

**SHARING OUR FAITH
2009**

**“Memories, Hopes and Conversations:
A Dialogue About Our National Identity”**

**A Sunday Service presentation for the congregations
of the Canadian Unitarian Council**

SHARING OUR FAITH 2009

The Canadian Unitarian Council's annual Sharing Our Faith services are offered as whole packages to the member congregations of the CUC. Once a year, it is hoped that all our congregations will unite in presenting this service as a tangible way of showing support to each other; all the collections taken during Sharing Our Faith services go directly back to congregations to fund growth and sustainability initiatives.

This year's service is related to the theme of Identity, in keeping with the conversation about our National Identity which was recently launched by the CUC Board. The service was conceived by Rev. Debra Faulk, and is titled after a book on Appreciative Inquiry by Mark Lau Branson. It was part of a visioning weekend undertaken by the Don Heights Unitarian Congregation in Ontario, and was also a creative way of framing the conversation about identity.

The service takes place as a dialogue or reflection in three parts – i) Memories of Unitarian Universalism, of the CUC, and of the local congregation; ii) Hopes of the local congregation, and of the CUC, and; iii) the Conversation about our national identity.

The format is suggested as a dialogue between two people – a minister and lay leader, or two lay leaders, but can also be done by a single reader. The dialogue took place originally at Don Heights between Rev. Faulk and Vyda Ng, Chair of the National Identity Task Force and a past president of the CUC Board.

We have made suggestions about readings and music, and have left it up to service leaders to make final decisions about what material to use. Likewise, the dialogue is a proposal only, and your own memories and hopes can take the place of this written material.

We hope you find the service meaningful and thought-provoking as you engage in conversation that delves into the roots of who we are, and, together, map out our possibilities.

For more information on the National Identity Initiative, please look at <https://cuc-national-identity.pbwiki.com>.

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Order of Service

**MEMORIES, HOPES AND CONVERSATION: A DIALOGUE ABOUT
OUR NATIONAL IDENTITY**

Prelude

Welcome

Announcements

Chalice Lighting

Opening Words

#440 From the Fragmented World

Opening Song

**#295 Sing Out Praises for the Journey
or
#300 With Heart and Mind**

Story for All Ages

The Wise Quail (Buddhist adapted)

Joys & Concerns

Offering

Sharing Our Faith Collection

Meditation words, silence and music

Memories, Hopes & Conversations

I Memories

II Hopes

Sung Response

#168 One More Step

III Conversations

Closing Song

#354 We Laugh, We Cry

Closing Words/Extinguish Chalice

Postlude

THE SERVICE

Prelude

Welcome

According to your usual practice. Add "Identity and vision will direct the morning reflections. We will join together to explore the yearning for a Canadian UU identity."

Announcements

According to your local practice

Chalice Lighting

A beacon of memory and hope;
 A beacon of warmth and caring;
 A beacon of the loving mind and thoughtful heart;
 A beacon of community.

Opening Words

No vision and you perish;
 No ideal and you're lost;
 Your heart must ever cherish some faith at any cost.
 Some hope, some dream to cling to. Some rainbow in the sky. Some melody to sing to. Some service that is high. - *Harriet du Autermont* -

OR

#440 From the Fragmented World

Opening Song

#295 Sing Out Praises for the Journey
 or
 #300 With Heart and Mind

Story for All Ages

« The Wise Quail » (Buddhist Adapted)

Joys and Concerns

Offering – Sharing Our Faith Collection

(suggested text, as people find their cheque books and pens, etc.)

Each year, the CUC asks that UU congregations in Canada take up a special collection. We receive much from our Unitarian communities, and in turn, are privileged to be in a position to give of ourselves, our energy, and our money. Today's financial offering will be used to support the work

of our Unitarian Universalist community in Canada. Congregations across the country are contributing to the Sharing Our Faith Fund; all the offerings collected will be given back to congregations who apply and are approved for funding to “Grow Vital Religious Communities.”

Please give as generously as you are able.

Cheques may be made out to your local congregation, who will then forward a single cheque for the total amount to the CUC; please designate as “Sharing Our Faith” contribution. You will be eligible for a tax receipt.

Meditation words, silence and music

From separate lives, from different paths, we have come.

From distinct joys and private sorrows, we have come.

