



## *Happy February, friends!*

To some of you, the greeting above might seem contradictory – for you, February may be identified with “*the blahs*” or worse, or may be just a grey month to get through as fast as possible. Even for those of us who don’t much enjoy winter, however, February has a few things to recommend it, and the one I like best is the increasing daylight. I love light, and not only the natural kinds (sunlight, moonlight, starlight) but the glow of candlelight, lamplight, firelight, and more. It seems very appropriate to me that the Unitarian Universalist symbol is a flaming chalice. So I’m going to begin this issue with a little exploration of that symbol, adapted from a pamphlet by Dan Hotchkiss.

### *The Flaming Chalice*

*At the opening of Unitarian Universalist services and meetings, many congregations light a flame inside a chalice. This flaming chalice has become a well-known symbol of our movement. It unites our members and symbolizes the spirit of our work.*

*The flaming chalice combines two archetypes—a drinking vessel and a flame. Sharing, generosity, sustenance, and love are some of the meanings symbolized. Flame has been a central symbol for the world’s oldest scriptures, the Vedic hymns of India. Today, lights shine on Christmas and Hanukkah, eternal flames stand watch at monuments and tombs, and candles flicker in cathedrals, temples, mosques, and meeting houses. A flame can symbolize witness, sacrifice, testing, courage, and illumination.*

*The chalice and the flame were brought together as a Unitarian symbol by an Austrian artist, Hans Deutsch, in 1941. In Portugal, where he had fled from the Nazi regime, Deutsch met the Reverend Charles Joy, executive director of the Unitarian Service Committee (USC). The Service Committee was new, founded in Boston to assist Eastern Europeans, among them Unitarians as well as Jews, who needed to escape Nazi persecution.*

*Deutsch was most impressed and soon was working for the USC, an almost unknown organization in 1941. This unknownness was a special handicap where establishing trust quickly across barriers of language, nationality, and faith could mean life instead of death.*

*Disguises, signs and countersigns, and midnight runs across guarded borders were the means of freedom in those days. Joy asked Deutsch to create a symbol for their papers "to make them look official, to give dignity and importance to them, and at the same time to symbolize the spirit of our work.... "*

*Thus, Hans Deutsch made his lasting contribution to the USC and, as it turned out, to Unitarian Universalism. With pencil and ink he drew a chalice with a flame, which was made into a seal for papers and a badge for agents moving refugees to freedom. In time it became a symbol of Unitarian Universalism all around the world. When Deutsch designed the flaming chalice, he had never seen a Unitarian or Universalist church or heard a sermon. **What he had seen was faith in action—people who were willing to risk all for others in a time of urgent need.***

*Today, the flaming chalice is the symbol of the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee, the Unitarian Universalist Association, and (in a maple leaf frame) the Canadian Unitarian Council. No one meaning or interpretation is official. The flaming chalice, like our faith, stands open to receive new truths that pass the tests of reason, justice, and compassion.*

Here are some of my favourite forms of the flaming chalice – and these words describe its significance for me: **the light of truth, the warmth of love, and the fire of commitment.**



A few more versions will probably crop up later in this newsletter .....



Now, on to some notes from members of this network. (Two years ago, in February 2010, I wrote that I'd only received one "check-in": this month there are three times as many! See how positive I'm trying to be?)

from **Janet Vickers**

[janetvickers@shaw.ca](mailto:janetvickers@shaw.ca)

*I have written a pantomime for the local community theatre group - Gabriola Players, and we are now about to have a reading, a workshop reading for critique and feedback on this play. Pretty exciting for me.*

*Also last month I had chest pains and went to the doctor who then sent me for blood work - and according to her I am pretty healthy for 63. I just have to get my cholesterol down.*

*Last month was my birthday and my daughter from South Africa, who had come over for Christmas, came to Gabriola to celebrate (see photo below left). We went out to the local Woodfire Pizza restaurant for dinner and this surprise came after the meal (see photo below right).*

*Both Tony and I have been fighting a silly cold for the last few weeks. There is the feverish start that keeps you sleeping for a day then feelings of getting better, getting over it, then back to specific symptoms such as stuffy nose and a cough. So I have missed many of my appointments and social events because of this yo-yo thing.*

