

Canadian Unitarian Council

Annual Report 2024 for 2023



Annual General Meeting

May 25, 2024

Online on Zoom

Interdependence . Love . Justice

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CUC President's Report for 2023-2024

Kiersten Moore

I have been thinking a lot about what it means to be finishing six years on the CUC Board and my one and only year as President of the Board. As the first Religious Educator on the CUC Board and as President, I have viewed this leadership work from the perspective of how we grow collectively and individually within this faith movement. How does each of us come to identify as Unitarian or Unitarian Universalist? How do we lean into our commonalities and work through our differences? I have enjoyed immensely my work with ministers, lay leaders, religious professionals, and staff across the country and have learned so much about the national character of Canadian Unitarian Universalism.



This year I am proud to have worked with a Board so dedicated to collaboration and willingness to give space at our meetings to the conversations that needed to happen. Our beginnings as a new-formed Board last summer were rocked by the death of Rev. Rodrigo Emilio Solano-Quesnel. I knew he was near his term limit last May and I was happy that we would be completing our time on the Board together. My heart still aches at his loss, as I know all who knew and loved him feel. His voice and measured perspective have been missed. Within that loss we were pleased to welcome James Garland as our second Eastern representative last November. James is on the nominating slate to continue with the Board for his own term and we are glad to have him at the table.

I am thrilled to be bringing a focused Goal and Priorities to the organization that was developed through Staff and Board conversations. We delved into what clear work we want the national organization to do in the next two years: what the staff have capacity for; where we may be able to invigorate volunteer participation; how to grow towards our vision of interdependence, love, and justice that builds belonging with radical inclusivity.

It has been a strange time for all of us across North America as the immediacy of the pandemic and lock-down recedes, but the effects and repercussions linger on, often surprising us. Various levels of burn-out are apparent amongst staff and volunteers at the congregational and national level, as well as surges of excitement and new ideas. I think it is critical to remember that we have been through a collective, worldwide, traumatic event that has touched all of us in different ways and intensities. This visual representation of a community's [phases of collective trauma response](#) feels accurate and I would say we are still in the rebuilding and reconstruction phase on the way to wiser living.

The Living into the Future, Emergent Sustainability (LIFES) crew that we put together this winter is an effort to look at rebuilding and reconstruction with fresh eyes. It grew out of a need for a strategic plan for the CUC and a desire to look at how to have a sustainable national organization that connects Unitarian Universalist congregations and individuals with each other, shared services, and resources.

The pandemic both isolated us and connected us virtually. Many opportunities have grown out of our virtual connections, and this continues to benefit us as we wrestle with the climate crisis and rising costs-

environmental and financial-of travel. But it also highlights how rich and vital our in-person connections are; and how easy it is to lose sight of our shared purpose when we are reduced to typed words and 2-dimensional boxes that don't allow for side conversations and amplifies disagreement and unkindness.

As a BC Representative for six years, I have noticed a decline in engagement with the CUC on some levels. A loss of understanding in what it means to be a part of the CUC and a tendency to see the national leadership as far away and separate from congregations. The fact of the matter is that "the CUC" is not a monolith, it consists of all the member congregations as a whole body, CUC staff, CUC Board made up of representatives from congregations, and collaboration with ministerial leadership through UU Ministers of Canada (UUMOC). So, when one asks "what is the CUC?" the short answer is "the national organization of Unitarian and Unitarian Universalist congregations in Canada." And it is more than the sum of its parts.

There continue to be very engaged individuals across the country, and I encourage you, who are taking the time to read this, to stay engaged. The national organization is as strong as the diversity of people who show up to participate and our willingness to bend, listen, and lean into love. If you have skills with finance or HR management, please consider volunteering some time to support our Board and Staff as treasurer or on our newly envisioned HR or Fundraising Teams. Reach out to Vyda Ng, Executive Director, or president-board@cuc.ca and help us thrive together.

For all who would like to know when opportunities arise, be sure you are [signed up](#) for the News, and one of the google groups if that's your thing. Sign up for congregational conversations and regional or online events when you can. Stay in conversation with each other and keep in mind that with the written word our language shapes our interactions—remember to be kind, both in the words you give and with feedback you receive, it matters. We will mess up, it is inevitable, and like our youth say: mess up, own up, apologize, and forgive. We can be a strong voice for love and justice in Canada, let us take action to be so—with each other and as a collective voice in our communities.

In peace,

Kiersten E. Moore
Board President

Contact the Board President: president-board@cuc.ca

REMEMBER TO BE KIND, BOTH IN THE WORDS YOU GIVE AND
WITH FEEDBACK YOU RECEIVE, IT MATTERS... WE CAN BE A
STRONG VOICE FOR LOVE AND JUSTICE IN CANADA, LET US
TAKE ACTION TO BE SO.

~ Kiersten Moore ~

CUC Treasurer’s Report

Yvette Salinas and Margaret Wanlin

Since 2023’s Annual General Meeting, Yvette Salinas and Margaret Wanlin have served as Co-Treasurers.

The 2022 and 2023 post-Covid period was hit with high inflation. These forces had an impact on CUC staffing costs, the cost of in-person events such as the Symposium, and travel costs.

The CUC worked to maintain engagement and service levels to congregations and groups as we more fully moved forward into the post-Covid world.



Yvette Salinas

Finance and Investment Committee



An important part of the CUC’s financial management system is the Finance & Investment Committee. Members until May 2023 were Joanne Green, Treasurer, Chuck Shields, President and Vyda Ng, ED. For the remainder of 2023 members were Yvette Salinas and Margaret Wanlin, Co-Treasurers, Kiersten Moore, President, Margaret Kohr, Vice President, Vyda Ng, ED, and Joanne Green as a non-Board representative. Special thanks to Joanne for sharing the knowledge she gained in her years as the Treasurer and for her significant contribution to “getting it done and getting it done right.” We extend our thanks to this group for its commitment to due diligence on behalf of the CUC.

Margaret Wanlin

The Co-Treasurers, along with the Finance & Investment Committee, reviews monthly statements, investment reports, and budget reports. After the review of the monthly financial statements and bank reconciliations, the Co-Treasurers submit a monthly review to the Executive Director and accountant, as well as a monthly report to the Board. The monthly reports give the auditor evidence that the Co-Treasurers and the Board are carrying out their fiduciary duties.

For efficiency, the CUC grants signing authority to selected Board members and staff, with all transactions requiring two signatures for approval. The Co-Treasurers and other Board members spend considerable time reviewing transactions and backup material prior to providing approvals.

2023 Revenue Sources

The CUC has four primary sources of income, listed in order of their size: transfers from CUC investments (from the earnings after inflation of the Legacy Fund, and the Unrestricted General Fund), Annual Program Contributions, Symposium and other Program Registration Revenue, Friends of the CUC contributions, now known as Growing into the Future. There is also a small amount of Administrative Fees and Miscellaneous Revenue collected.

Transfers from the Investment Fund

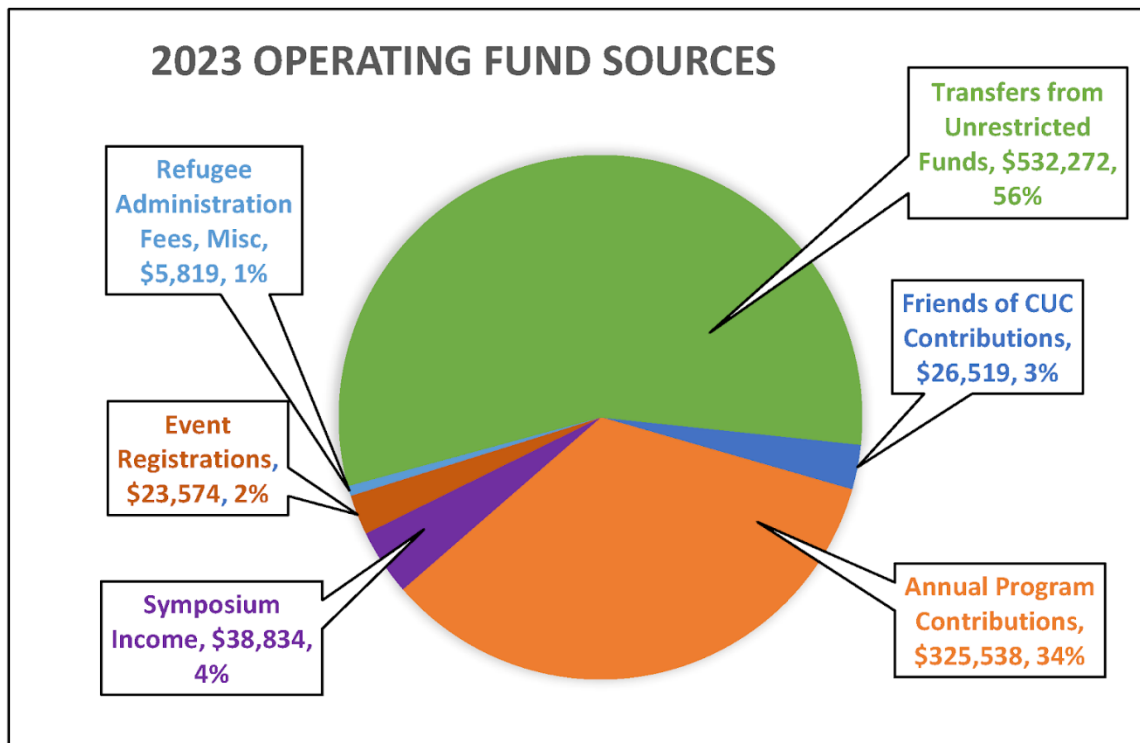
In 2023, for the first time, Transfers from CUC Investment Fund, at 56% of operating sources, exceeded Annual Program Contributions at 34%. (In 2022 Annual Program contributions were 53% and Transfers were 37%.)

Monthly transfers are made from the investments to the operating account to ensure there is enough cash on hand to meet obligations.

