

Three new program staff hired for expanded cuc

“Hiring three new staff might not be a big deal for some organizations,” says cuc executive director Mary Bennett. “But for us, it’s huge! It means doubling the size of our staff, and creating three entirely new jobs.”

The sudden growth spurt is part of creating the “new cuc” – the organization that is taking over responsibility for services to congregations (previously delivered by the UUA and their districts). The three new positions are all program staff, who will begin working full-time in the fall. The new staff are:

- **Sylvia Bass West** – Director of Lifespan Learning, with national responsibilities
- **Sara McEwan** – Director of Regional Services, with responsibility for the B.C. and Western Regions
- **Linda Thomson**, Director of Regional Services, with responsibility for the Central and Eastern regions

“These three are absolute winners,” says Mary Bennett. “We managed to find people who are passionate about the cuc, and are ready to hit the ground running because of their extensive denominational experience.”

Mary Bennett worked with three different search committees, composed of congregational leaders from across the country, in finding the new staff. They applied, were interviewed, selected and hired in less than two months, following the cuc annual meeting that confirmed the new staff structure.

Sylvia Bass West has served for the last six years as the full-time Director of Lifespan Religious Education at the Unitarian Fellowship of London. “We need to nurture a vibrant liberal faith community across Canada,” she says, “to help draw families together in a world that offers much to separate them.”

Linda Thomson will be well known to most of the congregations in her region, as the UUA Canadian Consultant in the St. Lawrence Dis-



Sylvia Bass West at last year's cuc annual meeting



Sara McEwan



Linda Thomson

trict for the past five years. A lay chaplain and former president at the First Unitarian Church of Hamilton, Thomson says, “It will be a privilege to work with the societies and individuals who make up the cuc, and to help them build a new organization.”

Sara McEwan has extensive contacts as a denominational leader in western Canada, from her base at the Unitarian Church of Edmonton. Trained as a probation officer, she worked most recently as Executive Director of the Edmonton Elizabeth Fry Society. She says she is, “excitedly imagining becoming a change agent at a time of development for the Canadian Unitarian movement.”

All three will work from home offices, with extensive travel in their regions, and in Sylvia Bass West’s case, across the country. ☐

cuc Annual Meeting 2002

— full reports inside

Regional cuc gatherings planned for fall

Each of the new cuc regions will hold their inaugural annual meetings this fall. Here are the preliminary dates and contacts. For more information go to the cuc web site at www.cuc.ca or call 416-489-4121.

- **B.C. Region:** Nov. 9–10, 2002, West Vancouver, B.C., contact: Inger O’Hanlon, ingeroh@telus.net
- **Western Canada:** Oct. 4–6, 2002, Saskatoon, SK, contact: Rhonda Everson, reverson@shaw.ca
- **Central Region:** Oct. 26, Waterloo, ON, contact: Craig Beam, cabeam@uwaterloo.ca
- **Eastern Region:** Oct. 25–27, 2002, Ottawa, ON, contact: Louise Lefort, lalefort@storm.ca

**GROWING VITAL
RELIGIOUS
COMMUNITIES
IN CANADA**



Mary Bennett

CUC Executive Director

We'll meet our UUA brethren as peers from now on

Source de Vie, Spirit of Life,
As we begin this new era of partnership and cooperation,
Be with us as we seek ways to support one another, to learn from one another and to grow alongside one another.

These lines are from a blessing read at the UUA General Assembly in Quebec City in June.

All those who had been involved in the past few years worth of negotiating and transition teams were invited on stage. We crossed mid-stage, then stepped off the stage, hugging and shaking hands with each of the other team.

The transition felt very real at that moment. As I greeted each of the UUA people I scarcely noticed the delegates in the convention centre witnessing the ritual – a ceremony of *au revoir*.

When next we meet it will be as peers. When I talk about being partners with the UUA, some people reply that the CUC is much, much smaller. However, I believe we can still contribute something significant – which comes from our own special knowledge and experience – that the UUA will find valuable (I call this the Canadarm approach to partnership).

This blessing could as easily be written for the new staff and myself, along with current staff, to read together line by line:

May our relationship as peers serve to strengthen Unitarianism, Universalism, and Unitarian Universalism.

