

# Fellowship News

## *Infolettre UUFO*

SPRING ISSUE

MARCH 2022



## The Beauty of Very Early Spring

By Pat Lucey

Our Sunday worship planners have chosen the theme of “Beauty” for the months of May and June, because what could be more beautiful than the awakening of trees and flowers during those glorious months of spring in Ottawa? Ah, the blessed warmth arrives at last -- off with the tuques and scarves, and on with the shorts and sandals!



But wait: according to the calendar, the first day of spring is March 20<sup>th</sup>. Seriously? March 20<sup>th</sup>, when we still have piles of dirty snow all around us, muddy lost mittens lying on the ground, patches of slushy ice on the lakes and rivers, and the real threat of a crippling blizzard over the next 3 or 4 weeks?

Here in the Ottawa area, as in many other northern regions, we are gifted with an unofficial season which I call “sprinter” -- it’s spring! And it’s winter! Sprinter begins on the spring equinox, and lasts until May Day, when we are reasonably – but not 100% -- certain we won’t see any more snow until somewhere around Halloween. The ancient northern European feast of Beltaine is celebrated on May Day, with bonfires, feasting, drinking, and various fertility rites, but here in Ottawa, we also celebrate Beltaine by taking off our snow tires and hoping for the best.



Yes, May and June are beautiful, but sprinter is full of beauty and joy as well. Well before the migrating birds start to return to our yards and meadows, we hear the chirps and twitters of the winter birds, and we see more of them every day. Juncos, chickadees, cedar waxwings, cardinals, blue jays, redpolls, woodpeckers, goldfinches, nuthatches, wild turkeys, owls, red-tailed hawks -- they have all been hunkering down over the winter months, and the longer, warmer days in very early spring bring them out into the sunshine, looking for food, mates and nesting materials.

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Eager for puddles!



## Melting snow and mud puddles

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Our common Ontario lilac is a classic May beauty, but she starts plumping out her buds while we still have snow on the ground and below -zero nights. If you have a lilac bush, you can observe the development of those buds from week to week throughout March and April, while you anticipate the rich colour and overwhelming fragrance of your lilac in the full bloom which is to come.

Springtime has a foot firmly in the door at last when the ice starts melting, and flowing water returns to our rivers and streams. Water is life, and as Rumi said, "When you do things from your soul, you feel a river moving in you, a joy." We are one with the water, and in the melting, softening beauty of spring, we feel this joy again.

There is beauty and joyfulness everywhere in that first magical day when the sun is bright and warm, and the air is soft, and you go out for a walk with your winter jacket unzipped, and your scarf hanging loose, and everyone around you is smiling with delight. We may be buried in snow again by the end of the week, but who cares? It's maple syrup season, and we're off to the cabane à sucre!



## Caring and Sharing "May their memory be a blessing"



Daphne and Ruth, Aug 10 2007

Many of us are still mourning the loss of **Ruth Milne**, who died as the Winter Newsletter headed into print.

[An obituary](#) holds a tiny space in the world of the internet to hold on to the story of a person who brought love and joy to those around her.

Ruth has come up a number of times in this newsletter, [in 2013](#), she was profiled, and we checked in on her recently, this past [summer 2021](#).

Ruth and Bill moved to Wakefield after Bill's retirement in 1995, just in time for the founding of UUFO as we know it. She actively served our Fellowship from the very start, organized outings, and hosted countless potlucks up until she moved back to Salem, MA for the final years of her life.

### Caroline Balderston Parry

A good friend to our Fellowship, Caroline died on February 11, surrounded by her family singing her in and out of consciousness. Music and celebration were woven into her life. We will remember her dulcimer accompanying her singing the hymn "My Life Flows On" at the last service she presented for us at UUFO a year ago. Caroline, an active Quaker, served 3 Unitarian congregations as Director of Religious Education, for 15 years. She thought deeply, lived her social conscience and rejoiced with her many communities.



Caroline at home, Feb 1 2022



## Founding Faces

In March, we celebrate our Fellowship's Anniversary, on the Sunday closest to the 17th each year. This year is the 26th anniversary of our small but mighty UUFO.



St. Patrick's Day, March 17 1996, outside Rockcliffe Park Public School Library: the nascent Fellowship and many supporting friends glowed with the warmth of the joyous Irish blessing given to them moments before during the celebratory inaugural service by the Fellowship founder and minister, the Rev. Fred Cappuccino.

Cover art for March 2020 Anniversary Service that wasn't



Art by Andrina Cox

*Spring is more  
colourful like this duck  
and Koi hugging each  
other*

*Thanks, happy you  
found the drawing  
end of winter March  
to spring bosom  
buddies,*

Andrina



The founding members of the Unitarian  
Universalist Fellowship of Ottawa:

**DONALD MCDIARMID**

**CATHERINE DEVITO**

**VERNON LANG**

**DAPHNE MCREE**

**AUDREY O'CALLAGHAN**

**MARILYN KUHN**

**JAMES JORDAN /**

**SANDRA JORDAN**

**KAREN BAYS-WOODS /**

**GEOFFREY DUNKLEY**

**CAROL ANNE OWEN /**

**MARK SEEBARAN**

Six of these people have passed away (Catherine, Vernon, Daphne, Audrey, Sandra and Geoff), and Jim, Karen, Carol-Anne and Mark have moved away, so only Don and Marilyn remain among us as Fellowship members who signed the Letters Patent.

