

Dear Presidents and Ministers,

Now that the current CUC work plan has been completed, the 2011 year-end has arrived and with the search for a new interim executive director soon to begin, the Board of Trustees would like to take a moment to pause and report back to you where we find the affairs of the Canadian Unitarian Council today.

A separate interim progress report will be sent to you concerning the actual functioning of the Board itself, the highlights of which include:

- An increased focus on the CUC's vision and mission
- Strong Board cohesiveness
- Strengthened relationship with UUMOC (our Canadian minister's association)
- Improved communication and consultation with you, the membership

At the 2010 Annual Meeting, you, as members of the Council, approved a \$500,000 draw on the unrestricted fund with a commitment to balance the budget by the end of 2013. We are currently about half way through that amount of money. We have 8.5 full time equivalent staff positions hired (Appendix A) and, as you are undoubtedly aware, services are in the process of being re-established following a prolonged period of staff vacancies. Some examples of the many vision and mission focused services you have seen include:

- Last year's 50th anniversary conference
- The new website (please go visit it and comment if you haven't already done so)
- The new and improved communications including
 - CanU (The Canadian Unitarian)
 - E-news
- Increased youth and young adult engagement, facilitated by a dedicated staff resource
- Provision of resources and support to congregations by congregational development staff across the country
- CUUL school in both the east and west
- The upcoming spiritual leadership symposium this May in Ottawa

As we take stock and make plans for the future it is abundantly clear that we stand at an important cross roads. In order to achieve the vision and mission of the CUC we will need to stay focused, constantly demanding that the work we undertake has a clear line of sight back to that vision and mission. The Vision and Mission of the CUC was articulated at the 2002 Annual Conference and Meeting in Kelowna BC. (Appendix B). The Board has, in turn, translated that into a series of Ends or Goals (Appendix C). Lately we have been hearing an emerging voice suggesting that our interpretation of the vision and mission statement of the CUC has been too limited

and should be expanded to include a national spokesperson or even a more visionary national presence.

As the 2012 year started we were disappointed to learn that we ran a budget deficit of approximately \$327,000 in 2011 (the final detailed budget is still pending and will be distributed as soon as it is available). This deficit was about \$123,000 more than the Board had authorized primarily because the planned increase in donations was not realized. In addition we learnt in January that the 50th anniversary annual meeting and conference ran a deficit of about \$105,000 (\$70,000 in event related spending and \$35,000 in staff time allocation).

In order to balance the budget by 2014 some changes will be required. Either there will need to be a significant decrease in spending, an increase in revenue (either in the form of an increase in the annual program contributions or in donations) or some combination of the two.

The Board of Trustees has asked the staff to re-examine how they might deliver services in a more cost effective way while maintaining and even expanding the services provided in the four high priority areas, providing:

- resources for religious exploration and spiritual growth,
- resources to nurture leadership,
- resources for social sustainability, and
- resources for multi-generational appeal and relevant life-stage ministries.

The staff will be joining with the Board for a day in early March to discuss where they are at in their deliberations.

Given the limited resources at our disposition, we feel that it is a high priority to clarify the vision and mission statement of the CUC in order that we can stay focused and deliver the highest level of value to you, the membership. In particular we have discerned a need to clarify what it means to “represent our faith in the larger social and religious environments” and to what extent we want to do that. To that end, the Board intends to partner with UUMOC in consulting with all member congregations over the 6 months following this year’s symposium. The result of that consultation will be communicated to you at the 2013 annual meeting.

Finally, new legislation governing not-for-profit corporations was passed last year. This requires us to redo our bylaws sometime in the next 3 years and affords us an excellent opportunity to allow for any changes that are envisioned, either by the above consultation or by the active democracy study group who will be reporting back at the same annual meeting in 2013.

Like the CUC, many of our member societies are facing considerable challenges themselves. With that understanding firmly in sight I am asking you to recommit to the work of your national organization—not for the sake of the CUC itself but for the sake of our common Unitarian Universalist movement. A strong healthy national

organization focused on its mission and vision will be invaluable in making Unitarian and Universalist values available to our society and in growing vital religious communities in Canada. For the CUC to reach its potential with the limited financial resource at our disposal there needs to be a balance between providing resources and support for congregations and being a visionary presence in enhancing, nurturing and promoting Unitarian and Unitarian Universalist religion in Canada as called for in our mission statement. In recommitting I am specifically asking for

- **Your patience**

The last several years have been challenging. There have been service disruptions, there has been trouble at the Board level, there have been financial concerns and many have felt disconnected from the work of the CUC. The winds of change are blowing but it takes time for an organization, especially one heavily dependent on volunteer help, to change direction. I trust that you are experiencing improved support and communication, and I ask for your patience.

