

Sharing Our Faith

2012

Sharing Our Faith is a program of the Canadian Unitarian Council (CUC). Its goal is to encourage greater associational awareness in our congregations and to foster a sense of community and interdependence among and between the member congregations.

Resources for
use by
Congregations

RESOURCES FOR SHARING OUR FAITH 2012

Trust the Dawning Future

ABOUT SHARING OUR FAITH

Sharing Our Faith is a program of the Canadian Unitarian Council (CUC). Its goal is to encourage greater associational awareness in our congregations and to foster a sense of community and interdependence among and between the member congregations.

During Sharing Our Faith services, the collection taken is in support of the Sharing Our Faith fund. This fund consists of monies collected by congregations at special Sharing Our Faith services during the year and sent to the CUC. These funds are to be allocated in the form of grants to congregations applying for projects they may otherwise not afford to undertake, but which can be seen as enhancing ministry, growth and/or outreach for that congregation and for the Unitarian and Universalist movement in Canada.

This package is for use in congregations as they plan their Sharing Our Faith Services. It is the hope that in providing a series of resources around a central theme, TRUST THE DAWNING FUTURE, that congregations will, as they use them, remember others are using the same resource package and that the connections and relationships between congregations will be strengthened. In May of 1961, the Canadian Unitarian Council was founded, and during this, our 50th Anniversary year we have much to celebrate. The theme at the 2011 Annual Conference and Meeting, Trust the Dawning Future, provided us with inspiration as we imagined and planned to strengthen our community of liberal religious congregations. By participating in the Sharing our Faith program, your congregation can contribute to our movement and the strength of our congregations in Canada.

Congregations are free to use these resources for worship elements, providing they credit the writer.

Where a Canadian Unitarian Council maple leaf chalice symbol, , is displayed after the name of a writer, it indicates that he or she is a Canadian or has served a Canadian congregation as their minister.

If you have any questions about this package or the program please contact us, info@cuc.ca. Applications for Sharing Our Faith Grant applications can be found at: <http://www.cuc.ca/funding/SharingOurFaithFunding.htm> , the 2012 application deadline is April 15.

OPENINGS/CHALICE LIGHTINGS

A chalice lit in our midst is a symbol of our liberal faith,
A faith built on the foundation of freedom, reason and tolerance
A faith sustained by acts of kindness and justice
A faith that visions a world flourishing, with equality for all her people
A faith that demands the living out of goodness
A faith that requires thoughtfulness
A faith of wholeness
This tiny flame is the symbol of the spark of all this within each of us.

~Debra Faulk 

We gather this day to celebrate and give thanks
for life's great gifts of grace:
That we build on foundations we did not lay,
that we warm ourselves at fires we did not light.
That we sit in the shade of trees we did not plant,
and drink from wells we did not dig.
In this time we make sacred in our coming together,
let us celebrate with glad and grateful hearts
all that has brought us to this day.

- Freely adapted from Deuteronomy 6:10-12, by Shawn Newton 

At this hour, in small towns and big cities, in single rooms and ornate sanctuaries, many of our sister Unitarian Universalist congregations are also lighting a flaming chalice. As we light our chalice today, let us remember that we are part of a great community of faith. May this dancing flame inspire us to fill our lives with the Unitarian Universalist ideals of love, justice and truth.

~Judith Quarles

We gather here as individual people: young and old; male and female; temporarily able and disabled; gay, lesbian, bisexual and straight people, all the colors of the human race; theist, atheist, agnostic; Christian, Buddhist, feminist, humanist.

We gather here as a community of people who are more than categories.

We gather here—each ministering to the other, meeting one another's strength, encouraging wholeness.

We give thanks for this extraordinary blessing—the gathering together of separate, unique individuals as one whole, one body, our church.

Here may our minds stretch, our hearts open, our spirits deepen.

Here may we acknowledge our brokenness and be ever stirred by love's infinite possibilities.

Come, let us worship.

~Barbara Hamilton-Holway

We come together this morning because within us there is something that knows we need more than we can find in our aloneness. We know – instinctively, in the depths of ourselves – that we need others for this journey of life even though we also guard our independence and individuality quite jealously.

And just as we come together as individuals to make this congregation, so our Unitarian Universalist congregations come together to form the Canadian Unitarian Council, because we need more than we can find in our aloneness. We, too, guard our independence and our individuality, yet in our togetherness we are so much more than we can ever be on our own.

So on this Sharing our Faith Sunday, let us celebrate all that makes us unique yet also all that makes us one, and let us dream dreams of all that we can do . . . together.

-Erik Walker Wikstrom (adapted)

We gather round this chalice light to share the history of our Unitarian tradition. We gather to grasp a sense of belonging to something larger, something beyond the walls of this building.

To sense our belonging to a Unitarian and Universalist movement,
Something much greater than merely this community.

-Ray Drennan 

OFFERTORY WORDS

One of the great gifts of our religious tradition is the autonomy of each of our congregations. Each is free to organize itself, to call (or not) a minister of its own choosing, to situate itself in quarters of its own choosing and to associate with other Canadian Unitarian congregations through membership in the Canadian Unitarian Council. As member congregations in that Council we work together to common ends, so that together we can live and foster our values. As member congregations in that Council we undertake to participate with and support one another.

Today, our congregation is marking Sharing Our Faith Sunday. Sharing our Faith is a program of the Canadian Unitarian Council. The goal of the program is to encourage greater associational awareness in our congregations and to foster a sense of community and interdependence among and between the member congregations.

Today's collection is in support of the Sharing Our Faith fund. This fund consists of monies collected by our congregations at their services during the year. Member congregations are free to apply for grants from the fund to foster and enhance ministry, growth or outreach for that congregation and for the Unitarian and Universalist movement in Canada.