Annual Program Contributions (APC)

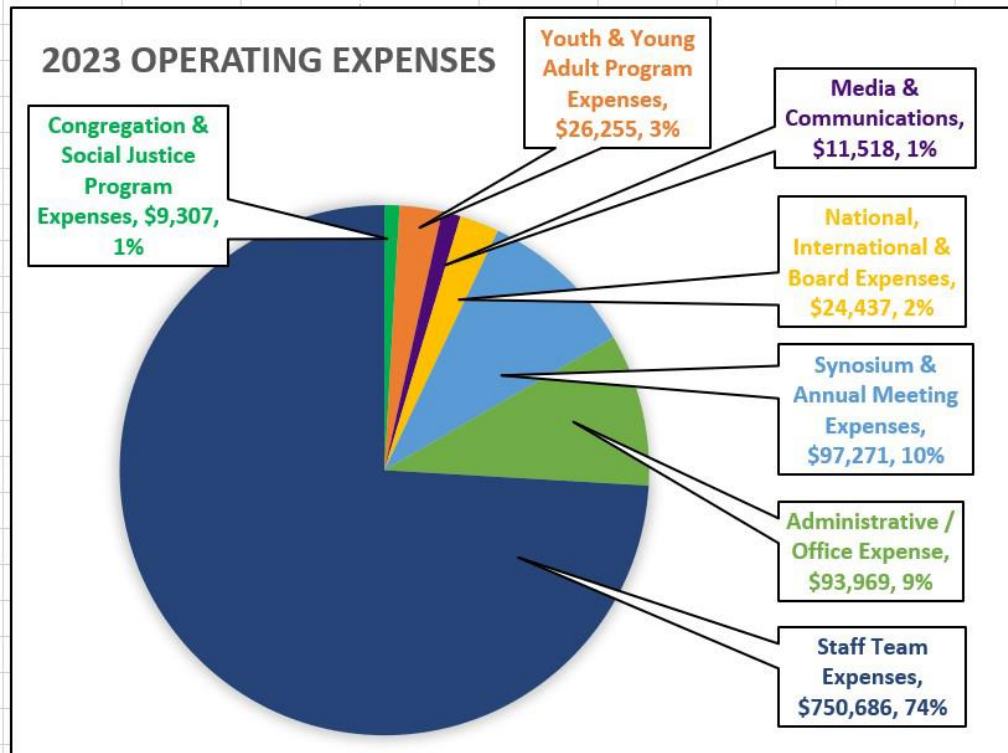
Our bylaws require that each member congregation pay APCs to the CUC as part of their covenant with the other member congregations. We know that the Covid and post-Covid periods, with accompanying inflation, have been challenging times for both congregations and the CUC. At the time of writing most congregations have paid their full 2023 APCs. Thank you to all the congregations for their financial commitment to the CUC. In 2023, APCs provided 34% of the CUC's revenue. Some 2023 APCs were received in 2024 so this amount, approximately \$30,000, will be included in 2024 revenue.

The national CUC Symposium held in Ottawa in May, 2023 brought in registration fees of \$38,834 or 4% of the annual revenue. Registration for events such as CanUUdle, ChorUUs and 8th Principle events brought in 2% of the total revenue, while Administration fees for Refugees and others accounted for 1% of total revenue.



As always, staffing expenses are the largest budget line. Congregational Life, Youth and Young Adult (YaYA) Ministry and Social Justice staff provide programs and services to congregations and individuals, while Administrative staff manage the CUC's financial and administrative processes.

Symposium and Annual Meeting expenses totalled \$97,271. As a result of the loss on this event (\$58,437), the Board and staff are rethinking how to host accessible and cost effective in-person gatherings. The cost structures for travel, venues, accommodations, and meals have changed since Covid.



Restricted Fund Expenses for Programs

There are several national programs which are accounted for in Restricted Fund categories, e.g. Sharing our Faith, Chaplaincy and Refugee Resettlement. Both the revenues and expenses for programs such as the Refugee Settlement Program are separated from regular operating expenses. Refer to Page 13 of the audited statements for details.

Annual Charities Return

The 2022 Annual Charities Return was completed and filed in June 2023. The report was accepted and a letter was received regarding changes for the 2023 report to better meet requirements.

Audited Financial Statements

The 2023 Audited Financial Statements were completed by Grant Thornton and reviewed by the Accountant, Executive Director and the CUC Finance & Investment Committee. The audited financial

statements have been submitted to the full board and approved. The review and approval was done prior to the annual meeting.

The CUC uses the restricted fund method of accounting which requires that grants, donations, and other income must be recorded in the years received. The audited statements show the income received and expenses paid to entities outside the CUC, as well as unrealized gains and losses on the restricted funds. In contrast, the operating budgets presented at AGMs do not show investment income, investment management fees, or unrealized gains (losses).

Starting in 2021, the restricted fund revenue and expenses were separated from operating revenue and expenses in our program budgets. The change makes comparing the audited statements to the annual budget simpler to understand. The largest restricted fund is the Avalon Fund. Work is beginning to look into ways to make it more usable to support the work of the CUC. The second largest restricted fund is the Refugee Fund which is kept in a separate bank account. It includes amounts for refugees who have not yet arrived in Canada. On arrival they receive monthly payments for their first year.

CUC Investment Fund

The CUC Investment Account is managed by Scotia McLeod. In 2023 CUC investments experienced a welcome rebound of 18% after its significant loss of 17% in 2022. The value at the end of 2023 was \$7,170,801 (Audit).

Scotia McLeod advised the 2023 net rate of return was +18.12% and the 10-year average rose to 7.91%. The net rate of return is the increase or decrease in value after accounting for all transfers, dividends and interest, gains or losses from the sale or purchase of equities, management fees, and all deposits.

The CUC’s net rate of return was higher compared with the S&P/TSX comparison which was 11.75%. The CUC’s return differs from these industry comparisons due to our choice to avoid investments in the carbon economy, weapons, alcohol, and other commodities. Renewable energy equities have yet to rebound from their fall in 2022. Figures presented in this report include all cash and cash equivalents (money market funds, etc.). Investment management fees (1%) are charged quarterly.

The Investment Account (audited) breaks down as follows:

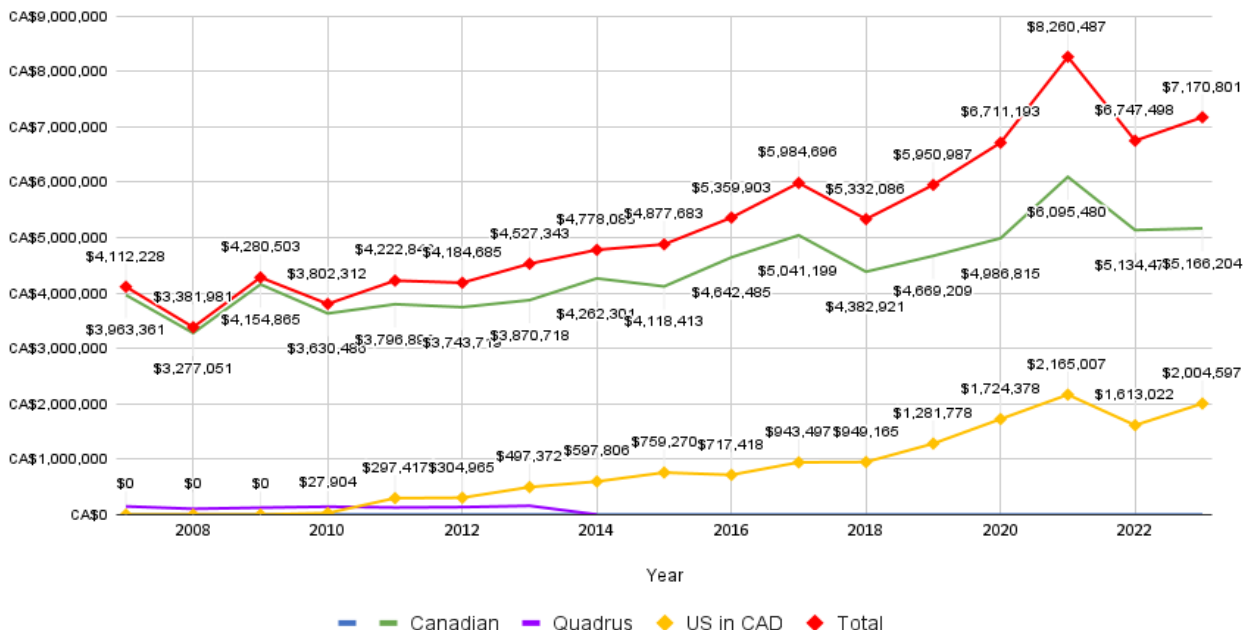
CUC Legacy Fund	\$2,697,508
Internally Restricted Funds (Lay Chaplain, Justice & Equity Fund, Other)	\$24,968
Externally Restricted Funds (Dissolved Societies, Refugee, Other)	\$164,401
Congregational Investment Funds	\$945,525
Endowment Funds (2) plus Avalon Fund	\$780,572
Unrestricted Funds	\$2,345,199
(Total investments - \$7,170,801 - all restricted fund - \$4,825,602	

The Portfolio (Wealth) Manager makes decisions about the portfolio, within criteria established by the Board, to protect our investment fund as well as possible during good and bad economic times. The CUC Investment Policy requires the Portfolio Manager to keep no more than 75% in equities. Formal and informal reviews of the Investment Fund were done in 2023 within Alan Harman, Portfolio Manager, to keep the Board updated.

The overall objective for our Investment Fund is balanced growth, with some opportunity for income and a primary focus on long-term capital appreciation. As is usual in turbulent times, the Portfolio Manager indicates that for long-term investments, it is best to “stay the course” rather than responding immediately to the ups and downs of the market. US investments continue to be mainly technology equities although there are some shares in Starbucks and Visa Inc.

The following graph shows the year-end values from year-to-year for the past 15 years:

Year End Values Invested Funds - CUC Investment Fund



2023 Budget vs Actual Income & Expenses

This short summary shows areas of significant difference from the 2023 revised budget adopted at the 2023 Annual Meeting:

REVENUE	
Annual Program Contributions	\$(44,462) lower (Note 1)
Friends of the CUC contributions	\$(8,481) lower (Note 2)
Event Registrations	\$8,574 higher (Note 3)
National Conference / AGM	\$(33,666) lower (Note 4)
Total Revenue before Transfers	\$(82,383) lower
Total Transfers from Investment	\$50,957 higher (Note 5)
EXPENSES	
Congregational Life and Justice & Equity	\$10,840 under
Youth and Young Adult Ministry	(\$5,165) over

National Conference / AGM	(\$25,771) over (Note 4)
Administration and Office	(\$6,639) over
Total staffing	\$54,081 under (Note 6)
Total operating expenses	\$25,294 under

Note 1: APC payments received in January to March 2024 (\$30,000) for the year 2023 are not included. The audited statements do not include the amounts deposited after Dec. 31, 2023.