- **Your understanding**

The resources at our disposal are not the same as our sister organization to the south of us. We just cannot deliver the same level of service with the 8.5 full time staff equivalent and resources we have as the UUA is able to provide with their 200+ staff and significant endowment funding. In order to provide you the priority services that you want and need, our staff must prioritize carefully. I ask for your understanding if your particular issue of interest is not one of the key priorities identified by the Board, and so does not receive quite as much focus. If your congregation feels that the areas of priority are not properly aligned with the mission and vision of the CUC we want to hear from you. You can either contact me directly at gary@cuc.ca, or via your board representative using their first name @cuc.ca, or join in a discussion of this letter on our facebook page. We appreciate hearing from both individuals and congregations, but I wish to be clear that issues brought to us by congregations (or other organized groups) carry significantly more weight and is preferable.

- **Your commitment to a longer term vision**

You articulated a vision in 2002 of a CUC that enhances, nurtures and promotes Unitarian and Unitarian Universalist religion in Canada in addition to providing tangible support for religious exploration, spiritual growth and social responsibility. That kind of vision can only be realized in a culture that views the annual program contribution (APC) as a gift to our liberal religious movement as well as dues paid with an expectation of a tangible return. I urge you to keep that in mind as you consider the Board's proposed APC increase for 2013.

- **Your assistance with clarifying our vision**

We will be coming to talk to you following the spiritual leadership symposium being held in Ottawa this May. I urge you to participate in the symposium and join with us in discussion. This is your national organization—help make it the organization you want it to be, the organization it is capable of being.

Sincerely,

Gary Groot
President
CUC Board of Trustees

**Appendix A
CUC Staff**

Staff Role	Name
Executive Director	vacant
Director of Congregational Services	Linda Thomson
Director of Finance	Philip Strapp
Director of Communications	Ben Wolfe
Social Responsibility Coordinator – part-time	April Hope
Congregational Services Programmer for the West and British Columbia	Antonia Won
Congregational Services Programmer for Canada's Central Region -half time	Helen Armstrong
Congregational Services Programmer for Canada's Eastern Region - half time	Kelly McDowell
Office and Database Administrator	Karen Claney
Technical Services / ACM Program Manager	Jorge Moreira
Youth/Young Adult Programmer	Ariel Hunt-Brondwin

Appendix B

CUC Mission and Vision Statement

Vision statement

The Canadian Unitarian Council is a strong, respected Canadian voice for a vibrant, liberal faith community, relevant to contemporary life in the twenty-first century. It takes a responsible role in the international community of Unitarians and Universalists and the interfaith community. It respects and affirms diversity both within and among its congregations and within the Canadian mosaic. It connects, nurtures and empowers Canadian Unitarians and Universalists and their congregations, and fosters the growth and outreach of the Unitarian Universalist movement in Canada, particularly in the areas of:

- *Lifespan religious education;*
- *Effective professional and lay ministries and*
- *Active participation in national social issues.*

Mission statement

*The Canadian Unitarian Council is an organization of Unitarian and Unitarian Universalist member congregations and individual members acting to enhance, nurture and promote Unitarian and Unitarian Universalist religion in Canada. The CUC provides tangible support for religious exploration, spiritual growth and social responsibility. It represents our faith in the larger social and religious environments, which can be summarized as: **Growing Vital Religious Communities in Canada.***

Appendix C

CUC Board of Trustees “Ends” or Goals

The Canadian Unitarian Council (CUC) is a democratic body that exists so that Canadian UU Communities* have the resources and profile they need in order to thrive spiritually, socially and economically. This includes:

1. Canadian UU communities are equipped for religious exploration and spiritual growth.
2. Canadian UU communities are equipped to benefit the wider communities in which they operate.
3. Canadian UU communities are equipped to be socially and economically sustainable, including in the areas of leadership, multi-generational appeal, relevant life-stage ministries, health and safety, and legal adherence.
 - 3.1 Canadian UU Communities are equipped to nurture leadership within their communities.
 - 3.2 Canadian UU communities are equipped to attain and maintain financial health.
 - 3.3 Canadian UU communities are equipped to be socially sustainable.
 - 3.4 Canadian UU communities are equipped to attract and sustain multi-generational participation, and nurture relevant life-stage ministries.
 - 3.5 Canadian UU communities are equipped to operate according to appropriate legal standards.
 - 3.6 Canadian UU communities are equipped for building and sustaining the health and safety of all their members.
4. Canadian UU communities form interdependent webs of religious communities.
5. Canadian UU communities undertake collective leadership on the Canadian and international stage so that the voice of the Canadian UU movement is heard.
6. All of the above are to be achieved in a cost-effective manner.