

Same-sex 'marriage' has a long Unitarian history

Should gay and lesbian partners have the right to a legally recognized marriage? At least two provinces have Supreme Court cases or reviews underway on this issue and the topic is back on the public agenda.

Unitarian churches, which have been performing "services of union" for same-sex couples for decades, are also involved in this issue. (There were 24 such services performed last year by Unitarian ministers and chaplains.) As far back as 1974, Rev. Norm Naylor of Winnipeg married a same-sex couple, although their attempt to get legal recognition was eventually defeated in the Manitoba courts.

The highly publicized recent case involves a pair of couples who were married at Metropolitan Community Church in Toronto (not a Unitarian church), which has a predominantly gay and lesbian congregation. The same-sex male and female couples were married on Jan. 14, but their attempt to register the unions were denied on the grounds that they did not have opposite-sex relationships. Their church is helping them and six other couples appeal this decision to the Supreme Court of Ontario.

Rev. Mark Morrison-Reed of First Unitarian in Toronto recently swore an affidavit in support of the case on behalf of the CUC. He argued that, "withholding the legal sanction of marriage between two persons of the same sex results in a strongly negative message to the wider society."

Rev. Vann Knight of Victoria submitted a similar affidavit to a B.C. judicial review of the Marriage Act last July. He wrote that, "Homosexual



unions, like heterosexual ones, should be recognized as sacred and worthy of protection and respect." (His full sermon on this issue is available at the Victoria church's website: www.islandnet.com/~unitnvc.)

Chris Vogel is one of the two gay men who were married by Naylor in 1974. To avoid applying for a marriage licence prior to the wedding, Naylor used the ancient practice of reading marriage banns in the Winnipeg church on three occasions prior to the ceremony – the same method used more recently in Toronto. (Although the practice doesn't have Unitarian origins, it goes back to perhaps 1200, and in some provinces is still a legal way of preparing for marriage, as

Couples Kevin Bourassa and partner Joe Varnell (left), and Anne Vautour and partner Elaine Vautour (right) pose with Rev. Brent Hawkes after they were married at the Metropolitan Community Church of Toronto in January. The CUC is supporting the legal struggle for recognition of these marriages.



Richard North and Chris Vogel were married by at the First UU Church of Winnipeg in 1974 (photo circa 1992).

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**GROWING VITAL
RELIGIOUS
COMMUNITIES
IN CANADA**



Mary Bennett

CUC Executive Director

My favourite Unitarian principle is democracy

I love democracy. I might well pick principle five as my favourite – I do indeed affirm and promote “the use of the democratic process.” The children’s version goes like this: “Everyone has a voice and everyone has a vote.”

In this edition of *The Canadian Unitarian* you’ll find a lot of information about the important decision to be made at the annual general meeting in May. Who will vote there? Delegates from our 45 congregations. How will those delegates be selected? Some congregations have policies and procedures for this and others don’t ... yet.

How will those who don’t have a vote because they’re not delegates have a voice? Ever since the joint communiqué from CUC and UUA went out in early January we’ve been receiving and responding to messages from across the country. Some of these people will probably vote as delegates of their congregations. Others are not members of Canadian congregations – youth, “friends” and members of congregations in the U.S. – who will be affected by the vote in May and want to give others the benefit of their voice.

In some ways, this whole initiative is about voice and vote. Canadian Unitarians have felt a need to find their own voice and speak in that voice. As the CUC and UUA explored how to provide the autonomy within which to seek and speak from that voice, the structures and financial arrangements that seemed workable were not what delegates voted on last year. And so, time for another vote.

Democracy – I love it. As executive director my role is implementation. I will work for the CUC Board – and through them the 5,200 Canadian Unitarians – to implement the decision taken at our next annual meeting. **□**

Letters to the Unitarian

GOES BEYOND MANDATE

Both before and after the vote on “autonomy” at the CUC annual meeting in Calgary last May, we were repeatedly assured by CUC leaders in the Canadian Unitarian that “any organizational changes would be “evolutionary” (Barbara Bowmar) and “the vote is not for separation from our U.S. denomination” (Kim Turner). Now we are faced with a scheme that calls for abrupt and virtually complete separation from the UUA.

