



The Flaming Chalice

January 2016

Unitarian Fellowship of Sarnia & Port Huron
180 College Ave. N. Sarnia, Ontario
www.uusarnia.com

... a refreshing alternative for religious explorers

January Services

Sunday services begin at 11:00 a.m. in the Kiwanis Room at the Lochiel Kiwanis Centre at 180 College Ave. N., Sarnia (enter at the Forsythe St. main door).

Jan 3: “The Burning Bowl Ritual”- Wendy Starr

We will individually review our past year, determine what lessons or insights that we wish to bring forward into the New Year and, using the ceremony of the burning bowl, we will then release what no longer serves us.

Jan 10: “The Good Deeds Project” - Laura Louise Persichetti

Laura Louise will be sharing her journey of the Good Deeds Project. This was birthed as a suicide prevention program to bring awareness to the power of kindness.

Jan 17: “Our Greatest Strength - Our Biggest Weakness” - Allan McKeown

To honour “Religious Freedom Day” in the United States, Allan will reflect on its Unitarian roots and whether, in an era of declining church attendance, UUism can evolve to meet the challenges of the future.

Jan 24: “Freedom, Opportunity And The Disciplines” - Nathan Colquhoun

Freedom comes not just from the opportunity to do whatever we want, but through the disciplining of our actions so that we can actually live free lives.

Jan 31: “Making Sarnia A Home For Refugees” - Stephanie Ferrera and Roxanne Gilroy-Machado

Stephanie is the Project Coordinator for the Local Immigration Partnership while Roxanne is the Newcomer Services Supervisor with YMCA's across South Western Ontario.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 January Services
- 2 Executive Team Report
- 3 President's Reflection
- 4 Refugee Sponsorship Update
- 5 Upcoming Events
- 6 Other Info
- 7 Other Info continued
- 8 In Memory of John

*“Anybody can create community with people who believe just like they do. The true test of **community** rests in the ability to create it with people who disagree with us.”*

- Lee Barker, Unitarian Universalist Minister

Executive Team Report

By Ann Steadman



Executive Team Highlights from the Dec. 17th, 2015 Meeting

“Love is the spirit of this church, and service is its law.

*This is our great covenant:
To dwell together in peace,
To seek truth in love,
And to help one another.”*

James Vila Blake.

Unitarian Room: The lease for the former Unitarian Room was assumed by St. Clair Child and Youth Services effective December 1, 2015. We will have free use of SCC&YS’s facilities in the Lochiel Kiwanis Centre on weekends and evenings and free storage of our UU materials. This arrangement will save the Fellowship some \$269.51 per month.

Finance: As of the end of November, we are continuing to show a net budget surplus. The third and final installment of the Annual Program Contribution to the Canadian Unitarian Council was paid on Dec. 3rd. A donation has been made of some \$700 to the Inn of the Good Shepherd from monies raised by our Soup Sundays.

Piano: We are actively pursuing replacing the piano in the Kiwanis Room.

Membership: A “New Members Orientation” will be offered to our newer and potential members in the New Year.

Program: The Program Team continues to provide us with interesting and varied Sunday services. Many thanks!

Social Justice: Both Fellowship members and the community at large have been very supportive of our Syrian Refugee initiative. Please see “Refugee Sponsorship Update” on page 4.

Executive Team Meetings are open to the members of the Fellowship. They happen at 6:30 pm on the 2nd Thursday of the month from September to June at the Lochiel Kiwanis Centre. **The next meeting will be on Thursday, January 14, 2016.**



60th Anniversary!

2016 marks our Fellowship’s 60th year as a voice for liberal religion in the Sarnia and Port Huron area. The Executive is hoping to hold a celebration in June. To that end, we are bringing together an Anniversary Celebration Team to plan and implement the celebration. If you would like to join this Team or if you have any suggestions to share please contact Ann Steadman or Dwayne O’Neill.

President's January Reflection

Other Thoughts on Othering”

On December 6th, 2015, Wendy Starr led an excellent service on the topic of “Xenophobia”. This word is defined as an “intense or irrational dislike or fear of people from other countries.” Most commonly today the targets of this fear are those of the Muslim faith. No doubt everyone is aware of the acts of violence, both physical and verbal, that many Muslims have experienced with greater intensity since the awful Paris attacks.