Note 2: Friends of the CUC contributions are down. Friends of the CUC has been renamed to Growing into the Future and a campaign for increased contributions is forthcoming.

Note 3: Event registrations exceeded budget due to activities such as Widening the Circle, CanUUdle, Chorus and other 8th Principle programming.

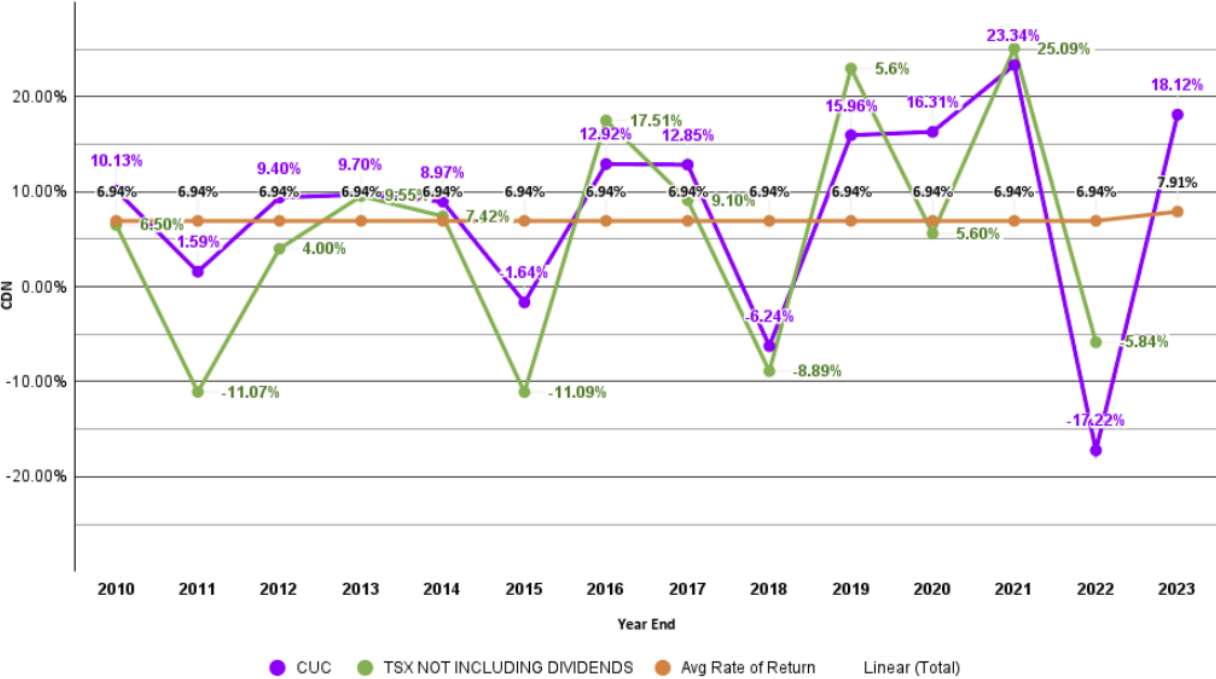
Note 4: Registration revenue for the National Symposium/ACM was 54% of the planned revenue, while expenses were 36% above plan for a deficit of \$58,437. As a result, there will be some reconsideration of how to hold future in-person events.

Note 5: Calculated transfer of \$29,230 was taken. Additional transfers that were budgeted at \$372,085 were \$503,042, a difference of \$130,957. A special transfer of \$80,000 for 8th Principle work was planned but not expended, although some 8th Principle work went on in other ways. In total, transfers exceeded the budget by \$50,957.

Note 6: Some positions were vacant for a few months causing this category to be under budget.

Contact the CUC treasurer: treasurer@cuc.ca

Historical Annual Rate of Return - CUC Investment Fund



Executive Director’s Report

Vyda Ng

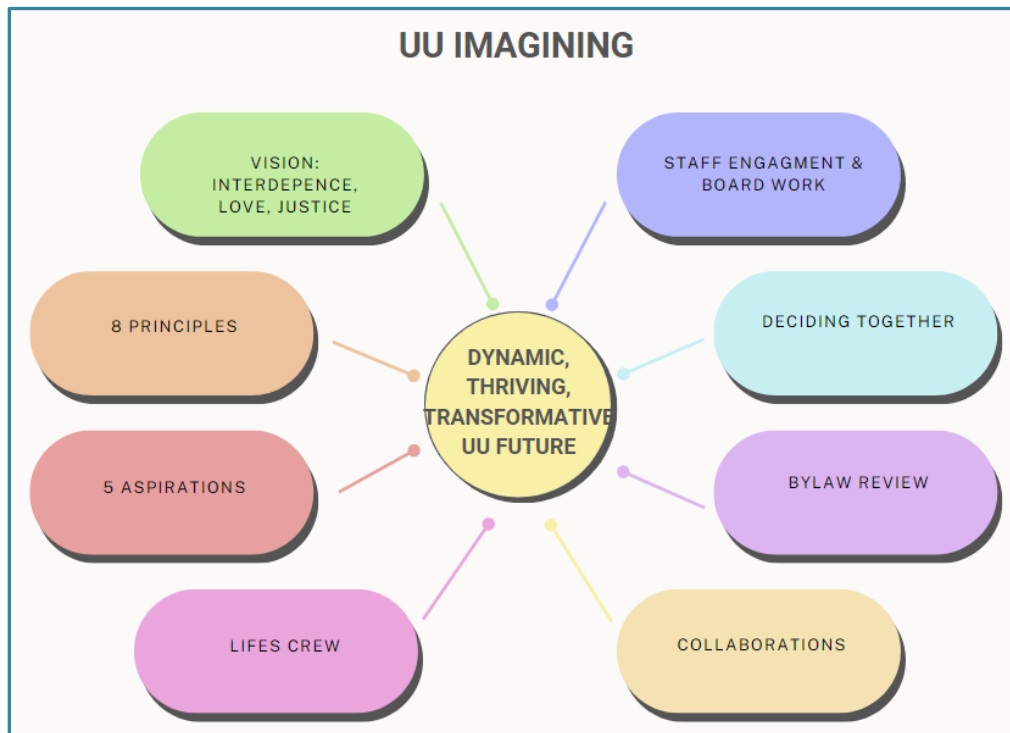
The work that the CUC staff does is always in service to our Vision, the 8 Principles, and approved Goals and Strategic Priorities. In 2023, although the proposed Goals and Strategic Priorities were [postponed indefinitely](#), we continued to be guided by the principles of inclusivity, strengthening connections, and nurturing resilience and leadership.



Long-range imagining and strategic planning

While staff plans revolve around annual goals and priorities, the CUC has been without a roadmap into the future. An initiative that was launched in late 2019 was thwarted by the pandemic, and, post-Covid, the need for a way to the future is more needed than ever. In 2023, the CUC Board approved an initial draft plan for a strategic-planning project, and the call went out to recruit a team. This team would coordinate the work of imagining a thriving and transformative future in creative, fresh and innovative ways – of Living into the Future: Emergent Sustainability (LIFES). The LIFES Crew was assembled in the fall of 2023 and is in the forming and brainstorming phase of their work.

Along with the work of the LIFES Crew, other work to address our systems and dismantle barriers to full inclusion is ongoing. To effect change, one of the most fundamental places to start is to look within – into our own processes and practices and examine what might need to



evolve to take us where we want to go.

The Decision-Making Exploration Team, comprised of young adults, has been reviewing and testing different decision making mechanisms over the past year and a half and has shared [a report](#) with some recommendations. The Bylaw Review Committee is looking at the processes that govern our meetings, membership and organization, and reflecting on alternate pathways to belonging.

This work is long-term. Our systems have developed over time to meet the needs of the day and will take time to adjust. As we orient ourselves towards the future, new needs are emerging. Are we able to be the change we need in the world?

Take the time to dream. We can't create a better world if we don't first envision it.

- To imagine a different future, challenge long-held assumptions.
- Focus on those with greatest need.
- Take evolutionary steps to achieve revolutionary goals.
- If it winds up that what needs to change is us, are we willing to make that change?

Gatherings and Events

National Conference: In May 2023, we held the first in-person national gathering since 2018. The National Symposium in Ottawa was a chance for us to be physically together again, and it was good! Co-hosted by the First Unitarian Congregation of Ottawa and the UU Fellowship of Ottawa, CUC staff dove into making the event happen. Rev. Julie Stoneberg presented a powerful and thoughtful Confluence Lecture [Open Minds, Closed Doors](#), asking if we are the people who will risk our comfort to create a world of love and justice.

We learnt some valuable lessons about post-Covid in-person gatherings. Costs were up substantially, while attendance was down significantly. The way we used to do conferences isn't working anymore. We are collectively faced with the question of how we gather and create meaningful community in changing times, while remaining honest about fiscal realities.

We also know that youth and young adults need their communities and value their in-person time together, as is evidenced by the success of the annual youth and young adult cons, CanUUdle and Chorus. We have lessons to learn from younger perspectives.

In-person events:

- National Symposium
- Annual General Meeting
- CanUUdle
- Chorus
- Our Whole Lives facilitator training
- Unicamp Young Adult retreat
- National Service

Online events: we continued to organize and facilitate online learning and connecting opportunities, though in far lesser number than during the pandemic years. For the most part, these engaged the people who wanted to

EVENT CATEGORY / TYPE	NUMBER
Connect and Deepen – small group ministry	6
Rising Together- welcoming space for People of Colour	8
Gathered Here – monthly chat for young adults	9
Youth Advisor training series	6
National Worship services	3
Young adult age range conversations	1
Decision-making Exploration	4
Congregational Life	1
Lay Chaplains	6
Young adults	8
Justice & Equity	4
AGM-related	2
TOTAL	58

Staff Team: Roles and Transitions

Staff transitions are a regular occurrence, and because our team is so small, every transition has a major impact. Job descriptions, interviewing, hiring, orientation and onboarding are mainly handled by the Executive Director, with some administrative and interviewing support. Each staff who departs, and each new staff who joins our team equals approximately 20 – 30 hours of human resource and onboarding time, which happens on top of the business-as-usual matters. When a position is vacant for a time, the remaining responsibilities are covered by other staff.