# Joys and Sorrows or Check in?

By Nancy Rubenstein & Laura Evans

The Worship Cluster has had many discussions over the years about one element of our service, Joys and Sorrows. Should we call it Joys and Sorrows or Joys and Concerns? Should we separate personal Joys and Sorrows from Concerns for the World?

**Joys and Sorrows** is recognized as an integral part of our spiritual practice and a strong force in strengthening our community. This Unitarian ritual allows space for the community to hold one another's emotional moments and milestones, either through candle lighting or water rituals.

There is an element of unpredictability in opening the mic to Joys and Sorrows. What if no one comes forward with a Joy or Concern? What if dozens of people come forward? Some people speak often, others not at all.

Unitarian congregations across Canada and the U.S. include Joys and Sorrows as part of their services. Many larger congregations ask people to submit their messages to the service leader who then reads them during the service. Others light a candle in silent inward reflection. In the Fellowship, we want to hear directly from people so we adjust to the unpredictability of Joys and Sorrows.

**Check ins** are another Unitarian tradition: the convention of going around the circle at the start of a meeting or event and giving everyone a chance to share what's on their mind, or in their heart at that moment. Check ins can range from stories of the day or week, to the thoughts that have been preoccupying our minds and need to find a space to be expressed in community.

With both Joys and Sorrows and Check Ins, everyone has the option to pass. There is no obligation to speak up. But the content and range of what is shared can differ drastically.

Now we are using Break-Out rooms for Joys and Sorrows on Zoom. During a recent meeting of the Worship Cluster, the subject of Joys and Sorrows again arose. Should it be a chance to check-in? It's important to catch up with one another's news and we don't have time to chat with one another before the service or during Coffee. Others expressed that view that Joys and Sorrows should be a deeper, more reflective time to share the ups and downs of our lives.

**Nancy:** I am in the second camp. I chat with people I meet on my daily walks, the people waiting in line at the grocery store or the pharmacy, the delivery person...During Joys and Sorrows, I want to go deeper, to frame the experiences of my life in a spiritual context. I also want to allow time for silence in order to really listen to others' joy, grief, despair, outrage or other emotions.

Of course, I also love to hear news gleaned from a check-in.

**Laura:** Our lives have become so isolated. I don't see many (or usually no) Fellowship members in the course of a week. I appreciate having a couple of minutes during Joys and Sorrows to find out what you have been doing that brings you Joy or what is distressing you. This is more of a check-in where we truly check in with each other.

If time is given to each of the 3-5 people in a break-out room, our connection is strengthened. I may not have a formal Joy or Sorrow but I have had a week of ups and downs.

I want to hear what you are thinking about or what has been on your mind. And tell you something that I want others to know about me.

*(Continued on page 5)*





## Checking in on our Joy and Sorrow (cont...)

*(Continued from page 4)*

These are things we might share at coffee hour but not find “worthy” of placing a stone in our bowl of water.

Zoom is an intrinsically isolating format that the Fellowship has used successfully. Each of us in our box on the screen building a community of faces. The Joys and Sorrows is the one time in a service we can be active and interactive, be seen as more than a muted face. What a waste to have this opportunity spent in silence.

When we return to (primarily) in person services I think the check-in will return to coffee hour and Joys and Sorrows will return to being more narrowly defined sharing and holding special moments in our lives as sacred.

Nancy: I guess I’m on the fence, a typical Unitarian stance.

The Worship Cluster would welcome your input on Joys and Sorrows. We fully expect that we’ll hear support for both views – and perhaps suggestions for other ways to share what is meaningful in our lives. ([worship@uuf.org](mailto:worship@uuf.org))

## Board Walk

By Brandon Milk, Board President

Our Fellowship is successfully making its way through another pandemic winter.

In view of the ever-changing Ottawa Public Health rules on gathering, opening the sanctuary for services continues to be a hot topic. The board has given more decision-making power to the people who are impacted by this the most: the worship cluster, who organize and run our services. The cluster is working with a board liaison to make decisions on how to deliver services. In addition, the UUFO “tech team” has done more testing which will improve hybrid services in the future. Since services are planned far in advance, there may be a lag between when rules allow us to re-open and when we are prepared to offer in-person components to services.

While the pandemic has kept us out of our physical space, interesting things are happening there. Heartwood House has organized some upgrades to the wash-room facilities and other elements of the building. They are also pursuing grants for yet more improvements. Board representatives from UUFO and Heartwood House have agreed to attend a presentation by Co-Energy, a renewable energy co-operative, regarding fitting our roof with solar panels.

Last but certainly not least, many of you will have heard by now that the board is proposing to enter into an agreement with the Reverend Fulgence Ndagijimana to officially support his community ministry. As I write this, the first information session/discussion on this topic has been scheduled. The agreement Rev. Fulgence has proposed will allow us to support a worthy cause – his work with refugees – and help get our name out into the community.

