

HISTORIC DECISION FOR CUC

Delegates vote strongly for made-in-Canada services

“Well, here we go,” said Canadian Unitarian Council president Kim Turner as she received the results of a secret ballot on the autonomy question at the organization’s annual meeting last May. “It’s 105 for and 22 against,” she announced simply.

After decades of consideration, three years of study, dozens of meetings this past spring, and more than three hours of debate at the annual meeting, Canadian Unitarians had voted to chart a new course for the organization. As of July 2002, responsibility for delivering most services to Canadian congregations will be transferred from the U.S.-based Unitarian Universalist Association to the CUC.

It was a historic moment, something the CUC delegates seemed to sense. They broke into applause, and rose to hug each other and congratulate the leaders who had led the movement to autonomy. The celebrating wasn’t unanimous, however. The result was a letdown for the congregations and delegates who opposed the change and argued for a “third way” that didn’t involve splitting Canadian members so dramatically from the UUA.

A little over a month later, in a hotel suite in Cleveland, Ohio during the UUA’s General Assembly, a group of CUC and UUA representatives met at 7:30 in the morning to officially conclude the past half-year of negotiations and agreements.

“We cleared the table,” says Rev. Katie Stein Sather, “then carefully laid out four copies of the final agreement between the two organizations. Then Mark Morrison-Reed, our representative, and Jerry Gabert, the UUA Treasurer, put their signatures on



the document, finalizing the whole process.” Sather, who is the Canadian representative on the UUA board of trustees, was a witness to the legal agreement.

“We seized the day,” says Sather, referring to the rapid pace of change in the last seven months. She saw it up close as a member of the Canadian team that negotiated the deal with the UUA.

The legally binding agreement will be distributed to all Canadian congregations and is already available on the CUC web site. It codifies the summary text agreement that was negotiated last January and circulated widely in Canada. There were only two substantial changes between then and now. The final agreement makes no mention of Canadian congregational membership in the UUA, because the American body has no provision for removing members. And it includes a “covenant” clause saying the

The credentials committee sets about the task of counting ballots from the resolution on Canadian autonomy (from left to right): Emanuel Freitas, Phyllis Gregain, Carol Greene. Below left: the historic secret ballot vote



**GROWING VITAL
RELIGIOUS
COMMUNITIES
IN CANADA**



Mary
Bennett

CUC Executive Director

Meeting in Quebec City next spring is prophetic

The UUA's General Assembly – their annual meeting, which attracts over 4,000 delegates from all across North America – will be held in Quebec City next June, just weeks before the CUC is scheduled to take over most of the UUA's responsibility for service delivery to congregations.

Some people say that's ironic. I think it's prophetic.

When people hear about the Quebec meeting, it's hard not to draw a parallel between our relationship with the UUA and that of Quebec and Canada. To have us "separating" from the UUA in Quebec City – that's what people find ironic!

I see it differently. I think it's a great chance for Canadian and American UUs to jump start our new relationship. We can say *bienvenue*, but we can also say *merci* to the UUA for all they've done to support our movement in Canada. We'll have a chance to showcase our plans, our resources and our members. That's the prophetic part.

At last June's General Assembly in Cleveland, several Canadians were elected to office in the UUA (elected, mainly, by the American delegates). Again, some people get confused about why Canadians were running for UUA office just a month after our autonomy vote. The reason is simple: Canadian congregations are still members of the UUA until July 2002, and even after that date some important services will continue to be delivered by them.

We don't know exactly how our peer relationship with the UUA will work over the next few years. We do know that we intend to collaborate and communicate, even if that seems ironic at first. That's why it makes sense to meet in Quebec next spring, and to feel proud of a strong Canadian presence on the UUA board and district bodies.

Testimony

Rev. Charles Eddis

We're building flimsy cottages on loose sand

In the halcyon days of the 1950s, Unitarians on this continent had a cohesion and integrity we are losing today. Then, as now, we welcomed all comers and affirmed individual freedom of belief, but the reality was that most Unitarians adhered to one of three schools of thought: Christian, theist, and humanist.