As UUs, many of us are speaking and acting in quite a different way. Fully one half of Unitarian congregations in Canada are engaging in Syrian refugee sponsorships! And, of course, I am proud that our Fellowship is a part of these efforts. To read an excellent article on UU refugee initiatives please click on the following link

<http://www.uuworld.org/articles/congregations-sponsor-syrian-refugees>

Peter Morales, President of the Unitarian Universalist Association, (UUA) has made the following remarks.

“The enemy isn’t Islam, or any other religion. The enemy is the radical fundamentalism that defines one group as the ‘good and pure’ and everyone else as bad.”

“We instinctively, even unconsciously, divide people between us and them. Race is one powerful way we do it, but not the only way. People who speak with a different accent are outside our tribe. People who speak a different language or who have a different religion are *other*. ...

The problem is not cognitive. We can’t *think* our way to the Beloved Community. Workshops and trainings won’t get us there.

We build a new world through *action*. We build relationships. We build alliances. We must open ourselves to *experience* the ‘other’—for once we truly experience one another in depth and over time the ‘other’ is no longer other. ‘They’ become ‘we’.”

What Peter describes in the above paragraph is exactly what we are doing and will be doing through our partnership with the Sarnia Muslim Association!

In Fellowship, *Ann Steadman*

Please check out the following links:

<http://www.uuworld.org/articles/mixture-triumph-and-pain>

<http://www.today.com/news/muslim-americans-speak-out-what-its-live-us-after-paris-t58356>



“Unitarian Universalism is especially important right now, because something sinister is brewing in our culture and our world again: a harsh hateful fundamentalism in both religion and politics that makes a mockery of discourse and a joke of fellowship ...”

The Unitarian Universalist
Pocket Guide, 2012



Refugee Sponsorship Update as of Dec 23, 2015

Where are we at in the process?

The Sarnia Interfaith Refugee Partnership (SIRP), which is our Fellowship and the Sarnia Muslim Association, is currently in the process of gathering the documentation required by our Sponsorship Agreement Holder (SAH), the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC). This includes providing the names/contact information of volunteers for background checks and insurance confirmations prior to the sign-off on a Memorandum of Understanding with the MCC. Once this paperwork is accepted by the MCC our application for a sponsorship through the *Blended Visa Office Referral* (BVOR) program will be processed.

When can we expect to welcome a family?

We don't know. The MCC reports that they cannot give us any timelines for receiving a family. Since the new Federal Government came into power and has attempted to bring in as many Syrian refugees as possible by the end of 2015, only those sponsorship applications already in process are being considered (these are mostly private sponsorships). We have been told that the BVOR program will be re-activated in January. The Mennonite Central Committee says that once we are approved and then accept a family that things could move very quickly. What is happening now is that some private sponsors have been given just 48 hours notice!

How are our finances?

Due to the tremendous generosity of the community (one business has donated some \$10,000) and of our members and friends, the Fellowship's share of the sponsorship is secured without recourse to Fellowship monies. Our Co-Treasurer, Mark Woolston, has set up a separate "Refugee Fund" bank account at Libro Credit Union which is totally dedicated to this initiative. Further, our other Co-Treasurer, Dan Danner, will ensure that tax receipts are forwarded to community donors who gave \$20 or more and to Fellowship members and friends as part of their regular annual tax receipt.

Where will the newcomers be housed?

A member of the mosque is donating the use of a townhouse for a year (SIRP is responsible for the newcomers' accommodation for the first year). This townhouse has been repainted and cleaned. It is located on Colburne Rd. just north of the 402 overpass. It is 'basic' accommodation consistent with the guidelines that we have been given from the government which asks us to provide only what a family could afford if on social assistance. We will ensure that the townhouse is furnished and has essential household items. Goodwill Industries will provide vouchers for clothing and other household purchases. It will be important to ensure that the newcomers are able to make their own choices as far as is possible.

How will the newcomers be helped to adapt and integrate after their arrival?

Settlement Task Teams have been set up populated with volunteers from both of our communities. The newcomers will be connected with the YMCA's Newcomer Settlement Program and services provided by the Sarnia-Lambton Local Integration Partnership. As well, should the family that we receive be of the Muslim faith, the mosque community will be most welcoming while, I might add, wanting any newcomers to also integrate into our Sarnia/Canadian culture. Great thanks to our many members who have volunteered to serve on the various settlement teams!