May we find the courage to speak our truths in love.

May we find the shared faith to sustain us in our seeking.

Spirit of Life. Please be with us on this journey.

Source de Vie, soit avec nous sur ce sejour.
Blessed Be.

Amen.

Testimony

by Stephen Turnbull

Is UUism a religion? asks youth observer to CUC Board

My name is Stephen Turnbull, a youth member from the First Unitarian Congregation of Ottawa, and I'm the new Youth Observer to the CUC Board of Trustees.

I've been a church attendee for five years now. But for all that, it may be surprising that I only began to think of Unitarian Universalism as a real religion after attending this year's AGM and youth conference in Kelowna, B.C.

I'm not saying I doubted it was a religion, or that it was real. But when people asked me what UUism was, I responded jokingly, saying my church was called that for tax reasons! I liked the church and the people and the community – but it did not feel religious to me.

However, at Kelowna something changed. I don't know what exactly, but something did. It struck me that UUism truly is a religion, albeit an atypical one. I see it as a technically Christian religious group, in which even long-term active members can't fully agree on what the religion is really about.

It's so diverse as to include people from what are perceived to be contrary religious practices worshipping together, and so liberal as to include some people who don't believe UUism is a religion at all.

I find that for all our diversity, for all our differences and opinions, for our vast array of ages and walks of life, we still all basically seem to agree on the less fuzzy parts of our beliefs, such as our Principles and Sources, and respect for others.

It's our origins and history that can get a bit confusing.

I have often argued that technically Unitarian Universalism is or was Christian. When I speak with other youth, most tell me that UUism is no longer a Christian faith. They agree it is spiritual, and that it draws lessons and morals from Christianity, but they perceive it as drawing equally from all sources.

UUism is seen by some as an entity without a central pillar of belief. As I see it, that might be where we are going, but I don't see it as where we are. We still seem to hold to select traditions.

I remember last Christmas being surprised when the service was a telling of the story of the birth of Christ. It wasn't wrong – it

just wasn't what I had expected (though I can't say what it is I expected!).

Whatever UUism is right now, whatever it may become, for me it's the best thing I've had the chance to happen across in my short life so far.

I would love any correspondence on this, anything to do with the Youth Observer to the board position, or any other topic. I can be reached at s_jturnbull@hotmail.com. ☐



Correction

Rev. Linda Weaver Horton, North Shore's new minister, is in fact 54 years of age, not 57 as we reported in the last issue. Our apologies to Linda.



Rev. Charles Eddis moves the final motion on autonomy at last May's annual meeting

cuc delegates take one more step to autonomy

Delegates to last May's annual meeting took the final step of a long journey to move the Canadian Unitarian Council to independence from its American cousin, the Unitarian Universalist Association.

They voted unanimously to approve the restructuring model proposed by the cuc's Implementation Taskforce, outlined in the Winter 2002 issue of the *Canadian Unitarian*.

As a result, the cuc took over responsibility for delivering most services to congregations from the UUA on July 1. It will hire three new full-time staff in order to do so, restructure its regional groupings, and recruit many new volunteers at the local and regional levels. The cuc also receives a lump sum payment of about \$2 million from the UUA as part of the deal struck 18 months ago.

"Forty-one years is a long labour," said cuc President Mark Morrison-Reed at the start of debate over the autonomy issue at the annual meeting. "But we're almost there. The head is crowning, and we have to remember to keep breathing, to relax, and to push!"

The debate that followed featured many questions, and some reservations. One delegate questioned the assumption of rising annual fees to pay for the new cuc. Another felt the roles of the new staff were inadequately defined, and that their titles were too bureaucratic sounding. Neither felt these were reasons to vote against the Taskforce plan.

Jeff Bailey of Toronto (who was a member of the Taskforce) said, "From the point of view of young adults, this feels a lot more do-able than a year ago."

Lynn Price of Vancouver felt that B.C. looked "tacked on" when viewed against the names of the other regions (Central, Western, and Eastern), and suggested "Pacific" and "Prairie" rather than B.C. and Western.

Delegates adopted the resolution unanimously when it came time to vote, prompting a lot of tears, hugging, and a rousing chorus of Joyce Poley's hymn "One More Step."