Spring is around the corner; it’s shaping up to be an exciting one at UUFO.







## Monthly Movie Nights

In this newsletter issue, the Movie Night regulars are giving our faithful and inspired leader, cinema buff Michel Jan, a much-deserved break from writing this column, and some of us are sharing our thoughts about the films we've watched together over the last 3 months.

In December, we viewed and discussed Ingmar Bergman's "Wild Strawberries," and "Mr. Hulot's Holiday" by Jacques Tati. These are two very different films, both black & white award winners from Europe in the 1960s, which most of us had seen before but were happy to revisit. "Wild Strawberries" is a serious, slow-moving Swedish drama with strongly developed characters, and is a deep reflection on the meaning of one's life, both conscious and unconscious, and on the impact of memories and dreams upon the difficulties and enigmas of one's present-day life. "Mr. Hulot's Holiday" is a French farce with some very funny scenes – some of them are classic slapstick antics, while others are delightfully unpredictable (spoiler alert: that big blob of taffy is never really going to hit the ground!).



January's theme was the search for the Holy Grail, so we watched "Monty Python and the Holy Grail" (1975) and "Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade" (1989), which was directed by Steven Spielberg. In the first movie, the highly original and creative silliness of Monty Python's send-up of the Arthurian legend is interwoven with an alternate modern-day plot involving an historian and his wife, with gruesome results when medieval history meets the present day. In contrast, the Indiana Jones quest for the Grail is essentially a straightforward, high-powered presentation of a series of breathtaking action stunts, much like the original Indiana Jones movie "Raiders of the Lost Ark" (1981), and the dramatic template for the latter film closely matches that of "Raiders."



The films we viewed and discussed in February are both Oscar-nominated 2021 films: "Don't Look Up!" and "The Power of The Dog," and we spent most of our time discussing the latter film. "Don't Look Up!" features a truly impressive cast of A-list actors, but the screenwriting felt weak to some of us, which resulted in a real waste of star power – we've all seen Leonardo DiCaprio, Cate Blanchett, Meryl Streep, and Jennifer Lawrence in much better films.



"The Power of the Dog," directed by Jane Campion, is based on a 1967 novel by Thomas Savage, and the film adheres faithfully to the novel, but with several adaptive changes needed to present this deeply character-driven story using cinematic, rather than literary, art. The overt plot is that cattle rancher Phil Burbank, a cruel and bitter person, identifies with the rowdy uncouth cowboys who work for him. He initially torments, and then eventually befriends, his brother's new stepson, a rather bored effeminate adolescent. Phil seems to become a role model for the fatherless lad, but as the drama unfolds, so do issues of resentment, jealousy and sexuality, leading to a quietly startling denouement. But this is a subtle and layered film, with two other fully realized main characters, and at least two of the Movie Night regulars have decided to obtain the book and read it, because they want to know more about the back stories of all four characters, and answer some of the questions they have about the story.

Our Monthly Movie Nights take place on Zoom at 6:30 pm on the second Thursday of the month, and we welcome new members – the Zoom link is published in Friday Notes. To quote one of our regular participants: "I really enjoy, and look forward to, the monthly Zoom movie night. Watching movies with purpose and discussing them with others is a nice change from my regular, random Netflix and Prime viewings."

## Meditation Musings

By Evangeline Danseco



### A Proper Welcome Coming Soon... We Hope!

The Welcome and Membership Committee looks forward to the time when we will all feel comfortable attending in-person services at the Fellowship again. We want to thank everyone who has helped keep our UUFO connections via our Zoom services and meetings - the service planners and coordinators, all the amazing contributors and guest speakers, music contributors, the all important tech team (Gary, Pat, Sarah and Allison), the Caring Committee and our other committees working in the background and of course, Sarah in the office and the Board of Directors.

We remind everyone that we welcome any inquiries about our Fellowship and hope that we will be able to begin welcoming newcomers in person before long!

Hoppy Roy [hoppyroy@gmail.com](mailto:hoppyroy@gmail.com)

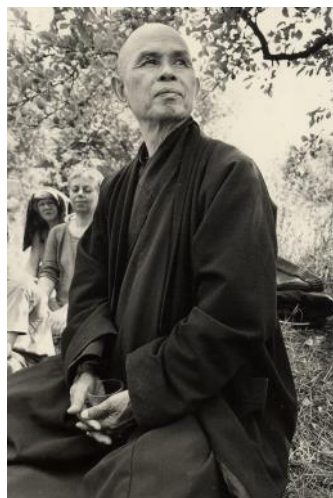
Carole Séguin [4carolle@gmail.com](mailto:4carolle@gmail.com)

Andrea Young [andreamkentyoung@gmail.com](mailto:andreamkentyoung@gmail.com)

You may have heard the news that on January 22, 2022, Thich Nhat Hahn died (also called Thay by his students). He was a Vietnamese Zen Buddhist monk who lived in exile in France and founded [Plum Village](#). You might be surprised to know that our meditation sessions at the Fellowship have been strongly influenced by Thich Nhat Hahn.