Please contact Ann Steadman at 519-542-9708 or Dwayne O'Neill at 519-869-2725 should you have any questions or would like more information.

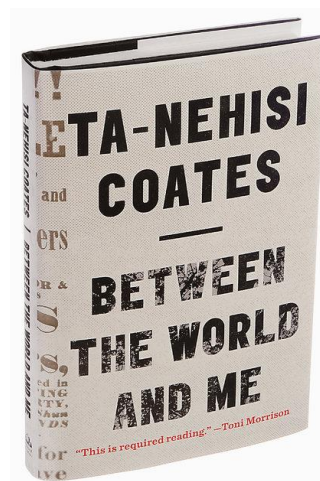
Regular Events

Book Club: Continues to meet on the 3rd Sunday of every month at 9:15 am at 'Parkside Perk' on Front St. In January, we will be reviewing the book *Between The World And Me* by Ta-Nehisi Coates. Everyone is welcome to come out and join the discussion, whether you've read the book or not.

Men's Group: The Men's Group plans will be announced as they become available.

Women's Circle: Pizza & Conversation Evening, Tuesday, January 14th, 6 pm at the home of Judy Lindberg, #57-1660 River Rd., Marysville, Michigan.

Small Group Ministry: Members meet every other Thursday afternoon at chosen locations. All are welcome. Contact Betty Learn for info at: 519-337-4039



Special Events

New Year's Eve Pot Luck Dinner & Party

Zena & Colin Graf will, once again, be graciously hosting their annual New Year's Eve Pot Luck Dinner and Party. Dinner will be at 6:00 pm. Feel free to bring your spouse/partner or a friend or two. It would be greatly appreciated if you could let Zena and Colin know what food item you intend to bring so they can get a good balance of main dishes, desserts, etc.

110 Bright St., Sarnia R.S.V.P. 519-337-9843

Launching our 60th Anniversary Year

Let's celebrate the beginning of our 60th Anniversary Year by enjoying a fine dinner at the Ravenous Gastropub Restaurant while listening to Steve Lane play the piano.

Where: Ravenous Gastropub, 146 Christina St. N., Sarnia

When: Saturday, January 9, 2015

The restaurant opens at 5 pm.

Please RRSVP by phoning Lorraine Cheney at 519-336-7899 Tuesday, January 5th.

Other Info

ICUU Update on Burundi Situation Dec. 19, 2015:

Violence in Burundi has escalated with government forces killing civilians, leaving the bodies in the streets to further terrorise their people. The still active charges against the leader of the Burundi Unitarians are now being used to seek to arrest and intimidate the lawyers and those of others faiths who were of assistance.

Regrettably, it is now necessary for Burundi Unitarians to join the multitudes fleeing the country for personal safety. Assistance is being offered to all our congregants who need to leave and several large homes in another country are being rented to provide shelter.

So far everyone has been able to leave safely, although some Unitarians remain in country. It is likely we will need to house and feed people away from home for a number of months.

Provisions have been made for the Unitarian Church Building in Bujumbura to be secured and guarded. When possible, worship and prayer continues there.

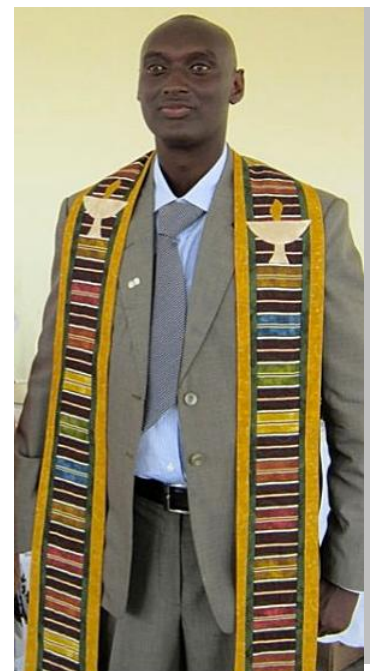
The Rev. Fulgence Ndagijimana is living in one of the rented shelters, organizing relief efforts and looking after the spiritual needs of both Unitarians and non-Unitarians.