A month later, at the UUA's General Assembly in Quebec City, that organization also put its stamp of approval on the changes by approving their necessary bylaw amendments. ☐



Rev. Mark Morrison-Reed

CUC President

We have faithfully lived our principles amid this struggle

We were stunned. None of us had imagined that the vote to adopt the Implementation Task Force Report would go the way it did last May.

For the third consecutive year the cuc Board was asking delegates to approve changes in our relationship with the Unitarian Universalist Association. In the previous two years there were strong and lengthy debates, followed by approval votes of about 85 per cent.

This year was different. We responded to last year's dissent with a lot more consultation. We spent 12 months developing a workable plan for an expanded cuc. And we met over breakfast the day before the vote to clarify and settle some contentious issues with representatives of the Western Canada District.

Then the crucial moment arrived. Rev. Charles Eddis, the first cuc president, moved the motion. Stephen Turnbull, the youth observer on the cuc Board, was seconder. We had a surprisingly short debate, where many of the speakers used their three minutes to praise the work of the taskforce.

When I called for the *yeas*, I saw a sea of salmon-coloured voting cards. And when I called for the *nays*, not a single card went up. It was unanimous! And this among a people who pride themselves on holding their stand on issues of conscience! We were stunned, and then overwhelmed. We sang. We cried.

What does it mean? It means we stayed in conversation with one another. It means we chose the possibility of the future rather than the security of the past. It means we've participated in a creative breakthrough while at the same time remaining accommodating. It means we have faithfully lived our principles even amidst this struggle.

As Diane Olson, the UUA Moderator said after witnessing the vote: "It was an act of redemption."

What first-timers find at the AGM

The Canadian Unitarian spoke to several participants who were attending their first-ever cuc annual meeting. Here's what they found in four busy days of worships, workshops, plenaries and social events.



I found community

NICOLE KOHNERT,
KELOWNA

Nicole is new to the Okanagan, having moved up from the B.C. lower mainland less than a year ago. She says she wanted to attend the annual meeting to reconnect with Vancouver friends, and meet more people from the Kelowna church.

She says she was “thrilled” by the keynote address (see page eight of this issue) given by David Crawley, and really identified with his theme of looking for community. She attended the pagan service, which was conducted outdoors, in bare feet on green grass. And she volunteered as a liaison, introducing several guest speakers at their small group workshops.

Her highlight was “having a variety of experiences with very different people,” including several members of her new congregation in Kelowna.

Nicole lives in Vernon and is the manager of landfills and recycling for the Okanagan Regional District. •



I found stimulation

CAMERON LINTON,
TORONTO

Cameron was very impressed by the plenary sessions at the annual meeting, and by the vote on Saturday to confirm the cuc’s autonomy. “I could sense the swell of relief from three or four years of effort,” he says.

“And in fact, I’m 41, so Charles Eddis’ motion was the result of activity he’s been pursuing for as long as I’ve been alive, which is pretty amazing.”

At home in Toronto, where he attends First Unitarian, Cameron’s church work is squeezed into a small space in the day between 9:30 p.m. and midnight. “So believe it or not, it’s a stimulating mental break to have several days of straight Unitarian thought!”

He was intrigued to discover that Ottawa First Unitarian’s building includes a senior’s home, which he thinks is great.

Cameron works for the internet division of the Globe and Mail. •



I found excitement

JANE SHOEMAKER,
COQUITLAM

We spoke to Jane just after she attended a workshop on globalization and democracy, which she found “amazing.” According to Jane, “the consensus at the workshop was that it’s essential to connect and join together across congregations, and try to focus on one thing.”

At Beacon Unitarian, Jane is chair of her partner church committee, and went to Kombatfalva, Transylvania last year to visit the congregation. As a result, she gave a presentation at the partner church workshop in Kelowna, describing the value of the program for her church.

She was moved by the emotion involved in the autonomy resolution, and felt “very excited when we passed the motion that made the new cuc.”

Jane was recently laid off from her job as document controller at a high-tech Vancouver company, but says she is relieved to have time off. •



I found purpose

JIM GORDON,
KAMLOOPS

Jim is president of his Kamloops, B.C. congregation. And although he’s been a member for 30 years, he has never attended “the big show” of a cuc annual meeting. Speaking on the final day of the meeting, he said, “There are some pretty inspiring people here – people that don’t just talk the talk.”