Clearly, the team negotiating this agreement has gone far beyond the mandate it received in Calgary. Yet, it appears that delegates to the CUC annual meeting in Montreal in May will be given only this one option to vote on. That’s not good enough! We need at least one other choice that is consistent with the “evolutionary” process promised us.

We propose that all Canadian congregations be polled directly on the options, with each having the same number of votes as their delegate entitlement.

— Robyn Newton, *President, North Shore Unitarian Church, West Vancouver*

FREE PORCELAIN CHALICE

I have a 14- by 8-inch porcelain chalice – handcrafted, one of a kind, green and white – that has an (invisible) flaw, so that UU-Uniques can’t sell it. I would like to donate it to any UU church that would pick it up from my house. A donation to the Canadian Unitarians for Social Justice would be appreciated.

— Miriam Smith, *14 Roycrest Ave., North York, ON, M2N 1R2*

DISAGREE WITH MI’KMAQ STAND

Is the CUC really looking at the whole picture when they propose to support Mi’kmaq fishing rights? For the past 30 years we have been looking back in history and trying to settle our own conscience by trying to make amends for alleged injustices against people living in another era. But can we really criticize decisions made in another world, before our time?

When the CUC supports the Mi’kmaq fishing rights, are they not supporting inequality in our society? I do not suggest that injustices have not been done in the past, and I do not have a quick answer to Native problems, but I do know that there are solutions that do not include the creation of special status and inequalities among the people of Canada.

— A.R. Warner, *Unitarian Church of Vancouver*

Same-sex marriage, cont.

an alternative to a marriage licence.)

Vogel and his partner Richard North sued the Manitoba registrar of vital statistics after they were denied the right to register their marriage. Their case received national media coverage. Although the Manitoba law did not spell out that marriage had to be between members of the opposite sex, Vogel and North lost their case when the judge based his decision on an opposite-sex, dictionary definition of marriage.

Vogel is not surprised that the issue has resurfaced again. “It’s only a matter of time before same-sex marriage is legally accepted,” he believes. Still with Richard 27 years later, Chris says

their service of union was undertaken for reasons of law reform, but it had other consequences.

“It helped us reconcile our identities with our families, something we hadn’t anticipated,” he says. He now sees this sort of acceptance – by families, communities and society as a whole – as a powerful argument for legalizing same-sex marriages.

Norm Naylor, who married the couple, says the 1974 ceremony was controversial at the time, both in the wider society and also in the local church. But, he says, “it was the best and finest act I have ever done to help move forward public discussion and greater acceptance of a significant issue.” He’s glad that Unitarian ministers and congregations are working today to finish the struggle he began over a quarter-century ago. **□**

The Unitarian RRSP

North Shore Unitarian in West Vancouver needs to borrow about \$125,000 to finance their church expansion. But instead of going to the bank, they're going to borrow from themselves, using a clever scheme where the church itself becomes an RRSP. Members can direct their year 2000 contributions to the North Shore fund, or move existing RRSP dollars over from other funds, where they will earn interest of about 6 per cent this year. The North Shore RRSP has been operating for over 15 years and has 19 long-term members, although they're looking to expand that for the current project.

CAMP WORKERS WANTED

Unicamp in southern Ontario is looking for various staff members for its upcoming summer season. It needs senior staff (camp director, assistant director, cook and maintenance person), intermediate staff (office assistant) and of course, junior staff (housekeeping, maintenance and kitchen). The deadline for senior and intermediate positions is Feb. 22 and for the junior positions, Mar. 22. Contact Eileen Ormond: 905-279-4615 or twosome@idirect.com.

EMPTY BOWLS IN THUNDER BAY

Pyteke Blaauw of Lakehead Unitarian Fellowship spearheaded the first Empty Bowls Fundraising Dinner in Thunder Bay last fall. Close to 150 people attended the event, helping raise \$3,000 for the local food bank and shelter. Along with the local potter's guild and the United Church they produced handcrafted bowls, which they sold along with soup, bread and pie at the dinner.