A significant grant from the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC) combined with the generous donations from Unitarians and Unitarian Universalists around the world is making all this possible. Any funds the Burundi Unitarians had have been frozen by the Burundi government.

The International Council of Unitarians and Universalists (ICUU) is working closely with the Unitarian Church of Burundi to support these efforts. Partners are assisting through a special multi-organizational working group coordinated by the ICUU and also including representatives of the Canadian Unitarian Council, International Bridges for Justice, UUA International Office, UUSC and the ICUU Francophone Mentoring Coalition.

Please continue to support the ICUU Burundi Appeal. You can donate online via credit card or PayPal by clicking [here](#) . Checks in \$ can be sent to Burundi Appeal, ICUU, PO Box 2575, Corvallis. OR 97339, USA. Donations from US taxpayers only [are](#) tax deductible.

Rev Steve Dick, Executive Director, International Council of Unitarians and Universalists (ICUU)



“The Rev. Fulgence Ndagijimana is living in one of the rented shelters, organizing relief efforts and looking after the spiritual needs of both Unitarians and non-Unitarians.”

Other Info continued ...

Canadian Unitarian Council (CUC) e-newsletter: To receive this electronic newsletter from the CUC once per month, go the website at www.cuc.ca and click on the sign up link on the Home page. Also, copies of the “*Canadian Unitarian*” can be found on Sundays on the information table and are free to take home. Check out the “*Sermon of the Month*” on the CUC website.

“UU World” on line! The American quarterly magazine “*UU World*” is also available as a weekly electronic newsletter. Highly recommended for UU’s! Go to www.uuworld.org and click on “*get weekly email updates from UU World*”.

Did You Know There Is UU Fellowship Without Walls?

The Church of the Larger Fellowship (CLF) is the largest Unitarian Universalist congregation in the world. For UUs and others, it offers an online spiritual home beyond walls or geography. Unitarian Universalists find supportive UU fellowship and words to inspire and comfort.

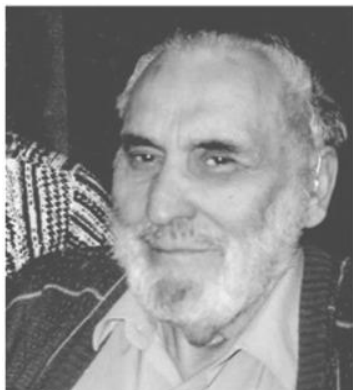
The CLF website states that, “No matter where you’re located, you can join our online spiritual community. We serve anyone longing for a faith rooted in love that cultivates wonder, encourages imagination and champions justice.” To check out the CLF go to <http://www.clfuu.org/> .



Holly is an ancient symbol which tells us that life endures even when all seems dead. It is beautiful, but it is also fierce, as anyone who has been stabbed by a holly leaf can tell you. Beautiful is good, but it turns out that fierce is sometimes what gets you through the winter.

How has being fierce helped you to get through your tough times?

In Memory of John Drage



July 9, 1930 - Dec 7, 2015

As stated in his obituary, “John was a farmer for many years before opening up a wicker business with the love of his life, the late Peggy Drage. John was a member of Writers in Transition, and the Unitarian Church. He was an accomplished writer, humorist, pilot, artist and woodworker.”

To us, however, he was “our John”, a constant presence each Sunday morning always arriving early to help set-up the room and to make sure that we had a bees-wax chalice candle. He could be consistently relied upon to make us laugh with his droll stories during Joys and Concerns and to provide his “Three-Step Soup” on Soup Sundays. John, you are greatly missed and will always be loved by your UU friends.

“Because of the role that religion has historically played in denying gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people their full humanity, I believe that we now have a special calling to reach out to our GLBT sisters and brothers. We need to offer an explicit welcome, because the world can still be a very unwelcoming place. We need to offer radical acceptance, because neither family nor society can always be counted on to be accepting. We need to offer unconditional love, because Love is at the heart of religious community.”

— Allison Barrett, Canadian UU Minister



Please consider sharing this newsletter with a friend and then invite them to a service! Every Sunday is “Bring a Guest Sunday”!

Each “Flaming Chalice” newsletter is printed by the Organization for Literacy Lambton (OLL): helping every person acquire the gift of literacy!

Newsletter editor: Wendy Cornelis

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