

The Canadian UNITARIAN

Volume 39

Number 1

January 1998

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THE CANADIAN UNITARIAN
Published four times a year by the
CANADIAN UNITARIAN COUNCIL/
CONSEIL UNITARIEN DU CANADA
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ISSN 0527-9860
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Connecting theology and economics

In November, protesters at the Vancouver meeting of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation were pepper-sprayed and brutalized by the police. At the same time, many people started hearing for the first time about a new Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI), to which the Canadian government has already agreed in principle.

In a recent sermon at the Unitarian Church of Vancouver, Rev. Sydney Amara Morris offered a theological perspective on these issues. She believes that, "We are entering a new era; a new social arrangement that ensures the checks and balances of economic, social and ethical forces for an entire globe is required."

Morris identified three "challenges" posed by the new economic agenda. First, she says, we need to become aware of the changes that are taking place. Second, we need "a theological basis for our economic systems." And third, we must act in a way that is "filled with hope, and empty of demonization."

Morris pointed out that the MAI would grant multinational corporations an exemption from adhering to "ethical standards of any country." Under the MAI, as proposed, their right to make a profit "cannot be hampered by environmental codes, or child labour laws, or even taxation."

"We all know that people have the ability to be kind, compassionate, and altruistic," said Morris. "If we base our economy on sin, we should not be surprised that we end up acting sinfully, colluding with an evil structure."

She argued that corporations are "uncivilized, instinctual creature[s]" who will not act beyond their self-interest, unless forced to. She thinks governments need to "reinstate their power over transnationals," forcing them to consider ethics in their decision-making.

Finally, Morris argued against demonizing those who run the corporations. She believes that we're all involved in the economic system, through our purchases, our pension plans, and perhaps investments.

"The possibility of transformation extends to every corner of our creation," she said. And that's why we need religious community: "to support our ethical development ... to give us strength to carry on

against all opposition ... and [to encourage us] to have compassion and hope for all beings."

Watch for coverage of the MAI in *Just News*, newsletter of the UU Social Justice Committee. Analysis of the MAI is also available from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives -- phone: (613) 563-1341, or on the web at: www.policyalternatives.ca

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CUC writes Axworthy on Land Mines Issue

THE CANADIAN Unitarian Council's Executive Director recently exchanged letters with Foreign Affairs Minister Lloyd Axworthy about the government's proposed global ban on landmines.

Ellen Campbell urged Axworthy and Jean Chrétien, "to hold firm on your commitment to achieve a total ban on landmines." In particular she asked the government not to cave in to U.S. pressure for a nine-year transition period. "We believe that this moral leadership will have support among people in the United States and other countries that are 'hold-outs'," she wrote. Campbell also cited her own experience with American Unitarians who were eager to have their country follow Canada's lead on the landmine issue.

Axworthy replied that the new international landmine treaty "will establish a clear and unambiguous legally-binding ban on all [anti-personnel] mines, with no exceptions." He hinted that the official signing of the treaty by over 100 countries in December would launch the process of getting "universal" approval for banning the use of landmines, and de-mining the war zones of the world.

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President's Column -- John Hopewell Sorting out the ends and the means

THE BOARD held its annual retreat in mid-October. Because routine business also had to be conducted, the retreat was part development and planning and part board meeting. Our main emphasis this year was on developing a draft policy manual for the CUC. Last year Ben Harrison spoke to the Board about John Carver's ideas on governance for non-profit organizations. This year Ben gave us a full day of his time to work on the manual using Carver's principles.

The final manual will be "modified Carver" using what is workable for our organization and modifying the rest. The objective is to clarify board and staff roles, with the board focusing on ends and the Executive Director working on means. While this is the way we have traditionally operated, in the past lines have sometimes been blurred with the board spending time on issues that could be handled

by staff.

To keep the Executive Director's role manageable, Board Members will wear two hats, sometimes operating in the Board role and at other times offering volunteer assistance to the Executive Director in completion of specific tasks.

Some congregations are also implementing methods outlined by Carver in his book, *Boards That Make a Difference*. While Carver's work includes many good ideas, it's important to remember that not every part of his approach will work for every organization and some aspects will need to be modified or ignored.

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Against book-banning and for gay rights

THREE SAME-SEX parent books banned by the Surrey, B.C. school board have found a home in the South Fraser Unitarian Church.