2001: A UNITARIAN SPACE ODYSSEY

The theme of the annual mid-winter retreat for Unitarians in Greater Toronto came from the science fiction movie, 2001, although it mixed a little Star Trek in as well (the theme phrase



These two stained glass panels, symbolizing the seven UU principles, were installed in the renovated sanctuary of the Unitarian Fellowship of London last fall.

was, "to boldly go where no Unitarian has gone before"). It included workshops on The Final Frontier (outer and inner space), Making Space for Spiritual Practice, Starship UU (how to care for our crewmember volunteers), Using Space in Church Architecture, Get Your Face Into a Different Space (using drama to reach an audience), and of course, a special viewing of the 1975 classic movie by Stanley Kubrick. Suffice to say, it was both a serious and light-hearted weekend for the 60 participants.

COOKIE EXCHANGE

Okay, it's holiday time and you want to have a great variety of cookies, just like Mum used to produce, but in this day and age, who has the time for that much home baking? Saskatoon Unitarians came up with a novel solution last December. They had a cookie exchange. Each interested member contributed 3-1/2 dozen of their own cookies (one kind!) and went home with six varieties. The extra half-dozen went to make boxes for people with mobility or health problems.

Unitarian People

GETTING INTO POLITICS

The President of the Sarnia-Port Huron Unitarian Fellowship ran as a candidate for the Green Party in last November's federal election. **Alan McKeown** finished in fifth place out of 10 candidates in the Sarnia-Lambton riding, right behind the four established parties. Many fellowship members were disturbed by the lack of focus on environmental issues in the last election. "We achieved our objective of getting the environment onto the local political scene and increasing awareness of the Green Party," says McKeown.

THROWING SNOWBALLS AT STEFAN

Here's a technique for encouraging frank questions and direct answers at your next congregational meeting. (It was recently used by Western Canada District's **Stefan Jonasson** at a meeting in Calgary, where he was helping the congregation sort through their worries about ministerial sabbatical.) Ask people to write their burning questions on pieces of paper, then crumple them up (the "snowballs") and throw them at the speaker or resource person. He was tossed questions like this: "How do we prevent exhaustion and burnout as we try to fill the gaps?" (His answer: "Say 'no' or 'not now, but later' if you can't do it. It's better to be clear than to say yes and not do it.")

MINISTERIAL UPDATES

- **Rev. Ann Buckmaster** was ordained and installed as Minister of Religious Education at the Unitarian Church of Vancouver last November.
- **Lynne Picard** is celebrating her 10th anniversary as Director of Religious Education at the Winnipeg Church.
- South Fraser Unitarian Congregation has invited **Debra Faulk** to fill a half-time leadership position while she attends seminary at Vancouver School of Theology en route to full ordination.
- **Rev. Linda Smith Stowell** is now **Rev. Linda Weaver Horton** following her marriage to Lloyd Horton. The congregation celebrated at the end of January with a service and reception (the couple were previously married in San Diego).

John May: a builder of our movement

John May was the first lay President of the CUC in 1968, was on the first CUC/UUA negotiating team, and was the first UUA Trustee from Canada in 1971. He was the past president of Toronto First Unitarian Congregation, Willowdale Fellowship, and the Unitarian Church of Edmonton, a founder of EAGLES (the St. Lawrence District leadership school), is a past chaplain from Toronto First, past Facilitator at Don Heights, past President of the Canadian Chaplains Association and a true friend to many. He died on Jan. 10, 2001 at the age of 76. This is an abridged version of the eulogy delivered at his memorial service by Frances Deverell, candidate for ministry at Don Heights Unitarian.

John May grew up in the Swansea neighbourhood of western Toronto. His mother died when he was two and he was raised by a father old enough to be his grandfather and a series of housekeepers until his father remarried when he was seven. He grew up in a working class neighbourhood during the Depression.

When he was 16, just finished Grade 10, John quit school to work as a salesman and help support his family. At 18 he tried to enlist in the airforce but was rejected because of varicose veins. He had them removed and went on to serve as ground crew in England, Finland and finally, after the war, in Germany. The post-war experience changed his consciousness as he saw the devastation caused by aerial bombardment. He didn't become a full pacifist, but he participated in peace marches for the rest of his life.

Back in Canada, he found his calling as a sales manager for a moving company, masterminding complicated commercial moves. It brought out one of his strengths – creating step-by-step plans for even the hardest tasks.

