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UU Expressions: Love in Real Life Episode 8: Potential

This groundbreaking 10-episode docu-series takes an inspiring and honest look at how Unitarian Universalism (UU) is evolving across Canada in 2024. This isn't just a celebration—it's an invitation to all of us to reflect on what it means to live our UU values in the diverse communities we call home, from bustling cities to small towns, and for diverse people to shape diverse expressions of UUism beyond congregations and, if so, what this means for our national identity.

In each episode, Erin Horvath and Amber Bellemare, the Canadian Unitarian Council's Justice and Equity team, interview Unitarian Universalists who have formed groups outside of congregations and are experiencing an alternative kind of UU community. The individuals share their perspectives and reflections on their experiences, and speak only for themselves. We thank them for their generosity.

Transcript for Episode 8 - Potential

In this episode, we uncover the potential that exists within community ministries that share UU values while also creating sustainable revenue streams.

Our guests include:

- Kayoki Whiteduck and Lynn Kofmel-Preston from Ajaski Project (Ottawa First Unitarian Fellowship)
- Yvette Salinas (Executive Director) and Joanna Barrington (Camp Director), Unicamp, Ontario
- Karen Dunk Green, Lay Chaplain, Toronto
- Reverends Anne Barker and Linda Thompson, CUC's Congregational Life Team
- Rev Wendy Luella Perkins, Founder of Soulful Singing

Episode playtime is 42 mins



Music	
Karen	Within religious circles, when people are talking about growing membership and talking about being successful in growing their congregations, there's this very standard idea of how do we get more people in, how do we bring them in and how do we get people to come to us?
	And there's just this different way of looking about it that says, how do we go out? How do we give it away? Trusting that by doing that it will come back. And that's a whole different mindset.
Music	
Amber Music out	Welcome to UU Expressions: Love in real life, a 10 episode docu-series that discovers, celebrates, and challenges how Unitarian Universalism is practiced across Canada in 2024. That was the voice of Lay Chaplain Karen Dunk-Green, asking how we might embrace an abundant mindset. I am Amber Bellemare and I am joined by my co-host Erin Horvath. In this episode, we uncover the potential that exists within community ministries that share UU values while also creating sustainable revenue streams.
Erin	At the tail end of each conversation I had with people doing community based ministry interviewees, I spoke about ways to expand their ministries; you might consider it a sort of playful brainstorming. I shared bits about my experience using both social entrepreneurship and social enterprise as an avenue to co-create in the world and we played and imagined together.
Amber	Some of our listeners may not know of your experience, Erin, with social enterprises and social entrepreneurship. We just know you in the context of the work you do with the CUC. Can you briefly give some background?
Erin	Certainly. First of all social enterprise is my playground, it's where I love to be. Outside of the work I do with the CUC I'm the co-founder of a not-for-profit community development organization called New Vision Unlimited that has operated as a social enterprise since 2006. My focus is on helping groups of people, usually in an organizational or community context, get from wherever they are in their vision and mission to where they want to be. So often this involves helping people examine their own paradigms, challenge systems, and co-create new ways to bring their passions to life or address the concerns they have. I have been a professional coach, consultant, teacher, and curriculum developer related to social entrepreneurship and social enterprise. I have also run two of my own social enterprises. And recently finished my doctorate that focused on the perceptions gaps related to doing good that often exist within social entrepreneurship and social enterprises.
Amber	This is not just something of a passing interest. This is your lifes work and as you say, your wheelhouse.