In 2023, we had these staff transitions:

- Joan Carolyn (Congregational Life Lead for the BC & Western Regions) left in March, and Rev. Anne Barker joined us in May.
- Caitlyn Seale (Administrative Assistant) left in March. This position was not filled until December when Shirley Marquez joined us.
- Samia Teclé (Refugee Support) left in early 2023, and Mary Hailu joined us shortly after.
- Vidya Sudama (Accountant) transitioned out by November, and overlapped with Jane Meng, who joined us in September.
- Shelley Motz (Communications Manager) left in November, and Deoluwa Atayero joined us in April 2024.

The remaining staff position, the Dismantling Barriers position, will be filled over the summer of 2024.

TEAM	WHO	HOURS/WEEK
Congregational Life	Lead for Central & Eastern Regions: Rev. Linda Thomson	FT: 37.93
	Lead for BC & Western Regions: Joan Carolyn (end March/23)	FT: 37.92
	Lead for BC & Western Regions: Rev. Anne Barker (start May/23)	FT: 37.92

TEAM	WHO	HOURS/WEEK
Youth & Young Adult Ministry	YaYA Program & Events Coordinator: Casey Stainsby YaYA Ministry Specialist: Rev. Danie Webber	PT: 20.0 PT: 30.0
Social Justice	Lead: Erin Horvath Truth, Healing & Reconciliation, and Special Events Coordinator: Amber Bellemare	PT: 30.0 PT: 30.0
Communications	Communications Manager: Shelley Motz (end Nov/23) Web Weaver: Brigitte Twomey eNews: Kenzie Love Communications Manager: Deoluwa Atayero (start Apr/24)	FT: 37.92 PT: 20.0 Contract: 10.0 FT: 37.92
Refugee Support	Samia Tecele (end Jun/23) Mary Hailu (start Jul/23)	Contract 9.0 Contract 9.0
Office Administration & Financial	Organizational Administrator: Ahna DiFelice Administrative Assistant: Caitlyn Seale (end Mar/23) Administrative Assistant: Shirley Marques (start Dec/23) Accountant: Vidya Sudama (end Nov/23) Accountant: Jane Meng (start Sep/23)	FT: 37.92 PT: 20.0 PT: 20.0 Contract: 4.0 Contract: 4.0
Executive Director	Vyda Ng	FT: 41.25
Contracts As needed	CanUdle Coordinator Chorus (YA con) Coordinator Conference Convenor Rising Together YaYA facilitators YA Pastoral Care Team	

Contact Vyda: executivedirector@cuc.ca

Congregational Life

Rev. Linda Thomson – Congregational Life Lead, Central and Eastern Regions

Rev. Anne Barker – Congregational Life Lead, BC and Western Regions

The Congregational Life Leads have a variety of roles, in support of Congregational and community vitality. We work with leaders, acting as a sounding board and resources, as they manage their priorities. Coaching, training and consultation are a key part of the work, as is helping congregations make connections for support and collaboration. In 2023 Joan Carolyn retired from the role of Congregational Life Lead for the Western and BC regions. In May Rev. Anne Barker began working as part of the team, in the role vacated by Joan.



Linda Thomson

Congregational Interactions

As a team, our work plan is focused around *intentional, regular contacts with congregations - with a goal of providing support, resources, collaboration, and connections for, and between, congregations.* We focus on shorter contacts and/or outreach to every congregation monthly, and more detailed, deeper, connections within individual congregations quarterly. Monthly contacts include: update letters from congregational life; check-ins with a leader (*board member, minister or religious educator, lay chaplain, or someone with a question*); supporting events (*ordinations, installations, national services, conferences, etc.*); providing programming that is open to multiple congregations; sharing available resources; regular eNews articles; and simpler email or phone exchanges. Deeper connections include: congregational visits (*in person or on-line*); Zoom conversations; programming for a single congregation or team; ministerial transition support; concentrated help for a specific topic or urgent situation; resource sharing that includes research or development; and discernment support.



Anne Barker 1

If you have not been receiving our communications, please send a message to congregationallife@cuc.ca and we'll ensure that your group's contact information is current. We try to keep roles and contacts updated - but changes happen frequently, and we don't want to lose track of one another!

SEP

The most tender parts of our work take place around the challenges, emergencies, and heartbreaks of congregational life: supporting our Olinda congregation around the accidental death of their minister Reverend Rodrigo Emilio Solano-Quesnel last summer; working with congregations who are

concerned about their ability to continue; journeying with you as you experience grief, loss, disappointment, injury, misconduct, and other heartaches; and simply sharing in the vulnerability of these changing times.

2023 Highlights: working with the UUs of the Salish Sea in British Columbia as they work to form a new congregation; helping congregations creatively navigate the changing dynamics and demographics of congregational life; and building deeper relationships. We are excited by your willingness to share both congregational vulnerabilities and the creative options that are emerging - and this is positively impacting congregations across the country!

Regional & National Events and Programs

Some of the programming we've coordinated and facilitated this year, has included: an online opportunity to hear from our smaller congregations as they shared with us the issues they are facing; the workshop "Conflict and Covenant" at the May Symposium; the November full-day training "Working Well Together"; and the monthly on-line Small Group Ministry, "Connect and Deepen". Additionally, we coordinated and participated in the Fall National Worship, "Reemerging, Reimagining and Renewal".

Partnerships and Collaborations

As part of a larger staff team, we partner and collaborate with others. We also meet regularly with volunteers and staff from several other UU-related groups: CUURE (the Canadian Chapter of the Liberal Religious Educators), and staff from the UUA's Transition, Ministerial Formation, Congregational Life, and Church Staff Finances departments. Additionally, we participate in events and meetings sponsored by the UU Ministers Association (UUMA) and its Canadian Chapter, UU Ministers of Canada (UUMoC).

Congregational Conversations

We noticed, early on, that we were having similar conversations across the country. While there are key differences regarding congregational size, access to professional religious leadership, building ownership vs. rental, and generational diversity - all congregations are experiencing shifts in cultural patterns around topics like volunteer renewal, pledging patterns, children's participation, aging memberships, engagement in the local community, in a time of broad decline in religion - *but not spirituality!*

Our November survey of leaders identified the priority topics congregations are facing - and would like support around. From there, we launched the **Congregational Conversations** series - and from what we hear, you're loving it! We're excited to support the vibrant increase in *collaboration between congregations! There is so much creativity and wisdom among you!*

This series is ongoing. Find current details here: [Congregational Conversations](#)

Expressions of Unitarian Universalism in Canada:

In addition to working with congregations and formal UU structures we, along with the larger staff team, have been expanding our awareness, connections with, and appreciation for the many and varied ways Unitarian Universalism is manifesting in Canada. We've been using the term "Expressions of UUism" to encompass the organizations, groups, projects, programs, and businesses/nonprofits that are guided by our UU values and principles, but exist separate from - or are more loosely affiliated with - congregations. An emerging question is "*How do we - the CUC organization/staff and our member congregations - recognize and build deeper, interdependent relationships with these varied UU Expressions, in a collaborative, national way?*"

Curiosity, creativity, collaboration, and calm (*that one's an aspiration!*) have been key in 2023.

Thank you for the opportunity to work with Canadian and other UU leaders in support of vital UU communities,

Respectfully submitted,
Revs. Anne Barker and Linda Thomson

Contact us: congregationalife@cuc.ca



Youth and Young Adult Ministry Development

Casey Stainsby, Youth and Young Adults Events Manager

Rev. Danie Webber, Youth and Young Adult Ministry Specialist

Staff members: Rev. Danie Webber (they/them) and Casey Stainsby (she/her)

Youth and young adult (YaYA) ministry is supported at the national level by a team of two part-time staff, Casey Stainsby (who manages events and programs both in-person and online) and Rev. Danie Webber (who supports communities in their local YaYA ministries, as well as developing resources to support the training and growth of these ministries). Rev. Danie also holds the *Our Whole Lives* portfolio.



Casey Stainsby

Youth ministries across the country are still rebuilding in a post-lockdown world. Youth groups are becoming more active, sending their teens to national events like CanUUdle, and nurturing emerging leaders. We are finding hope in the number of congregations that have robust cohorts of 11-13 year olds and are setting the stage for them to grow together into strong youth groups.



Danie Webber

The young adult community is finding a kind of stability and engaging in conversations about how to strengthen our community. While this enthusiasm is exciting, the reality is that young adults have been hit hard by the economic crisis. This means that young people are finding it even more difficult to engage with the volunteerism model that our communities and national body are accustomed to. One example of this is the Decision-Making Exploration Team, which had the admirable goal of being led by an all young-adult team. Unfortunately, nearly all the members of the team had to step back from the significant workload due to

other demands on their time. This reality calls us to reconsider how we might better support our more marginalized community members even as we look to them for leadership.

Key Definitions

Youth: 14-19 year olds - usually participating in congregational youth groups and/or regional and national youth cons (weekend long events).

Young adults (YAs): 18-35 year olds - some based in a congregation and others only connected through regional and national events, online gatherings and social media.

Emerging adults (EAs): 18-24 year olds - a particularly under-served group within the YA umbrella.

Youth advisors: Adults 25 and over who support youth ministry in congregations, help plan and lead programs, and accompany youth to youth cons.

Highlights of the Year

Youth Events

CanUUdle, the national youth conference, took place in Ottawa over the May long weekend, alongside the National Symposium and Chorus. 29 youth and 7 adult advisors (representing 14 congregations) from across the country attended the con hosted by the First Unitarian Congregation of Ottawa. The theme *Bee UUrsel* encouraged participants to celebrate both their wonderful uniqueness as well as the importance of pollinators! Big thanks to CanUUdle Coordinator Carter Mahoney who completed his third year in this role, as well as to the entire volunteer team of both youth and adults!

We are proud that CanUUdle provides inspiration for youth groups as they continue to rebuild across the country. The Vancouver Unitarians youth group hosted another fall con in November, with some support from CUC staff.