The suburban Vancouver congregation ordered the books -- *Asha's Mums*, *Belinda's Bouquet* and *One Dad, Two Dads*, *Brown Dads*, *Blue Dads* -- after they were banned in Surrey schools earlier this year for their portrayal of gay and lesbian parents.

At one of their spring services, the Unitarians invited an openly gay Surrey teacher, James Chamberlain, to read from the books. "I think the congregation felt very receptive and positive that something was being done," said Rev. Brian Kiely. "I think the school board is creating a climate of fear and discrimination, and that's sad."

Rev. Kiely was critical of the school board in local newspapers, and the congregation's support also earned media coverage.

"Our first principle affirms the inherent worth and dignity of every person," Kiely told a weekly newspaper. "Our experience of same-sex parents is that they are as loving and caring and capable as any other families -- but they need broad support in their struggle for acceptance."

Unitarians have led North American churches in the acceptance of homosexuality. We were the first church to ordain openly gay, lesbian, or transgender ministers, more than 20 years ago. And we perform services of union for gay or lesbian couples.

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Montreal cooks up a model collective kitchen

HOW MANY stories do we hear about retired people not bothering to cook for themselves? (Or, how many times do you look at your own meals and think, if only we had another set of hands we could a make more interesting menu?)

Well, the Unitarian Church of Montreal is helping solve these problems. They've organized and built a collective kitchen, with the goal of supplying a way for people in need to cook nutritious and economical meals together.

Nancy Lorimer chairs the committee that set up the kitchen. She describes the location as "bright and cheerful, with a yellow and white colour scheme." The kitchen includes:

- a large, eight-burner gas stove with two ovens
- a heavy-duty food processor than can chop a head of cabbage in a flash
- a high-efficiency dishwasher that takes five minutes per load
- and a commercial size fridge

A large chopping block is the centrepiece for socializing. It can be wheeled into the middle of the kitchen where four to six people can easily chop and scrape while talking.

The space is now used by five different groups who meet once a month to cook together. There are the Pot Boilers, the Magic Pans, and the Lunch Bunch. The latter group of three to four people prepare lunch for about 30 senior members of the congregation and the local community. The newest group are students from the Concordia University campus ministry.

Each group has work to do in preparing the menu, shopping and transporting the food. There is also work in the divvying up and calculating volumes. Two of the organizers were home economists before retiring, however, some of the participants have rarely cooked for themselves. All are welcome.

Each group has its own mini-pantry for storage, but a great supply of herbs, spices and essentials like onions and flour are stored for use by all the groups.

According to Nancy Durnford of the Canadian Home Economics Association, collective kitchens are fairly common in Canada. There are about 1,000 in operation across the country, with half of them in the Quebec.

Says Durnford, "The stigma associated with food vouchers and other forms of charity are shed [in a collective kitchen], as participants band together to plan, shop and cook.

"A sense of dignity replaces despair."

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UUA Trustee's Report -- Herman Boerma

Providing and Funding UUA Services in Canada

OCTOBER 31 -- Halloween. I look out on a blaze of purple asters in the front yard. They're the only surviving flowers in the neighbourhood after some hard frosts. A guy from down the street came by and asked if he could trade three of his perennials for one piece of my asters next spring. Next spring! That's when we're planning to build a house on the west coast, sell our house in Saskatoon, help our two youngest children move out on their own, move to our new house, and plan our life in (semi) retirement.

My agenda this year is very full -- too full, until last week, when I resigned as chair of the Fulfilling the Promise Committee (FTPC). In October 1995, I was appointed to this committee for a two-year term. The charge to the committee was to create and recommend to the UUA board a process for involving all member congregations in planning the future of the UUA. That task is complete and the process is being implemented. I'll continue with my responsibilities on the boards of the UUA and the CUC.

Included in my CUC responsibilities is that I will be serving on the newly created Commission on Delivery of Services (CODOS). It is mandated to do an in-depth study of the "Accord" (the agreement between the UUA and the CUC regarding the provision and financing of UUA services to Canadian congregations) and of the delivery of services by the UUA in Boston, the UUA districts and the CUC itself. The CODOS's timeline was designed to run in parallel with the Fulfilling The Promise process. I see it as the Canadian portion of the FTP process and I intend to liaise between the CODOS and the FTPC.

