



The Flaming Chalice

February 2024

Unitarian Fellowship of Sarnia & Port Huron

Lochiel Kiwanis Centre, 180 College Ave. N. Sarnia, Ontario uusarnia.com

A loving community of spiritual explorers who stand on the side of love and justice

February Services

In-person & via Zoom

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83460043365>



February 4: Brenda Lorenz – “The St. Clair River – a Tale of Recovery”

Much of the pollution of the St. Clair River came from Sarnia's Chemical Valley, sewage overflow from Sarnia's sewage system and agricultural run-off. Brenda Lorenz is a member of "Friends of the St. Clair", and she will describe the steps taken to improve water quality and restore natural habitats. A success story!

February 11: Rev. Meg Roberts – “What Sustains and Inspires Us in this Climate Emergency?”

In this time, we are facing multiple climate crises. It can be frightening and dispiriting. How can our values and practices sustain and inspire us - as individuals and as a Unitarian community? How can we get from despair to hope?

February 18: Crystal Fach – “Myth Busting Gender Identity in Schools”

Let's chat about some terminology, myth bust some of the SOGI (Sexual Orientation Gender Identity) curriculum in schools and talk about how you can become an ally to those in the community. Crystal (They/Them) is the Founder and Executive Director of Diversity Ed. - Safer Spaces Canada.

February 25: Bob Weir – “Peace through Accepting, Allowing, and Attracting”

Bob Weir returns to the Fellowship to continue his series of presentations on peace. In “Peace through Accepting, Allowing, and Attracting”, Bob will present practical spiritual definitions of these terms, the concepts and applications of the Law of Attraction and the Art of Allowing, and tips on how we can manifest peace of mind and peace of heart.

Theme—Liberating Love

Instead of a creed, Unitarian Universalists share a spirit and vision of radical inclusivity, individual agency, and social justice. We create a safe space to stand out, stand up, and change your mind particularly during life transitions. We embrace personal discovery and growth through learning, engagement, and service. Our only doctrine is love.

VICTORIA MITCHELL

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Speaker bio:

Rev. Meg Roberts has served congregations in various parts of Canada during the last 20 years: Edmonton, Montreal, Calgary, Vancouver Island, and now with Beacon in New Westminster and the Tri-cities area in BC. She also does community ministry using interactive theatre techniques with groups who want to deal with challenging social and organizational issues, and find practical solutions.

In the Buddhist tradition, one cultivates *metta*, or lovingkindness. It is a practice of wishing yourself and others freedom from suffering as well as happiness and peace. It is a practice of centering yourself on love and care for all beings.

Practice a brief metta meditation today:

May I be happy. May I be well. May I be peaceful and at ease.

May you be happy. May you be well. May you be peaceful and at ease.

May all beings be happy. May all beings be well. May all beings be peaceful and at ease.

Michael Tino

(UU Church of the Larger Fellowship – Daily Compass Jan 25, 2024)

President Mark's Musings for February

February's theme is "Liberating Love".

The UFSPH Executive Team met for the fifth meeting of 2023/24 on January 18th. It was decided at the meeting that we would recognize Sharon MacKay with the title of Honorary Life Member. Thanks to Eileen Zinn for initiating this idea last year.

On page 2 of the theme package (see link below) from the First Unitarian Congregation of Toronto, there is a quote from James Baldwin that reminds me of Sharon's approach to life:

"The longer I live, the more deeply I learn that love— whether we call it friendship or family or romance— is the work of mirroring and magnifying each other's light. Gentle work. Steadfast work. Lifesaving work in those moments when life and shame and sorrow occlude our own light from our view but there is still a clear-eyed loving person to beam it back. In our best moments, we are that person for another."

We have tentatively booked the celebration of Sharon's Honorary Life Membership for Mother's Day. Sharon's partner, Steve Lane, describes Sharon as the "best mother ever". Hopefully, having the celebration on Mother's Day will allow Sharon's family to participate.

Sharon's love goes beyond family. When I was discussing this with Sharon, she introduced me to the term Agape Love, a term I was not familiar with. With the help of Google (and Sharon) I now understand that agape love is defined as the selfless love that a person feels for strangers and humanity as a whole. It is demonstrated in one who shows respect, kindness, and compassion toward everyone without expecting anything in return.