The **MyceliUUm Youth Network of Canada** is a forum for youth to connect with each other in between cons. There are now over 40 youth and adult allies on our Discord server. The server provides a safe communication channel for youth to talk to each other, for our event staff to do their planning and for CUC staff to get news directly to youth. There is also the opportunity with Discord for advisors and parents/guardians to connect with each other and with CUC staff, though so far this has not been used.

The Fairy Ring is the name of the small committee of youth and adults who host MyceliUUm gatherings and other events. The Fairy Ring has been relatively dormant this year, as youth in leadership have been focusing their energies on planning in-person conferences.

The emerging adults of colour who form the small but dedicated core of **Rising Together** continued to meet regularly in the first part of 2023. Camellia Jahanshahi, who facilitates the program, decided to try a different approach for the 2023-24 church year. Rising Together events are now offered seasonally (instead of monthly), and are open to Black, Indigenous and People of Colour (BIPOC) UUs of all ages while maintaining a format that is inspired by YaYA community spaces. So far we have seen that there is significant interest in this type of event. We remain curious about how to best reach and serve BIPOC youth in our communities.

Young Adult Events

26 young adults attended the **National Symposium** in Ottawa, with two more participating virtually. While young adults were full participants in the Symposium, they also had several opportunities to get together with other YAs for **Chorus** programming, including an Opening Circle, Social Time, Bridging events, Closing Circle, and open chat space on the YA Discord Server. Twelve congregations were represented by young adult participants, while ten attendees claimed “other” or “none” when asked about congregational affiliation.

The **Unicamp YA Retreat** officially “bounced back” in 2023. With a total of 20 attendees, nine congregations were represented, and seven participants were unaffiliated. The retreat emphasized a spirit of shared leadership. Highlights included discussions on mental health and peer support, carceral “justice” abolitionism, playing board games, hanging out with the chickens and of course, the coffee house, campfire, dance, and lake swimming!

Gathered Here, our monthly YA online check in, continues to be an important mainstay in our YA programming. This was the second year of Gathered Here being hosted by community members, and we want to thank Brenagh Rapoport, Ilara Stefaniuk-Gaudet, and Maya Ferguson Klinowski for their caring leadership. Gathered Here welcomed in 28 individual YAs this year, with an average attendance of eight and an overall attendance of 69.

Gathered Here also provides an important point of connection with the ministers of the **YA Pastoral Care Team**, who co-host with either Brenagh, Ilara or Maya on their month that they are on-call. Heartfelt gratitude to Revs. Lynn Harrison, Diane Rollert, Arran Morton and Christopher Wulff for serving our young adults in this way in 2023. Requests for support from the team were low this year, with only three YAs reaching out. We will be moving forward in 2024 with a team of three instead of four ministers. CUC staff also provided support to the UUA's National Emerging Adult Task Force in their establishment of a similar pastoral care service.

We are grateful to Revs. Lara Campbell and Aaron Payson from the UU Trauma Response Ministry who worked with Rev. Diane Rollert (CUC YA Pastoral Care Team) to hold a **grief ritual entitled "A Love Holding Us"** in August, for young adults and others who were impacted by Rev. Rod Solano-Quesnel's sudden death, on top of the many griefs in the world and our own lives.

YAs & Beyond Community Conversations:

In the fall of 2023, we launched a community conversation series entitled "Young Adults & Beyond." The current age range that the CUC uses for its YA programs of 18-35 is wonderful for many reasons, including the opportunity for those who are less likely to find age-group peers in congregations to be in spiritual community together and for the mentorship that can occur naturally within this somewhat wide range. However, we are also aware that emerging adults (ages 18-24) are less likely to attend our events, and this tells us that they have specific needs that aren't being well addressed in the current model. At the same time, there is often significant grief and loss that comes with bridging out at the age of 35, in the absence of similar opportunities for folks above this age. These are complex problems without simple solutions, so we are looking forward to continuing to discuss and experiment with our community members in hopes of finding a model that can best serve younger UUs with the resources we have.

Supporting Congregations

Thanks to the six congregations that reached out this year for **consultations with Rev. Danie about their youth and/or young adult ministries**. One of the resources that Rev. Danie has been referring to regularly articulates "that both prioritizing and having a strategy for young adult engagement are strongly related to higher percentages of young adults within congregations, regardless of the size and location of the congregation." Similar results can be assumed of youth programming. If your community is looking at supporting youth and young adults, and would like support in prioritizing and developing a strategy, please be in touch!

A reimagining of the UUA's **Basic Youth Advisor Training** happened this year, and a pilot of this training ran from October 2023 - February 2024. The pilot project involved 22 participants, representing 12 congregations! We are looking forward to completing the final edits and adding it to a regular roster of trainings. Please reach out if you would like more information about this training. There is a recorded Q&A session that might be helpful.

Many congregations will remember the **Young Adult Welcoming** project led by Rev. Carly Gaylor and Asha Philar in 2017/2018. There were seven congregations that went through the original mentoring program.

Rev. Danie is working with another cohort to update and expand on this material, seeking out best practices and implementing them in innovative ways to support the welcoming, integration and collaboration of younger adults into community life! Look for more details as the pilot project gets underway!

Our Whole Lives (OWL) Sexuality Education:

Immediately following the CUC Symposium in May 2023, the First Unitarian Congregation of Ottawa and the CUC co-hosted two **OWL Facilitator Trainings** (both for the High School and All Adults curricula). 25 participants registered for these two events, representing eight Canadian congregations and one US congregation. The training was successful, with 16 participants fully completing the program.

At this point there are no plans for the CUC to co-host another training during 2024. However, the UUA continues to offer training for OWL facilitators online and congregations are encouraged to register through their training portal.

If your community is interested in hosting OWL programming and need any support, please be in touch! We have **recently updated the [OWL brochure](#)**. We regularly receive requests from people who are not connected with UU congregations and who are interested in attending or sending their children to OWL programs. If your congregation has scheduled OWL programming, please let us know. We can help connect those interested in the program with someone in their area.

Collaborations

At the CUC Symposium the YaYA Ministry Team and Congregational Life Team co-facilitated a multiplatform stream entitled ***Conflict and Covenant***. More than 25 people were present both in person and online. This workshop was very intergenerational with rich cross-culture conversations around covenanting and engaging conflict.

The work of the **Decision Making Exploration Team (DMET)** has also been supported by Rev. Danie during 2023, as the makeup of this team was all young adults. Look for the report of the team at the AGM.

Contact us: youth@cuc.ca



Justice and Equity

Erin Horvath and Amber Bellemare

Overview

The 2023 congregational year was pivotal in terms of inclusivity. Its significance may be better realized when considered within the landscape of changes since 2020 when the national Unitarian Universalist community began to discuss inclusivity in light of the social justice cries that were a hallmark of the pandemic.

2020 and 2021 saw UUs debate the need for systemic changes to make way for inclusion in the world and our congregations, followed by a time of expansion in 2022 as UU's were challenged to not only learn about how injustice manifests in the world but to get real about how it is manifesting within our own movement. During that time a group of pioneers came together to mourn the version of ourselves that we thought we were, to accept how things truly are. Many found a sense of interconnectedness within this place of vulnerability. Through Inclusivity Forums on various topics, Inclusivity Action groups, and conversations throughout UU spaces, curiosity helped us delve deeper into the experiences of those feeling excluded. In doing so, we learned an important piece of information that became the direction of the Justice and Equity Team in 2023:



Erin Horvath

Inclusivity is more than welcoming diverse people into rigid expressions of UUism; it's about supporting diverse people in co-creating diverse expressions of UUism.

We were pleasantly surprised to learn that a variety of expressions of UUism were happening that were making people's hearts sing. Many of these exist on the outskirts of congregational life and, therefore, are not officially under the umbrella of what the Canadian Unitarian Council (CUC) is mandated to support and are not reflected in membership numbers. Yet they are still much beloved expressions. Our work in 2023 was characterized by curiosity as we set out to discover how these expressions function, why they were created, what barriers exist to their full inclusion within UUism in Canada, and what the CUC could do to help them thrive. This resulted in 18 UU Expressions interviews from across Canada, including the congregational expression which has been foundational. The Justice and Equity Team has been so moved by what we've learned that we are devising a way to share our findings with the national UU community in 2024 in hopes that it will provide hope and inspiration as we look to co-create a sustainable future for UUism in Canada.

This report will share some themes we have discovered in 2023, activities we led as a Justice and Equity Team, and where we are headed in 2024.

Dismantling Racism & Barriers to True Inclusivity

Forums & Inclusivity Action Groups

In 2021, the Dismantling Racism Study Group asked the Justice & Equity Team to guide the heart work related to inclusivity. Since then, we have hosted the 8th Principle forums (fall 2021), additional forums in 2022 (related to family/relationship types, disability, class, age, and gender), and Inclusive Action groups in 2023.



Amber Bellemare (& Rudy)

In 2023, we hosted four Inclusivity Action Group meetings where participants chose an area of inclusivity to focus on addressing within UUism in Canada. There are 50 people involved in this; the majority of which have lived experience with some form of exclusion within their UU community. Our CUC Elder, Sharon Jinkerson-Brass joined us for each of these sessions, offering guidance and ensuring that we work to the core of colonialism regardless of the area of inclusivity being addressed. Areas of focus are a) gender discrimination (non-binary & trans focus), b) ageism, c) classism, d) inclusion of diverse families/relationships, e) ableism, f) racism, g) uncolonizing our UU spaces, and h) engaging men in inclusivity work.

Some general trends we have noticed regarding inclusivity work within our UU spaces:

- Most people participating are women, non-binary, or trans folks. Consistent with the overall demographics of UUism, the majority are Caucasian. There is less participation from cis-gendered, heterosexual men.
- The majority of participants have lived experiences with a particular type of exclusion and are involved because they want to feel more included within UUism.
- Classism has been identified as a big issue for some UU communities, with a divide between those who are financially secure and those who are struggling.
- Ageism and an aging population is part of why UU membership across the country is declining.
- People are comfortable talking about doing things differently but are hesitant about actually doing things differently.
- Young people advocating for change are sometimes being met with resistance in some areas.
- There is a link between lack of inclusivity and declining membership.

We have created a [Resource Site](#) for those engaging in inclusivity work, which includes the [Responsibility Covenant and Culture Shift Guide](#).