*We have now in our front garden, snow drops, a flourish of varied thrush visiting the feeders, along with northern flickers, junco, chickadees and a pileated woodpecker. A couple of days ago I spotted a hummingbird at the feeders that had been out for months. So I hurriedly made up more nectar, washed out the feeders, and replaced with fresh food. Hope to see it again soon.*

*Leaf Press has a new anthology of love poems out called *The Wild Weathers*, and I am planning on a launch in March on Gabriola Island. Three of us on Gabriola have poems in this anthology.*

*The big Gabriola Poetry Festival is coming soon - February 16th - 19th, organized by the visionary and talented group Poetry Gabriola. Am really looking forward to that.*

*Janet*



from **Elisabeth Michnick**

[bert.michnick@sympatico.ca](mailto:bert.michnick@sympatico.ca)

*Hi Friends: This is Elisabeth Michnick checking in. This month I successfully came through abdominal surgery. Fortunately it went much more smoothly than it could have. Except for removing my appendix, the work was able to be done by laparoscopy. For days I was encumbered by tubes emerging from my nose, arms and bottom and had to shove around an I.V. pole to accomplish the required walking accompanied by my variety of appendages. I am back home and recovering quite nicely, able to eat whatever I want.*

*I just celebrated my 86th birthday on Groundhog Day, with multiple celebrations because my daughters both had to be away for the actual day and wanted to celebrate with me earlier. On the actual day my son came from Montreal and we celebrated at a restaurant with my grandsons and their wives and my wonderful great-granddaughter, who is almost two now and speaking quite a lot. I have a lot to be thankful for. Love and a wonderful year to all of you.*

from **Kim Rogers**

[planetgemini@hotmail.com](mailto:planetgemini@hotmail.com)

### The Forgotten War

*One of the things I miss the most about Ontario since leaving it 2 years ago, is taking part in the War of 1812 re-enactment weekends we used to go to, particularly in the Niagara region. With the Bicentennial of that war now upon us, it seems like the worst possible year to live so far away!*

*I have been keeping track of all the events that are happening by internet, and am impressed by what's in store for those living close enough to take part. I would encourage anyone who doesn't know what the War of 1812 is even about (and that's more the rule than the exception) to pay attention to the media this year. You'll have a great opportunity to take in a bit of a history lesson about how and why Canada as we know it is a separate country from the United States.*

*It could have turned out very differently if not for the valiant efforts of a combination of British soldiers, Upper Canadian Militia, and First Nation warriors. Vastly outnumbered by the US military, their success in preventing a US invasion of the Canadas from 1812-1814 is nothing short of incredible.*

*I recommend Pierre Berton's War of 1812 a recently released compilation of two of his books that basically walks readers completely through that important yet overlooked event in our history. Not only does he talk about the military aspects of the war, he also describes it from the many different viewpoints of the common people who experienced it's effects.*

*As for us, we're at least hoping to scrape the piggy bank and get down to Ontario for the Battle of Queenston Heights near Niagara that's happening in October. Not only is it one of the most important and amazing battles of the war, it's also one of the most beautiful places to go to re-live history.*

*I've attached a couple of pictures of us in our re-enacting finest from a few years ago....Maybe it will inspire some of you to explore the history of the War of 1812 in a little greater depth this year. As they would have said 200 years ago: "Long Live the King!"*

*warm regards for now. .~k~.*



*(Kim said, "I hope it's appropriate subject matter...." and I responded, "**Wouldn't it be great if this provoked some discussion?!**")*

from me, **Anne Treadwell**

[treadwell@ns.sympatico.ca](mailto:treadwell@ns.sympatico.ca)

*As time goes by, with our Nova Scotia house no nearer to being sold, I'm beginning to find it quite stressful, as my need to be back in Ontario becomes more urgently felt. We had a disappointment recently when a couple who seemed to have a serious interest in the house (and came for two lengthy visits and discussions) emailed us that they thought we were asking about 50% more than it was worth – not encouraging to say the least, and a bit extreme, even in the dismal real estate market of this area at the moment!*

*I need to keep reminding myself that both John and I have been quite lucky in the past – when we've moved house before, we've never lost money on the move, and we've never been badly burned financially in other ways. (I suppose that's one advantage of being "of modest means" – not so much to lose!) But this time it seems to be our turn to take our lumps – and why NOT us? I can't say I'm embracing this fact yet, but I do recognize its truth.*