These three visions were more closely related and compatible than we realized at the time. While we rejected traditional Christianity, most of us affirmed the ethics of Jesus and the Biblical prophets. We believed there were some basic truths underlying religions, found in all cultures and traditions, flowing from human experience.

We had passionate disagreements and arguments arising from our differences. But our Christians did not deny the value and validity of other faiths. Our humanists were, in their reactive way, Christian heretics, the loyal opposition, rather than outsiders or aliens. Our differences were more in modes of expression than in underlying meaning.

We had a unity then that we do not have today. The religious world in which we live has changed fundamentally. Then, the religious culture was overwhelmingly Christian. Today, we are not only multicultural, we live in the spiritual marketplace, where we try to shop around for whatever appeals to us, picking up bits and pieces of spirituality wherever we happen to encounter it, and commending it to others. The web is not only the web of nature. It is also the world wide web of the Internet, where all and everything may be found.

Instead of a structure with firm foundations, I fear we are building



Rev. Charles Eddis of Montreal (left) cuts the CUC's 40th birthday cake last May with help from Rev. Phillip Hewett of Vancouver

flimsy cottages on loose sand. We do not know the Bible or Christianity as we used to. We do not know any tradition very well. We are spiritual shoppers, samplers of experience, seldom able to plumb the depths of any faith or religion.

What do we cherish today that we want to pass on to our children? Is our only real message the improvised use of the spiritual marketplace? Is it our destiny to wander in the spiritual marketplace, drawn in many directions? What will become of us? Our lack of a deep-rooted identity troubles me.

Of course, we didn't know our ancestors very well when I was a young Unitarian. I had found a spiritual home in which I could become myself. In that I have not been disappointed. It has taken me years, many meetings, travels, and much reading to appreciate my Unitarian heritage, and also to appreciate the riches in the heritage I had rejected.

I think T.S. Eliot said it well in *Little Gidding*:

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.

Debating the autonomy resolution

The Saturday plenary to consider the resolution on Canadian autonomy was scheduled to take two hours. Instead, it rolled on for almost double that time, despite a strict three-minute per delegate speaking limit. The arguments for and against were fully aired, and the voting was democratic. Here are some of the arguments from the debate.

It's dysfunctional

"After 32 years, eight rounds of negotiations, numerous accords and countless other meetings, why haven't we been able to solve the problem of our relationship with the UUA? Because, despite all the good intentions in the world, it is a dysfunctional relationship. We struggle to be heard, but there is a mammoth imbalance of power between the two organizations. All of us recognize this as an unhealthy relationship."

— Mark Morrison-Reed, Toronto

We'll lose informal contacts

"The new service delivery model being proposed may well correct distortions of the current system, but the proposal ignores the nurturing that occurs with our informal experience at district level. When we eliminate the UUA district structures that support this nourishing we'll lose more than we may realize."

— Mary Stevenson, West Vancouver



We can swim

"When my daughter was learning to swim, she had to jump in at the deep end of the pool. As a parent I was worried sick, but she confidently walked out and took the leap. I believe that we can swim. We may be dog-paddling for a while, but we can swim."

— May Partridge,
Victoria



Youth are worried

"This statement was adopted by the youth conference that is meeting over at the Unitarian Church of Montreal. 'We the youth of Canada are deeply concerned about the direction the cuc seems to be taking. As stewards of our faith, adults have a responsibility to take into consideration the concerns of youth. We are opposed to making this massive jump in our evolutionary progress.'"

— Nina Rosmini, Vancouver

It's a fair offer

"The \$1.5 million us we've been offered by the UUA is about four per cent of their endowment fund, which equals our percentage membership in the UUA. What's the alternative? Our contribution to the UUA will have to double if we don't accept this deal. I think we should take the money and move ahead."