UU Expressions Research

In the fall of 2023 and early 2024 we conducted recorded interviews with representatives from the following expressions:

- [UU's of the Salish Sea](#)
- Congregations
- [Lay Chaplains](#)
- [Mirth and Dignity](#) / UU Hysterical Society
- [Nomadic UUism](#) (Huronian UU Fellowship)
- [Gathered Here](#)
- [Le Rassemblement Unitarien Universaliste d'Ottawa](#)
- [Ajashki Garden Project](#)

- [Unicamp of Ontario](#)
- [Rising Together](#)
- QUUer Connecting
- [Soulful Singing](#)
- [Canadian Unitarians for Social Justice](#)
- Loving Justice
- [Unitarian Shelter](#) (Nanaimo BC)

These expressions include expressions of worship and community, social justice movements, affinity groups, social enterprises, a community service, community outreach, project development support, and ministry through humour.

As we delve into the content, we can see key themes that explain more about why the numbers of Unitarian Universalists are declining, the barriers that are in the way of young adults emerging as leaders within the movement, and some potential paths forward that would utilize the skills and resources we have to create a sustainable and thriving future.

We have worked to analyze the data which we will share in a multi-episode podcast that will include clips from the various interviews we have conducted as well as our analysis. We will include discussion questions which we hope will guide the work of the Living into the Future: Emergent Sustainability (LIFES) Crew who will engage the national body of UUs in a conversation about what we're learning and how to move forward together. Expect our podcasts to be released in mid-2024.

“Into the Weeds” Blog

In the fall of 2023 the CUC started a blog called “Call and Response”. The Justice and Equity team has a stream within this blog called “Into the Weeds,” which focuses on the challenging and less discussed aspects of inclusivity, uncolonizing, and decolonizing. We've had the opportunity to share our resources through this blog and to address some of the common topics that arise in our work. Here are some of the blogs:

[Introduction to the Justice and Equity Team](#)

[Introducing the Responsibility Covenant](#)

[Inclusion in Action: An Organizational Culture Shift Tool](#)

[Truth and Reconciliation Again? How to move out of shame and into accountability](#)

[Decolonize or Uncolonize?](#)

Watch for the CUC's Intersectional Welcoming Guide

We are working on an Intersectional Welcoming Guide that encourages UUs to take concrete steps toward making their congregations more inclusive by removing barriers to full inclusion. A UU young adult who experiences various barriers to inclusion had reached out to the CUC with a draft.

The Inclusivity Action Group members have been helping shape this guide, which will be focused on activities and actions that people can take to shift their UU culture, not on “check-the-box” gestures of inclusivity. Since its conception the scope of the guide has been broadened based on what we are learning; there needs to be diverse expressions of UU, not just inclusion of diverse people within congregations. This has resulted in some new sections being added and our release date being delayed. Look for this resource in late 2024.

Truth, Healing, and Reconciliation

We have been challenged to live into Indigenous sovereignty rather than simply talking about Indigenous rights and settler wrongdoings. Uncolonizing our UU movement while decolonizing the Land and our relationship with Indigenous nations/peoples is distinctly different from educating ourselves about Indigenous history, worldviews, and experiences of colonialism. It requires settler nations to change their ways and relinquish privilege. Once again, we have found that people are eager to learn but less eager to change. For instance, there are still only a few UU communities that are actively engaged with Indigenous peoples in a way that is living into their sovereignty (i.e. paying taxes for their property on Indigenous lands, offering up their space/resources for sovereignty building activities, engaging in environmental activism in a way that centres Indigenous voices, and advocating against resource extraction meant to fuel the transition away from fossil fuels, such as mining for batteries for electric cars).

Uncolonizing Focus Groups

The [Un-colonizing Focus Group](#) materials have been made available for UU groups to use with a recommendation that it be facilitated by those who were trained to facilitate the Truth, Healing and Reconciliation Reflection Guides (THRRG) or have equivalent knowledge and experience. It is designed for people who have taken the THRRG guides and want to take action to un-colonize themselves individually and collectively as Unitarians. Topics include differentiating between uncolonizing and decolonizing work, identity, worldview, origin stories, protocols & privilege, white fragility, land acknowledgements, and the examining UU principles. Given that it is inward reflecting we include materials that are relevant expressions of contemporary Unitarians including the 8th Principle process and responses. We provide monthly coaching to facilitators doing this work within their congregations. Feedback has been very positive although it is challenging for participants and facilitators.

Uncolonizing Climate Justice

In May 2023 Erin and Dave Skene (CUC Traditional Teacher in Residence) hosted a hybrid workshop on Uncolonizing Climate Justice. We asked UU climate activists to fundamentally reimagine their relationship to the land (as settlers), how they actively honour the sovereignty of Indigenous nations, and the wisdom they hold about reversing climate change. Slowing down capitalism by greenwashing is not the solution, it is a harm-reduction strategy. Yet many settler activists busy themselves with harm reduction initiatives without modelling the shift we want to see in the world where Indigenous voices are centred in our climate actions, locally and nationally, and lands are returned to Indigenous care (Landback movement).

Topics covered included:

- What we mean by colonization, decolonization, and un-colonization
- Identifying colonial characteristics in our movements
- Settler wounds of disconnection from Mother Earth and how mourning this loss may help heal how settlers relate to the Earth.
- “Not another Stakeholder”
- Amplifying Indigenous Leadership

Climate Justice resources, workshops, and speakers offered by the CUC will continue to advocate to uncolonize climate movements lest we contribute to what has been called [Green Colonization](#), a contemporary form of colonialism that occurs when environmental movements continue to function from a place of colonial entitlement without fundamentally changing their relationship to the Land and Indigenous peoples. This [Uncolonizing Climate Justice resource site](#) is a tool we are creating for those who want to actualize this work within their local climate movement.

Contact us: socialjustice@cuc.ca

Communications

Shelley Motz, Communications Manager (to November 2023)

Kenzie Love, Writer

Brigitte Twomey, Web Specialist

Deoluwa Atayero, Communications Manager (from April 2024)

The communications team has a robust portfolio carried out by three staff: a communications manager (37.5 hours per week), web specialist (18 hours per week), and contract writer (10 hours per week). Their work supports (and is guided by) the Canadian Unitarian Council's goals and strategic priorities, drawing attention to the many opportunities, information, and resources the CUC provides to congregations, individual Unitarian Universalists, and the broader community.



Kenzie Love

Highlights of 2023

This report highlights a few of the ways the communications team contributed to the Canadian Unitarian Council's goals in 2023.

Goal One: *Strengthen our Unitarian Universalist member congregations and communities in order to thrive spiritually, theologically, organizationally, economically, and socially in a diverse, multi-generational context.*

- The communications team played an integral role in the promotion of the 2023 Symposium and Annual General Meeting. This included the development and implementation of a communications strategy; writing promotional content to be distributed via the website, email, newsletter, and social media; working with a contractor to design branded materials for the CUC and the symposium; developing registration forms for the symposium, CanUUdle, and Chorus; compiling survey results; and producing the CUC's 2022 Annual Report. The team worked closely with a contractor to design and build the symposium website.
- Web content, forms, and other online promotional materials for close to 30 standalone and recurring events, including the symposium and Annual General Meeting, were developed between January 1 and December 31, 2023.

Goal Two: *Enhance community resilience through exploration, education and sharing of diverse and inclusive spiritual and organizational practices, including those from our own faith tradition.*

- In the monthly eNews, the communications team regularly shares the knowledge, experience, and insights of Unitarian Universalists who are helping their congregations and communities be more resilient, inclusive, and responsive. Examples include [Rev. Nicole McKay](#), the first UU military chaplain in Canada; recipient of the 2023 Knight Award, [Lynn Sabourin](#); and the [Decision Making Exploration Team](#), which is focused on how we can adopt governance practices that are aligned with our principles and values.

Goal Three: *Advance socially responsible actions to live out our vision of interdependence, love, and justice to bring benefit to Canadian and global communities.*

- In 2023, the CUC released nine [National Statements](#) (in partnership with the Unitarian Universalist Ministers of Canada). Six of these statements call on UUs and other people of faith

and conscience to take action on diverse issues, including anti-2SLGBTQIA+ hate, the role of police in responding to mental health crises, the repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery, and the conflict between Israel and Hamas. These statements were published on the website, posted on social media, and distributed through the monthly eNews and via email.

Goal Four: *Strengthen collaborative and interdependent UU networks of congregations and communities.*

- The communications team helps collaborative and interdependent UU networks expand their reach. We promote their offerings to the thousands of people who subscribe to the CUC's newsletter, email lists, and social media channels. For example, in August, they publicized a new initiative led by Rev. Karen Fraser Gitlitz, *Meaning Making in Liminal Times*, in the eNews; on Facebook and Instagram; and to our Leaders' List.

CUC Communications Channels

The CUC Communications Team continues to develop and maintain cohesive yet segmented communications channels to support the organization's programs and initiatives, and to share relevant information about programs, events, and strategic priorities with our audiences.



Brigitte Twomey

CUC Website

The CUC website is the primary channel used by Canadian UUs to access information about CUC events and registration, discussions, meetings, national gatherings & services and the eNews. In 2023, 42,415 people visited the CUC website. There were 105,375 page views. On average, 3,535 people visited the website each month (116 per day). ^[1]_{SEP}

The visitors accessed the CUC website from a desktop (58%), a mobile device (39%) or a tablet (4%). Users accessed the website directly (41%), which tells us they are familiar with the CUC and with the website. More than one third (36%) of visitors accessed the site through a Google search, while approximately 13% were directed to the site from email or social media links. 53% of visitors accessed the site using Chrome and 28% using Safari.

- In 2023, we noticed that visitors were primarily interested in pages related to finding a Congregation and demonstrated a desire to learn about the principles and sources of our faith. Visitors were very interested in the events hosted by the CUC. A significant number of visitors (19%) accessed the 2023 eNews. The 9 most-visited pages accounted for approximately 22% of all visits:
 - Find a Congregation
 - Death of Rev. Rodrigo Emilio Solano-Quesnel
 - eNews August 15, 2023
 - Event Calendar
 - Principles & Sources
 - Unitarian Universalism
 - eNews October 17, 2023
 - National Voice Statement on Conflict between Israel and Hamas
 - National Worship Sunday Service: Reemerging, Reimagining, & Renewal

- Interest in the AGM, 8th principles, and inclusivity were also demonstrated by the terms most often entered in the search field:
 - AGM
 - 8th Principle
 - Confluence Lecture
 - Doctrine of Discovery
 - Aspirations
 - CANUUDLE

Youth and young adults (18 to 34) accounted for the highest percentage of visits to the CUC website in 2023, followed by the ages of 35 to 54 and over 55.