He married Janet Paterson in 1948 and they raised three children, John, Margaret and Robert. They were members of the local Presbyterian Church until John came home and asked if he really would go to hell if he didn't do what his parents told him. Janet pulled the kids out of Sunday school, and in its place the parents read stories to the children each week. They discovered and tried Toronto First Unitarian church, and liked it, but John wouldn't make a quick decision on a matter of such importance. It was five years before he signed the membership book.

They both became active in their church, and then with the larger denomination. John offered a strong, reliable presence that combined a native intelligence of how to get things done with a love of people and an ability to bring out the best in them. He wove a mesh of people and relationships around him, from many walks of life and across generational lines. He grounded his own children in the land and the city he

loved so that they would deeply understand their roots.

John became a leader in our denomination, surrounded by people that were more likely to have university degrees than his own Grade 10 education. By 1968 he was the first lay leader to be president of the still-young Canadian Unitarian Council. He was part of the group that negotiated the first accord between the CUC and the Unitarian Universalist Association. He served for eight years as the Canadian trustee on the UUA Board. Apparently, he was selected for president of the Edmonton congregation before he even arrived! With his steady, reliable presence, John was a true builder of the Canadian Unitarian movement.



John's congregation at Toronto First was a home for artists, musicians, scientists and social activists. It was an agent of change in the wider community, and it supported international causes as well. John believed that people came to church mainly for community, and he loved the group energy of his chosen spiritual home.

A life committed so strongly to individual integrity would sometimes run into conflicts with others. After all, my truth is not always yours. But John had an amazing ability to rise above personal interests and put the institution ahead of his own needs.

Out of sorts with his home church over issues of democratic process, education requirement for chaplains and others, he found a new home for his last years at Don Heights. Within six months of joining he was hired as facilitator for the congregation, and became a constant presence on every committee and helped us renew our commitment to growth.

He also took an active lead in social and community issues. He was there every Friday night with other Don Heighters doing intake for the Out of the Cold program. He worked with the Caring Alliance to support refugees and homeless people, and he advocated for affordable housing in Toronto. John could see that there was very little to separate these unfortunate people from the rest of us.

For John May, there were only two things that mattered: love life and be of service. He worked right up until six weeks before he died. Fiercely independent, he was never happy if he wasn't out and about, with a real job to do.

We can be grateful that, staring at a life of much greater dependency, John was able to let go and enter the gate to the mystery. □

— *The family requests that memorial donations be made to the CUC Founders Fund, 55 Eglinton Ave. E., Suite 705, Toronto, ON, M4P 1G8, or to the Caring Alliance, c/o Margaret Heffron, 5 Windy Ridge Dr., Scarborough, ON, M1M 1H6. Please mark cheques "John May."*

Taskforce on Chaplaincy

Updating chaplaincy

Your congregation's chaplain may be called "lay chaplain" in the future, to avoid any confusion the public might have over his or her identity. This is just one recommendation from a cuc taskforce that reviewed the chaplaincy program over the past year.

The taskforce, which presented a report to the cuc Board in January (the final version was sent to congregations in February) has recommended that chaplains meet minimum training requirements, that they be limited to six-year terms, and that a special fund be created to finance the training of new chaplains and local chaplaincy committees.

John Hopewell, chair of the taskforce, says the cuc felt the chaplaincy program needed a review after 30 years of operation. "The program did not have major problems," says Hopewell, "but it evolved without conscious decision-making." Congregations nominate their own chaplains, who are lay people that perform rites



Elizabeth McGugan

of passage for church members and the wider public. (There are currently 76 Unitarian chaplains in Canada.) In most provinces, the cuc then submits their names to the necessary government bodies for registration. This means the cuc has liability and accountability for the program, Hopewell explains.

"From the cuc's perspective," says Hopewell, "the chaplaincy program has been loosely governed." The report's recommendations are an attempt to "refine" the operations of the program, he says, without changing it fundamentally or taking over control from local congregations.

The name change to "lay chaplain" may be the least controversial of the changes recommended by the taskforce. It is meant to clarify the role

of a chaplain in the wider community, where the term has ministerial associations. Representatives of the Chaplains Association agreed to that term earlier last year, in consultation with the taskforce. In French, the new term will be *célébrant(e)*.

More contentious is the shift to limited terms for chaplains. Hopewell says this is meant to give other lay people the chance to become chaplains, and also to prevent the position from becoming "a profession." The taskforce views chaplaincy as an extended volunteer role.