From unique insights and personal convictions, we have come.

We have come and we are here:

To make a common life at the crossroads of our paths.

To expand our joys and share the burdens of our sorrows,

To deepen our insights and announce our convictions.

We are here, and we have come

To weave the threads of our lives

Into the whole cloth of religious community.

~Rev. Wayne Arnason~

Memories, Hopes and Conversations

I. Memories

Leader 1:

**History is not the past.
It is a story about the past, told in the present,
and designed to be useful in constructing the future....Henry Glassie**

Rev. Peter Boullata of the First Unitarian Congregation of Toronto summed it up succinctly in saying, "Our living faith has its beginnings as an organized religious movement in the sixteenth century. Unitarianism has deep roots in the radical wing of the Protestant Reformation. Today, our movement embraces a diversity of theological and philosophical outlooks, including religious humanism, earth-centred spirituality, and naturalistic theism as well as an appreciation of our Christian and Jewish heritage.

"Our basis of union is not one of doctrine. Thus there is no requirement for members to all think alike or to believe the same things. Rather, ours is a fellowship of mutual support that encourages thoughtfulness, freedom of conscience and the transforming power of love. As a religious movement without a creed that everyone must adhere to, individuals are free to search for truth and meaning within a caring and supportive community. We care deeply about our world, too, and are involved in efforts to actualize our humanitarian values in this city, in Canadian society, and in the global sphere."

Leader 2:

Let me open a time capsule for you.

The Canadian Unitarian Council is approaching middle age. In 2011, the CUC will be 50 years old. However, the dream of a national Canadian Unitarian body began well before 1961. Proposals were first made as early as 1898, by Unitarian ministers who were serving Canadian congregations. The idea gained strength with the publication of the first edition of the Canadian Unitarian in 1940. After many discussions, Unitarians from Vancouver to Halifax met in Boston in May 1961, and approved the first set of by-laws that created the Canadian Unitarian Council. The first CUC Board was elected, with Rev. Charles Eddis serving as its first President.¹

(It was during that same May in 1961 that American Unitarians and Universalists voted to bring together the American Unitarian Association and the Universalist Church of America to form the Unitarian Universalist Association [UUA].)

¹ Source: Rev. Dr. Charles Eddis

Fast forward. In 1969, the UUA, which had been administering funds and services to Canadian congregations, faced a financial crisis and proposed cutting back CUC funding. The First Accord was negotiated, giving Canadian Unitarians representation on the UUA Board, the responsibility for raising funds in Canada, and the authority to certify ministers to perform weddings in Canada. This laid the foundation for the lay chaplaincy program, and the beginnings of the CUC's existence as an organization in its own right.

From the beginning, the CUC files had been administered by a dedicated volunteer, Barbara Arnott. The CUC "office" existed in a bedroom in her apartment. In 1983, the CUC hired its first Executive Director, Kathleen Hunter. This was instrumental in redefining the way Canadians regarded the CUC – there was an increasing sense of identity, commitment and confidence. Annual Program Contributions kept increasing, and with an Executive Director guiding the programs, the CUC grew more effective.

Fast forward. Between 1969 and 2000, several more Accords were negotiated between the CUC and the UUA. Key factors in these Accords were the financial arrangements between the two organizations. The Seventh Accord was dissolved in 1998, when the UUA stated that Canada was costing too much, and offered a sum for Canadians to go our own way.

After many, many hours of discussion, soul-searching and negotiations with the UUA, delegates at the 2001 Annual Conference and Meeting in Montreal voted to accept the final Accord between the CUC and the UUA. This would make the CUC the primary association and service provider to Canadian Unitarian and Universalist congregations effective July 1, 2002.

The CUC Board appointed an Implementation Task Force to plan for the new beginning. The following year, in Kelowna in 2002, delegates at the ACM approved this plan that would define Canada into 4 geographical regions and create new staff positions.

Fast forward. It is now 2009. The plan envisioned by the Implementation Task Force has come to fruition. Many dedicated volunteers and staff have spent countless hours in making this vision a reality, and as is the way with organizations that grow and remain vital, the CUC is at another transitional phase. Some of our key staff has moved on from us, and the CUC Board is in the position of re-thinking and re-visioning the future of the CUC and Canadian Unitarians, in a climate of economic challenges.