He says his small fellowship is struggling, “so everything I’ve done here, I try to apply to our local setting.” And he thinks he’s found the secret of survival.

“Our focus shouldn’t be services and structures – we should look beyond that to find a common purpose we can all commit to.” He says that people at the cuc annual meeting “speak with such purpose.” He compares this to an atom, “where the closer you get to the centre, the more energy there is – and the nucleus is *purpose*.”

Jim is a retired provincial court judge, looking for new challenges and passions. •

The power we generate with our minds at the youth con

Imagine lying on a bed of soft pillows and feathery blankets while three or four people gently massage your neck, shoulders, and back. You forget the strains of school or home, and feel completely at ease with yourself. You close your eyes and listen to the conversation happening above you.



everything in between. The calibre of these talks was amazing. Every opinion is heard and accepted, and in some cases debated to the max.

You can walk around at 3 p.m. or 3 a.m. and hear people discussing the past, the present, the future, and the roles we all play in each. Silent

A few more minutes and you are dragged from your silent reverie by a soft voice telling you your time is up, but they'd be happy to continue later. You smile, knowing it's not an empty promise. You slowly roll over to face the people who led you to that state of well-being, and introduce yourself.

Welcome, my friend, to a Unitarian Youth Conference, like the one I attended in Kelowna last May.

Every youth delegate has different reasons why these "cons" are great, but there's a common factor – the people. My reasons are no different. I was amazed that I could feel totally comfortable after knowing someone for little more than an hour.

Any barriers between you and the world disintegrate the moment you arrive, which is a good thing, since over the next three days people will see you after you've had no sleep, a lot of coffee, and half a dozen of the massages described above.

But more wonderful to me than the friendships built in a matter of minutes is the power we generate with our minds.

Over the weekend I found myself in conversations ranging from peacekeeping, to genetically modified foods, to the latest movie stars – and

voices are suddenly heard, as stronger ones give them room to grow, again expanding the depth and breadth of the topic.

Each person yields from a different view of life, and that leads to an understanding that youth sometimes lack.

The most interesting conversations I heard were about the changes that we can make as youth and the adults of tomorrow. In such a small group of people I heard ideas ranging from political to environmental, to peaceful protests – each with its own perfectly thought-out rationale.

I realized, perhaps for the first time, that these aren't just the ramblings of sleep-deprived teenagers. These deeds, this change, is going to happen. It's going to happen regionally, nationally, and yes, it will happen globally. ☺

– Emily Shuttleworth, 16, Kelowna



SPELL CHECK

At the annual meeting, delegates also adopted the UUA's seven principles and six sources of faith, with two small amendments (the spelling of the words "neighbour" in the fourth source and "centred" in the sixth) and a full translation into French. There will be a long-term taskforce to develop a uniquely Canadian statement of principles.

PEACE AND RACISM

The annual meeting dealt with several policy resolutions. It authorized a monitoring group to update and consolidate the various peace resolutions from the last few decades. It approved three studies: on racial and ethnic prejudice and discrimination; on alternatives to drug prohibition; and a peace policy update.

GOODBYE WENDY

Delegates thanked Rev. Wendy Luella-Perkins for her four years of work as the cuc's growth coordinator, a grant-funded position that is being superseded by the new cuc servicing structure. She received hearty applause for her work in the areas of growth, stewardship, theology and French translation.



SHARING OUR FAITH WINNERS

This year's applications for the cuc's Sharing Our Faith grants totalled \$24,000, with \$8,000 in funds available to distribute (the money comes from the annual Sharing our Faith collections in congregations each February). The grants will go to Winnipeg for youth coordination, PEI for summer services, Saint John for part-time ministry, South Fraser for a growth study, Halifax for web design, Kingston for RE, and Westwood for part-time ministry.

SUNDAY OFFERING TO EDUCATION

The collection of over \$4,000 at the annual meeting's Sunday service will go towards students in financial need at Okanagan University College next September, in recognition that the B.C. government has increased fees by \$1,000 per semester for college students.