Elizabeth McGugan, the President of the Chaplains Association, was a member of the taskforce. She agrees with most of its recommendations, but thinks the six-year limit will be hard to swallow, because "for some chaplains, it has become a job" they don't want to lose. (A congregation can request extensions beyond the six-year term on an annual basis, if no other members are found for the position.)

The taskforce recommends that all chaplains have a written contract with their congregations, spelling out how work gets split between chaplains and the minister, the fees that will be charged, and the supervision of the chaplain's work by a special congregational committee.

The report also recommends that chaplains draw a clear distinction between consulting and counselling. "It's okay for chaplains to be a shoulder to cry on," says Hopewell, "but not to give advice. At that point, they need to refer people to someone in the community."

Some of the taskforce recommendations will be sent to the cuc annual meeting next May for discussion and approval by congregations. □

International News

INTERNATIONAL KEYNOTE

Jill McAllister, President of the International Council of Unitarians and Universalists will be the keynote speaker at the cuc annual meeting in Montreal, May 18-21, addressing the question, "How can Canadian Unitarians support the growth of Unitarian Universalism around the world?"

GOODBYE FAMILY AVDIUS

Last fall, the uu Fellowship of Ottawa bade farewell to some members of their adopted Kosovar refugee family (four of the seven members returned to Kosovo in Yugoslavia, while three stayed in Canada). Anneke Dubash of Ottawa says, "The Avdius family had their ups and downs after arriving in Canada in August 1999. They had illnesses, a death in Kosova, and recovery from the trauma of war, but they managed to keep a sense of humour and were determined to make the best of every bump on the road." The 87-year-old grandmother, Qamille, recently told Dubash, "I never knew there were such good people in the world. Now I know there are such good people as Canadians."

VANCOUVER SPONSORS REFUGEE

Under its sponsorship agreement with Citizenship and Immigration Canada, the cuc recently approved the Unitarian Church of Vancouver's application to sponsor a Serbian refugee. This is the first time a Unitarian church has been able to do refugee sponsorship alone (not in conjunction with other churches). The cuc received recognition as a Sponsorship Agreement Holder with the federal government last July.

UNITARIAN JOURNEY TO PRAGUE

Beverly Carr is organizing another journey to Prague and the Czech countryside – a study tour on the European origins of Unitarianism. The September 2001 tour will be accompanied by Rev. Richard Henry, who is the biographer of Norbert Fabian Capek, the Czech Unitarian founder. For more information, contact Beverly Carr: 416-778-6657, bgcarr@interlog.com.

Across the Country

UU RADIO ON INTERNET

Thanks for your excellent newsletter. Regarding the piece in your last issue on Chaplain Terry Choyce's radio show *InterConnections*, it is regrettable that most of your readers live well outside CKDU's Halifax broadcast range. However, they can tune in to Terry's show anywhere in the world on the internet, at <http://ckdu.dal.ca>.

— Paul A. Falvo, Halifax

SECRET BUDDIES IN VICTORIA

The Victoria First congregation's RE program is celebrating the 10th anniversary of its "Secret Buddy" program. Juniors are matched with seniors in a double-blind combo, using famous Unitarians for code names. Each pair gets acquainted through a weekly letter exchange. Kids get to know each other (without giving away their identities) by sharing hobbies, passions or concerns about the world. The program is materminded by RE committee members Kay Dyer and Ruth Chudley.

NEAR-DEATH EXPERIENCES

The Kingston Unitarian Fellowship offered an evening seminar on near-death experiences in January. Their main text was the book *Life After Death*, by Tom Harpur. A second seminar on reincarnation is scheduled for late February. Both seminars were led by John Mark McAllister, a Kingston member who has studied religious belief in resurrection of the body and immortality of the soul. The seminars focus on the scientific survival research in these areas.

WINTER RETREAT TO MANNING

Residents of North and West Vancouver get a lot of rain, sitting at the foot of the mountains. So the North Shore church is organizing a winter getaway weekend in Manning Park, in the snowy interior of the province. It's not a conference or a workshop. The featured activities are simply skiing, skating, tobogganing and sleigh rides. (There's also an exercise room and hot tub.) The accommodations aren't private (shared cabins), but the cost is very affordable, at \$40 per person.