Finally, may I remind you that the deadline for returning the survey form included in the September/October issue of *World* is January 31, 1998. Please fill in the survey and mail it. Yes, I know, it requires a 52 cent stamp and in this country we call ourselves Canadians. However, it would be helpful to both the FTPC and the CODOS, if you send the survey in anyway. If you can create or participate in a group discussion of the survey questions, please do so.

The number one purpose of the survey is to stimulate discussion in preparation for future steps in the FTP process. Also, I recommend for study the Commission on Appraisal's report *Interdependence - Renewing Congregational Polity* and Conrad Wright's new book *Congregational Polity*. Both are essential resources for the FTP process whose subtitle is "a recovenanting process for the 21st Century."

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Across the country

IT WAS A HOME RUN

After the final service at their old home, five members of the Unitarian Fellowship of London, Ont. ran eight kilometres across town to their new, 10,000-square-foot church. When he arrived, president Paul Nesbitt-Larking held up a key -- "The key to our future" -- and opened the front door of the new

building. With the move, the fellowship has doubled its space; religious education now has six rooms for their seven groups.

THE KING'S CHURCH

In 1863, the Nova Scotian Universalist entrepreneur and grindstone king Amos Seaman built a wooden church in the village of Minudie, N.S. Seaman declared that the church should be dedicated to the Universal Father, but open to all sects. And so it was, until a dwindling population in the village could no longer care for it, and the church fell into disrepair. Now a local group, including two members of the Universalist Unitarian Church of Halifax, wants to preserve the building. Memberships in the King Seaman Church Society are \$30, available from Treasurer Ruth Symes (Seaman's great-granddaughter) at 5355 Barronsfield Rd., River Hebert, NS, B0L 1G0.

KOOTENAY DISBANDS

With regret, the West Kootenay congregation, which has been a member since 1960, has decided to disband as a member society. Their members will remain as part of the CUC's individual member's program.

RELIGIOUS COUNSEL

Thirty B.C. religious leaders, including Minister Emeritus Rev. Phillip Hewett of the Unitarian Church of Vancouver, met with Premier Glen Clark last summer. He requested the meeting, noting that he often met with business, community and labour leaders, "but none of them considers these issues from a broader moral and ethical perspective."

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The life and poetry of Dorothy Livesay

Canadian poet Dorothy Livesay died in 1996. She was also a scholar, journalist, Communist, peace activist, and ... a Unitarian. This short biography is by poet David Lawson, a member of the Unitarian Church of Montreal.

Dorothy Livesay was a hugely creative person who displayed a great range of interests during her 85-year life. Her poetry also varied, moving from Imagism, to social realism, to personal and emotional themes.

Born in Winnipeg in 1909, she moved with her writer parents to Toronto in 1920, and in 1931 graduated from the University of Toronto, having majored in French and Italian. There followed a period at the Sorbonne, where she investigated the influence of French Symbolism on Modern English poetry. By this time she was well-disposed to write in the Imagist tradition, which was less than 20 years old.

A first chapbook from 1928, *Green Pitcher*, was taut and concrete, in the spirit of Imagism, though too emotional to be purely objective:

*Encased in the hand, bright shell of my dream,
How sudden now to wake
And find the night still passing overhead,
The wind crying in the naked trees,
Myself alone, within a narrow bed.*

Such activities were ivory tower, ones undertaken by a "blue stocking." But the social unrest in Paris and the socio-economic conditions of the Depression in Canada on her return caused her to be troubled by the plight of the real world. She studied social work in Toronto before going to Montreal as a case worker, where her exposure to slum life and social injustice resulted in her joining the Young Communist League, the Progressive Arts Club and its offshoot, the Workers' Experimental Theatre.

In 1934, the same year that the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (forerunner to the NDP) was founded, Livesay, now a social radical, joined the Communist Party.

The scholar, poet and radical also became an editor and journalist for the progressive magazine *New Frontier*, which brought her to Vancouver in 1936.

In the west, Livesay met her future husband, Duncan Macnair, with whom she would raise a son and daughter. In the Depression years she was involved with the League Against War and Fascism. She met and became acquainted with the poets Roy Daniels and Earle Birney, and found a working hideaway in the coastal cabin of Malcolm Lowry.

