advocacy agency.

PESTICIDE FREE KAMLOOPS

Inspired by David Suzuki’s Nature Challenge, members of the Kamloops congregation coordinated a public education workshop last year that led to the pursuit of the political action option suggested by Suzuki. The Unitarians formed “Pesticide Free Kamloops” and then distributed brochures and petitions, brought in a guest speaker, designed a website, sold “Pesticide Free” lawn signs, and educated politicians on the issue. A Feb. 1, 2006, headline in the local newspaper signalled success for the group: “City Bylaw would Ban Pesticides: New rules for private property to be in place one year from now.”

WHAT WOULD DR. LOTTA DO?

Lotta Hitschmanova founded the Unitarian Service Committee, in 1945 as a small group of aid workers sending supplies to war-torn Europe. A recipient of the Order of Canada, Lotta became a symbol of how one person can make a difference, making 56 Sparks Street a household name through television ads. This fall, USC Canada will launch a writing contest to commemorate USC Canada’s 60 years of development and social justice work. This short essay contest on the topic of “How is Dr. Lotta Hitschmanova’s message relevant today?” is for young people aged 12 to 18. E-mail USC Canada at kgreen@usc-canada.org for details.

Friends Profile

Joan Harris

BY BRUCE SCHWARTZENTRUBER

We caught up with Friend Joan Harris just a few days before she was due at a meeting in Dharmasala (see report on page three), a mountain town in northern India. Joan's meeting was pretty important, being with the Dalai Lama and all. Joan was checking her itinerary in eager anticipation of her second trip to India, living fully her passion for religious freedom and global awareness.



Joan began moving around in her youth, her family leaving the Blitz in London to evade Hitler's Luftwaffe as bombs strafed England. After the war, she would travel Europe, by thumb no less, and would bump into a friend who would "sing Canada's praises." Joan too fell in love with Canada after landing in Toronto in 1957, and it would be a mere three years before she discovered Toronto First's Carousel Club for singles.

Joan would serve on Toronto First's board twice along with "committees too numerous to count." Her vision for the broader horizon would lead her to serve on the CUC board and committees during the formative years of independence from the UUA.

Joan has been a friend of the CUC since it began and believes that all UUs "should support the organization that supports us." The assistance given to ministers, staff and lay persons, the sharing of national experiences so that all may benefit, and the resources provided to smaller congregations, ensures that we remain strong as a denomination. As Joan Harris sees it, a strong CUC can serve as a bridge to other members of our global community, and to other religious traditions – like the one fostered by the Dalai Lama, receiving visitors on a mountain in India.

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- You can become a CUC Friend online: www.cuc.ca/friends or by contacting the CUC (see back cover).

Across the Country

Winnipeg's windows tell many stories

In February, the Winnipeg congregation's Heritage Sunday service marked the 115th anniversary of the Church by unveiling a plaque describing the history and symbolism of the ten century-old Unitarian stained glass windows that grace the sanctuary.

From the plaque we learn that:

- The arches windows represent the blending of ancient Greek wisdom and the Judeo-Christian religion, probably dating back to the First Icelandic Unitarian Church of Winnipeg founded in 1891.
- Member Fred Swanson of the second Icelandic Unitarian Church designed two pairs of large windows, the harps and the torches, as well as the two pairs of small windows, the clear glass ovals and the lamps, in 1905.
- The lamp and torch (precursor to



the flaming chalice) windows represent the place of Unitarianism as the spiritual heir of the 18th century Enlightenment.

These beautiful, historic windows connect the congregation to its rich heritage and to the Icelandic immigrants who came to this land over 100 years ago. If only these windows could talk, could tell us stories about the services and ceremonies, the music and the pageantry they have witnessed. **U**

Ministerial Transitions

THERE ARE MANY CHANGES in our professional ministry in Canada. For complete details see "Transitions" at www.cuc.ca/ministry/ Revs. Linda Weaver Horton and Wendy McNiven continue on a consulting ministry arrangement with Kelowna and Kamloops respectively. Rev. Julie Stoneberg continues with Lakehead in Thunder Bay on a consulting basis. Rev. Susan van Dreser has retired from the UU Church of Winnipeg. Rev. Debra Faulk is the new minister for Don Heights, Toronto. Rev. Peter Boullata is interim minister at

Peterborough. Karen Fraser Gitlitz, formerly on the CUC board, is the first intern minister at Hamilton. Rev. Felicia Urbanski is the interim minister at Waterloo. Rev. Janet Newman will interim with Toronto First. Rev. Frances Deverell has been selected as a part-time consulting minister for the coming year at the Ottawa Fellowship. Rev. Diane Rollert is the 11th minister and first female minister at UCMontreal. Rev. Brian Kopke of Ottawa First has announced he will leave as of next summer. Rev. John Baros-Johnson has completed his ministry with UU Halifax. **U**

Voices from out of eternity

This is an extract from the speaking notes for “Letters of the Spirit,” a lecture series delivered by Rev. Stefan Jonasson during last summer’s Eliot Institute at Naramata.