Erin	No definitely not. Co-creating is my passion. Social entrepreneurship, social enterprise, education, storytelling and art- those are my tools. And people, passion, and money are the types of energy that I enjoy harnessing to bring things to life.
MUSIC	
Amber	Earlier you mentioned two terms: social entrepreneurship and social enterprise. I have typically heard those used interchangeably to mean something like addressing a need in the world by starting a business rooted in values that benefit people, planet, and culture. How do you distinguish between the two?
Erin	These terms mean two different things. I like the definition of social entrepreneurship offered by Paul Tapsell and Christine Woods, who study social entrepreneurship within a Maori context. They say Social Entrepreneurship is “the construction and pursuit of opportunities for transformative social change through innovative activities occurring within or across economic communities in a historical and cultural context” (Tapsell & Woods, 2010, p. 539). This is a fancy way of saying it’s a big picture lens that looks at all the components that create societies and the systems that govern them. Social Enterprise is “a revenue-generating business with two goals: to achieve social, cultural, community economic, and/or environmental outcomes; and to earn revenue”. That definition comes from the British Columbia Centre for Social Enterprise and shows how it is a much more focused tool that can be used to enact change.
Amber	So when it comes to our conversations within a Unitarian Universalist context it seems like both of those might be relevant.
Erin	Absolutely, if we’re considering the work of activists they are focussed on larger systems change when they bring up topics such changing how policing and law enforcement are handled. This large scale, systems based transformation is what they are interested in as is the case of Loving Justice. Unicamp is a classic social enterprise. Their focus is on running an enterprise that accomplishes their social vision of creating UU community in nature while bringing in revenue to sustain the venture. The Hysterical Society is an example of something a little bit different from social entrepreneurship and social enterprise. Their creations more closely resemble an art form that is meant to cause us to think about things differently. There are elements of a social enterprise too, in that they sell merchandise on their online store and have a goal of using Unitarian Universalism to create humour and community in the world.
Amber	Oh wow. So without realizing it, UU's have already been engaging with social entrepreneurship and social enterprise. We just refer to it as community ministry.



Erin	It appears so. The thing that is great about recognizing this overlap is that it can open the doors to a new paradigm to explore as well as new models, skills sets to learn that can enhance the great visions that are already happening and perhaps launch some new UU expressions in the future.
Amber	This feels very exciting - like there are roads of possibilities ahead of us waiting to be explored.
Erin	I'm so glad it feels that way. It captures the essence of how it felt when talking with some of these community-based ministries. In my conversations, I tried to reflect back what I perceived to be strengths and opportunities of sharing UU values while being sustainable and generating a healthy flow of money without those feelings of guilt or shame. After all, money when applied to a healthy vision will empower these ministries to have an even greater impact. In this episode we will return to a conversation with Lay Chaplain Karen Dunk-Green to illustrate the potential of looking at new ways we can serve and breaking out of old molds.
Erin	The CUC's Lay Chaplain program, which offers trained lay chaplains to perform rites of passage and ceremonies, currently works by word of mouth mostly but also internet search where people in local communities might search for someone to perform certain ceremonies and find the service embedded somewhere in a congregations website. We can ask ourselves, "what potential is out there to be discovered if these services were easier to find?"
Amber	Yeah, I see how the CUC could play a part in helping promote their work from a different, more scalable angle, using social media or our reach on the internet to promote ceremony "consulting" or guidance from afar.
Erin	Yes, I definitely see potential there. In talking with Karen, I realized just how creative these lay chaplains are, and yet the structure does not yet exist to make it easy for them to collaborate with each other, or for people to find them. I found out that there are people who are more experienced in certain types of ceremonies, such as Karen stating her experience with polyamorous unions, and right now there is no way for polyamorous people in a community on the opposite side of the country to know that Karen exists in Toronto and can coach them through the creation of a ceremony, whether she officiates it or not.
Amber	There is potential in creating a place online where people can see all the UU lay chaplains that exist in Canada, their specialities, and the services they offer. This could take things to a whole different level in terms of outreach and engagement within the community.
Erin	Another area of potential is in the area of passive income. By this I mean, the creation of goods that can be sold online and do not require additional effort by lay chaplains. These could be how-to manuals, and kits to perform certain ceremonies and other rites of passage. This is a whole other area that could be explored. Karen and I had a chance to consider some of these things. This excerpt starts with Karen sharing how post-pandemic