Gary Palen, a friend of the Fellowship, introduced us to his teachings sometime in 2013. Gary came to speak at one of our services and offered several meditation retreats. Thay's teachings on engaged Buddhism resonated with our UU principles. We also thoroughly enjoyed listening and ringing the mindfulness bell, adopting the practice of inviting, then striking the bowl three times, with 20-second intervals in between each ringing of the bowl. Dave Kempster, a regular of our early sessions, gifted us with our meditation bowl and shared with us his joy in listening to the [Great Mindfulness Bell chant](#).

Thich Nhat Hahn's book on [Walking Meditation](#) has been a source of guidance for our meditation sessions, a discovery from Marlene H. We've read passages from this book to teach and remind us that we walk in nature and mother earth. Walking meditation is a good way of bringing both body and mind focused and has been part of many Buddhist traditions. Marie-Claire and Isobel have been coordinating our mindful nature walks, when the weather (and pandemic restrictions) allows for safe group walks. You might also be interested in hearing or reading his [Ten Love Letters to the Earth](#) available at Emergence Magazine (available in text or as a recording/podcast).



What I appreciate from Thich Nhat Hahn is how accessible he has made Buddhist teachings and mindfulness practices. His many books provide very practical guidance, yet they also speak to how he embodied wisdom and compassion. In our celebrity and status-obsessed world, Thich Nhat Hahn was an exceptional teacher. The ripples of his life, his presence and his teachings will continue to live on.

# COIN FRANÇAIS

## Rassemblement Unitarien Universaliste d'Ottawa

Par Lucie-Marie Castonguay-Bower



Chers compagnons et compagnes de route de notre Rassemblement UU,

C'est en toute amitié que je vous offre ce simple poème en espérant qu'à notre prochaine Infolettre ce sera votre tour de partager l'élan de votre cœur : ne serait-ce qu'un événement amusant, quelques bribes cocasses, une information, une question, une photo, tout ce qui nous permet de se mieux connaître et de s'unir aussi bien dans la joie comme dans la peine...

Avant de vous livrer ce qui suit, j'aimerais qu'on se rappelle cette phrase de sagesse de Albert Einstein : « Un homme qui n'est plus capable de s'émerveiller a pratiquement cessé de vivre ».

### S'émerveiller!

Ouvrir toute grande la porte  
de mon esprit,  
Laisser battre mon cœur au  
rythme du printemps,  
Entendre l'appel des vents,  
Humer le parfum de la terre,  
Accueillir la Vie à bras ouverts,  
M'émerveiller au chant des mésanges comme à  
ceux des grillons,  
Caresser les arbres et tout ce qui est en gestation,  
Entretenir quotidiennement la passion de vivre,  
Inviter mon âme à rejoindre, sous toutes ses  
formes,  
La beauté du monde et des personnes,  
Labourer, ensemer, pétrir la terre et l'arroser  
de mes larmes,  
Voilà l'émerveillement dont je me gratifie!

*L'émerveillement serait-elle primordiale pour  
reconnaître l'amour et la beauté? –*



### Prochaines célébrations francophones :

27 mars Qui sommes-nous en tant qu'UU?  
24 avril Traditions spirituelles – Invité :  
Rév. Fulgence  
22 mai Beauté  
26 juin Donner et recevoir

Notre **Cercle de croissance spirituelle** est toujours très actif. Nous avons dû retourner en virtuel mais aussitôt qu'il nous sera possible nous irons en présentiel, dans notre sanctuaire, le premier jeudi du mois à 13 heures.

## Traditions printanières

### Les rituels de paque: Lucie-Marie

Chez-moi nous avons un rituel pour chaque saison et chaque grande fête de sorte que les enfants puissent bien comprendre et profiter de tous ces précieux moments qui unissent la famille. Maintenant je crois que je suis la seule à les accomplir (avec adaptation) sauf ceux des fêtes: Noël, Pâques et Action de grâce.

Je vous partage celui de Pâques.

En ce qui concerne Pâques, le rituel s'étend sur la semaine qui précède. Chaque jour on crée ou



## Spring Traditions printanières

confectionne une décoration ou un met qui mettra en évidence « le renouveau » que la nature nous offre. Au matin de Pâques on s'échange nos créations puis c'est le déjeuner aux crêpes avec petits fruits et sirop d'érable; le tout est suivi de la chasse aux œufs. Attention, dans cette

course, on y trouvera peut-être des cocos aux chocolat mais surtout des petits mots d'amour et des petites attentions pleines de tendresse. Pour nous c'est une fête de lumière et de renaissance.

Chaque année ce rituel subit des adaptations et des changements selon les besoins du temps, de l'environnement et de la famille. Quoique ce soit que l'on crée et met en action doit toujours être significatif et adapté à la personne/famille.



### Spring Planting:

**Louka & Laurie-Anne**

Louka and I have had the tradition of planting a vegetable and flower garden in our backyard since he was 3 years old. His Nana has been instrumental in helping us learn about plants and what they need. It's a great time to bond, and the pride and excitement of producing your own vegetables never gets old.



Louka planting his first garden with his Nana when he was 3 years old. It's been a tradition since then.



