

**SHARING
OUR
FAITH**

2011

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 2011 SUPPORTING ONE ANOTHER


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. These funds are sent to the CUC to be allocated in the form of grants to congregations applying for projects they may otherwise not afford to undertake, but which enhance ministry, growth and/or outreach for that congregation and for the Unitarian and Universalist movement in Canada.

This package is for use by congregations as they plan their Sharing Our Faith services. It is the hope that as congregations use this series of resources around a central theme, **Supporting One Another**, they will remember others are using the same resource package and that the connections and relationships between congregations will be strengthened.

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 on the CUC web site at: <http://www.cuc.ca/funding/SharingOurFaithFunding.htm>.

The 2011 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 

The chalice lit amongst us is a beacon
A beacon of hope, in a world in crisis
A beacon of possibility, made manifest in community
A beacon of warmth through our interconnections
A beacon of light illuminating our shared wisdom
A beacon of connection by our being together

--Debra Faulk 

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 an 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

Spirit of Life and Love, of wonder known by many names, we are mindful of the many blessings of our lives; for the beauty that surrounds us, for this community, for people who care and for the possibilities and potential of human existence. Too often though, we act as if this life is not enough. Frightened by dangers real and imagined we neglect to appreciate all that we have, and too often we find our hearts and minds closed to the gifts and needs of others. In our sadness and despair we often lack the faith that helps us to appreciate what we do have and we find ourselves living small lives. Yet, when we find the grace and the courage to extend ourselves, to open our hearts, we are enriched. In giving, in sharing – with those we know and those we don't, we find we've perhaps, "entertained angels unawares". May we be hospitable people, so that those who are burdened by illness and trouble know that they are not alone and so that we can be blessed with thankful and generous hearts. May we be generous people so that this community of faith can continue to serve as a beacon of justice and liberal faith. For ourselves, for each other, for our world, we pray that these things may be so.

Blessed Be.

--Linda Thomson 

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 these 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 afloat and laugh with joy all the while? Do we take our faith to the streets, to the highways and byways, 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)

Who are the people of this church? Those who want to be part of a religious community where trust is in the potential which resides in individuals and in the process which works among people through honest sharing of perspectives. Those who want no more to do with a domineering, authoritarian style of religion. Those whose minds and hearts are opening to the deeper spiritual significance of the ancient symbols, stories and texts. Those who cannot be satisfied with either a simplistic literalism or a religion which simply fights against literalism. Those who feel that there are many paths into the depths of the mystery in which our lives are set, even as they seek the one path most personally significant for them. Those who resist the temptation toward exclusivity in religion. Those who are challenged by the idea that each person has within the potential to achieve the highest. Membership in this church is open to all those sensing the deeper longings of the spirit, who wish to walk in one company together—for mutual support and benefit and toward the greater glory.

--Roy Phillips

CLOSING WORDS

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