	<p>life has been different than expected for lay chaplains. What I like about this is that it shows a creative mindset and the ability to pivot, and the examples Karen shares shows how some lay chaplains have already started thinking about ways they can offer support outside of ceremonies. Here's Karen:</p>
Karen	<p>...it's been really interesting to watch whether or not post-pandemic people have come rushing back for more ceremony. And we have found that they've not. We thought there would be this big sort of backlog, particularly of memorial services that people might want to do later. But we found that what happened is people did their own. In some cases, they did nothing, but in many cases they did their own.</p>
	<p>Our reaction has been mixed in the sense of, well, that's too bad. We could have done something. You know, it would have been a connection, it would've been business. There is a small amount of income related to this work, but at the same time, I think how wonderful that people found it in themselves to perform a ritual to create something that they were comfortable with that serve the purpose in that moment.</p>
	<p>And what would be wrong with helping them do more of that? We tell people when they come to us and in our ceremonies, many of the chaplains will actually say something along the lines of, "We're all capable of creating sacred space together. And I'm here as your guide through that sacred experience. And I'm equipped to do that with you.</p>
	<p>But that doesn't mean that you can't create your own sacred space." And so I think it actually shows us that many people are willing and able to do that. And how could we fit ourselves alongside them to provide some assistance if they felt they needed that, even if we weren't going to be the officiant in every single case?</p>
Erin	<p>And so what comes to my mind when I think about UUism and potentially an offering is imagine if in every household there was a keeper of ceremonies that, you know, when the child graduated from this point in life to this point in life,</p>
	<p>I wonder if there would be something there about. Yeah, like actually offering and coaching people and saying, here, we're going to do a thing and it's for women or men or parents or whatever it is to know how to create that sacredness in your own family units, whatever those look like.</p>
Karen	<p>Angela Klassen, who is our director of Lifespan Religious Education at Toronto First, during the pandemic, offered to families a home altar kit and so she created a package that would help people create a space, a physical space and a sacred space, and provided them with coaching about how to have ceremony and hold space in a way that would be reminiscent of what would have happened if they had been able to come to the congregation to be within group worship.</p>
	<p>But as that was not possible, here was a way they could still continue to do that, especially to provide that space to their children and set the examples for their children that, yes, this can still happen even though we're not going over there. It was a fantastic initiative and I think it relates nicely to what we're talking about in terms of any kind of</p>



	ceremony and bringing lay people into that because we don't see this division between lay people and ordained people.
	There is no reason why lay people can't be involved in ritual. Some couples who have done a lot of the do it yourself part of their weddings, but not in terms of creating decorations and organizing tables and things like that.
	What they've used to do it yourself for was to actually contribute to the ceremony and the rituals. So really designing ways that they could engage their families in the ceremony, creating materials that brought forth traditional family foods as part of the ceremony, almost as an offering or as a way for people to participate. Again, all of the things that we see around, hand fasting and candle lighting and stomping on the glass,
	these are all ways of engaging people in ceremony in a way that really is about family tradition and something that's meaningful in their personal context. It doesn't have to relate to anything that's sort of officially sanctioned or part of a script of a ceremony that comes from someone ordained was just a way for them to say, This is our wedding, this is what we think is meaningful to us, so we're going to work this into it.
Erin	I asked Karen how the Canadian Unitarian Council could be helpful in amplifying the work of lay chaplains.
Karen	We've had at times three or even four chaplains in the group, and each goes off and does what they do. We come back and we share our stories. And so sometimes an idea jumps from one lay chaplain to another lay chaplain, but to actually package that and use that intentionally as a way to provide this expanded form of outreach is a really interesting idea.
	And I think it could be something that would really fit, especially now, post-pandemic. And as things are changing in so many ways and people really want to have the freedom to be authentic and to be involved hands-on in their own services. So why not create more tools and more suggestions and more ideas and share those in a broader network?
Erin	As Karen and I played back and forth, sharing ideas of how to amplify the impacts of lay chaplaincy by sharing UU values in the world, ideas emerged that naturally built community and generated revenue.
Karen	I love the idea that we get on the "could this, could this provide service and connection to more and more people in the community if it wasn't only I'll be more officiant, if
	as you know, the Unitarians will help you figure out rituals and ceremonies that you can do yourselves." I mean, you can't marry yourself, but there are lots of things that can be done that would bring sacred space and bring those moments of meaning into people's lives in a more structured way.
	Wouldn't it be wonderful if that was something that more people felt they could do? Because we showed them how and we helped them see why and how it could matter to them. And I think that, you know, goes beyond just the lay chaplaincy-type situations.