Charles Eddis wrote in 2002, referring to the cash flow challenge at the time, "What [the CUC Board] lacks in immediate cash, they will more than make up for with enthusiasm, ingenuity, dedication, and sheer determination. There is the will. They will find the way."

That held true then, and now, that enthusiasm, ingenuity, dedication and determination will find us a way into the future.

[Ask congregants to turn to their neighbour and for 2 minutes, share a local congregational memory]

II. Hopes

This section can be introduced with a reading or quote. A selection is below.

I believe that imagination is stronger than knowledge,
That myth is more potent than history.
I believe that dreams are more powerful than facts
That hope always triumphs over experience
That laughter is the only cure for grief
And I believe that love is stronger than death.
-- *Robert Fulghum.*

Hoping does not mean doing nothing. It is not fatalistic resignation. It means going about our assigned tasks, confident that God will provide the meaning and the conclusion. It is not compelled to work away at keeping up appearances with a bogus spirituality. It is the opposite of desperate and panicky manipulations, of scurrying and worrying. And hoping is not dreaming. It is not spinning an illusion or fantasy to protect us from our boredom or our pain. It means a confident, alert expectation that God will do what he said he will do. It is imagination put in the harness of faith. It is a willingness to let God do it in his way and in his time. It is the opposite of making plans that we demand that God put into effect, telling him both how and when to do it.
-- *Eugene Peterson.*

Don't be afraid of the space between your dreams and reality. If you can dream it, you can make it so.
-- *Belva Davis.*

The test of a first-rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposed ideas in mind at the same time and still retain the ability to function. One should, for example, be able to see that things are hopeless and yet be determined to make them otherwise.
-- *F. Scott Fitzgerald.*

Don't believe in miracles, rely on them!
-- *Unknown.*

All human wisdom is summed up in two words: wait and hope.
-- *Alexandre Dumas.*

We should not let our fears hold us back from pursuing our hopes.

-- John Fitzgerald Kennedy.

Optimism is the faith that leads to achievement. Nothing can be done without hope and confidence.

-- Helen Keller.

Hope is a state of mind, not of the world. Hope, in this deep and powerful sense, is not the same as joy that things are going well, or willingness to invest in enterprises that are obviously heading for success, but rather an ability to work for something because it is good.

-- Unknown.

Leader 1

Share 2 minutes about hopes for your congregation

Leader 2

Share hopes for the Canadian Unitarian movement

I have dreams for Canadian Unitarians. Tom Harpur, well-known religious writer of books like “The Pagan Christ” and “Living Waters,” talked about Unitarians in an article in the Toronto Star. When the Annual Conference and Meeting was held in Hamilton, Ontario in 2005, Harpur said that Unitarians “face a unique opportunity to fill the growing spiritual vacuum.” He went on to say that there “are hundreds of thousands of Canadians currently looking for a spiritual home.... They want, in the midst of the other good things you have to offer, a truly living experience of God. They want meaning now and a future hope.”

I want us to fill that spiritual vacuum, and to become home to those hundreds of thousands of Canadians who are looking.

How do we do this? By not being shy, by telling others about this good thing we have called Unitarian Universalism. By leading with examples in our communities. By performing random acts of kindnesses. By dropping the word “Unitarian” into conversations every chance we get. By talking with each other, by sharing our passions, by doing the things we do best. By building relationships and encouraging the best in each other.

The CUC, the Council which is the practical organizational arm for Canadian Unitarian communities, is one of the means by which we continue to grow vital religious communities.

[Ask congregants to turn to their neighbours and share a hope for your local congregation]

Musical Response #168 One More Step

III. Conversations and Connections

Leader 2:

The CUC Board is inviting Canadian Unitarians and Universalists into conversation about Who We Are.

Why are we doing this? Margaret Wheatley writes:

Identity is the source of organization. Every organization is an identity in motion, moving through the world, trying to make a difference. Therefore, the most important work we can do at the beginning of an organizing effort is to engage one another in exploring our purpose. We need to explore why we have come together. How does the purpose of this effort connect with the organization? Does it connect to our individual hopes and desires? Is the purpose big enough to welcome the contributions of us all?

