



The Flaming Chalice

March 2025

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

March Services

In-person & via Zoom

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83101536641>

March 2: "Beacon of Light" – Rev. Fiona Heath

With the light of the chalice guiding the way, we explore our aspiration to be theologically alive: seeking to be ever evolving in our understanding, open to new knowledge. How does our theology respond to the present moment and where might it go in the future?

March 9: "Brain Gym"- Erin Gudmundson

Brain Gym (R) integrative techniques reduce stress, improve performance, and enhance sense of well being. These simple activities allow us to activate our sensory modalities and both hemispheres of the brain. This presentation is an introduction to a tool that empowers you to live your best life!

March 16: "Fingerprints of Humanism, John Dietrich, and You!"

- Drew Bekius

In the early 1900s, a young Unitarian minister, defrocked of traditional Christian credentials, began leading a non-theistic movement out of Minneapolis that he would soon describe as *humanism*. This movement would then birth the American Humanist Association along with several other organizations. Drew, who works with this very same Minneapolis humanist congregation today, will reflect on where humanism began and where it's headed today.

March 23: "Canadian Foreign Policy and the Quest for Peace and Justice" – Kevin MacKay

The past few years have seen the global political landscape shift rapidly. Old structures of power are declining, while new ones are emerging. These developments present serious challenges to Canada's national sovereignty and to our place in the world. This talk will explore how Canadians can navigate the emerging multipolar world in a way that promotes peace, justice, and sustainability.

More service information on page 2.

Theme:

'Theological Aliveness'



*Spirituality is all about
honoring the human journey,
loving it and living it in all its
wonder and tragedy.*

Richard Rohr

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More March Service Info

March 30: “Mind Control in Traditional Media” – Steve Lane

Having worked in television, newspaper and various marketing agencies, Steve will share the rich dichotomy of how news and marketing shapes us, and how we have shaped them in the modern age of communications.

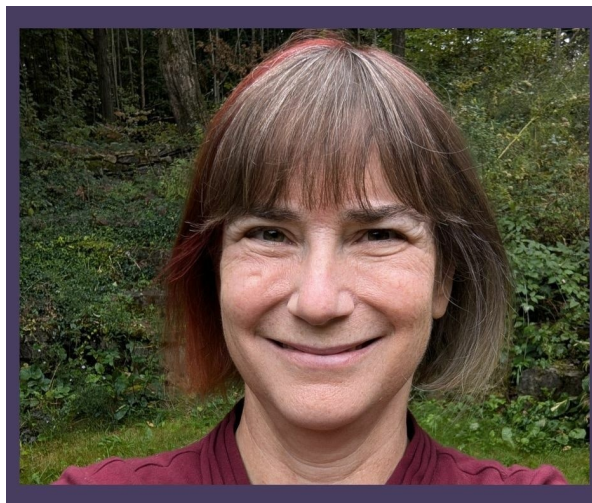
March 30th will also be a Soup Sunday!

March 2—Beacon of Light: The Aspiration of Theological Aliveness

Roots of Resilience Service

Rev. Fiona Heath

Bio: Rev. Fiona Heath spent nine years as the settled minister at the Unitarian Congregation in Mississauga, as well as two years as the part time minister of the UU Congregation of Durham. Now retired, she lives in the countryside north of Kingston, focusing on fiction and poetry writing, local climate crisis response, and how to be a UU at home.



The more the outer world needs fixing, the more our inner world needs deepening. Finding allies in community... is a valuable and perhaps even necessary way of carrying on and moving forward to regain again and again a sense of hope.

Are you feeling overwhelmed at times with the headlines and “all the stuff that is happening so quickly”? How are you taking care of yourself for the long haul?

Daily Meditations With Matthew Fox-- Feb 1 2025

For the theme packet on ‘Theological Aliveness’, contact Ann Steadman at asteadman@cogeco.ca .