It is not surprising that Sharon is the chair of the UFSPH Caring Community. It is so natural for her to show respect, kindness, and compassion. I believe that Sharon's selfless love goes beyond Members and Friends of the Fellowship and encompasses "humanity as a whole".

I hope by sharing January's Executive Team decision to bestow Honorary Life Membership on Sharon MacKay, gives everyone lots of time to plan the celebration and liberate our love for Sharon.

In Fellowship, Mark Woolston

'Liberating Love' theme package from the First Unitarian Congregation of Toronto:

<https://www.firstunitariantoronto.org/wp-content/publications/tj/2024/The-Journey-2024-01-Liberating-Love.pdf>

Quotes on 'Liberating Love' To Ponder

Never forget that justice is what love looks like in public.

Cornel West

The opposite of love is not hate, it's indifference.

Elie Wiesel

Power without love is reckless and abusive, and love without power is sentimental and anemic. Power at its best is love implementing the demands of justice, and justice at its best is power correcting everything that stands against love. **Martin Luther King Jr.**

How you love yourself is how you teach others to love you.

Rupi Kaur

We accept the love we think we deserve.

Stephen Chbosky

The mystic is not somebody who says, "Look what I've experienced. Look

what I've achieved." The mystic is the one who says, "Look what love has done to me."

James Finley

Love is the will to extend one's self for the purpose of nurturing one's own or another's spiritual growth.

M. Scott Peck

In this universe, love is the liberating force from the prison of judgment.

Debasish Mridha

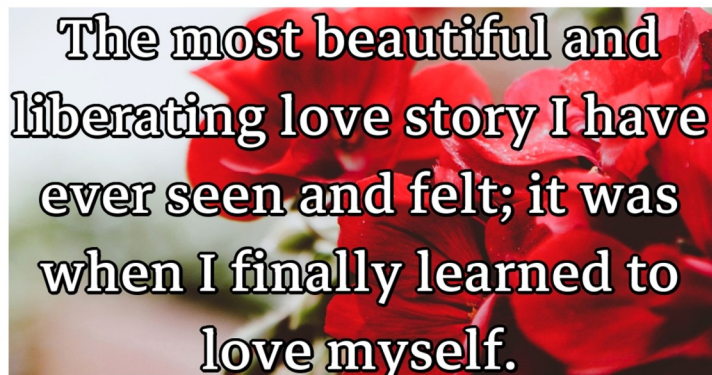
Love is self-realization. Love is liberation. The only way beyond time, to unravel the knot of existence, is to love.

Frederick Lenz

It is essential that our love be liberating, not possessive. We must, at all times, give those we love the freedom to be themselves. Love affirms the other as other. It does not possess and manipulate another as mine.

John Powell

I am grateful to have been loved and to be loved now and to be able to love, because that liberates. Love liberates. It doesn't just hold—that's ego. Love liberates. It doesn't bind. **Dr. Maya Angelou**



The most beautiful and liberating love story I have ever seen and felt; it was when I finally learned to love myself.

Love is liberating. It opens up a world of possibilities rather than restrictions. It allows us to willingly surrender our egos and replaces them with humility. Love rids us of fear and allows us to dream.

Daliah Husu

Unconditional love for all beings is *agape* love. It is the love that drives us to connect with others, the love that asks us to work for the liberation of all people, and the love most often associated with the divine by people whose belief systems include that.

Michael Tino - (UU Church of the Larger Fellowship – Daily Compass Jan 24, 2024)

Love is always patient and kind; love is never jealous; love is not boastful or conceited; it is never rude and never seeks its own advantage, it does not take offence or store up grievances. Love does not rejoice at wrongdoing but finds its joy in the truth. It is always ready to make allowances, to trust, to hope and to endure whatever comes.

1 Corinthians 13:4-7 (New Jerusalem Bible)



Steve Lane Featured in Sarnia This Week



Sarnia Strangway Centre open house showcases programs

Pianist Steve Lane and banjo player Rick Clements perform during Saturday morning's (Jan 6) open house at the Strangway Community Centre in Sarnia. The centre offers more than 70 programs for adults aged 20 and older.

PAUL MORDEN /The Observer/ Jan 08, 2024

UU Pub Night—Stay Tuned for More Details

Maud's Variety

125 Mitton St S,
Sarnia, ON

Friday, Feb. 23, 2024

6 PM—Munchies & Chat

Evening entertainment, if any,
to be announced.