As the CUC Board continues its work of moving forward, it is engaging in a process of consultation with congregations and communities across the country to inform its planning for the future of Canadian Unitarians. This initiative to talk about our identity is aimed at:

- Ø Providing more opportunities for congregations to engage in deeper and more meaningful conversation;
- Ø Clarifying our identity, so that we can become better at living out who we say we are;
- Ø Telling others more concisely about Canadian Unitarianism, so that those who haven't yet found their spiritual home might discover their place with us.

Leslie Kemp from Vancouver quotes from Margaret Wheatley and Myron Kellner-Rogers (1996): They “*describe identity as having many dimensions: history, values, actions, core beliefs, competencies, principles, purpose, mission. None of these alone tells us who the organization is. Some are statements about who it would like to be. Some are revealing of who it really is. But together they tell the story of a self and its sojourn in a world it has created.*”

Leslie goes on to say, “I can't help thinking that if the CUC wishes to develop a national identity, we need to share our stories, as Unitarians, and as congregations and groups who have, through our actions, attempted to live out our values, beliefs and principles. Our stories will reveal to us and others who we are - they will both uncover and create our identity. It is through stories that people throughout history have discovered and passed on their identity.”

We will be talking with children and youth, young adults and older adults, social responsibility monitoring groups, ministers, lay chaplains, congregations and

individuals, international partners, and those who are knowledgeable about the religious landscape but who are not Unitarian – in essence, we'll talk with anybody and everybody who wants to talk about Who We Are. We'll ask questions and provoke discussion. We'll present sermons and workshops. We will ask you to tell us your stories about being Unitarian and how you came to this home. And at the end of all our conversations and stories - we hope to have an articulated Canadian Unitarian identity.

Leader 1:

[Ask congregants to turn to their neighbours and share briefly what they appreciate or love about their Unitarian community.]

So let us share our passions about being Unitarian. Here, at this moment in time, we have opportunity to tell others who we are through our stories. W.E.B. Du Bois writes,

“Now is the accepted time, not tomorrow, not some more convenient season.

It is today that our best work can be done and not some future day or future year.

It is today that we fit ourselves for the greater usefulness of tomorrow.

Today is the seed time, now are the hours of work, and tomorrow comes the harvest and the play time.”

Closing Song #354 We Laugh, We Cry

Closing Words/Extinguish Chalice

#693 by V Emil Gudmundson

And now, may we have faith in life to do wise planting that the generations to come may reap even more abundantly than we.

May we be bold in bringing to fruition the golden dreams of human kinship and justice.

This we ask that the fields of promise become fields of reality.

Postlude

STORY FOR ALL AGES

“The Wise Quail”

Martin, Rafe. *The Hungry Tigress: Buddhist Legends and Jataka Tales*.
Berkeley, California: Parallax Press, ©1990.

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“Reprinted from *The Hungry Tigress* (1990) by Rafe Martin with permission of
Parallax Press, Berkeley, California

Once, the Buddha was a wise quail, the leader of a flock. One day, a hunter came into the forest. Imitating the quails' own calls, he began to trap unwary birds. The wise quail noticed that something was amiss. Calling his flock together, he announced, “My fellow quail, I am afraid that there is a hunter in our forest. Many of our brothers and sisters are missing. We must be alert. Danger is all around us. Still, if we work together we can stay free. Please listen to my plan. If you should hear a whistling call—twe whee! twe whee! twe wheel—as if a brother or sister were calling, be very watchful! If you follow that call, you may find darkness descending upon you.

“Your wings may be pinned so that you cannot fly, and the fear of death may grip your heart. If these things happen, just understand that you have been trapped by the hunter's net and do not give up! Remember, if you work together you can be free. Now, this is my plan. You must stick your heads out through webs of the net and, then, you must all flap your wings together. As a group, though you are still bound in the net, you will rise up into the air. Fly to a bush. Let the net drape on the branches of the bush so you can each drop to the ground, and fly away from under the net, this way and that, to freedom. Do you understand? Can you do this?”

“We do understand,” answered all the quail as one, “and we will do it! We will work together and be free.”