Letters about 'Calculating God'

GOD CREATED DARWIN

I read Mark Perraro's testimony in the last issue with interest and pleasure. I'm not going to argue that you can use Darwin to disprove the existence of God, but rather that you can't use God to disprove the existence of Darwin. I think it can be agreed that God used carbon, iron, oxygen and hydrogen and all that as the basic building material to construct human beings. Why couldn't he have picked evolution as the process to cobble his materials together? I'd much rather believe in a God who rolls up his sleeves and does things the hard way, than one who fakes it here and there with ineffable magic powers. So far as I'm concerned, God created Darwin, then looked at his work and said, "It is good."

— D. Stephens, St. John

EVOLUTION AND SYMBIOSIS

In general I find no reason to support creationist views of evolution by design, which seem to lack an appreciation of the enormous span of time and marvellous biotic diversity on earth. The study of bacterial organisms and their evolution is teaching us that symbiosis (i.e. co-operation) has had a profound effect, and is just as important as cell mutation in the scheme of things.

— Bob McPherson, Calgary

THERE MUST BE A PURPOSE

I find it hard to believe that there was a designer of the universe — that we name God. However, I find it impossible to believe that the universe exists with no reason and no purpose. That really boggles my mind! The expansion of the universe suggests the possibility that it had a beginning at some time in the past — "The Big Bang." In an unchanging universe one can imagine that God created it at literally any time in the past. On the other hand, if the Universe is expanding there had to be a beginning. An expanding universe does not preclude a creator, but it does place limits on when he might have carried out his job.

— Dolores Dickey, Thunder Bay

GOD IS AMORPHOUS

Darwin made important observations, but anomalies seem, ultimately, to overturn his basic premises and leave us confused or hearkening back to simpler times. Of course God exists, but in an amorphous form that has little to do with our primitive notions of theology or science. God, like immortality, is pervasive — both near and far, but not at all related to what our anthropomorphic, ante-deluvian brains now cogitate.

— Jim Lavers, Edmonton

DEFECTIVE ARGUMENT

Mark Pezarro quotes a defective argument by Michael Behe concluding that the "hand of God" must be involved in evolution. As a random process, we should expect that the least adequate products of evolution be eliminated by natural selection. That will leave mostly adequate products with a smaller number of apparently well-designed results. Behe cites the seeming improbability of the latter results as demonstrating God's intervention, but neglects that most products of evolution are not as well designed as they might be. Pezarro does not seem to note that the more common sub-optimal designs argue against an infallible designer God that is not a part of nature.

— Kellogg Wilson, Edmonton

GOD IS ALL

I am a pantheist, which means that all is God, or God-like. The universe to me is infinite and vast, powerful and awesome — very God-like, but not an actual God in a literal sense. I think that God is the universe, the combined sum of totality of all that which exists. The UU Seventh Principle is very pantheistic when it reads: *we affirm and promote respect for the interdependent (and interconnected) web of all existence of which we are a part.* As a pantheist, I show my care, respect and awe to the universe, which includes our home planet Earth.

— Alexander Hadian, Toronto

Poetry

Anne

BY MARILYN RAYMOND

I wasn't expecting grace
when it arrived
at church this morning.

A small, rounded woman,
heading into the second half
of her century, carried it in.

She looked tired but easy
Lovely in her calm middle-aged
confidence
Unpretentious
and solidly real.

She stood at the front of the church
and lit a candle.
She smiled.

"I must tell you my hard news,"
she said gently.
"I have Alzheimer's
and I thought you should know."

Shock rippled a sudden squall
through the church.
Images of raging and wailing
and sodden self pity
Struggled in my clenched fists

How will this be?
Falling into mindlessness
Memories and meanings
turning off
Lights going out
An empty house
Bare floor boards
Windows looking
into formless colours
and meaningless shapes

How will this be?
Falling into "Who are you?
Who are you?"
Disoriented, frightened, lost.
Everything, everything abandoned.

Where is the soul
when the self is lost?

And she knows
That this is the future that is rushing
toward her
This loss.

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And yet ...
 she smiled at us.
 Her lover stood solidly behind her
 love and tears shining in his face.

