

SHARING OUR FAITH 2024: CALL FOR THE OFFERING

The **Sharing Our Faith** fund is a program of the Canadian Unitarian Council, supporting projects that enhance ministry, growth, and outreach for congregations and for the Unitarian Universalist movement in Canada. It is designed to encourage greater associational awareness in our congregations, the fostering of relationships, and a sense of community and connection among and between our member congregations and communities.

Each year, this fund is renewed with money collected by congregations at special dedicated services, and from a Foundation Fund administered by the First Unitarian Congregation of Toronto. These donations are sent to the CUC to be distributed as grants to congregations applying for projects they may not otherwise afford.

Since its inception in 2001, through the generosity of our congregations and Canadian UUs, the **Sharing Our Faith** program has awarded over \$200,000 in grants.

Past Initiatives include:

- Support for part-time professional ministry,
- communication, publicity and increased visibility through signage, social media, or the web,
- technology upgrades to increase accessibility,
- and Religious Education, Youth, and Music programs.

But before we take up the offering, let's pause and acknowledge that this year has been hard – costs are up, and not everyone is in a position to contribute. If this is your circumstance, we are grateful to have you with us today, and your presence here is enough. But if you are in position to contribute – congregations across the country will be grateful for your generosity.

When the plate passes, we experience a visceral connection to one another ... passing that basket, or bowl, hand to hand ... seeing people stretch to contribute whatever they can ... and feeling a sense of satisfaction – that we are supporting the very program that has so generously supported us, in the times when we were working hard to reach a new goal.

Attending on zoom, from our homes, or our workplaces, or our cars, we don't get quite that same tangible experience. We are one step removed from the immediate practice. So I invite you – if you are not here in body – to come closer and participate in the ways that you can. To reach beyond the screen and make a contribution, either by sending it to the congregation, marked 'Sharing Our Faith', or by contributing directly to the CUC. It can feel awkward, and it takes extra steps, but your effort is deeply appreciated.

So we ask this morning, whether you are attending virtually or in person, to do what you can. To give in the spirit of growth ... in the spirit of hope ... so we can live into our lessons of the past – and emerge into a thriving future, together. To help our neighbours grow. To help all of us grow.

For 22 years, this program has helped Canadian UUs to help one another – to keep the flame of Unitarian Universalism ablaze ... and this year, we need your help as much as ever before.

So ... here are the methods:

For anyone attending a Sharing Our Faith service in-person please contribute to the collection as generously as you are able, and it will be sent from the congregation to the Canadian Unitarian Council's **Sharing Our Faith** fund.

Or, for those online, watching at another time, or wanting to donate later:

Go directly to the website: cuc.ca [Donate to Sharing Our Faith!](#) *(direct link)*

Click **donate** – and choose 'sharing our faith' from the many worthy choices.

The CUC will **gladly receive your cheques, as well.** Or an e-transfer to info@cuc.ca Please be sure to **give your contact information for tax receipts** in the message box – and mark your contributions **Sharing Our Faith**.

Your generous support today, or directly by March 31st, is an expression of hope that together we can help serve the needs of our sibling congregations and communities, and the faith that our work will reach out across our country and our world.

We look forward to the Canadian Unitarian Council Annual Meeting in May, when the grant recipients will be announced and we can share in one another's growth initiatives and good fortune. What happens here today will help to fuel that celebration.

If you are interested in some ideas about how this can be a support of your congregation go to the Sharing Our Faith page at cuc.ca and make sure that you get your grant applications in by March 31st.

Thank you for your annual support of this program, and all our faith communities across Canada.