Evolution nearly extinct in Ontario classrooms

Ottawa Unitarians are speaking out publicly about the Ontario government's move to scale back the teaching of evolution in the province's schools.

"I can't imagine kids going through the whole school system and coming out the other end without knowing anything about evolution," says Rev. Brian Kopke of the First Unitarian Congregation of Ottawa.

"There are so many kids out there who will be going into the sciences – and even the humanities – who need to have some idea of how all of this fits into a framework and how important science is to who we are," he told the *Ottawa Citizen*.

Kopke was reacting to the new Ontario high school curriculum, released last October. It deals with evolution only in advanced biology – a single course for Grade 12 students who will study biology or biochemistry in university. (The science curriculum in elementary schools doesn't even mention evolution in living things.)

Within two weeks, Kopke and the Ottawa church had organized a public

meeting on the issue, attracting two dozen people, many of whom do not attend the church. Their flyer called for "teachers, botanists, palæontologists, geologists, astronomers, chemists, geneticists, ecologists, artists, story tellers," and others. Their aim is to influence educational policy, and if necessary, offer an alternative forum for teaching science, including the theory of evolution.

In restricting the study of evolution to all but those who will study biology in university, the Ontario government is following the lead of many of the United States. Under pressure from creationists, 19 states have removed evolution from their science curriculum or watered it down to avoid controversy.

The approach of Ontario's new curriculum is to give more attention to safer science topics, like the life cycles of plants, how light, food and water affect animals, the functions of cells and organs, etc. But none of it directly mentions evolution.

"It is all value-neutral," says Tom Stinke of the Ottawa-Carleton Catholic School Board, "so stuff that is controversial or has values attached to it – environmental stuff and so on – is pretty much left out."

Ontario hasn't actually banned the teaching of evolution, but with a huge new curriculum, teachers don't have time for optional extras, according to Stinke, who oversees math and science for his board. According to biologist Jim Fenwick of the University of Ottawa, without evolution biology is just "a cookbook list of facts, each isolated, and each by itself perhaps interesting, but meaningless."

Kopke says that all parts of evolution have not been proven, but we do know enough to know that living things evolve. He argues that you can't say evolution isn't science and still support hard-core science. Removing evolution from the curriculum, he believes, "drives us back to the Middle Ages."

More information about the Ottawa Unitarian campaign on evolution is available at www.uuottawa.com/evolution.htm. □

Finding spiritual connection in the wildest places

Ratty from Kenneth Graham's, *The Wind in the Willows* exclaims that "there is nothing half so much worth doing as simply messing about in boats." I think I can say that messing about in boats – canoes that is – is how I got here.

For many years, canoeing and the local canoe club were the focus of my life: weekend trips into the Alberta foothills, and camping by the rapids we spent so much time on, and in. Paddling the whitewater helped me gain confidence in myself, and negotiating the perils of canoeing sports governing bodies immersed me in the activities of boards and committees. I learned that all I had to do was grab a breath of air, and go for it.

Canoeing and camping were natural extensions of my childhood fascination with the outdoors. I felt at home there. As a child I slept out under the fallen-over apple tree in my father's orchard. As an adult, I found every opportunity I could to go canoeing and camping. When my husband's work schedule didn't allow for longer canoe trips, I found jobs guiding wilderness trips so I could spend a month or two at a time there.

I yearned for something more, something I could not then name, but which I now call *connection*. The concrete interconnected web I saw around me when I was outdoors needed to be made concrete in my daily life at home and at another, metaphorical level.

My connections in the canoe club were waning as its lifecycle ebbed, and so I moved to a Unitarian Fellowship. I found words for my metaphor of God in the writing of process theologian Bernard Loomer: the web of life. Divinity is in the connections, both between people and with all the other inhabitants of the universe – animal, vegetable and mineral. These kinds of connections I could work at, strive for. In some way, then, I could know God.

I have come to understand that compassion for and understanding of others' life situations are also connections. Working in the world – like being a member of the board of the St. John's Women's Centre – is another way of weaving connections. I find friends while I help the Women's Centre make a small difference in the lives of others. The Women's Centre provides resources and advocacy for all women, but perhaps especially some of the most vulnerable.