She smiled at us
 and I watched her minister
 to our fear
 Perfectly present in this moment
 as she laughed about her
 clumsiness.

She comforted me.
 And I was overwhelmed.
 This is what love means.

I felt like her mother.
 I felt like her daughter.
 I felt like her sister.
 Pride in her courage
 lifted my shoulders
 and grief melted over my cheeks.

Dignity and worth filled our church.



Marilyn Raymond teaches students with special needs at Okanagan University College and is a member of the Kelowna Unitarian Fellowship. She read this poem at the cuc annual meeting, and it is included in Sacred Circle, just published by the Kelowna Unitarian poetry group, available for \$12 plus shipping from: haynes@silk.net

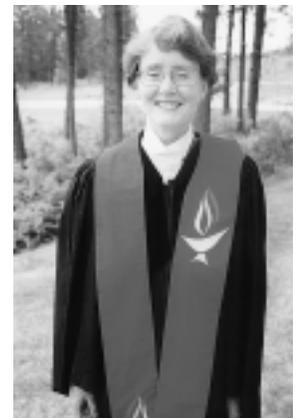


POETRY CONTRIBUTIONS

Please send your short, spiritual poems to our poetry editor: fouann@telus.net or by regular mail to the Canadian Unitarian (address on back page).



SCENES FROM AN ANNUAL MEETING (clockwise from top): 40 youth attended their own conference • Spartan apples – an Okanagan gift • Rev. Wendy McNiven of Kelowna after the Sunday service • All ages attended the worship service • Environmentalist and author Betty Krawczyk spoke at the annual meeting of Canadian Unitarians for Social Justice • Walking the medieval labyrinth in a workshop



The Canadian Unitarian is published quarterly by the Canadian Unitarian Council / Conseil unitarien du Canada

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

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Printed on Canadian-made recycled paper (30 per cent post-consumer fibre)

Deadline for next issue **September 13, 2002**

Canada Post Agreement #1774530
Returns to: CUC, 55 Eglinton Avenue E., #705, Toronto, ON, M4P 1G8

cuc Keynote Address

Stop worrying about survival and serve the world

The keynote address at the CUC annual meeting came from David Crawley, the Anglican Archbishop in B.C. His hour-long talk about the exile of modern churches from secular society was humorous, learned, relevant, and very human. Here's an excerpt from the conclusion of his address.

How do we get back from exile? The first thing is to admit you're in exile and not deny it. In my church, they don't understand when you talk about exile. They're hooked into the establishment, with lots of pretend power.

How do we know when we're back from exile? It's when you're ready to accept the world as it is, not as you wish it were. You can view the world as depraved and beyond redemption – that's the view, of the U.S religious right and fundamentalist Muslims. Or you can accept it as redeemable, as part of God's creation.

I'll conclude by identifying three elements we need to recognize and accept about our society if we're ever to get back from our exile.

The first is that my generation – the 1960s kids, the baby boomers – we've lost them, and they're not coming back. The new generation – those 40 years of age and younger, generation X and Y – they're the most spiritually minded group today, but also the least churchd.

They're post-modern. They say: *your truth is your truth and mine is mine.* Truth isn't authority. Their truth is what they experience to be true.

To appeal to them, questions have to be as welcome as answers. There has to be a lot of room for intellectual freedom, which I sense is not a huge

problem for Unitarians!

The second element is that this is a post-divorce generation. Almost everyone under 40 has the experience of having lived in untraditional or informal relationships. So what's important is community and friends. Think of today's popular television shows – Friends, Seinfeld, Ally McBeal, even Sex in the City. Friendship is more important than anything else.

Young people today don't say "What is the meaning of life?" They say: "Will you be there for me?" So we need to build community into our churches.

The third element is that this generation is post-institutional. They don't stay in one job very long, and they cer-



tainly don't work for the Boy Scouts for 30 years. So the experiential part of church has to be more important than the structure.

So that's three things to remember about our society, and the generation that is the best bet for our future: they're post-modern, post-divorce, and post-institutional.

How do we de-institutionalize? Well, fundamentally we have to focus outside ourselves. I say to the churches where I work, they must find a purpose outside their own walls. They have to stop worrying about survival and serve the world. ☐