— Michael Cassidy, Ottawa

Squeaky wheels

"UUA moderator Denny Davidoff talked this morning about us being beggars at the table of the UUA, implying that we are not noticed there. Do we believe we'll be more noticed as members of an independent organization? As a small, rural congregation, we do not believe there

is enough money to serve our needs. I think the larger congregations will get the attention – the squeaky wheel gets the grease."

— Sylvia Sigurdson, Arborg

Delegates vote for made-in-Canada services by 2002

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agreement should be interpreted, "in a manner consistent with the covenant and principles of the UUA."

The cuc now enters a intense, six-month period of consultation and planning. An Implementation Task Force, chaired by Rev. Brian Kiely of Edmonton (see photo on page six), has already begun to sketch the plans for a restructured cuc (see "Defining the shape of a new cuc" in the last Canadian Unitarian). The taskforce has been expanded and will meet with various constituencies through the fall. Its goal is to present a detailed plan to the cuc board next January, which will go to the next cuc annual meeting, to be held in Kelowna, B.C. next May. ■

A new start for Canada's lay chaplains

The resolution on CUC autonomy wasn't the only hot issue at the annual meeting last May. Delegates also considered a proposal to make some basic changes to the chaplaincy program – the network of lay leaders who perform rites of passage for Unitarian congregations across Canada.

The resolution on chaplaincy passed overwhelmingly, but not before almost two hours of debate on a sunny, Sunday afternoon.

John Hopewell, who chaired the taskforce that came up with the chaplaincy resolution, introduced the motion saying, "Most congregations have been well served by their chaplains, however, we believe there needs to be more accountability for chaplains, and that this is essential for the program."

The resolution outlined five basic changes:

- that the name *chaplain* be replaced by *lay chaplain* in English and *célébrant* or *célébrante* in French
- that the CUC set minimum standards for the training, support, performance and evaluation of chaplains
- that chaplains serve a maximum term of six years, with some provisions for extension if a replacement can't be found
- that the CUC set minimum requirements for the contracts that chaplains sign with their sponsoring congregations
- that congregations contribute to a new training fund each time their chap-

lain officiates at a fee-generating rite of passage (primarily weddings)

The most contentious issue of the five was the issue of limited terms for chaplains. John Backhouse of Calgary argued that the limit will "impinge on how we do things in our congregation." He urged the delegates to defeat the resolution.

On the other hand, Meg Roberts of Vancouver felt the six-year term was just fine. "I served for six years as a chaplain, and I believe that the clause already allows for an extension." She added: "I think it's important that people get attached to rites of passage with Unitarians, not with particular individuals."

Another delegate argued that "we see the chaplaincy program as one of ministry, and we don't put limits on the terms of ministers." But a former chaplain replied that she had six years of "invaluable spiritual growth" as a chaplain, and she's still in favour of a limited term, so that other lay leaders can enjoy her experience.

The final vote may have been influenced by Doreen Peever of St. Catharines. She's an experienced chaplain, a member of the taskforce that took over a year to examine the program, and an executive member of the chaplains' association.

"Initially, I had reservations about the six-year term," she said, "but this has been addressed by the amendments to that clause [allowing for extensions]. The CUC is willing to be flexible, especially for small congregations who have difficulty



Doreen Peever (above) spoke in favour of the chaplaincy resolution; below, speaker at the 'con' mike

finding someone willing to be a chaplain.

"But the CUC has strong legal liability concerns that we must recognize as well-founded. It's important that they trust us as chaplains and that we trust them in ... making these recommendations work."

Peever concluded, saying, "I urge you to pass this motion. Chaplaincy is a uniquely Canadian institution that has served us well for 27 years. It is one of the main ways to outreach into the community to demonstrate Unitarian Universalist values and practice. I feel passionately about it."

At a meeting following the vote to approve the chaplaincy resolution, the CUC board instituted a fee of \$10 to be paid to the chaplains training fund from each rite of passage. ☐



Annual meeting brings 36 youth to Montreal

Overall, I had an excellent time at the Youth Conference in Montreal last May. Never before had I gone to a conference such as this and I was amazed from the beginning at the sense of hospitality and camaraderie among the 36 UU youth and 10 adult supervisors who were with us.