	<p>It just goes into our belief that there is no division between people who can do that and people who can't. We are all part of the divine. We all have the ability to create the sacred, to call upon the sacred. We just need to know how to do it.</p>
Erin	<p>It felt like our conversation brought us back to the real heart of the matter- the message that we are all part of the divine, we all have the ability to create the sacred, and to call upon the sacred.</p>
Amber	<p>Beautiful. The idea that UUs would become known as the people who can help folks find and celebrate the sacred in the daily rites of passage and transitions of life is very compelling.</p>
Erin	<p>Yes. And as we spoke Karen ended up sharing something that I would see as the potential start of a business model.</p>
Karen	<p>I think we restrict ourselves sometimes by the model that we're in.</p>
	<p>For instance, the way the chaplaincy model is, we are efficient. You pay us a fee for us to be officiant for you. And so if you're not going to pay a fee, we don't give you anything. We don't give up the secrets of how you structure ceremony. We don't put our recommended texts on the website for you to just take away yourself or do yourself, because somehow there's the sense that this is ours and it's kind of a business model.</p>
	<p>It's a light one, it's a gentle one. We don't get all excited about it, and it's not very much money, but it's a business model nonetheless, as opposed to taking this generous spirit of it and offering it to the world in a way that it can be embraced. And then accepting the idea that by people embracing that for free, it will bring something back to us in the end.</p>
Erin	<p>While there have certainly been lay ministers who have shared resources in different ways over the years, I think what Karen is highlighting here is the potential for doing this in a more strategic and coordinated way to build connections, name recognition for UUs, and as an avenue for sharing the divine outside congregational walls.</p>
Amber	<p>Yes, as a business owner myself and a content creator, what Karen is describing is an excellent business model. There are certain resources that are shared freely and this helps build community and helps people to learn about what UU's are about. So in theory, they could put out into the world some free "how-to" guides about doing certain types of ceremonies such as teenagers' rite of passage into adulthood or a pet's funeral and then link this to an online site where customers can find a list of lay chaplains that can do ceremonies, coaching, and resources and items available for purchase. Things like multi-wick candles for adoptions and intentional family ceremonies. And if well priced, this is the type of things that people will happily pay for especially as they plan things like marriages, baby arrivals, adoptions, and celebrations of life. This list goes on.</p>
Erin	<p>Exactly, and perhaps most importantly, is a well-designed online presence that connects this site to UUism as a whole and that portrays UUs as people who are available to co-create in dynamic and meaningful ways. If each of these sites point to one another</p>



	then someone who finds us through one project will be able to easily find their way to the various other UU projects and communities that are alive across the country.
Amber	Exactly. There is a whole approach to getting the word out that we have barely scratched the surface with.
Music	
Erin	Besides sharing excerpts from this conversation to show the potential that exists in adding a social enterprise component to lay chaplaincy, I wanted to show how strategic conversations can help bring the pieces together into something that feels exciting, is on vision, is impactful, and sustainable.
Amber	If you covered that much ground together in a short 75 minute conversation, imagine what potential could be found if there was a bit more time and focus put to this.
Erin	Absolutely. Now there are a few within UUism that have given a fair amount of thought to how social enterprise could merge into UUism - one is Rev. Anne Barker. During our interview I was thrilled to hear how excited she is about finding new models to share UUism within the world and how many years she has been pondering ideas after hearing Shaun Loney talk about how social enterprise can support the work of religious organizations. Building upon the work UU's are already doing around ceremonies and weddings she shared how this could be taken to the next level.
Rev. Anne Barker	...if you had a commercially certified kitchen and you have a pretty space and a room like a classroom or an office that could work as a dressing room, you could run a wedding business, a social enterprise around weddings.
	So you have to ask yourself, well, what is the social good? Well, weddings are devastatingly expensive, so you could commit to - We do a simple version at the most affordable way for weddings of a certain size, and it's almost a plug and play kind of thing with some individualism to it. But it provides a service for people to be able to have something they really want but can't afford it.
	And it's more than just going to City Hall or having the marriage commissioner come to your living room. And then if you wanted to take it further, you could what if you created a room that was full of donated wedding dresses and then people are even more able to participate in something (or suits or whatever) that in something that they couldn't afford but they really want.
	That's one way to do it. The other way to make it a social enterprise is to employ people who have difficulty finding employment - UUs have been sponsoring refugee families for ages, for ages, and so often a refugee comes with a language barrier that makes it hard to find work. And I've never met one yet in my experience that can't cook.