SOMETIMES I FIND MYSELF lying awake at night listening to the faint sound of the clock ticking away in the bedroom. As time passes, the clock’s rhythmic beat becomes louder and louder. Oftentimes the beat of my heart slowly blends with the ticking of the clock and it is almost as if the clock and my heart are beating out the same percussionist’s score of some cosmic symphony, as if eternity itself and my feeble little bag of bones had dissolved into one.

Sometimes I also hear voices late at night, against the silent stillness of the room. They are *not* – let me reassure you

– the kind of voices that came to Joan of Arc or, for that matter, the latest mass murderer to get his name in the paper. It is neither the voice of God nor the voice of the devil that I hear in those moments of twilight consciousness. No, they are the voices we all hear, I would imagine, when we are too tired to stay awake and yet too stimulated to fall asleep. They are the voices of memory, for the most part, belonging to loved ones who have gone before, those precious individuals whose influence upon us has been so profound that, were they to walk the Earth once more, we would immediately recognize their forms in the distance and the sound of their voices calling our names.


My great uncle Axel used to tell me “we live in the shadow of history,” admonishing me to remember the voices of those from whom I inherited my values and traditions. I have always felt the weight of this truth and have sought to live worthily in that shadow. But I would go further: we dwell in the midst of eternity. As Spinoza said, “we feel and know that we are eternal,” which is why those voices speak to us with such urgency and power.

Unitarian Universalists like to speak of the “direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces that create and uphold life.” This transcending mystery and wonder

is experienced in many ways – when we gaze upon a beautiful vista, when we are caressed by the excited touch of a lover, when our ears tune in to the songs of the birds or the melodious strains of a violin, when the poems of the heart tumble from our lips, or when the golden silence of creation surrounds us in meditation or prayer. We experience it, too, when we encounter the literature of our living tradition, which speaks to us of faith and love across the distance of time and space. So it is that we may distill the essence of our faith – its eternal qualities, if you will – from the words that come down to us from the treasury of stories and sermons, tracts and tomes which are a part of our spiritual legacy.

So I hear an echo of our eternal nature in the voices of those whose memory is so deeply etched upon my own soul that I cannot escape them, even if I would. And I hear eternal truths tumble forth in the words of insightful women and men, from biblical times right down to the latest book of meditations, whose writings have inspired and encouraged me in my faith.

Our work and witness as people of the free spirit is something we undertake in the name of eternal values and abiding truths, as living embodiments of this living tradition we hold dear. We are strengthened in this undertaking by our rich literary inheritance, alongside the voices of memory, which serve us well as we live in the shadow of history and dwell in the midst of eternity.

When I drift off to sleep and when I awake in the morning, I hear their voices proclaiming the good news of our liberal faith. 

Rev. Stefan Jonasson is a Unitarian Universalist minister, historian and organizational development consultant based in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.
<http://members.shaw.ca/smjjonasson>



The Canadian Unitarian is the newsletter of the Canadian Unitarian Council. It's mailed free to all members for whom the CUC has a current address.* The Unitarian reports on newsworthy events in the denomination, including the annual conference each spring. It attempts to reflect all segments of Unitarianism and Universalism in Canada. We welcome all submissions, however, publication is based on the criteria of newsworthiness, relevance to readers, length and balance. We try to publish all letters to the editor, although they may be edited for brevity and clarity.

* Non-members can subscribe to the Unitarian for \$15 Can. or \$10 U.S. Send name, address and cheque to CUC office.

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In Memory

MARGARET (SMITH) HEWETT, wife of Rev. Phillip Hewett, Minister Emeritus of the Unitarian Church of Vancouver, died in Vancouver on March 26, 2006. Margaret was born on April 7, 1923, in London, England.

A teacher and pre-school educator, she was much involved in the work of the Unitarian Church and in causes promoting peace and disarmament, receiving an award for outstanding service from the International Association for Religious Freedom. Margaret had a deep interest in music and

served on the board of the Vancouver Chamber Choir. In her earlier years she was a strong contralto singer and also a vigorous hiker. For the past 25 years she struggled courageously with the increasing ravages of rheumatoid arthritis. Margaret was a 3rd generation Unitarian, and was President of the British Unitarian Youth Association when she first met Phillip.



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Designs by Donna

Need "appreciation" gifts? Donna has her own colourful, copyrighted chalice designs on T-shirts, book bags, sweatshirts, "hoodies" and more! These designs include the one at the left, plus a musical variation (with a music note for the flame). Church hangings and ministerial stoles are also available.

New this season: Toddler and kids T-shirts, adult long-sleeved T-shirts.

Check out the web-site and order soon.

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