As was the case for many students early in the century, left-wing politics replaced literary interests, though for Livesay, communist influence waned with the Hitler-Stalin pact of 1939. By the mid-1930s she saw that poets as such could also be social radicals.

In the 1940s she parted company with political dogma and became a Unitarian. In 1964 she published with the Unitarian Church of Vancouver a collection called *The Colour of God's Face*. As a Unitarian, on the title page of another collection, *Plainsongs*, she saw fit to include her own reversed version of the Biblical declaration as follows: "In the beginning was the flesh/and the flesh was made word."

Livesay's terse, imagistic-type lines began to give way to new work, with a social-industrial framework:

*Shadrack, Mechak and Abednego.
Turn in the furnace, whirling slow.
Lord, I'm burnin' in the fire
Lord, I'm steppin' on the coal
Lord, I'm blacker than my brother
Blow your breath down here.*

Coleridge saw a poem as a "felt-thought." While the above passage has feeling and thought in equal balance, Dorothy Livesay's progression saw the "thought" side of the see-saw descend as the "feeling" side ascended. One of her collections is called *Feeling the Worlds*, in which she quotes Richard

Wilbur: "Poetry is feeling the world."

Although Livesay's poetry went from Imagism to a social-industrial style, she ended up focusing on personal feeling, making it the supreme feature of her later writing. Collections like *The Unquiet Bed* and *Feeling the Worlds* feature emotion in such a way that they are in keeping with contemporary androgynous poetry like that of Adrienne Rich.

Such erotic poetry now rides the same bandwagon as the current acceptance of lesbians and gays into our dominant culture. For me, this may entail something of a cliquey set. I prefer Livesay's earlier, pointed commentary of conscience and social justice. Still, as she declared, "The aim of poetry, which has the potential of surviving fashions and fad, is to illuminate the world and mankind's task within it." I take her seriously when she writes:

*Our poem -- everyone's --
must be a message
for survival
Let it sound out clear
signposts and banner
plain talk:
NO MORE WAR*

In a 1983 volume called *The Phases of Love*, Dorothy Livesay pauses to consider her one-time teachers "who taught/me/the delicacy of French," saying:

*[they] never shrugged me off
as a hopeless
non-conformist
but somehow loved
my twisted awkward frame
my freckled vision
somehow saw
how I might someday strike outward
to be a person*

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International briefs

CULTIVATING ANCIENT SEEDS

Seeds of Survival is just one of the Unitarian Service Committee's international development projects. It is assisting farmers to conserve and cultivate traditional seeds called landraces. They more resistant to pests and disease and grow without chemicals. According to studies by scientists in 1996, the landraces outperformed genetically-uniform varieties by 10 per cent. For more information call (613) 234-6827.

UN MEETS THE UN

Did you know that Unitarian Universalists have representation at the United Nations in New York? The UU United Nations Office (UU-UNO) advocates at the UN Economic and Social Council and provides affiliated individuals and congregations with a newsletter, action alerts, readings, and a grades 4-6 RE program. Individual memberships are \$45; congregational memberships are \$65 per year. The Office is holding an "Intergenerational Seminar on Human Rights," Apr. 16-18, 1998, in New York. For more information, contact Canadian Envoy Coordinator Eryl Court -- phone: (416) 368-3270, e-mail: ekort@msn.com.

ENGLAND IN THE SPRING

Next April, the International Council of Unitarians and Universalists will meet in Great Hucklow, England. Organizers are expecting UUs from Europe, North America, Asia, and elsewhere. The program for the April 18-22, 1998 conference includes morning and evening worship, talks and discussion with representatives from ICUU member groups, and countryside walks. Registration is \$US 110, and room and board is \$US 220, payable by Mar. 1. For more information, look for ICUU under International on www.uua.org, or write: Rev. Geoffrey Usher, Upper Chapel, Norfolk Street, Sheffield S1 2JD, UK.

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Executive Director

-- Ellen Campbell

WE'VE GOT NEW CONGREGATIONS AND GROUPS

WE ARE experiencing a growth in our religious community that surpasses anything since the heady days of the 1950s and '60s.

At its last meeting, the CUC Board accepted into membership the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Ottawa, to join Capital Unitarian Universalist Congregation as the first two new congregations since 1990. Both have membership in the neighbourhood of fifty, and have developed good leadership and programs.