Reflection by President Tracy Jutras

Executive Team Report: February 2025 Highlights

- Soup Sunday was held on the last Sunday in February and was a success. Everyone enjoyed three delicious soups and donations will be going to the Inn of the Good Shepherd.
- Our AGM is only two months away on April 27th. Everyone is invited.
- Our nominating committee consists of Ann Steadman and Mary Stearns. They will be looking to fill two positions for our 2025-2026 year: Religious Exploration Chairperson and Member-at-Large.
- Satisfaction Survey: We haven't released one since April 2023, so we will update the previous questions and ask our Members and Friends (those listed in the Directory) to fill the survey out. We are interested in your thoughts and ideas for our Fellowship. Stay tuned for more information. Death Café Update: Our team consists of Allan McKeown, Ann Steadman, Brenda Woolston, Mary Stearns and me. Our first meeting will be in March. Thank you to all who volunteered.

Our March theme is The Practice of Theological Aliveness: how we are opening to new knowledge and evolving our understanding.

In 2016, a Canadian team convened to create a vision statement and also came back with five "aspirations."

Vision

As Canadian Unitarian Universalists, we envision a world in which our interdependence calls us to love and justice.

Five Aspirations

As Canadian Unitarian Universalists, we aspire to be:

Deeply Connected: We strive to foster healthy relationships amongst and within UU communities, with the broader world and with all life.

Radically Inclusive: We strive to create hospitable, diverse, multi-generational communities.

Actively Engaged: We strive to work joyfully for a just and compassionate society, experimenting with new forms of community.

Theologically Alive: We seek to be ever-evolving in our understanding, open to new knowledge.

Spiritually Grounded: We seek transformation through personal spiritual experiences and shared ritual.

If you wish, you may use these as a guidepost in your life and it might also help you to explain our faith tradition to others.

In Fellowship, Tracy Jutras

Quotes on 'Theological Aliveness' To Ponder

Our theology is expansive but it has boundaries, a shape. Rooted in the earth, in science and knowledge, it rises to open up to the universe, to the divine, to the mystery. It looks like a chalice, ready to be filled by the beauty of each one of us, and strong enough to hold us all together. **Rev. Fiona Heath**

I have an almost complete disregard of precedent and a faith in the possibility of something better. It irritates me to be told how things always have been done... I defy the tyranny of precedent. I cannot afford the luxury of a closed mind. I go for anything new that might improve the past.

Clara Harlowe Barton (1821-1912)

We understand there is a mandate emerging from our theological heritage to dismantle the structures and systems which silence, harm, and exploit human beings and the varied ecosystems of our planet as well as to work to create just and sustainable communities without barriers to belonging in our communities for all those who share our values and theological perspectives. **Rev. Dr. Sheri Prud'homme**

The patchwork quilt of our theological heritage is torn and fraying in places, and it is stunningly vibrant in others. Some sections have been mended or wholly replaced... As we mature spiritually as a tradition and as people, we develop our capacities to be with the broken and the beautiful, the contradictions, and the complexities. **Rev. Dr. Sheri Prud'homme**

As a religious leader of Unitarian Universalists, my goal is to get the people I serve to be able to articulate a theology of salvation by interconnection--one in which we are all born with inherent worth and dignity, from a wellspring of love that desires our interdependence and health and has endowed us with the power to be agents of that salvation right here, right now, on this earth. In organizer language, I'm trying

to get people to understand collective liberation and to sense both the blessing and the responsibility of claiming a belief that none of us is free until all of us are free. **Rev. Ashley Horan**

I wish others (and our own people) understood that Unitarian Universalism stands as securely in the lineage of Christianity (and Judaism) as any other branch that has emerged from the Christian story--even though many of us (myself included) consider our

tradition largely post-Christian. We didn't arrive on the scene 60 years ago, ex nihilo. We have a storied past that finds continuity with our present. So much of what undergirds our Principles is grounded in the mandate of

love and justice found in Jewish and Christian scripture. We distort ourselves unnecessarily when we ignore our roots, or worse, pretend they don't exist. My wish is that we would take up the mantle to be a shining example of the best that these parent traditions have to offer. **Rev. Shawn Gauthier**