In 2023, we started a [Call and Response blog](#) section in partnership with CUC staff from the Justice & Equity, Youth & Young Adult Ministry, and Congregational Life teams. To accommodate this new blog, we updated the look of the home page to showcase this new feature. We created new website pages, notably the [CUC National Sunday Services](#) listing past Sunday Services, YAS and Beyond in response to a set of conversations about the young adult age range.

eNews

Approximately 860 subscribers open and read the newsletter each month. It continues to be an effective tool for sharing news and information with Unitarian Universalists in Canada. (We see the most traffic to the CUC website on the days the eNews is published.) The average open rate from January to December 2023 was roughly 11% lower than the average for email newsletters produced by faith organizations in general; the click rate 5% higher. (These numbers do not include people who may have viewed these issues of the CUC eNews on the website.)



Deoluwa Atayero

The most popular issue was once again [ScandaloUUs](#), a spoof of the eNews published on April 1, 2023.

You can read all back issues of the [eNews](#) online. You can also [subscribe](#) to receive the eNews.

Events Attendance

The numbers below are 2023 events attendance from forms filled on Website & some Google forms. Youth and Young Adults events do not always require advanced registration. Attendance is not always the same as the number of people registered.

- Number of attendees over all events: **832** (including staff)
- Number of single (one event) attendees: **468** (including staff)

Facebook

In 2023, the CUC Facebook page had 1906 followers, an increase of 5 % from the previous year. The CUC posts had a reach of 31,900 — an increase of 135% from the previous year. By far the most viewed Facebook post was the announcement of the tragic passing of Rev. Rod Solano-Quesnel on July 11, 2023, which had a reach of 12,300 and 135 content interactions.

Instagram

The CUC Instagram page, which launched in 2022, had 451 followers, an increase of 48% over the previous year. A video by board member Ilara Stefaniuk-Gaudet inviting people to join the LIFES crew was the most popular post, with a reach of 205.

Discord

In 2023, the Canadian Unitarian Council set up a private online communication hub with a forum-style discussion structure divided into channels (Chat rooms) where UU communities can communicate, collaborate, build relationships, connect, exchange ideas and know-how. This hub is set up on a platform called Discord.

We are planning to invite UUs in stages. At the moment, it is a pilot project and the server is open mainly to the Board and Staff. In the second stage we will invite Congregations so that the Board, Staff and Congregations can have open lines of communication in real time.

For more information please refer to the:

- [Covenant](#)
- [Instructions](#)

Contact us: communications@cuc.ca

Refugee Support

The work of refugee support and resettlement is one of the most important ways the CUC manifests its principles and beliefs. As a Sponsorship Agreement Holder (SAH) with Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), the CUC is able to partner with congregations and organizations to help resettle newcomers who have to flee their home countries. Mary Haily coordinates this work for the CUC.



In 2023, we submitted a total of 16 cases for a total of 27 persons. 31 cases arrived – these are applications from previous years - for a total of 53 people. The refugees came from Eritrea, Syria, Iran, and Burundi, and settled in Ottawa, Peterborough, Halifax, Oakville, Toronto, and Calgary. The CUC also continues its valued partnership with Capital Rainbow Refuge in Ottawa, which sponsors LGBTQ+ refugees. We are profoundly grateful to the volunteers in the congregations and organizations who work hard to raise funds and help newcomers adjust to living in Canada.

National Lay Chaplaincy Committee Report

Mary-Anna Louise Kovar, National Lay Chaplaincy Committee

The Committee continues to meet monthly on the 2nd Tuesday, 10 months of the year and handles any business occurring in the summer months by email. The rotation of Chairperson, Recorder and Opening/Closing Words has worked well for us. It allows all members to share equally in experiencing the roles. In addition, individual members take responsibility for Coordinator of Applications/Extensions and Coordinator of Chats. A team of members is responsible for Basic Training. All members act as committee liaisons for specific congregations. Due to a shortage of ministers the committee has functioned without a Ministerial Rep in 2023.



In 2023 the committee approved 8 new Lay Chaplains and granted extensions/reinstatements to 7 Lay Chaplains. The unusual number of extensions occurred as congregations engaged in rebuilding in-person activity and negotiated the decrease in volunteer capacity. The Lay Chaplains performed 146 Rites of Passage and contributed \$2340.00 to the Training Fund

The CUC LCC had 4 members retire in 2023. We thank Bob Armstrong, Peter Scales, Rob Van Wyck and Yvette Roberts for their service. We welcomed 3 new members Beth McLin, Guy Belleperche and Lyla Miklos. We are actively seeking to fill the 4th position.

Basic Training in Leading Rites of Passage occurred Feb 25,26 and March 4 2023 with 11 attendees. Lay Chaplain Chats were held March 6, June 5 and Oct 2, with an average attendance of 20.

Both training and Chats were done utilizing Zoom and both received positive feedback from attendees. This has proved to be the most efficient way to include participants across the country for reasonable cost and practical timing for both attendees and trainers. We acknowledge that some of the benefits of in person training are lost and the committee will continue to consider the pros and cons of both in our planning. We intend to have at least 1 Basic Training and 3 Chat sessions in 2024.

The CUC LCC participated in the National Symposium in May 2023 with a Lay Chaplaincy Information table.

Mirth & Dignity Report

Liz James

Mirth and Dignity is a non-profit organization founded on a belief in the viral power of joy. Most of what we create is humour based, and all of it is grounded in an expansive idea of UU community.

We offer [coaching](#) to UUs who are working on an “outside-the-box” ministry... If you have a weird idea and need someone to talk it through with, we’re here for you!



We also partner with projects, including:

- **The Unitarian Universalist Hysterical Society:** [A 250,000 person Facebook group](#), UUHS is a place for people to share humour and community... In a kind, empathetic way that is consistent with our UU principles.
- **Building a Better World: What Role Will YOU Play?**, a [curriculum](#) that helps participants co-create a world setting for a role-playing game while exploring questions of ethics, morality, and social justice.
- **21st Century Unitarian Universalism**, a [video ministry primarily on TikTok](#). Seminarian Karishma Gottfried has also created resources for religious professionals and educational resources on the proposed changes to article II.
- **Soulful Singing: Songs for the Journey** will be a beautiful, easily navigable website featuring a searchable library of Rev. Wendy Luella Perkins’ original songs, lyrics, artwork, themed meditation videos and instructional videos sharing the Soulful Singing model. Rev. Wendy Luella is also [on TikTok](#), for those interested.
- **The Changing our Stories Project:** Liz James and Rev Anne Barker created a retreat curriculum as well as a season of their humour podcast The Cracked Cup, which you can [find on our website](#), or whether you get your pods). We are so grateful to the CUC for awarding us the [2023 Sharing Our Faith grant](#) for this project.

We also did a tour this year! From October 2023 through April 2024 Liz preached at 19 congregations across ten states and provinces. Our workshop *The Church of Our Imagination*, encouraging congregations to think outside the box, was a big hit as an add-on at many of these locations. Want to be on the wait list for the 2025 tour bookings? You can find more information [on our website](#).

Do you believe in a UUism beyond walls, that sees change as an adventure? Our Saints pledge between five and twenty five dollars per month to support this vision--without them, we could do none of the work we do. Learn more about becoming a Saint [here!](#)



Project Ploughshares

Colin Read



Project Ploughshares is a Canadian peace research institute with a focus on disarmament efforts and international security, specifically related to the arms trade, emerging military and security technologies, nuclear weapons, and outer space.

The wars in the Ukraine and Gaza have again emphasized the need for strong research into military activities, effective communication of the issues that threaten peace, and unified collaborative efforts at the national and international levels to bring about an end to conflict and pave a path to peace. Project Ploughshares is an amazing organization that does incredibly valuable work, mostly behind the scenes, to drive the development of international regulations, resolutions, agreements, and treaties that work towards creating a safer and more peaceful world.

The use of lethal drones by both Russia and Ukraine has accelerated the development of semi-autonomous weapons that are able to search, identify, and engage human targets with limited human oversight. There is a high possibility of fully autonomous weapons in the near future, and passing a treaty to prevent such weapons from being used is a high priority. After close to a decade of effort, there is still no treaty regulating autonomous weapons systems. However, last November the First Committee of the United Nations (UN) General Assembly, which deals with disarmament and global threats to peace, approved the first-ever resolution on autonomous weapons. Ploughshares researcher, Branka Marijan, continues to be heavily involved in collaborative efforts to move the process from resolutions to a treaty that bans autonomous weapons.

The current situation in Gaza is putting Canada's commitment to the Arms Trade Treaty to the test. As Ploughshares researcher Kelsey Gallagher writes, "The media have paid significant attention to Canada's arming of Israel since Israel began its military operation in Gaza in response to the October 7 Hamas attacks. Serious and credible allegations of human rights violations by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) have raised concerns that Canadian-made weapons could be used in those abuses." Canadian arms ban on Israel: Step in the right direction but no silver bullet. Kelsey Gallagher, March 28, 2024

The United Nations Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) was the result of over twenty years of work by Ploughshares and a variety of other civil society groups. Under articles of the ATT, exports of military hardware to Israel should be halted, as there is a legitimate concern that they could be used in human rights violations. The Canadian government did pass a motion to suspend all military trade with Israel, but that suspension does not apply to trade agreements that have already been approved. So despite having signed onto the ATT, the Canadian government is still allowing military exports to Israel.

These are just two examples that show how Ploughshares is on the cutting edge of research that drives policies, regulations, and treaty formation that help pave a path to peace.

I have been offered, and accepted, the role of Vice Chair of the Management Committee of Project Ploughshares. This is a member-at-large position, thus leaving open the opportunity for a representative of the CUC to join the Management Committee. Having a UU presence in this organization is a wonderful opportunity to build connections with other faith groups and promote a greater awareness and

understanding of Unitarian Universalism in Canada. I invite anyone interested in being on the Project Ploughshares Management Committee to contact me to get more information.