We have three intentional new start congregations this year. Through the generosity of Ed and Elinor Ratcliffe, the newly-ordained Katie Stein Sather is the Extension Minister for the Avalon Unitarian Universalist Fellowship in St. John's, Newfoundland. It makes us truly a national movement, with at least one congregation in every province (we haven't made it into the Territories yet). We're grateful to Ed and Elinor for their support. A group is developing in The Beach area of Toronto, with a Steering Committee led by Rev. Gretchen Thomas and Wayne Walder. In Durham Region, just east of Greater Toronto, another group is beginning to meet; Cheryl Jack is the organizer.

There are five "emerging groups," that have the intention of growing into full congregations, in Saint John, New Brunswick, the Huronia region of Ontario, Elora/Fergus, Ontario, and Kamloops, British

Columbia. Groups are taking shape in the Cowichan Valley and the Upper Fraser Valley as well.

A religious community that embodies "a free and responsible search for truth and meaning" is clearly meeting a need for many people today.

BRIEF NOTES FROM THE COUNCIL

NOMINATIONS FOR UU TRUSTEE

Herman Boerma is serving as the Unitarian Universalist Trustee from Canada. The practice has been that the CUC Annual Meeting selects someone to hold this post and recommends that person to the UUA Nominating Committee. We have to start early to get all this done by the appropriate deadlines - this time the decision must be made at our 1998 Annual Meeting. Herman is willing to stand for a second term. Further nominations can be made by congregations. Nominations should be submitted to the CUC office by Feb. 28.

CUC BABY COMING

The CUC office is preparing for its first maternity leave! Carol will be leaving in April to get ready for the birth of a baby boy in May, and will return in January. She and I are both finding it a challenge to think ahead about all the things she does that are in her head, as well as those on her job description, and to find effective ways of doing them in her absence.

UU VIDEO NOW AVAILABLE

Our agreement with VISION-TV gave them one year's exclusive broadcast use of the program. That year is now up, and congregations who wish to use it on local cable or other stations are free to do so. We will soon have a few copies available for a small handling charge. We have also written the first funding proposal for a second video, this time on religious education. You'll be hearing more about it soon.

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CUC joins Aboriginal Rights Coalition

The Canadian Unitarian Council has been accepted as a member of the Aboriginal Rights Coalition (ARC), the group of churches working to support aboriginal peoples in Canada. This marks the deepening of our Council's support to the aboriginal struggle in Canada. However, we're still unclear about how we can offer meaningful, on-going assistance and resources to the Coalition.

Donald Bailey attended the ARC's national meeting last spring. He reports that the coalition is serious, and active: "It hesitates to accept any church or network that cannot provide money and personnel to participate in its work."

Other churches have full-time staff devoted to aboriginal justice. Bailey wonders, "Do we, at the CUC, have the resources to engage this issue of peace and justice with determination, courage,

finances, and personal support?"

Much of the ARC's work is local. Several local Unitarian congregations have worked with provincial ARCs, or have lent church space. But Bailey thinks that more involvement is needed, individually, and from congregations.

What can be done? As a start, Bailey suggests reading the highlights of the Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. The 150-page document is titled, *People to People, Nation to Nation*. The ARC has also published an education kit based on the Commission, and it can be used in adult discussion groups or in religious education. (Both documents are available from the ARC -- Phone: (613) 235-9956, E-mail: arc@web.ca.)

After that, Bailey recommends:

- seeking out local issues and becoming involved in their resolution
- challenging misinformation in the media concerning aboriginal issues
- becoming well-informed about native issues

In late August, CUC representative Harold Koehler attended a Sacred Assembly at the Sagkeeng First Nations (Fort Alexander Reserve), just north of Winnipeg. He says, "we have much learn about spirituality from sharing in the struggles of native people."

Social justice is always a two-way enterprise.

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BOOK REVIEW by Anne Orfald **In the Kindergarten of understanding**

Have you ever considered the spirituality of eating yogurt? Or the therapeutic use of the famous phrase from religious mythology, "To Hell with it!"?

You'll find these and other wonders in an inexpensive, unpretentious little paperback called *Stir Around and Make a Light*. It's a rich collection of sketches -- engaging essays, meditative reflections, poetic snippets, poignant and funny reminiscences -- by the Rev. John Hanly Morgan, minister emeritus of First Unitarian Congregation of Toronto.