The group of us from all over Canada experienced many things together. We toured the city and visited many historic sites as well as some newer ones, like the Olympic Stadium.

I regret that we were not able to be more active in the affairs of the cuc and the icuu. We were a fair distance away from the hotel where these took place. However, we were still given the opportunity to take part in discussion beforehand, and to present our resolution to the meeting.

I also found that I underestimated the amicability of the other youth at

the conference and wish now that I had got to know more of them.

I have a number of cherished memories from the weekend. They range from standing at the top of the Olympic Stadium, to eating at a Chinese buffet, to attending a fantastic service on Sunday and even singing a duet by the Arrogant Worms for our talent show and coffee house. All of these are fond memories I am sure I will hold forever.

There were many things that I enjoyed immensely while I was in Montreal. I attended the morning services and sang in the choir. I also took part in many fun activities with my fellow youth. Unfortunately, I am moving to Brussels this summer and probably won't be able to attend the next youth conference in Kelowna, B.C. next May. I envy those who will. ☐

— Michael Hatton, 14, Halifax



Ganiat Olanrewaju of Nigeria (above right) – a delegate to the International Council of Unitarians and Universalists conference that preceded the cuc annual meeting – meets with some of the youth conference participants. Youth organized their own agenda, and cooked their own food (right).



cuc Updates

NEW ON THE WEB SITE

The cuc web site underwent an overhaul late in the spring. It's now easier to navigate and find up-to-date items. There's a detailed section on the annual meeting, and there's a page that describes the various email lists relevant to UUism in Canada, with detailed instructions on how to join the lists. There's also a new logo page, with high-quality copies of the cuc logos, for both print and web use, ready for easy download. It's all at www.cuc.ca.

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

The cuc recently recognized four congregations for their social responsibility work over the past year:

- Don Heights, for their Combatting Youth Poverty and Homelessness project
- First Unitarian Congregation of Toronto, for their Central American Community Development project
- South Peel, for What Religious Education Students Do
- Elora and Fergus for their Share the Light and Share the Beans projects

SHARING OUR FAITH

The cuc has also announced the grants it disburses each year as part of Sharing Our Faith (an annual collection at Canadian congregations, which is then distributed by the cuc for growth projects). Here are the recipients:

- Cowichan Valley, \$1,000 to cover material for banner, sandwich board, and hymnals
- Durham, \$1,000 for a portable sign-board and a more permanent church sign with website address
- Winnipeg, \$1,267 second year grant for 50 per cent paid youth advisor
- Sarnia-Port Huron, \$1,000 for part-time music and new hymnals
- Saskatoon, \$900 for a men's weekend retreat
- Fredericton, up to \$1,000 of matching funds to send someone to the EAGLES Leadership Training School
- London, \$1,500 for signage
- Neighbourhood, matching up to \$1,000 for EAGLES, \$500 for their website and \$1,500 for RE

Across the Country

UNSUNG HERO

Ken Noble of South Peel has won the highest distinction for service to a Unitarian congregation. He was presented with the Unsung Hero award at the continental meeting of UUs in Cleveland, Ohio in June. He has done just about every voluntary job in his local church, and he's also been very active in his community, as a volunteer for Amnesty International and as a literacy teacher. As well, he has worked internationally, teaching school in Asia and Eastern Europe, and working with building projects in Guatemala and Malawi.

SURPRISE WEDDING

When **Rev. Anne Treadwell** of Waterloo arrived at her friend John O'Connor's home in Dundas, Ontario last month,



she was surprised to find a large group of friends and family assembled, including her daughter from Calgary. "An engagement party?" she wondered. Then the music swelled and John asked her, "Can I have this dance for the rest of my life?" to which she agreed while inquiring, "When is

the wedding?" He answered: "In half an hour!" After her initial shock, and a little panic about what to wear (her family had a dress and bouquet at hand), Anne agreed, and the two were married on the spot. Anne says she is "fabulously happy," and relieved that she didn't have to organize a single thing.