Our relationship with the larger Canadian Unitarian Universalist movement is a gift. Our generous support today is a expression of our gratitude for the larger community and our hope that together we can serve the needs of our congregations, our communities, our country and our world.

PRAYERS/MEDITATIONS

Some came here looking for solace. Some came here and gave it to them.
Some came here seeking music. Some came here and gave it, joyfully.
Some came here seeking laughter. Some came here and created it.
Some came here seeking learning, growth. Some came here and provided it.
Some came here looking for a sense of security, a safe haven. Some came here and provided it.
Some came here seeking an escape from hectic lives. Some came here and enabled them to have it.
Some came here seeking the joy of community. Some came here and created that.
Some came here wanting to serve. Some came here and made it possible for them.
We thank them all.

-Mel Harkrader-Pine

RESPONSIVE READINGS

We are people of all ages who enter this space bringing our joys and our concerns.
 We come together in hope.
We greet each other warmly with our voices and our smiles.
 We come together in peace.
We light the chalice to symbolize our interdependence and our unity.
 We come together in harmony.
We share our growth and our aspirations.
 We come together in wonder.
We share our losses and our disappointments.
 We come together in sorrow.
We share our concern and our compassion.
 We come together in love.
We come to this place bringing our doubts and our faith.
 We come together as seekers.
We sing and pray and listen. We speak and read and dream. We think and ponder and reflect. We cry and laugh and center. We mourn and celebrate and meditate. We strive for justice and for mercy.
 We come together in worship

-Carol Meyer 

Whether you have come here with heart full or heart empty, with spirits high or low, rested or tired, hopeful or despairing,
 Whether we have come here out of habit, conviction, loneliness, or curiosity,

You belong here because you are here, and all that you have and all that you are is welcome here.

This morning we are, together, the heartbeat of this congregation.

~Krista Taves 

READINGS

Unitarian ethicist and theologian James Luther Adams said, “By their groups you shall know them.” So what is our group, our association, and our religion to be? Is it a drinking fountain in a private park in a gated community, where only we and our selected friends can refresh our selves at our leisure? Or is it an expansive, life affirming, ignorance busting, despair destroying, hope giving fountain of the waters of life, where justice rolls down and peace like an ever flowing stream that we have to paddle like mad to stay a float on and laugh with joy all the while? Do we take our faith to the streets, to the highways and by ways, by first taking it in to our hearts and asking the Spirit of Life to move in our hands, giving life the shape of justice? I chose the latter and say yes to this faith and our Council of congregations which have placed before us the loftiest of ideals, without counting the cost. Because what we are doing is nothing less than changing lives and saving the world.

~Patrick Price (adapted)

The Fountain

Don't say, don't say there is no water
to solace the dryness at our hearts.

I have seen
the fountain springing out of the rock wall
and you drinking there. And I too
before your eyes
found footholds and climbed
to drink the cool water.

The woman of that place, shading her eyes,
frowned as she watched-but not because
she grudged the water,

only because she was waiting
to see we drank our fill and were
refreshed.

Don't say, don't say there is no water.
That fountain is there among its scalloped
green and gray stones,

it is still there and always there
with its quiet song and strange power
to spring in us,

up and out through the rock.

~ Denise Levertov (*Poems 1960-1967*)

"The church seems to think that the problem of the church is the future of the church....In order to be worth having around, the church must risk not being around....The church is called to live in ways that jeopardize its future.... Once we begin to think our purpose is to be here for the next generation we shift over into a survival mentality that prevents us from doing what we are here for...Our calling is to live defiantly and deliberately faithful lives - and let our future be our future." - Jim Dollar

"If we can recognize that change and uncertainty are basic principles, we can greet the future...with the understanding that we do not know enough to be pessimistic." - Hazel Henderson

"It is not a disgrace not to reach for the stars, but it is a disgrace to have no stars to reach for. Not failure, but low aim, is a sin." - Benjamin Mays

CLOSING WORDS

In a world shot through with suffering, religion has very often pointed to an escape from life's misery—a way out, a promised path to a place where justice will finally be found and the heartache of life and death will be no more. This place is known to us by many different names—as Nirvana or Paradise, as the Pure Land or Heaven. Each enchanting and inviting, and each seductive in its own way. I say this because what we believe about the future—about the horizon of human history or of a divine purpose on this planet—has a great deal to do with how we live out the days of our lives. It has a great deal to do with how we understand our responsibility to the earth and to each other. And it has a great deal to do with whether we feel a debt of gratitude to those who've gone before, and a sense of responsibility to those who will follow after.

- excerpt from "To Trust the Dawning Future" by Rev. Shawn Newton 

Come into the circle of caring,
Come into the community of gentleness, of justice and love.

Come, and you shall be refreshed.
Let the healing power of this people penetrate you,

Let hope infuse you,
And peace be the law of your heart.
In this human circle, caring is a calling.
[And] All of us are called.

So come into the circle of caring.
~Rev. Dick Gilbert

We extinguish the chalice here that it might glow gently in our hearts. May it light your path as you leave this place. May it guide your way until we are together again.

-Martha Munson 

With what benediction shall I leave you?

With what benediction shall I leave you?

This: In your life, may you know the holy meaning, the mystery that breaks into it every moment. May you live at peace with your world and at peace with yourself. And may the love of truth guide you in your every day. Amen.

-Mark Mosher DeWolfe 

Have you felt the spirit grow inside you? Did it rise up filling you with hope? Did you feel stronger? Are you more committed to this religious community, more committed to freedom, peace, and justice? Has the spirit of life that we experience as love transformed you into a more caring and aware individual? Will you think at least once this week about how you can act out your faith in the inherent worth and dignity of someone? Well then you have been blessed and will be a blessing unto others. Celebrate. Amen.

-Stephan Papa