### Passing the Matzo:

**Sarah Baxter**

Many of you know I was raised UU, but our family's spring traditions come from my mother's Jewish upbringing.

Passover, the Jewish holiday commemorating the escape of the Jewish people from slavery in Egypt under Pharaoh, is our big family get-together of the year. Growing up, we would gather at my Bubby and Zadie's house, later their condo, in Montreal. After their deaths, the gathering, as well as my grandparents' seder plate and *haggadahs*, (pictured above) moved to my cousin Scosha's house. There, my parents, sisters, cousins, aunts and uncles, come together for an (updated) traditional seder meal. We take turns reading the story of Passover, paragraph by paragraph, we drink wine (or grape juice), we eat matzo ball soup. And we reminisce about family Passovers and memories, quoting my Zadie "just a sip!" when it's time to drink the wine, or arguing about which version of the *haggadah* we should read from next year.

I'll always remember the year we managed to surprise my mom with my sister Joanna, who secretly flew in from British Columbia, to join the family for Passover!

We love Easter chocolate too, and I'm thankful that most years Passover benefits from the long Easter weekend, so that we can take a few days to head to the Eastern Townships to eat good food, and laugh, and recline at the table with my family.

## Postponed to '22

Our winter programs were postponed, so in the spring we are planning to return with our anticipated workshops

1.

### History of Racism in Canada Workshop

Saturday 2-4pm

Facilitator: Maurice Cabana-Proux

Racism has been with us since our colonial beginnings. This workshop will explore the history of racism and some of the denial factors that prevent Canadians from coming to grips with the problem.

Please register by email: [cp4@videotron.ca](mailto:cp4@videotron.ca)

March 12: in English

26 mars: en français

2.

### Compassionate Communication Continues

In the fall, Fran and Nick facilitated a two-part workshop on Compassionate Communication. This spring, a follow up workshop will be offered to further explore the topic introduced in the original workshops.

If you are interested, contact Fran to sign up.

Date TBD

## Adult Religious Exploration: Exploring Self, Spirit, and the World Around Us



### NEW! Sacred Self Care Routine with Chipo

Is Morning a challenge for you? Do you have a routine you follow?

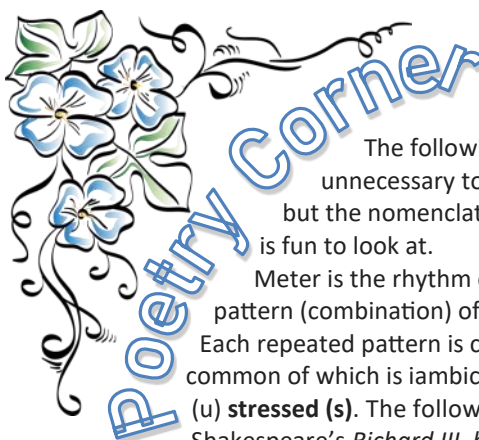
Chipo is inviting you to a 4 week session to share "Mindful, Mornings Sacred Self Care Activities". Especially if your current morning routine

consists of hitting snooze 10 times before you roll out of bed (late again) to rush around for the rest of the day in a flustered frenzy, then it's time to start doing things differently!

How do we take care of the world? By putting on our own oxygen mask first!

Breathe. Stretch. Dance. Massage yourself. Wake up gently. (Don't worry, it will be fun!)

Introducing a new weekly chance to recharge with Chipo: **Monday mornings at 10am in March**



### Things you don't have to know about poetry

The following information is totally unnecessary to the enjoyment of a poem, but the nomenclature, old and steady in Greek, is fun to look at.

Meter is the rhythm of a poem; it refers to the pattern (combination) of stresses in a line of poetry. Each repeated pattern is called a foot, the most common of which is iambic, two beats: unstressed (u) **stressed (s)**. The following line, from Shakespeare's *Richard III*, has five feet of u s, representing, then, iambic pentameter, the bard's favourite trick: *A horse, a horse, my kingdom for a horse.*

The reverse meter of the iamb is the trochee, s u. We turn to Milton who gives us four feet of trochee to a line, making it trochaic tetrameter: **Tyger Tyger burning bright.**

Other named feet include: anapaest—u u s; dactyl—s u u; amphibrach—u s u; and pyrrhic—u u. I do not always remember

(Continued on page 11)



## Neighbours Embrace Local Woods

By Nanci Burns & Ron Ridley

(Continued from page 10)

what is what, but they make an interesting collection of syllables.

And so, for your trouble, here is an excerpt from a poem written in anapaest, by the witty Lewis Carroll:

### You Are Old, Father William

You are old, Father William," the young man said,

"And your hair has become very white;  
And yet you incessantly stand on your head—

Do you think, at your age, it is right?"

"In my youth," Father William replied to his son,

"I feared it might injure the brain;  
But now that I'm perfectly sure I have none,

Why, I do it again and again."

"You are old," said the youth, "and your jaws are too weak

For anything tougher than suet;  
Yet you finished the goose, with the bones and the beak—

Pray, how did you manage to do it?"