Hearing this, the wise quail was content. The very next day a group of quail was pecking on the ground when they heard a long whistling call. “Twe whee! twe whee! twe whee!” It was the cry of a quail in distress! Off they rushed. Suddenly darkness descended on them and their wings were pinned. They had indeed been trapped by the hunter's net. But, remembering the wise quail's words, they did not panic. Sticking their heads out through the webs of the net they flapped their wings together, harder and harder and slowly, slowly, with the net still draped upon them, they rose, as a group, through the air. They flew to a bush. They dropped down through the bush, leaving the net hung on the outer branches, then flew away, each in their own direction, this way and that, to freedom.

The plan had worked! They were safe! They had escaped from the jaws of death. And, oh, they were happy!

But the hunter was not happy. He could not understand how the quail had escaped him. And this happened not just once, but many times. At last, the hunter realized the truth. “Why,” he said, amazed, “those quail are cooperating! They are working together! But it can't last. They are only birds, featherbrains after all. Sooner or later they will argue. And when they do, I shall have them.” And so, he was patient.

Now, the wise quail had had the same thought. Sooner or later the birds of his flock would begin to argue, and when that happened they would be lost. So he decided to take them deeper into the forest, far from their present danger.

That very day something happened to confirm the wise quail's thought. A quail was pecking on the ground for seeds when another bird of the flock, descending rapidly, accidentally struck it with its wing-tip. “Hey! Watch it, stupid!” called the first quail, in anger.

“Stupid is it?” responded the newly-landed quail, flustered because he had been careless, “Why are you so high and mighty? You were too dumb to move out of my way! Yes, you were too dumb, you dumb cluck!”

“Dumb cluck is it?” cried the first quail, “Dumb cluck? Why, talking of dumb, it's clear that you can't even land without slapping someone in the face! If that isn't 'dumb,' I don't know what is! Who taught you to fly anyway—the naked-winged bats?”

“Bats is it?” yelled the second quail, enraged, “Bats? Why, I'll give you a bat, you feathered ninny!” And with a loud chirruping whistle he hurled himself straight at the other quail. Chasing furiously after one another, loudly hurling insults and threats back and forth, they flew, twisting and turning, between the great, silent trees of the grove. An argument had started and, as is the way of arguments, no end was in sight.

The wise quail was nearby and he heard it all. At once he knew that danger was again upon them. If they could not work together the hunter was sure to have them. So again he called his flock together and said, “My dear brother and sister quail. The hunter is here. Let us go elsewhere, deeper into the forest and there, in seclusion, discipline ourselves, practicing our skills in working together. In this way we shall become truly free from the danger.”

Many of the birds said, “Though we love our present home, we shall go with you, Wise Quail. The danger is great and we wish to find safety.”

But others said, “Why go from this pleasant spot? You yourself, Wise Quail, have taught us all we need to know in order to be free. We know what to do. We just have to stick our heads out, flap our wings together, and fly away. Any dumb cluck can do it! We're going to stay.”

So some of the birds flew off with the wise quail, while the others stayed. A few days later, while some of those who stayed were scratching around for their dinner, they heard a whistling call. “Twe whee! twe whee! twe whee!” They ran to answer the call when suddenly, darkness descended upon them. Fear gripped their hearts. They were trapped in the hunter's net! But, remembering the wise

quail's teaching, they stuck their heads through the net, and one bird said, "On the count of three we all flap. Ready? One two, three..."

"Hey!" called another bird, "Who made you boss? Who said you could give the orders?"

"I'm the hardest worker and the strongest," said the first bird. "When I flap my wings, the dust rises from the earth and whirls up in clouds. Without me you'd never get this net off the ground. So I give the orders, see?"

"No, I don't see!" shouted another bird. "What you've just described is nothing. Why, when I flap my wings, all the leaves move on the trees, the branches bend and even the trunks sway. That's how strong I am. So if anyone should be giving orders around here it's me!"

"No, me!" shouted a third bird.

"Me!" yelled a fourth.

"No! No! Listen to me!" screamed the first bird again above the rising din. "Flap Flap! Flap! I tell you. Flap your wings all together when I say 'three!'"

But no one flapped. They just argued and argued. And as they argued, the hunter came along and found them and their fate, alas, was not a happy one. But the quail who had gone off deeper into the safety of the great forest learned, under the wise quail's guidance, how to really cooperate. They practiced constantly, until they were, indeed, able to work together without anger or argument. Though the hunter tried many times to catch them he never could. And if he never caught them, why, they're still free today.

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