

Exploring Our Unitarian Universalist Faith in French

“Overview of Three Publications”

Produced by
The Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Ottawa
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Challenge

It has been difficult to respond to the curiosity and interest about Unitarian Universalism expressed by Franco-Canadians within our Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Ottawa and the broader community when most of the literature describing our historical background, practices, and liberal faith is only available in the English language.

Action

In response to this challenge, the Fellowship undertook an initiative in 2007 to prepare and distribute French translations of relevant Unitarian Universalist (UU) texts that: 1) describe our roots and role in modern society; 2) provide some examples of the issues considered and reflected on in our regular Sunday services; and 3) support a new way to foster spiritual uplift and connection through small group ministries. The texts to be translated were selected by a small Translation Team composed of interested Franco-Canadian members of the Fellowship, working in consultation with our Minister at the time, the Reverend Frances Deverell. It is our hope that these texts will provide three different kinds of support for French-speaking explorers who want to learn more about the Unitarian approach to humanity, religion, spirituality, and faith.

The specific documents translated in each of the three theme areas are briefly described below:

- 1. Our Roots and the Role of a Liberal Religion in Modern Society** - After considering a number of relevant texts, the Translation Team chose excerpts from a book titled “Being Liberal in an Illiberal Age” by Jack Mendelsohn, a highly regarded retired UU Minister. This book, as described in its Forward by The Reverend Scotty McLennan: “is a primer on liberal religion, full of examples, history and vision. It’s a place to learn about a church that has always respected reason and the scientific method, a church that affirms truth as always incomplete and emerging rather than revealed and complete, a church that appreciates the role of doubt and questioning, a church that puts fellowship with others who are different ahead of conformity with those who share the same beliefs”.
- 2. Sample Sunday Sermons** - Sunday services, often with a sermon or talk by a Minister or someone with special knowledge on an important topic, are part of the Unitarian Universalist tradition. The Translation Team consequently thought that it would be useful to include several sermons in this package of translations to illustrate some of the questions and reflections that might be dealt with on a Sunday morning. The selection was made from sermons submitted by interested Canadian UU Ministers in response to a request sent to her colleagues by Reverend Deverell. The two sermons selected were titled “No Worship Without Sacrifice” and “Justification by Faith”, respectively submitted by the Reverend Anne Treadwell and the Reverend Frances Deverell. As Reverend Deverell’s sermon was her third in a trilogy, our translator Janine Laurencin, very kindly offered to also translate the

first two, titled “A Responsible Faith” and “A Growing Faith”, at no additional cost to the project. We are very pleased that these can now be included in this compendium.

3. **Support for a Small Group Ministry** - The Translation Team felt that the approach to Small Group Ministry developed and practiced within many UU congregations offered positive opportunities for other interested members of the Franco-Canadian community in Eastern Ottawa, West Quebec and beyond to explore our liberal religion’s progressive principles, values and approaches. Such a ministry was seen as providing a new way to reach and engage those seeking spiritual uplift and connections in their fast-moving lives. The Team believed that the first step in developing a small group ministry had to be the development of resource materials to support small group ministry facilitators. They consequently selected for translation the most relevant sections of a highly regarded Handbook for Small Group Ministry Facilitators developed by the First Unitarian Church of San Jose California.

Acknowledgement

The Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Ottawa is very grateful for the support and assistance it received to complete this translation project. More specifically, it would like to acknowledge and thank the following:

1. The West Trust Fund, based in Halifax Nova Scotia, which provided two grants which permitted the Fellowship to retain an experienced professional translator to work on this project. The objective of the West Trust Fund is to promote, within Canada, the seven principles which the member congregations of the Canadian Unitarian Council covenant to affirm and promote.
2. All the people and organizations that kindly contributed the texts that were translated. More specifically:
 1. The Reverend Jack Mendelsohn and Skinner House Books in Boston for permitting the translation and circulation of selected portions of “Being Liberal in an Illiberal Age”;
 2. The Reverends Anne Treadwell and Frances Deverell whose sermons are included, and all the other UU Ministers who submitted sermons for possible inclusion; and
 3. The First Unitarian Church of San Jose California, which allowed the translation and distribution of relevant sections of its Handbook for Small Group Ministry Facilitators.
3. All the members of the Fellowship who worked on this project and particularly the lay leaders Lucie Marie Castonguay-Bower and Maurice Cabana-Proulx, who provided the inspiration and oversight, including proofreading, for this initiative.
4. The Reverend Frances Deverell, who secured the permission of authors and publishers to let their work be translated, engaged her ministerial colleagues and her own time in submitting sermons for translation, and supported this initiative in many other ways.
5. Last, and especially, we want to express our sincere gratitude and appreciation to Janine Laurencin, who not only did the actual translation in a very responsive, professional and timely fashion but also went well beyond her formal contract with regard to the amount of text translated.

Without all these commitments, efforts and support this translation project would not have been possible.

Finally, the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Ottawa sincerely hopes that this effort to explore our Unitarian Universalist faith in French is not a one time initiative but rather is the beginning of a concerted strategy within our denomination to reach out and respond to the interest of our many Franco Canadian friends.