	<p>Right. So what if the meals were prepared by the people you hired who needed meaningful work but that we're having difficulty finding work. The social good can be all kinds of things. It's a version that people can wrap their head around because we're in the wedding business. Right?</p>
	<p>But there's a problem for UUs with social enterprise, and that's that we have for our entirety, except for a few key positions, been a volunteer organization and there are a few social enterprises that are run by volunteers.</p>
	<p>But the reliance on volunteers and not paying fair wages to humans makes it hard to keep something vital. And I loved that about Shaun Loney's teaching - that there are ways to create things where you can afford to pay people what they need to live on to do this work. And then it's a reciprocal loop. People are being paid.</p>
	<p>They're not sacrificing something that the whole thing falls apart when they don't have the energy or the time anymore. We have a barrier around paying for things when we're used to them being volunteer. And it's a challenge in our congregations, in our organizations, but it's a challenge with understanding social enterprise as well. It's not insurmountable, but there is work that needs to be done</p>
Erin	<p>As you're speaking about how you could create a wedding business? People would need to maybe imagine that there might be people who want to pay you well to do a wedding.</p>
	<p>They don't even need you to give them a discount. And because they pay you really well, you can give someone something great and you can like a discount on their wedding or you can pay your staff well. And, you know, simple things like the ability to create beautiful ceremonies, that is marketable. The ability to do so in a way that's inclusive, that's marketable.</p>
	<p>So you put a little bit of money into making sure that's where you'd normally gather for, you know, refreshments or whatever. That looks like an amazing reception hall. And you make sure there's a nice grounds and a place for pictures and, you know, the usual sanctuary. And you have a location. And you're correct in that people would need to revisit or understand that money itself is not evil, it's energy.</p>
	<p>And you can use that in so many cool and creative ways and that you're right, that as long as it isn't self-sustaining, which by the way, most of the social enterprises that we've talked to that are doing really great things, several of them have said the only reason I can exist doing what I do is because I get my money elsewhere. And that's absolutely not sustainable.</p>
Anne	<p>It's not repeatable, right, we can't we can't reproduce it, right, with another vendor who needs an income to live on.</p>
Erin	<p>That's right. And as long as we're not making viable enterprises too, then another way to look at it is that we are contributing to underemployment or no employment, because you can really create jobs for people. And weddings. People sink piles of money into weddings</p>



	and they want to. So why not?
Amber	Such great ideas shared here, and like Rev Anne said, UU's are already in the wedding business so this isn't that far of a reach.
Erin	That's right. And you can see by the way Anne was able to rhyme off a few different approaches that there are ways to add social values. Another option is to offer environmental value by providing minimal or no waste weddings as well.
Amber	And just providing good work for people, that is a social justice act as well, especially within this economy when people are struggling to make ends meet piecing part time jobs together. So there are several ways that something like this could be a positive contributor to a local community.
MUSIC	
Erin	In order to embrace the sort of change social entrepreneurship and social enterprises bring, several of the ministers we interviewed spoke about the shift that would need to happen within UU culture - a paradigm shift. Here's Rev. Linda Thomson describing what she and Rev. Anne Barker are witnessing in several UU congregations:
Linda	When people talk about new people coming into churches, I tell leaders in congregations, well, we need more volunteers. We need more donors. I say if you treat everyone who walks in the door as a strong back and a wallet, going to run because they'll know that, they'll figure that out.
Amber	Which is an example of scarcity mindset at work.
Erin	Yes. Here's Rev. Wendy Luella Perkins reflecting on how the structure of UUism in Canada that is set up to serve only congregations, is shaping our priorities and taking our focus away from the deep why's for Unitarian Universalism, and preventing us from recognizing when good things are happening outside of congregational life. She makes reference to the fact that 70% of the 50 or so people that are a part of Soulful Singing are not Unitarian Universalists and challenges us in how we think about the role of congregational membership.
Wendy Luella Perkins	What's really coming strongly is this idea of those deep whys. There can be an infinite number of hows. But coming back to getting really clear on the deep whys, why are we really at this and for me the deep wise even in this application that I did to the UUA, I was like, you know, all the questions are geared towards Unitarian Universalism.
	And part of me is like, about 70% of the people that come don't have a connection to Unitarian Universalism in an explicit way, but they are carrying out the values, the deep whys they are living the deep whys, they are in their communities, making community. They are standing up to racism or speaking to racism, being on the side of love.