"In my youth," said his father, "I took to the law,

And argued each case with my wife;  
And the muscular strength, which it gave to my jaw,

Has lasted the rest of my life."

Poetry corner by allison calvern

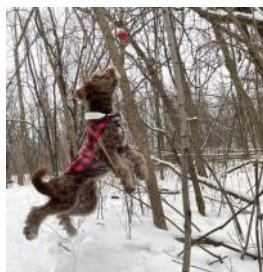
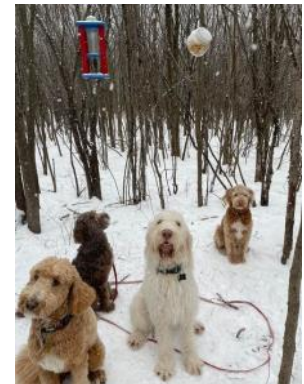
Many in our neighbourhood live with dogs and meet up in the woods behind Riverview School in Alta Vista. The woods protect dogs and owners alike from heat, wind and cold all year long. However, in Fall 2020, word soon spread that Ottawa Hydro planned to cut trees. A committee was formed and meetings and signatures quickly stopped any further plans to cut trees.

This however, reminded us how fragile our environment could be and proactive plans evolved. What started as a holiday idea to cheer up a small section of a local trail in the woods, ended up becoming an entire community effort. In Year One of the Pandemic, 200 Christmas ornaments decked the trees along with numerous homemade bird feeders and ice sculptures. When Christmas ended, Valentine decorations took over the trail, thanks primarily to a local home daycare. By St. Patrick's Day, message was out and green was the colour of choice – very fitting for our woods. Then spring came, and eggs and painted rocks started colouring the trail.

By December 2021, the number of holiday ornaments had grown to 500, and "Carlene's Cafe" served homemade dog treats each day to the many dogs who visit the trail. Dog names on ornaments line the trail as well.

Currently the trail is awash with red and valentine wishes for all. By March we will all be Irish and hope with any luck the Pandemic restrictions will no longer be needed.

The decorated path brought joy to many, from young children to seniors, with many also expressing how the ornament decorated path brought solitude, peace, stress relief and enjoyment, especially during these challenging Covid times.





# Social Action Cluster Focus: We Talked About It!

by Marilyn Kuhn

In December the title of this column was *Moving Towards a More Just and Compassionate World*. Today the situation in Ottawa feels anything but “just” and “compassionate”. On Feb. 13<sup>th</sup> Robin Cappuccino talked about *Beloved Community*. This included many non-violent protests related to struggles FOR racial justice, peace and greater compassion in the world. Looking at the situations he described through another lens they were struggles AGAINST racism and racist structures, nuclear weapons, unjust wars, and child poverty. It feels like too much of what we do is struggle AGAINST – climate change, pollution, violence against women and girls, harassment, neglect and persecution of indigenous communities ... and the many “isms” that we all know too well. Struggles FOR and the protests AGAINST are inherent in trying to live out our UUFO principles. Sometimes the “right” answers seem relatively clear. But often life is messy.

What about the so-called “freedom convoy”? For most of us nothing about the occupation in Ottawa is good or right or just – offensive noise, air pollution, threats, hatred, lawlessness. But we also know that at least some, maybe many, folks involved are there because of a deeply felt sense of injustice. A recent quote from *The Guardian* and *Globe and Mail* captures the depth, confusion and complexity of the occupation and occupiers in Ottawa.

The Canadian protests have given a disturbing platform to a range of other dark fringe views, amplified by genuine concerns. “Nominally protesting against vaccine mandates, the freedom convoy represented a medley of real, imagined and exaggerated issues bound together by a common sense of alienation and grievance,” Daniel Panneton *Globe and Mail*. (02/13/2022)

On a recent Zoom gathering, ten of us shared our feelings, questions and concerns about the truckers’ so-called “freedom convoy”. Some thoughts from this discussion are listed below followed by a link to four articles in the *Conversation* newsletter each looking at events through a different lens.

In our discussion, people shared how the occupation in Ottawa and the broader events of the past weeks have left them very worried, sad, frustrated, overwhelmed, angry,

concerned for the children and increasingly stressed. The

concerns expressed went well beyond issues related to the siege in downtown Ottawa. These included:



## Concerns for the Canadian government's capacities and our political future as Canadians.

- Will this apparent evidence of political failure be fuel for the growth of right-wing parties? How do those of us who seek economic, social and environmental justice talk, act, move ahead in this environment where rational dialogue is difficult if not impossible?
- Regional divisions in Canada have existed for a long time. We have not been able to deal with them satisfactorily. Will they be amplified? Is it too late?
- Do we have the know-how and the resources to address movements like this where right wing groups co-opt legitimate discontent to recruit people and draw on international money and other resources to amplify their voices?
- How much have these events pushed back other important agendas such as reconciliation, effective federal/provincial cooperation and the line between legitimate and unlawful dissent?

## Concerns about our civic culture.

- The thin veneer of civility that holds society together feels broken. How do we rebuild/repair it?