I am honoured to have been chosen to represent Canada on the UUA Board of Trustees at this pivotal time. We are renegotiating the formal relationship between the UUA and the CUC. Not only is the organizational structure of Unitarianism in Canada being negotiated, however, so are our relationships. One of the big questions is, "To what extent can we maintain our cross-border relationships without the cross-border organizations, the Districts."

Perhaps one of the answers will come in the form of new and stronger relationships within Canada. We don't yet know just what the CUC will look like in a year's time. This will be a big part of the conversations to come both this spring, and in the coming year. I think we are re-arranging our web, re-forming the connections and relationships within Canada in order to strengthen and focus our organizational work. [U](#)

— Katie has been the New Congregation Minister at Avalon UU Fellowship in St. John's, Newfoundland since 1997. In December she was appointed Trustee-at-Large for Canada on the Board of the Unitarian Universalist Association.

Our wonderful winter

After autumn, winter is my favourite season – even on the Canadian prairies. When the temperature falls and I wake up to trees coated with hoarfrost and sun dogs casting their rainbows across the sky, I chortle to my southern friends, "This is winter."

Not until the Manitoba spring begins to tease does my mind wander toward springtime (well, except when the seed catalogues arrive). No, winter feels like a gift, like a special warp in the year's rhythms when the air shimmers with an invisible energy and light takes on a clarity no summer sky affords.

Greta Crosby writes: "Let us not wish away winter. It is a season to itself, not simply a way to spring." No, let us not wish winter away, but accept it as a gift, as full of promise as a tulip bulb, as mysterious as the new year to come. Solstice, Christmas, the New Year – these are the icing on the cake of winter, ornaments on a season already brilliant and snapping.

— Rev. Susan Van Dreser, Winnipeg

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cuc Annual Meeting 2001

Montreal calling

This year's cuc annual meeting takes place at the Holiday Inn Midtown in vibrant downtown Montreal from May 18 to 21. *One Journey—Many Paths* is the theme that will be interwoven throughout the conference's workshops and events, and is sure to provoke much thought and discussion.

The conference site offers close proximity to several major city museums and an endless variety of stores and boutiques. Conference attendees will also enjoy visiting the Old Port of Montreal and Old Montreal, whose narrow cobbled streets magically take its visitors back in time to Montreal's 16th century origins. Public transportation is easily accessible from the hotel, and amazingly reliable!

Of interest to those arriving early, the International Council of Unitarians Universalists conference, also taking place in Montreal, will be wrapping up with a service at the Unitarian Church of Montreal (UCM) on Thursday evening. This is an opportunity to meet our extended community from around the world!

The RE Day on Friday will consist of two workshops with animators: *One-room Schoolhouse* examines a single multi-age program using various curricula. The second workshop is entitled *Earth-centred Traditions in Children's Worship and in RE Programs*. The new cuc video will be presented. A networking lunch will give participants the opportunity to discuss topics of interest. Planned youth activities will be running concurrently throughout the conference.

Here's an overview of the social agenda the Montreal local steering committee has in store for you:

- Friday: an in-gathering with a special twist to help those from different regions get to know each other.

- Late Saturday afternoon: choir practice (fun, relaxing, and a great way to unwind after the day).
- Saturday evening: a choice between a gourmet meal (vegetarian or not) prepared by local members at the UCM (register early, space limited), or dining out at a restaurant selected from



favourite establishments (guided by local members). Both alternatives followed by musical entertainment (Faustina) at the UCM.

- Sunday: hotel banquet followed by dancing to big band music, deejayed by "Maestro," a very well-known Montreal Unitarian.
- Monday afternoon: a post-conference tour to numerous Unitarian historically significant sites, guided by long-time Montreal member, Diana Scott.

If you find some extra time on your hands, there is plenty to see and do in Montreal. Here's a brief overview:

- Local attractions: in addition to those already mentioned – Botanical Gardens, Biodome, Olympic Stadium, Insectarium, Mount Royal
- Outside Montreal (1 to 2 hours drive) – Eastern Townships, (featuring quaint villages, covered bridges, unique architecture; vineyards tour), the Laurentians (hiking, lakes).

For more information go to www.tourism-montreal.org. Please note that a local member will be on site at the annual meeting to answer all your touring questions. ☑