	<p>They're doing all those things, even though they may not be connected to a congregation. This is the structural part: we value an association to Unitarian Universalism because it monetarily feeds the structure, however, the fact that 70% of the people that come to soulful singing are living out these values in their own life, but without an explicit connection to Unitarian Universalism, that is not a failure.</p>
	<p>That is not a "Oh how do we get them in?" They are already engaged in the values. They're already engaged in those deep whys of why we want societies that really care, that have mutual aid for one another, all those kinds of values. So, that's the sticky wicket, that we end up to have all of that channeled so that they're investing in congregational life.</p>
	<p>They're making pledges to a congregation. Those pledges then get carried on to the CUC. It's funny because those kids that are involved in Unitarian Universalism and they're so active, those young people, they are not making financial contributions to Unitarian Universalism. And yet we see that as such a vital part of our communities.</p>
	<p>That's the way we measure the vitality of congregations. How many pledging units where we could have extremely vital communities that are not reduced to that either. I mean, that's a challenging thing, because, of course, if we're going to have staff, where is the money coming from? I get that. I get that. But then there's these other things that are there that are kind of competing or maybe even at odds with each other. We're engaging Unitarian Universalist values with people that may never, ever, ever come to a congregation, join or make a pledge.</p>
Erin	<p>Yeah. And that is the truth of it. Anybody who is not a part of a congregation, they are not considered or counted as UU in Canada.</p>
	<p>And to me, this is an astounding oversight. As eyes looking in, Because I look at things in terms of a strong social agenda, but it has to be sustainable economically at the same time.</p>
	<p>When we have all of these people who are in the world living values that are UU values and things we can get behind, but then we don't do anything to acknowledge that. I just think it's a missed opportunity. And to your point, you said, you know, the forties, fifties and sixties, a certain structure made sense, but maybe it doesn't exactly make sense anymore in that it's, to try to get the 70% of the people singing to be like,"by the way, here's another whole separate thing that happens over here.</p>
	<p>Do you want to be involved?" And that has to be the big chasm that they cross before recognized as contributing, engaged, meaningfully involved people. Yeah, that's a bit of a challenge. I mean the fact that you had to apply or did apply to the UUA (Unitarian Universalist Association in the US) aid for support, you know and what can we be doing so that you know you feel that there's locally the support that you need.</p>



Amber	That is a good point - While there may be some youth and young adults who do contribute financially, we know it's not the norm since we know how precarious their living situations are. As well, our children are considered treasured assets and have no capacity to be participating in the adult systems put in place to ensure financial longevity - they are simply expressing UUism in the world - much like that 70 percent of Wendy-Luella's Soulful Singing group. The Deep Why's, that's such an interesting way to think about our choices. I appreciate how Rev Wendy Luella is challenging us to rethink the structure of UUism so that our need to fill congregations in order to sustain the movement is not overshadowing the greater Why for existing.
Erin	With Rev. Wendy Luella and several others I interviewed we talked about the dilemma of the CUC membership being centred on congregations only and the potential for it to be more of an empowerment, networking, and amplifying body for UUism in a broader sense of the word.
Amber	Is there the potential for additional pathways to membership within the CUC? And what sort of support and resources would they benefit from?
MUSIC	
Erin	I want To finish up this episode on potential, by emphasizing new possibilities that can emerge by creating strategic connections within UUism and outside of UUism. Unicamp has big dreams and expressed that they want to be in a reciprocal relationship with the CUC, although, within the current CUC membership structure at this point they are not considered members in the way congregations are. Instead they have an agreement that recognizes them as an affiliated organization which means the two organizations honour the work the other is doing but no money is exchanged and where the CUC provides some services and courtesies to Unicamp. Unicamp is an example of a group that sees potential in building connections from within UUism.
Erin	Joanna Barrington, Camp Director, shared her desire to know more about the CUC in order to share this with the various people who come through Unicamp, some who have no other connection to UUism.
Joanna Barrington	When I do staff training at the beginning of the summer with our staff members, I'm I'm always talking about the structure of Unicamp, and then we talk about the CUC.
	This is, you know, who's kind of guiding us through in a sense. The CUC is at the top of all of that. And when we think about all the Unitarian congregations throughout Canada and ourselves included, we're kind of a congregation in a sense.
	And then, for our youth who are on staff to realize, what are opportunities to be a Unitarian outside of unit camp?
	Like, maybe you don't want to get up and go to church on Sunday morning. So what else can you do to be connected with other Unitarians