WESTERN ANNIVERSARIES

The Western Canada District will be celebrating its 100th anniversary this summer when delegates meet in Gimli, Manitoba. As well, the Ladies Aid of the Arborg Unitarian Church is celebrating its 75th anniversary.

cuc Annual Meeting 2001



They're ready to roll! The cuc's Implementation Taskforce is charged with the job of figuring out a new structure for the organization, to serve the needs of Canadian congregations. Taskforce members (L-R): Rev. Brian Kiely (chair), Rev. Ann Buckmaster, Mary Ann Higgs, Lee Dickey, Rev. Allison Barrett, John Storm, Art Brewer.

Dummies guide to the cuc and UUA committees

There are actually three different committees to implement and oversee the agreement between the cuc and UUA, which is more than a little confusing. The first two are temporary, the third is permanent. Here's your handy guide to the three bodies.

CUC Implementation Task Force

This ad-hoc task force, struck by the cuc board, will do the nitty-gritty planning and consulting needed to come up with a re-vamped cuc structure before July 2002, it will report to its master, then die. **Members:** See photo caption above.

CUC-UUA Transition Team

This joint cuc-UUA committee is mandated by the agreement between the two organizations to manage "issues of mutual concern" between the two

organizations over the transition period leading up to July 2002 (in other words, interpret the legal agreement). **CUC members:** executive director Mary Bennett, John Slattery, Brian Kiely. **UUA members:** Tracey Robinson-Harris, Gini Courter, Olivia Holmes.

The CUC-UUA Joint Committee

This is a permanent cuc-UUA committee that will continue after the transition is complete (the other two will finish their work by next July). Its mandate is to "consult on ongoing issues and other matters of joint concern." **Members:** the elected leaders of each organization (the moderator of the UUA and the president of the cuc), plus at least one other from each organization. It will meet at least annually, or more frequently if necessary.

What's Ahead for the CUC?

It's time to move on says new president

The new president of the Canadian Unitarian Council is a tall, gentle man with a soft Chicago accent wrapped in a warm, baritone voice. His dark hair and beard are slightly flecked with grey, and he has a creeping smile that frequently breaks into a broad grin followed by a hearty laugh.

After more than two decades as a minister on both sides of the border, and having chosen Canada as his home, the Rev. Mark Morrison-Reed leads the CUC at a crucial turning point in its history.

"The Jews spent 40 years in the desert and came out as a people," says Morrison-Reed. "It's taken us two generations to find our identity," he continues, referring to the time between the CUC's founding in 1961 and this year's vote to become autonomous of the UUA. "Now we have to think long-term, and plan for the future."

This is the exciting part

Morrison-Reed definitely seems happy that the identity question has been settled. In fact, he was the first speaker on the autonomy resolution at the CUC annual meeting. He pleaded with the delegates to move ahead by voting yes to the question.

"I think this is the more exciting part," Morrison-Reed said in a phone interview in late June referring to the next two years. "It's creative, freewheeling, and more proactive than reactive. It involves building and doing," not just debating.

His vision of the CUC is a federation that supports the 45 Canadian congregations, and helps them help themselves. "The CUC's role is not to control the member societies. It's to think generously and kindly about their needs, and when there's a crisis, to support them by suggesting resources and solutions."

Morrison-Reed is clear about his job over the next year. "We need an open, transparent process for setting up the new structure of the CUC," he says. "We have to engage people with the CUC rather than the UUA's districts. We need



Rev. Mark Morrison-Reed

to generate excitement, and we have to identify leaders and people with skills, because we need tremendous lay involvement in this project."

After the transition to an autonomous CUC next July, Morrison-Reed says his board will have to focus on a capital campaign, "because the resources we have are not sufficient for what we need to do." But before any attempt at fundraising, he says the blueprint of the new CUC must be sketched clearly. "At the congregational level, new buildings draw money from members, because the plan is clear. We need to do it like that with the CUC."