Contact Colin: cread33@gmail.com

Canadian Unitarians for Social Justice

Jim Sannes

We are finally getting back on our feet with the pandemic fading into the past. The format of our meetings has changed so that we give the various social concerns committees across Canada a place to meet virtually and talk about what is currently happening in their Social Action Committees.



- Our [Discussion Forum](#) keeps up a lively debate.
- We maintain a [Facebook](#) group
- And of course our [web page](#)
- You can review our [JUSTnews Express](#)

One of our board members, **Ahti Tolvanen**, attended the **COP27** meetings in Egypt and we posted his report in our March Justnews Express Newsletter.

The following are recordings of our online presentations by invited speakers on diverse topics we had in **2023**, available on our [YouTube channel](#) - See descriptions for timeline/chapters, but the following links mostly start at the speaker's main address.

- **Tamara Lorincz**, who also went to the **COP27** meeting from Waterloo, spoke about her experiences "[Climate, Conflict & the Search for Peace](#)" in January.
- **Anita Nickerson** of Fair Vote Canada [spoke in February](#) at a joint meeting with Fair Vote members about a Citizens Assembly and proportional representation and the need for a Citizens Assembly.
- **Caterina Lindman** pointed out [the consolidation of Canada's food system](#) into just a few really big corporations in March.
- **Niki Ashton**, MP for Thompson, Manitoba, gave an excellent presentation on how we can [stand with Indigenous Communities](#) in April.
- **Yves Engler** [spoke about his book](#) "The Ugly Canadian: Justin Trudeau's Foreign Policy" at our AGM in May.
- **Mike Morrice**, Green MP for Kitchener Centre, spoke on "[Housing, a Fairer Election System and Much More](#)" in September.
- **Chris Jones** of Dying with Dignity Canada, [talked about](#) the current law and what changes are being considered by the government in October.
- We had an emergency meeting about Gaza and Palestine where we had over 80 registrants, but we could not publish the YouTube presentation because our speaker from **Independent Jewish Voices** declined to give us permission to do so.

- **Rev Mwibutsa (Fulgence) Ndagijimana** from Burundi spoke about his "[Returning to the Sacred Land](#)" in November.

So far this year 2024 we have had presentations about **Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity; The Ajashki Garden** a land back project by First Unitarian Ottawa; the Kitchener-Waterloo “**A Better Tent City**” and another try at the **Gaza, Palestine** situation which was recorded and is available on our [YouTube Channel](#).

We established a [UU Animal Ministry Chapter](#) in Canada to give voice to animals in UU Circles. You can join here for the monthly meetings.

CUSJ does not pretend to be the voice of all Unitarians any more than we are the voice of all Canadians. We represent a cross section of Canadian UUs and the topics we take up are suggested and voted on by the executive.

We encourage our members to write letters and we join groups which we are members of in signing petitions on behalf of CUSJ. Last year we became members and/or financial supporters of the following groups or organizations.

Amnesty International
 Canada Palestine Association
 Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives
 Canadian Drug Policy Coalition
 Canadian Foreign Policy Institute
 Canadian Voices of Women for Peace
 Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East
 Climate Action Network Canada
 Extradition Legal Defence Fund
 Fair Vote Canada
 First Nations Child and Family Caring Society
 International Civil Liberties Monitoring Group
 Justice for Mohamed Harkat Committee
 UU Animal Ministry, Canada

Contact CUSJ: admin@cusj.org

Unicamp of Ontario

Yvette Salinas, Executive Director

This past year, the Board and Staff of Unicamp have been focused on creating a more safe and inviting campground. We have made improvements in many levels of Unicamp. This includes improvements in governance, finances, human resources,



property, programming, hospitality, and communications.

Specifically, we are happy to report that:

- We have gone through a thorough and long process spearheaded by the By-Law Working Group; we are preparing updated Bylaws to comply with new requirements under ONCA. In addition, we are planning to hold a special meeting in June to review and discuss before an AGM vote in the fall
- The Safety Working Group is on the case preparing an audit of Unicamp's operations and programming to ensure safety, policy compliance, and transparency
- We have Initiated a third-party assessment process with the Ontario Camps Association; we are preparing to meet over 600 health and safety standards and recommendations
- We have made progress on updating our long-range plan, by assessing risks and mitigation plans
- A capital budget has been created to improve the dorms, install flooring (making the program space accessible), and fix issues in the dining area
- We have created better feedback loops between and among the staff, management, and Board
- We have improved our communication to the community through monthly newsletters, updates on our webpage, and through other media channels
- A 5-year report for the Accessibility for all Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) has been created that responds to four standards including communications and customer service
- We have engaged community members to prepare an exciting array of adult programming that touches on Unitarian Universalist principles
- There is an improved online system for program registration and accommodations based on community feedback
- Two out of three weeks of Children's Camp are sold out and we have added additional spots
- Youth Leadership Programming is sold out

Unicamp of Ontario continues to encourage community involvement through many opportunities. Please consider getting engaged through our new working groups, giving feedback, joining fundraising efforts, and more! Come join us this summer!

Our Adult Programming, Family Camp, Bookings information, and more can be found at unicampofontario.ca!



Report from the Unitarian Universalist Representative to the Interfaith Committee on Canadian Military Chaplaincy

Rev. Beckett Coppola

Introduction

The [ICCMC](#) “supports the Royal Canadian Chaplain Service ([RCChS](#)) in its mission within the unique context of the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF). The ICCMC is the body through which Faith Tradition communities of Canada exercise their support to [their tradition’s CAF Chaplains], and also represents and reflects the work of the RCChS to member Faith Tradition communities.”

[In 2000](#) the ICCMC began welcoming faith traditions beyond the Canadian Council of Churches and the Catholic Church. UUMOC was informed of our upcoming opportunity to join the committee at the May 2023 UUMOC Ministry Days gathering and voted unanimously in support of taking up this work. Through the 2023-2024 year the UUMOC Executive Committee has been moving this forward in collaboration with the CUC.



Rev. Beckett Coppola

Background

When a CAF Chaplain in an unrepresented faith officially takes up their call that tradition may then choose to take a seat on the ICCMC. This occurred for Unitarian Universalism in Canada on 17 April 2024 when Rev. Nicole McKay met all conditions to be a UU Chaplain in the CAF.

Faith traditions only get a seat on the committee when they have active chaplains in the RCChS. While some faith traditions choose not to take their place at the table, those systems that do must nominate a representative of the ministry from their tradition to the committee.

There are currently about twelve members of the Committee, and the primary contact for UU candidates has been Bishop Nigel Shaw of the Anglican Military Ordinariate, Vice Chair of the Committee, to whom we are grateful for the welcome, support, and care for our candidate in advance of our taking our seat on this committee.

The UU minister on the ICCMC will serve as the endorsing authority for chaplain candidates in the CAF. They will also: review electronic files from the Chaplain General and respond as necessary; provide pastoral and other supports for UU RCChS chaplains; participate in committee discussions from the point of view of Unitarian Universalism; other committee work as necessary; and maintain connections and relationships with the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA)’s Federal Chaplaincies Endorser, the Ministerial Fellowship Committee, the CUC Executive Director and Board, and more.

All ICCMC members are civilian volunteers who hold a contract with the Canadian Government. There are no salaries for committee members unless they are compensated by their faith tradition.

2023-2024 Final Report

Over the course of this year numerous informational conversations have happened and connections have been made in order to move this work forward in the most skillful way possible within our institutional systems.

In addition to these conversations and connections, an application for the position on the committee was created by Revs. Jess Purple Rodela, Nicole McKay, Beckett Coppola, and Samaya Oakley with Vyda Ng, CUC Executive Director.

A call for applicants was sent out to all UU ministers in Canada. Rev. Samaya Oakley, President of UUMOC Executive Committee and Vyda Ng selected Rev. Rebecca C. “Beckett” Coppola as the candidate for this role, and with Rev. Coppola’s consent presented her to the CUC Board for approval. Following approval Rev. Coppola was put forward by the CUC to our ICCMC contact as our nominee to the committee.

And, most importantly, our UU CAF Chaplain, Rev. Nicole McKay, is now authorized to wear, and is wearing, a UU tradition identifier on her military uniforms. Her patch is an image of the flaming chalice, which can be seen in the picture included in this report. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first time that a UU Military Chaplain in any country’s military service has been able to wear the chalice as their spiritual faith tradition identifier.



Conclusion

It is my honour and privilege to take up the work of being the UU representative to the ICCMC. Thank you for your faith in me, and I look forward to stepping into discovering the work of this role in the coming years.



Rev. Nicole McKay

And I would also like to take this time to express deep gratitude to Rev. Nicole McKay. Over the past seven years Rev. McKay has cleared and paved a path that did not exist and is now in a position to bring the power and the good news of Unitarian Universalism into the Canadian Armed Forces. May we support her in this amazing work, and may others find their way along the path she has so carefully prepared for our living tradition.

In Faith and Fellowship,
Rev. Rebecca C. “Beckett” Coppola [she/her]
UU Representative to the ICCMC
27 April 2024

Read the full article and Rev. McKay’s journey to become a military chaplain - [“Advancements for Unitarian Universalism at the Canadian Armed Forces.”](#)

Canadian Unitarian Council Committees and Task Forces 2023-2024

We thank the following volunteers who serve us at the national level.

Nominating Committee

Carey McDonald, Central Region
Jamie Struthers, BC/Western Region
Maury Prevost (Co-Chair), Central/Eastern Region
Kim Turner, Eastern Region
Alex Schumacher (Co-Chair), Western Region
Lesley Giroday, BC Region

National Lay Chaplaincy Committee

Mary-Anna Louise Kovar, Western Region
Anne Coward, Eastern Region
Elizabeth McLin, Central Region
Guy Belleperche, Central Region
Lyla Miklos, Central Region
Linda Thomson, CUC Liaison

Decision-Making Exploration Team

Robbie Brydon, Lead and Rev. Danie Webber, CUC staff

Bylaw Review

Kim Turner, Katharine Childs, Miriam Robern, Margaret Kohr, Kiersten Moore, Margaret Wanlin

Living into the Future: Emergent Sustainability (LIFES) Crew

Rev. Arran Morton, catherine strickland, Rev. Fiona Heath, Calvin Drake, Olivia Hall
Board: Ilara Stefaniuk Gaudet and Margo Ellis
Staff: Anne Barker and Vyda Ng