In this, Morgan's ninth book, are reflections on ministry and marriage, on life and death, on sex and spirituality, and social action. Morgan's passion for racial and economic justice and world peace, and his indomitable sense of humour shine through.

The book includes touching personal stories, ranging from the devastating experience of his father's death when Morgan was just 15, to conversations with a child about the wonders of the universe

while drifting in a boat "through heaven-trees of faint stars."

Morgan's reflections on his ministry are sometimes tender, sometimes comical, celebrating his accomplishments, but also admitting his limitations. One can't help but admire his creative problem-solving when a young man insists, moments before a wedding ceremony is to begin, on inserting "to obey" into his bride's vows. And you'll laugh out loud at the insistent Saturday night caller who pleads with the minister for "extreme unction," when all he really needs is a few hours to dry out.

Morgan has a way of drawing one in to each topic with vivid word pictures, and weaving in the personal element, whether the story is about family memories or philosophy or social justice.

He also insists on clear thinking. Although he avoids labelling them, he pokes fun at those who are caught up in fascination with the paranormal, astral travel, and other unscientific phenomena. He does so with some gentleness and good humour, but admits he has been accused of "unseemly levity." As a humanist committed to the scientific method, Morgan is also a critic of the sloppiness of some scientists. He claims no "theology," but clearly approaches life and all its mysteries with awe and wonder. The here-and-now complexity of this world, with all its beauty, pain and brevity, is enough for him.

He writes, "We are still in the nursery-kindergarten in our understanding of the complexities of matter, energy, space and time. It is indeed quite possible that we will never be able to understand the universe fully. But that's no problem for me.

"I don't even understand myself, but I certainly don't let that keep me from enjoying whatever it is that I am. I don't need An Absolutely True Theory of Everything to feel at home in the universe."

Stir Around is available for \$8 from Free Spirit Literature, by phone at 1-800-759-4889, or e-mail to frspirit@pangea.ca.

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

DEAR EDITOR:

Regarding the front page article "Social justice policy adopted in close vote" (September 1997) -- perhaps "Policy to avoid taking any social action adopted in close vote" would give a more accurate picture as to what happened at the last CUC general meeting.

Details of the proposed new social justice policy were received by delegates only days before the meeting, and voting was rushed through without any time set aside for prior study or discussion by the delegates. The resolution that was passed by a majority of only two votes makes it very difficult in the future to get any motion regarding social service policy, or other related issues, brought forward for consideration.

Resolutions will now only be considered at a general meeting after at least two months' notice of a study of the proposal is provided to all CUC congregations and their delegates. If passed, it would then require a two-year study involving all congregations, and recording their opinions, and opinions of individual members, before it is voted on.

It is questionable whether those who voted for this resolution represent the views of the majority of Canadian Unitarians -- most members cannot afford to attend these general meetings. To obtain a more democratic representation in the future, I would suggest that consideration be given to using some of the income from the CUC's \$700,000 investment fund to subsidize travel expenses for some delegates.

-- *Morry Smith, Willowdale Unitarian Fellowship*

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EXPLORING OUR FAITH -- *Rev. Anne Treadwell* **How can we learn to act with courage?**

What is it that enables some people to act courageously when it's called for by a particular injustice or need, to risk personal well-being for the sake of a greater good? I mean the kind of action that demands thoughtful decisions from us -- not the taking of momentary risks that cost us moments of our lives, but the kind that may cost us months or years of struggle.

There were courageous people at Olinda in 1880. In that year a group of 23 lay-people met to organize the First Universalist Parish of Olinda. They were there largely because of "Big Mike" Fox and his wife Margaret, who had begun to study Universalism from mail-order books in the 1860s. Michael and Margaret became convinced, through their reading, that God's love encompassed everyone and wouldn't condemn anyone to everlasting punishment, and they passed on their convictions to everyone in their community who'd listen.

Our founders had courage

I don't imagine it was any easier to buck the trend in Olinda in 1880 than it is in our society today. The founders of the church were brave people by any definition! You may know the kind of things that were said about them -- that without a doctrine of hell, people's natural tendency to evil would take over and immorality would be rampant. Imagine the struggle between wanting easy, pleasant relationships with the people around you and the need to speak up for what you believed, knowing your neighbours would shun you as immoral, or crazy! The founding of that congregation, and many others, have been courageous acts indeed.