I discovered, from my first encounter in Utah of all places(!), that a Unitarian Universalist congregation makes generous room for god-believers and atheists, for pagans, Buddhist-oriented meditators and wandering, non-ritualistic agnostics alike. Over the years, I have met with you at the doors of death and presided at your memorial services. Each time, whether you've believed in a life after death, or not, whether you were pagan or atheist, or whatever, you have affirmed for me the power of this religion as something unique and precious. **Rev. Steven Epperson**

We see a coherence to the world, and a generosity that includes all. So, let us love one another, for love comes from the holy, and if we cannot love one another—and ourselves—how could we love the whole? **Rev. Fran Dearman**

Theological Aliveness

Fellowship Happenings/Opportunities



Sunday, March 30th is Soup Sunday!

Plan to stay after the service to enjoy a delicious lunch and wonderful conversation.

Suggested donation is \$5 per individual or \$10 per family.

All proceeds to The Inn of the Good Shepherd.

Death Café

A small committee has been formed to begin the planning of a 'Death Café' which will be open to the community.

At a Death Café people drink tea, eat cake and discuss death. The aim is to increase awareness of death and to help people make the most of their (finite) lives.

For more info, or if willing to help in any way, contact Allan McKeown.

allanmck@protonmail.com

Death Cafe

Talking about death won't kill you.



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING



GET INVOLVED!

Fellowship Annual General Meeting

Sunday, April 27th following the service.

Please plan to attend and make your voice heard!

Canadian Unitarian Council (CUC) Retirement

Linda Thomson Announces Retirement



Rev. Linda Thomson, likes to joke that if there had been a poll entitled “Least Likely To Become A Religious Professional”, conducted in High School, she would have been at the top of the list. Yet life surprises us all. In June, Linda is retiring as the CUC’s Congregational Life Lead for the Central and Eastern regions, after holding this position for over 20 years. Based in Burlington, Ontario, she had previously served in a similar role with the Unitarian Universalist Association’s St. Lawrence District. She applied for her current position when the CUC took over providing services to Canadian congregations in 2002.

Linda was drawn to her position by her strong belief that Unitarian Universalism can be a positive force in both individuals’ lives and the wider world. She’s appreciated how it creates communities of support and challenge for people including herself.

“Things I don’t think I ever would have thought of before became apparent to me through my involvement with UUism,” she says. “My worldview really expanded. That felt to me like a really important and good thing to be part of.”

As one of the Congregational Life Leads, Linda has felt privileged to witness the dedication of the UU’s she’s interacted with.

“Sometimes when I’ve been in a room full of committed UUs, — and this is true both in physical rooms and on Zoom rooms — I just get moved,” she says. “by the care and commitment of the people who love their congregations and are willing to give part of themselves to those congregations and their missions. That’s really inspiring to see. These are volunteers who are working hard to make the world better. And that really keeps me going a lot of the time.”

The technological advances that have occurred over the past two decades have significantly impacted Linda’s work. Recalling a time when group meetings had to be held by phone and many congregations only had print editions of their newsletters, she’s grateful that videoconferencing and email have made it easier to connect.

“That’s a practical change, but it’s made really cool things possible,” she says. “We are able to network and collaborate in ways that we couldn’t before.”

In a time of rising secularism and anti-religiosity, Linda believes UUism is handling the challenges this poses better than many other faith traditions. But she’s nonetheless concerned by the sense, particularly among the younger generations, that church is “old-fashioned” or irrelevant, a misconception she hopes can be addressed.

“That is probably where my place of concern lies,” she says. How do we make ourselves known and how do we disavow people of the notion that we are not relevant to their lives because people have a need to reflect on the meaning of life and the big questions and to be in community with one another and to be challenged. And there are other ways to do it, but

we're a really great way to do it, and I want people to know that."

While technology has made connection across congregations easier, Linda emphasizes that relationships remain the foundation of the work, and anyone doing similar work to start with relationships. The connections she's built in her role are something she anticipates she'll miss in retirement.