- It feels like most coverage of the issues by politicians and the media is superficial. Where is the incentive and the space for more in-depth dialogue for listening and working things out. How do we have a dialogue when debating rather than discussing is the norm?
- How do we remain open to dialogue and communication when we see a lack of rationality in what is being presented?
- How do recognize “legitimate” concerns and deal with them in such a polarized environment?

#### Concerns about how we learn our values.

- Education system – what are we teaching our children? This is an issue for both home and school.

Clearly the scope of this discussion is way beyond a newsletter column. So, to conclude here is a link to four articles referenced in [The Conversation Canada](#) (analysis and research by academics) that take a look at events from four different perspectives – the Christian Right, aggrieved entitlement, the struggle over different conceptions of democracy and how disproportionate media attention rewards the loudest voice and negates the rights of others.

Next month – March 16<sup>th</sup> at 7 pm – SAC will host another *Let's Talk About It* event. Topic TBD. Please send us your ideas.

Respectfully submitted by:

The Social Action Cluster: Claire, Elinor, Gary, Helmut, Marilyn, Nanci, Michel J. (board rep.)



#### Widening the Circle

Our Liane Knight-Dubreuil is taking the facilitator training through the CUC called Widening the Circle which is examining how to open the circle to make our congregations more racially diverse.

Each congregation is being asked to Create a 'Widening of Circle' Group of committed individuals in our congregation who are willing to lean in, be curious about what is possible in support of Widening The Circle Of Concern and monitor progress, report and adapt to emerging realities in the next few months.

It is suggested that 2-4 individuals accept this responsibility to:

We would have the meetings together once every two weeks on Zoom except for the first two weeks of

March when we would need to meet weekly. Please contact Liane Knight-Dubreuil by email at

liannekd@gmail.com If this is something that you feel you would be interested in.

#### Seeking UUFO Event Managers

The UUFO Board has been deliberating over when to open our space again to rentals.

In order to offer our space for individual and community group rentals, we need individuals to be Event Mangers for UUFO.

An Event Manager oversees the rental, providing security and guidance on-site. This is a casual but paid position! If you are interested in occasional work, please email Sarah [rentals@uufo.org](mailto:rentals@uufo.org)

## Who Are the People in Our Neighbourhood?

*Nanci Burns, in conversation with Kelly Howson*

Housing is a timely issue of concern for our Fellowship and we are pleased to share space and resources with Options Bytown. This organization was created in 1987 to help homeless in Ottawa. With the current protests in Ottawa, so many of the homeless in downtown Ottawa have been impacted. They are treated to further abusive comments and behaviours and services they rely on are also threatened and intimidated. I interviewed Kelly Howson, the Manager.

### What happens at the office at Heartwood House?

The Options Bytown offices at HH are for the Housing First team, who are called Housing Based Case Managers (HBCM). My office is also here as I manage the team. Our team works both from HH and remotely right now (due to the pandemic) to assist homeless clients to find housing and for intensive case management services. Most of our clients come from the shelter system in Ottawa, however we also support tenants with challenges through a partnership with Centretown Citizens of Ottawa Corporation (CCOC).

### Who uses your services?

Options Bytown serves people who are marginalized, homeless, and some have mental health issues, some have substance use disorders, many have trauma histories, and all need supports. The Housing First team supports individuals coming out of the shelters and we work to find them suitable housing and then support them with other life goals.

### How do you connect with the other programs you have throughout the city?

Options Bytown's main office is at 380 Cumberland in the heart of the Byward Market. The three program managers meet monthly and under normal circumstances our whole staff of 52 would meet for agency functions. The three teams work both independently and jointly when we share clients who may live in our supportive housing buildings.

### How do you specifically address issues in the Vanier area?

The Housing First team provides service to people all over the Ottawa area, however there are a large number of clients in the Vanier area, simply because of the lower rents and the presence of affordable social housing.

### What do you appreciate about being a

#### Heartwood House member?

We love the sense of community here at HH. Moe is the very best ED and so far (7 months in) I have found many of the other agencies are serving the same population of individuals. I like the "one stop shopping" approach to the hub that HH is.

### Do you see any role for Unitarians?

The one thing that I could see is perhaps in fundraising to purchase grocery cards (Kelly suggests Giant Tiger for the range of food and clothing you can buy. They are located throughout the city.) Most of the folks are just squeaking by and the groceries that they can afford are not necessarily nutritious or helpful for a person with diabetes or other food restrictions.

I would love to get a community garden going at HH and to build planter boxes out front so that people in the neighbourhood could grow their own healthy food and have the experience of coming together as a community. Do I see your hand up??

### Final comments??

The lockdowns and trucker protest have been difficult for the people that we serve and for the Housing First team. Working from home is not what we do. We want to be out meeting people in the community and working to get them linked up with services, supports and their community.



### Want to contribute?

Leave gift cards for Options Bytown clients at the main door of HH in an envelop marked with Kelly's name on it.



# Affordable Housing Group

By Chris Baddeley Girard



With average rent for a one bedroom apartment in Ottawa now at \$1600 or more per month, the increasing rate of demo/renovictions from rental units, and the lack of construction of new buildings geared to low income families, Ottawa is truly in the midst of an affordable housing crises. Some of our own congregation are affected by this lack of affordable housing, often having to pay up to 50% of their income on rent alone.