*The same applies to my health: I've been extremely healthy in my adult life, until a few years ago when various problems made themselves felt and have proved rather intractable. I'm STILL lucky that they're not huge problems, but I have to recognize that my unthinking expectation (that I would continue to be robustly well until dying peacefully at a great old age) has been a little arrogant to say the least!*

*So, what I'm trying to learn from this mildly stressful time is that like every other human being I don't get to choose all the circumstances of my life and I'm not **entitled** to have any of my expectations fulfilled. I'm not a naturally patient person, but I'm endeavouring to cultivate patience. Meanwhile, we're just over half-way through winter, and perhaps there will be some good developments to report soon – although it's hard to imagine that they could be more wonderful than the yearly coming of Spring, which it happens **next month!***

Please don't forget how strongly you're encouraged to communicate directly with people on this list, or email me notes that I can include in the next newsletter. As the months pass, members have sometimes dropped hints (or said clearly) that they're going through difficult times of various sorts, and we don't always find out what happened. I'm a little wary of following up by writing directly to those members because I don't want to drop into the role of Minister and would prefer to just be the newsletter editor. But any of you could write the email which would be heartwarming for someone who's told us a little of their situation and would be very glad of some response. Look back at earlier newsletters, and see if there's something or someone calling to you ..... Real friendships sometimes start that way!



Because Valentine's Day falls this month, I'm going to include a couple of pieces on the theme of love, taken from the resource I've mentioned to you before, "Quest" which is the monthly journal of the Church of the Larger Fellowship. They're taken from the February 2011 issue.

### **Looking for Love in All the Wrong Places**

Most of us look for love in only the most obvious places, and as a result, most of us come away disappointed. It's as if we are still grade school kids, counting valentines as a measure of what matters. The love that matters is not typically the subject of sonnets or love songs.

There can be love in being told we are wrong. There can be love in sharing a regret. There can be love in asking for help. There can be love in communicating hurt. There can be love in telling hard truths. Most of us find it painful to live at this level of love, but it can be there, even in these most unlikely places. .... It's the sort of love that can bring us closer to finding the missing pieces of ourselves that we need to make us whole.



Some of the most loving things I've ever experienced I haven't been ready for, wasn't looking for, and nearly didn't recognize. A few of them I didn't want. But all of them have changed me, transformed some part of me, filled in a place that I didn't even know was empty.

When the valentine has been tucked away in a drawer, the candy eaten, the flowers faded and gone, there will be other legacies of love that will last as long as we do, because they have brought us to know an element of life—part feeling, part idea, part mystery—that once known, is ours to keep.



by *David S. Blanchard*, minister of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Canton, New York, from his meditation manual *A Temporary State of Grace: Meditations*. Published by Skinner House Books in 1997, this book is available from the [CLF library](#) or 617-948-6150.

### **Just Like Everyone Else**

Recently I've stumbled on a new favorite phrase, one I'd like to have on a button or a bumper sticker. You might want to use it too. Here's my new favorite: "You're unique, just like everybody else." I think the world would be better off if people would just remind each other of this great truth on a regular basis. You are unique. There is no one quite like you in the world. You deserve to be treasured—your particular gifts and abilities and experiences have never been seen before and will never be seen again. But the world will also be better off if you remember that everyone around you is just as special, just as precious, just as deserving of love and respect as you are. You're unique, just like everybody else.

The greatest love isn't loving yourself. The greatest love also isn't loving everyone but yourself. The greatest love is living from the certainty that every person, every animal and plant has its own inherent worth and dignity, just like you. Some people would describe this as God being inside of all beings. We love God through the way we treat everyone and everything we meet. We decide how to treat others based on the understanding that how we treat them is how we are treating God.

If the God idea doesn't work for you, you can go with the idea shared by religions around the globe: treat others as you would like to be treated. Not just because life works better that way, although it certainly does. Treat others as you would like to be treated because loving yourself and everyone else is the greatest form of love, and love is the heart of everything good.

Happy Valentine's Day!

Love,  
Lynn

by **Lynn Ungar**, Minister for Lifespan Learning, Church of the Larger Fellowship



*Now, to end, here's one more  
Flaming Chalice, and another symbol  
which fits this month's theme(s).*



*May your February be full of hope.*

*In faith and love,*

*Anne*