"I'll miss the people," she says. "I've made lots of dear relationships and I won't be in regular contact with those folks as much anymore. That feels like a bit of a looming hole."

In retirement, Linda is looking forward to once again singing in her church choir, doing some traveling, and perhaps some contract work.

"I'm open to what opportunities arise," she says. "I want to give myself space."

Executive Director Vyda Ng says Linda holds large swaths of CUC history. "Linda has been a steady, wise and experienced presence throughout all the changes at the CUC since 2002. I have depended on her knowledge and memory and will sorely miss Linda."

"Many of you will be asking – what's next?" For Linda – a lot of enjoyable camping and spending time with her beloved family. For the CUC – we will be advertising and hiring a Congregational Life position later in the spring, with a planned overlap with Linda before she leaves."

Save the date: Celebrate Linda's retirement with us on June 7th from 4:00 – 7:00 pm ET.

Rev. Linda will be leading and presenting in-person at our May 25th service.

CUC AGM 2025 Saturday, May 31



Via Zoom @ 1:00 pm ET (3.5hrs)

The CUC's Annual General Meeting brings together congregations and UUs to make decisions about matters that affect our collective national faith community.

This year, the AGM is held online. Participants and delegates will discuss and vote on the 2025-2026 budget. The CUC Board has approved the use of the Gradients of Agreement decision-making tool for use during the AGM.

Before the AGM, in March and April, join in hosted conversations for an orientation to this tool, and to ask questions, and to share your feedback. CUC Board members will be present at each session.

These conversations are of interest to congregational delegates, leaders, young adults, anti-racism/dismantling barriers advocates, ministers.

Each session will cover the same ground, offering several dates so you can choose the date and time that suits you. Dates and times are being confirmed.

Delegate registration: To register your congregation's approved delegates, please fill out this separate form by May 1, 2025. Your delegates must be registered for your congregation to vote.

Join us on [Zoom](#).

Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA)

UUA Joins Multifaith Lawsuit Asserting The ICE Policy Violates the First Amendment

February 11, 2025

On February 11, a multifaith coalition and the [Institute for Constitutional Advocacy and Protection](#) announced that they had filed a lawsuit challenging ICE's "sensitive locations policy." Churches (along with schools and hospitals) had previously been protected from the agency's enforcement actions, but a Department of Homeland Security memo rescinded that protection on January 20th.

The Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) is proud to announce that we are a plaintiff in this lawsuit. We join this multifaith coalition to challenge the ending of ICE's sensitive locations policy, and oppose any interpretation of law which would allow immigration raids in houses of worship and religious ceremonies.

The suit asserts that subjecting places of worship to ICE enforcement actions without a judicial warrant substantially burdens our religious exercise in violation of the First Amendment and the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA). These enforcement actions at our places of worship interfere with our religious activities and our ability to fulfill our religious mandate to welcome and serve immigrants.

Of the lawsuit, the UUA's Executive Vice President Carey McDonald said, "As Unitarian Universalists (UUs), fighting for justice and liberation for all people is at the heart of our faith tradition, which recognizes the spark of the divine inherent in every person; our sacred spaces must continue to offer sanctuary to those who face oppression, violence, or alienation, including immigrant communities.

UUs are united in our commitment through a set of shared religious values, which include interdependence, pluralism, justice, equity, generosity, and transformation, all of which revolve around Love at the center. Compelled by those values, we will continue to do what Unitarians and Universalists have done throughout our centuries-long history - use our voices and our actions to side with love and help those who are in the greatest need."

UU congregations include members who are immigrants, both documented and undocumented. Many of our congregations provide social ministries that serve immigrant communities in church spaces, such as through food and diaper distribution, ESL classes, a migrant-focused early learning program, and other tutoring and skill-building. And a large proportion of our congregations are located near the coasts, U.S.-Mexico or U.S.-Canada borders, or in cities where immigration-enforcement actions have recently occurred.





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 Association's UUWorld <http://www.uuworld.org/>

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To unsubscribe from this newsletter at any time, please send your request by email to:

asteadman@cogeco.ca