The Social Action Cluster held focus groups last fall in order to get a sense of what activities and initiatives would be of interest to Fellowship members. One of the major concerns expressed by participants consistently was the need for affordable housing in the City of Ottawa.

As for the Affordable Housing Committee, it came into being as a result of Elinor Mueller encouraging me to step up and begin figuring out what we at UUFO could do.

At our first meeting in December we concluded that background research was essential before deciding where we could best focus our energies. Affordable housing is a hot button issue; even our Mayor listed it as a priority for this year's council to address. We embarked on a research deep dive; From NGOs in the city involved in affordable housing initiatives, to various levels of government funding related to housing, contacting our ward councillors and searching for creative solutions such as Ottawa's Land Trust, Co-op housing and rent geared to income in new builds. We even attended Zoom meetings held by groups such as Acorn and the Alliance to End Homelessness in Ottawa.

By our second meeting held in January we had developed a plan of action. As there will be a municipal election and a provincial election this year, now is the time to inform all candidates, both current and potential, of the urgent need to develop concrete solutions for creating affordable housing in this city. We will begin with a letter and email writing campaign asking for specific proposals that have been targeted by key groups such as Acorn, Multifaith Housing Initiative and the Alliance to End Homelessness. This campaign will start slowly but build momentum as we approach the actual election days. **The goal: to inform, influence, encourage candidates into not just talking about the problem but developing a solid and workable plan to create more affordable housing in this city.**

Would you like to help? We certainly could use your support sending out those letters and emails to councillors and MPPs. If you are interested in pitching in, please contact Chris, Claire, Elinor, Bill, Laura, Nancy, or Katie.

## MHI Dream Come True

Multifaith Housing Initiative (MHI) "exists to build affordable housing that helps fix Ottawa's housing crisis and gets at-risk people into secure, safe homes." Their website states "Traditional practices have not been working so MHI has adopted a different approach...A roof over your head means more than shelter. It means better health, more stability, a chance to work, study and live to build a future for yourself, for others and for the greater community."

MHI was formed in 2002 by a coalition of faith groups including the local Catholic Archdiocese, other Christian churches, Muslims, Jews, Hindu, Unitarians, Baha'i and other faiths in our community. (UUFO is a long-standing member of MHI.) The coalition now includes local businesses, civil society, the City of Ottawa and federal/provincial governments all working together to build safe and continuously affordable housing in Ottawa. MHI is one of our neighbours, a member of Heartwood House.

On January 20<sup>th</sup> of this year, the National Capital Commission announced that the library parcel at LeBreton Flats will be developed by Dream LeBreton in partnership with Dream Asset Management Corporation, Dream Impact LP and Multifaith Housing Initiative. The project will provide 601 rental housing units, of which 31 % will be accessible, and 41% will be affordable housing. 130 units will be owned by MHI and rented at 59% of market rent in perpetuity, while 117 units will be owned by Dream LeBreton and rented at 79% of median market rent for 55 years.

The LeBreton Flats development promises to be leading edge, incorporating an aesthetic design, sustainability, affordability and accessibility. MHI is to be commended for its role in ensuring that the housing built on the site will promote an inclusive community. Let's hope that other developers and funders are inspired by the project's vision.

Submitted by Nancy Rubenstein

# Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Ottawa

*Everyone Welcome | Bienvenue à tous*

*The Unitarian Fellowship of Ottawa is a spiritual community of people with shared values and diverse beliefs.*

*We are guided by the warmth of love, the light of reason, and the call of justice.*

*We come together to nurture meaning, hope, and reverence for the earth as we pursue a more just and compassionate world.*

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## Fellowship News

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Send submissions, comments, or letters to the editors to:

[newsletter@uufu.org](mailto:newsletter@uufu.org)

Submissions for the Summer Issue are due May 15

Many thanks to our contributors and editors!

## Editorial Team

Allison, Nanci, Pat,  
Sarah



## Spring at UUFO

### Monthly Programming Schedule

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
(Worship)				Cercle de croissance spirituelle (UUFO)	Writer's Group (UUFO)	Meditation Circle (Zoom)
(Worship)				Film Club (Zoom)		
(Worship) Discussion Circle (UUFO)		Braiding Sweetgrass Book Club (Zoom)				Meditation Circle (Zoom)
(Worship) (Célébration francophone)					Music Night (Zoom)	
(Worship)						

### Spring Themes for Worship:

**March:** Who are We as UUs?  
**April:** Exploring Spiritual Traditions  
**May & June:** Beauty

### Spring Special Activities:

**March 7, 14, 21, 28:** Sacred Self Care Routines (10am)  
**March 12:** *History of Racism in Canada* Workshop (2-4pm)  
**March 20:** Anniversary Service (10:30am)  
**26 Mars:** *L'histoire du racisme au Canada* (14h-16h)  
  
(TBC): *Compassionate Communication* Workshop  
  
**June 5:** Annual General Meeting (12pm)

*Weekly event info & Zoom links come to your inbox in our Friday Notes!*