What enabled those pioneers to be so brave, I wonder? Why did Martin Luther launch the Reformation of the Christian Church, saying "Here I stand; I can do no other"? Why did Michael Servetus accept burning at the stake by order of Calvin rather than give up his concept of the truth about God? What helps you to be courageous in making changes in your life, or prevents you -- and is there any way we can pass along our collective courage?

'I can do no other'

Martin Luther's words give us a clue. "Here I stand," he said. "I can do no other." What I've seen of courageous people suggests that they're often under some sense of compulsion ("I can do no other"), with a conviction so strong it compels the action. Without strong convictions, courage may not be possible. What are the values so dear to us that we would risk at least our comfort, perhaps even our lives, for them? We do well to strengthen and nurture those values. It's having them deeply rooted and healthily growing in us that helps to make us courageous. As Viktor Frankl said about his concentration camp experiences, "If you have a 'why' for living, you can bear almost any 'how'."

Our Unitarian Universalist communities can be among our chief sources of conviction and courage, of knowing our "why" for living, as we share our thoughts and experiences with each other. To know that you're not alone in your convictions, or that even if you're alone, you're supported in your stand, is immensely encouraging. I might even be strong enough to face prison for my beliefs, if I had to, knowing that I have friends within Unitarian Universalism and elsewhere who wouldn't forget me or give up on me. The more we can support each other in our congregations, the more courage each one of us will find in the stands that we have to take.

And related to the support of those around us is the sense that we're part of a line of courageous people. It helps us to face being laughed at for our beliefs if we remember that the early Unitarians and Universalists were ridiculed for their strange ideas and unconventional ways. Knowing our forebears and their courage can strengthen our own; knowing about our religious movement and what it has stood for can make us braver people. Perhaps one of the biggest contributors to bravery is practice. Usually a person doesn't perform a heroic act right out of the blue; they start with little baby steps, making a small stand for a conviction -- being conspicuous for refusing to laugh at a racist joke, for example -- and graduate to slightly bigger ones -- going to their child's school to protest a prejudiced curriculum, perhaps. Most of us will probably never be called on to put our physical lives on the line, but the habit of having the courage of our convictions can grow in us through the little things.

Risking failure

These are starting points for the development of courage. But I wonder if the willingness to risk failure, to make ourselves vulnerable may be the biggest factor of all. If so, it surely comes from the knowledge that if I fail in this particular action I'm still a worthwhile person, and from a fundamentally trusting attitude towards the world. If I lose my security, my comforts, my health, even my life, do I still believe that goodness will ultimately prevail and that if I act courageously I cannot really lose?

If we believe those things, we will be brave. I hope our life in our UU congregations will strengthen our faith in those things -- that each of us is worthwhile and that the world is good at its heart. May we learn together the courage to be.

-- Anne Treadwell, UU Church of Olinda

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Unitarian People

KATIE GOES EAST

Katie Stein Sather was ordained into the UU ministry on Oct. 5, at Westwood Unitarian church in Edmonton. Then she headed out to St. John's with a task: help a small group of Unitarians who have been meeting for about a year, as an extension minister.

TWO INSTALLATIONS

Brian Kiely was welcomed to the Unitarian Church of Edmonton on Oct. 26. And **John Baros-Johnson** was installed in Halifax on Nov. 2.

EMOTIONAL UNIVERSE

Ernest J. Liebscher, a member of a newly-formed UU Congregation of Durham in Whitby, Ontario, has recently published a fascinating book called, *Indirect: A New Theory of the Universe*, published by ontic Publishing of Oshawa. It offers a vision of an emotional universe based on conscious and excitable energy fields that can join together to form massive galaxies. Contact: (905) 655-3156.

WESTERN ROUND-UP

Seventy-five western Canadian UUs gathered in Calgary in early October to participate in the Western Canada District Annual Meeting. **Pat Adams** was presented with the *Jennie McCaine Peterson Award* for service to the District. **Carol Lees** received the *Social Justice Award* for her work in obtaining recognition of housework as an occupation by the Canadian census. Both are members of the Saskatoon congregation.

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