	I think would be really cool to have more of a connection with the U.S. and Unitarians all across Canada to give opportunities for people of all ages to connect with like minded thinkers other than outside of other than in just unit a camp
Erin	In our interview with Yvette and Joanna spoke about their desire to see their facility used for more UU hosted events, such as conferences and gatherings.
Amber	So there is a genuine interest here in not only feeling more associated, but also with wanting to be a go-to-location for UU events that take place. And I have to say, Having a big audacious goal makes working toward it exciting for everyone involved.
Erin	From the perspective of growing their business, a next step might be to research what type of facility would be required to meet the needs of say a board and staff meeting, retreat, or workshop. For instance, it would be vital to have fast, reliable internet, accessible buildings and facilities, technology such as screens for presentations. Then they would need to determine if the amount of revenue it would generate as a small conference facility would make it worth doing those upgrades.
Amber	Right, because work meetings have different needs than campers.
Erin	They are taking the step of becoming certified through the Ontario Campers Association, which will be a huge step in a positive direction in terms of ensuring the facility meets the types of standards that people would expect not only for a children's camp but for a retreat or meeting facility.
Amber	Good for them. That's a big undertaking.
Erin	They also have expressed a desire to engage Ministers, Minister's in training, and Lay Chaplains differently. Again, Here's Yvette to explain their hopes.
Yvette	We are struggling a bit to get our minister in residence. We're very fortunate because one of our seasonal campers is a minister and that minister does perform our Sunday services and when she's not around it has to be one of the staff members like the program director or anybody who's feeling up to it.
	Like we'll go into our Sunday services. They're so wacky and like, they're amazing and they're like these short little 30 minutes where you're like, you really appreciate a rock and, like, just feel really amazing. Like, it's just awesome. If we could partner with the CUC and congregations, even people amongst their community that are interested in becoming a minister.
	They can come to camp for a little bit and just be immersed in this aw and wonder and beauty and explore ministry - that would be a cool little way to be more UU. We host weddings and things.
	So I have tried contacting the chaplains and say like, who would be available to host a ceremony at camp? We've had those weddings, but they can lead so many different weddings, right? They can be child dedications. They can lead like pet memorials, like all



	that sort of thing.
Erin	And they also dream of being a place for Minister's to come and recharge. They learned that some ministers do not come during family camp because members of their congregation attend and so it wouldn't really be time for them to recharge.. and that got Joanna thinking...
Joanna	Wouldn't it be amazing if UU ministers from throughout Canada could have a retreat at camp? I personally would love to be able to host them and give them a place that they can enjoy being there and not feel like, I have to be the minister of my congregation.
Amber	Their desire to be interconnected with and in service to the larger UU body is evident.
Erin	Whether they have the skills within their staff and board to bring their ambitious goals to life was my next question.
	You said about, getting the word out.Do you have a communications specialist? Do you have a marketing marketer? Do you have people that know how to do that and specialize in it?
	And so part of these conversations is to try to find out if there is any value in membership or other entities, and if so, what would be valuable like. So if somebody had a membership and you ended up having access to a certain number of hours of a marketer to help you and a business consultant to help you figure out how to scale things up and whatever, like does that now become a useful membership to have? It's formalizing the services or the exchange as opposed to just saying, now you belong to the thing.
Amber	Ok, so there is a potential opportunity here for accessing skilled professionals to coach and/or assist UU-run social enterprises using fees that they would pay for in their membership, or even as a one off service. Some of these smaller organizations may not know where to access the help they need in their geographical areas, but it could be possible if done more broadly.
Erin	It is certainly a possibility worth exploring further, especially if other people choose to engage in community-based ministry. If the need for social enterprise support is great enough across the country - planning, branding, marketing, communications, accounting, human resource policies and...environmental consultant in the case of Unicamp, then the membership model could be quite advantageous.
Amber	Yes, when congregations pitch in membership fees they are collectively paying for the professional support to do the work they do as congregations more effectively. So, it would be similar here.
Erin	The other thing that arose in this interview was the desire to be a part of group health insurance, which is something else worth exploring, not just for Unicamp but for all other UU organizations that have staff. And time and again, in these interviews, I also heard the desire for support in getting the word out about the things each community-based ministry or UU group was up to. So the potential here is to see how UU's across the country can