CUC—Congregational Safety: More Questions Than Answers



A few decades ago, congregational safety may have seemed relatively simple, a matter of determining how many fire extinguishers a church building needed to have or what the appropriate ratio of adults to children should be for Sunday school classes. In the years since, however, the issue has become more complicated. Shootings at a Pittsburgh synagogue, a Quebec City mosque, and a Knoxville UU congregation have shown that religious communities aren't immune to violent incidents. So how can UU congregations commit to being safe spaces, while also remaining welcoming and inclusive? It's a topic that is likely to result in more questions than answers. It seems clear, however, that if congregations haven't yet taken a deeper dive into safety, they should start doing so now.

"I just want congregations to think about how they engage with people who object to some of what they say and do and represent," says Rev. Linda Thomson, the CUC's Congregational Life Lead for the Central and Eastern Regions, "because there are potential safety repercussions to that." Thomson notes that while Canadian UU congregations have so far been relatively safe from physical threats to their property, some of them have been subject to hateful graffiti and the like for hosting events such as drag shows. While Thomson doesn't want to discourage congregations from hosting such events or otherwise supporting the LGBTQ2S+ community, she does want them to be mindful of the opposition they may encounter. "If you've got a big Inclusivity flag out front, your likelihood of getting graffiti has just gone up," she says. "You're making a statement. And you're going to piss somebody off."

Thomson encourages UU congregations to work with other liberal faith traditions in their communities to determine how they can be literal "safe harbours" for each other when facing external threats. But as Rev. Danielle Webber, the CUC's Youth and Young Adult Ministry Specialist notes, congregations need to pay close attention to safety within their own membership as well, particularly for children and youth at a vulnerable stage in their life. While precautions such as ensuring youth advisors have had criminal record checks remain critical, Webber points to the importance of taking a broader view of safety as well.

"In recent years, there's been recognition that emotional safety is definitely a big piece of stuff that we need to navigate," they say, "and also spiritual safety, from a place of the advisors grounded in Unitarian Universalist theology."

While congregations can commit to making safety a priority, Webber also notes that there's no "one size fits all" approach to this issue. Safety will be a particularly important consideration for children and youth from marginalized communities, and providing it will require an approach tailored to their individual circumstances. And it can look different than safety for the general public."

Creating a safe congregation will inevitably involve taking risks, for there's no way to ensure all those who venture into a UU space will always be completely safe within its walls. But without risk, there is no reward: a place where people have the freedom to be their whole authentic selves.

<https://cuc.ca/congregational-safety-more-questions-than-answers/>

How Can Unitarian Universalists Champion Climate Justice?



The [30 Days of Love](#) celebration offers spiritual nourishment and shares wisdom from compelling UU voices, Side With Love says. The 2nd week's theme is Re-Imagining :: Climate Justice.

When it comes to fighting for and learning about climate justice, we might stick to what we know, such as joining a protest, reading a news article, or watching a documentary. During 30 Days of Love, let's think about how we can envision and explore new solutions for the climate crisis.

Here are some ways to begin and sustain this effort.

Learn about the '4 Rs of Social Transformation'

[Rachel Myslivy](#), the climate justice organizer for the Unitarian Universalist Association's Side With Love Organizing Strategy Team, introduces the [4 Rs of Social Transformation](#) shared by the [North Carolina Climate Justice Collective](#).

They are:

- **Resist: working against the current systems**
- **Reform: working within the current systems**
- **Reimagine: envisioning a just new system**
- **Recreate: creating models for a just new system**

Read [Myslivy's reflection note](#) to learn more about how to use this framework. Mindful exercise, Myslivy states, is important for social transformation:

"Reimagining is not spiritual bypassing. It is not daydreaming with no action. It does not dismiss the harmful systems of oppression or ignore the climate disruption that is breaking our communities and our world. As we work toward a future where all are free, we must dream beyond our current circumstances. Those dreams are the seed of that future, and as we believe, we begin to shift our relationships, our commitments, and our actions to creating that world."

UU World, Winter 2024





Vision

*As a spiritual community,
We embrace diversity,
We explore openly,
We stand on the side of love and justice.
Community ... Spirituality ... Service*



Other UU links:

Canadian Unitarian Council <https://cuc.ca/>

Unitarian Universalist Associations latest **UUWorld** <http://www.uuworld.org/>

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