Chicago native

Morrison-Reed is a native of Chicago, born in 1949, the son of a nuclear chemist. He grew up there, but also spent extended periods in Europe, living, studying and travelling in Switzerland, Ireland and Austria. Although his family was Unitarian and he was involved in the church from a young age, he didn't turn to the ministry until he was in his mid-20s. After a lot of travelling and soul-searching, he returned home and entered Meadville-Lombard Theological School at the University of Chi-

cago, right across the street from the church he had attended as a child.

He met his future wife Donna – a fellow student and a Canadian – when he needed a co-teacher for the Sunday school where he was practice teaching. They married after two years and did their internships and theses together. Mark earned his doctorate in 1979. Since then, Donna and Mark have continued their "co-" relationship, serving as joint ministers in Rochester, New York for over nine years, and now at Toronto First for the last 12 years.

Coming to Canada was easy, he says, because it felt a little bit like Europe. He wanted his children (a boy and a girl, now aged 18 and 22) to grow up understanding their Canadian heritage. As Morrison-Reed became more involved in community affairs in Toronto, he applied for Canadian citizenship so that he could feel comfortable speaking out publicly and politically (he's actually a dual citizen, although he now considers Canada his home).

It's about self-assertion

Over the past two decades, Morrison-Reed has been intensely involved in denominational affairs on both sides of the border. He believes he's well-positioned to accomplish the transition to an autonomous CUC because he knows and is trusted by so many of the UUA representatives, including the newly elected UUA president, Bill Sinkford.

Both Morrison-Reed and Sinkford are African-Americans, which is a first on both sides of the border (the CUC has never been led by a visible minority member). Morrison-Reed draws a parallel between this identity, and the Canadian vote for autonomy. "Black power in the 1960s was really about self-assertion," he says. "I see the vote at the CUC last May as the culmination of Canadians becoming more confident in themselves as a people and a denomination."

"It seems to take two generations," he says, repeating the earlier theme. "Now it's time to move on." □

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Religious Education

New video showcases RE

A great new resource just arrived to help congregations explain Unitarianism to new and potential members. *Religious Education Spans a Lifetime* is a 23-minute video, introducing the philosophy of our religious education, especially its unique, *lifespan* focus.

The video, which was two years in production, was unveiled at the CUC annual meeting in May. It is a companion to the earlier video on Canadian Unitarianism, *Sharing Our Vision*, and was done by the same video production company. All congregations receive one copy of the new RE video for free, and can purchase additional copies from the CUC for \$15.

Besides the numerous shots of children in religious education programs, the video includes some of the country's RE leaders describing in concise terms what the program is all about. "RE expands the concept of God for children," says Karyn Burney of South Peel. "It shows them that God means a whole bunch of things, and it addresses their sense of awe."

Although the video's largest single segment is about children, it traces the



RE needs of youth, adults and seniors as well. Rev. Brian Kopke talks about his adult "Jesus Seminar" and describes finding how interested the humanists in his congregation were in biblical history.

The video ends with a simple testimony: "Our RE programs are a wonderful place to feed the mind and the spirit – you have to come and see for yourself." 

Nurturing the Spirit of Christmas

"Would you like to hold the baby?" – that's a common enough question when there's a newborn on the scene. But Joyce Poley of Surrey, B.C. has used the invitation as a powerful metaphor in a new UU Christmas service and pageant, complete with songs, parts, directions and music. The question about the baby "is really an invitation to reflect on what is most meaningful and important in your life," Poley



writes in the service homily. "It's an invitation to acknowledge your spiritual side, and nurture it, to embrace what you consider most sacred and holy."

Would You Like to Hold the Baby is Poley's second Christmas resource, a follow-up to her successful *Spirit of the Christmas Tree*, produced in 1998. Somehow, she's done it again – composed four original songs, combined them with a liberal re-telling of the Christmas story, all wrapped in a neat

and tidy package that congregations can produce in the month preceding Christmas. Contact: Songstyle Music, 604-596-3980 or jpoley@istar.ca. 