	pool together to get the supports they need to thrive and in what ways the CUC could assist with this.
Amber	Like adding additional membership opportunities or perhaps adding regional bodies with a board of directors that act as an equivalent to a congregation for those groups and enterprises that are not yet sponsored by an existing congregation - this is the kind of structure change we need to be imagining so that we can legally allow something like this to happen. I'm inspired! Erin, You've really got my creative juices flowing!
Erin	hahaha just you wait, there's more!
MUSIC	
Erin	I wanted to share this example of potential that exists through strategic partnerships outside of UUism. Returning to my conversation with Kayoki Whiteduck and Lynn Kofmel-Preston from the Ajashki project at First Unitarian Congregation of Ottawa. There UU's are helping to define what being in right relations with Indigenous communities means.
Kayoki	We would have our own building, our own center where we'd be teaching, many different youth, the skills that they can learn because I think there's a lot of youth within the city who could benefit from our program.
	We only reach a very small number of them, but our own center, with many youth, working to develop their own skills, around food security and how it relates to climate change because in the end the youth are the ones who are going to take the blunt force of how climate change affects agriculture and food systems in Canada. Getting as much youth prepared for these kind of events in the future would be a big goal.
Lynn	We have had discussions about having an Indigenous council and that would help to guide the program. And I think that it would be great if the volunteers were eventually replaced by paid Indigenous employees who would then take the programs forward under the Indigenous Council and the lead educator.
Amber	What a great example of reconciliation in action.
Erin	I agree. When I spoke with Kayoki and Lynn I noted that the value of this project is not limited to what they co-create together but also extends further if they share their successes, failures, and key learnings with other Indigenous and non-Indigenous groups interested in working together on similar projects. In this humble way that requires quite a bit of vulnerability, UU's can help further the goal of right relations with Indigenous peoples and nations.
Amber	What a meaningful way to move the needle, and how exciting that UU's are taking part in this. Imagine a world where UU's are living our values out like this all over the place? It's not about doing everything perfectly but about being willing to learn and share in a good and humble way.



Amber	These various UU Expressions are taking a path to investing in their communities that has the potential to have amazing impacts over time as they scale up efforts. What an inspiring episode this has been considering the potential that exists for engaging in community based ministries, specifically through social enterprises.
Erin	I want to conclude by referring to the words of lay chaplain Karen Dunk-Green who challenged us to think far into the future:
Karen	We have to play the long game here. When we think transactional, we think very short term. We think, okay, I'm giving you this and you're giving me this back, or you came and you contributed this.
	And so that's okay. I'm happy, right? But we know that there's this incredibly complex, unpredictable and yet real long term relationship of how something that happens to someone cycles around through their life and touches someone else. And it could be a very long time before it cycles around again and then comes back and touches you. We know that's real.
	We can't track it, we can't predict it. And so we've forgotten how to be generous. We're still in the short term transactional mode of thinking when we try to figure out what works. And again, recognizing that money is real and the things cost things, I understand why we're restricting ourselves in that way sometimes. But I do think a different way of thinking about it opens up all kinds of possibilities that can still pay back in ways that we can't imagine.
	But we have to play the long game and we have to be willing to invest upfront in order to wait and see if those things can happen. And so if we believe that what we're offering up to the world is truly of value, then we should be able to believe that it will then work its way through that wonderful, interconnected web that we always talk about and actually make its way back to us in a way that's going to matter.
Amber	What wise words to end our exploration of how the social enterprise approach can enhance the work of community-based ministries.
Erin	In our final 2 episodes, we'll look at how UU's might write their story considering where we have come from and where we could go if we so choose.
Amber	bye for now!
MUSIC	



End of Episode 8 transcript
