



The Newsletter of the Unitarian Fellowship of Fredericton

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Sunday Service 11 a.m.

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Saturday December 13 at 7 p.m. for an evening of music "Coffeehouse" style. All musical styles, types of music and levels of ability are welcome. Please contact Mac at maccampbel@nb.sympatico.ca or Linda Sprague at spraguella@yahoo.com if you'd like to participate.

Sunday Services

December 7 Fred Webster on *Searching for God in the Space-Time Continuum*. Fred Webster is from the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Saint John. The title is alleged to be somewhat exaggerated but slightly true, in the manner of tabloid headlines.

December 14 *Intergenerational service with participation by the Children's RE*

December 21 *Finding the Holy Among the Holly* Almost all cultures and societies have marked the winter solstice – shortest day, longest night, turning point, and so forth. (And, of course, the other way round in the southern hemisphere.) In North America, as in other places, that ancient observance has been engulfed by the Hallmark version of the Christian narrative. But why was this story told in just this way? Does the December hoopla have anything to do with the solstice, or for that matter with the Biblical narrative itself?

The Reverend Mac Campbell will explore these and related questions.

December 28 *Listening Circle*

Musical Evening

Do you like to sing, play an instrument or just listen to music? Join Mac Campbell at the Fellowship

Season's
Greetings



In whatever tradition you choose to celebrate the Solstice festival, may you experience the warmth of family and the serenity of peace.

Message from the President

The Season of Darkness is upon us. The days are short: we often leave before daylight and return under the spell of rain or snow dimming our headlights. Our footing is less sure and the frigid temperatures chill us through and through. It is a difficult season for many.

However this is also the time in many cultures when people make their own enlightenment. Candles are lit, feasts are prepared and friendships are renewed. Relatives are forgiven and embraced and families share in the warmth and joy of togetherness. The simple pleasures of young and old, sharing ancient stories and new-found wonder, re-ignite our spirits and zest for living. Spring is not too far away.

At our Fellowship, our larger family, we too have a culture to share, and opportunities to be joyful and to be renewed. Our Sunday services for December will be filled with music

and meaning from all generations. Please join with us in these services and help regenerate the spirit of community within us.

Another major opportunity to celebrate with us will be at the Gala Dinner, December 3rd, to mark the end of another successful pledge campaign. If you have not already done so, please send in your pledges to George DeMille, Secretary-Treasurer. Your contributions and pledges are greatly appreciated. Hope to see you there!

For those travelling in December, go carefully, enjoy your families and friends, and come home safely.

John van Abbema,
President

Tuff Scarves

Many scarves have been prepared for the International Students who will arrive at STU at the beginning of January. I will deliver them to Judy Coates at STU and she will look after passing them out for us.

Our Tuff Scarves project has been gifted with partial skeins of yarn from the Singer store 'Yarns on York'

Thanks to all the knitters!

Patricia desChamps



At the foot of Yggdrasil, the Norns weave the threads of fate. As good an explanation as any.

To See Ourselves as Others See Us

Editor's Note: Sharon van Abbema found this for us. On February 3, 2008, Bob Jones, a minister from Wilmot United Church in Fredericton made a visit to Fredericton's Unitarian Fellowship. This is the report he issued in "Words from Wilmot", the church newsletter.

I found myself in a modest sized group of approximately 50 worshippers, or should I say 'inquirers' because the emphasis here appears to be inquiry and learning, the worship and praise being more understated, but nevertheless present in the hugs and greetings.

The site for the weekly gathers is a large 'converted' home, with spacious, attractive grounds in an older residential part of the city.

We were seated in an L-shaped living room and dining room. Behind the lectern a brightly burning log on the fireplace created a warm cozy atmosphere.

Before the service, recorded classical music, followed by professionally performed accompaniment on the Grand Piano created a pleasing musical framework.

The Order of Service, neatly printed on a bulletin was not unlike that with which I have been familiar for the past 50 years. The opening welcome speaks volumes about the inclusiveness of Unitarianism.

"We bid you welcome who come with weary spirit seeking rest. Whoever you are -whatever you are, wherever you are on your journey, we bid you welcome!"

There were two other hymns which, to me, had new words, but singable tunes. Other parts of the service were quite conventional, Children's Story, Offertory, Announcements, etc.

The central feature was a talk by Dr. Kassimi of UNB who spoke of his experience and knowledge of the Islamic Faith. He came across as a likeable person who made his subject interesting. He appeared to be connecting well with his listeners.

I found it beneficial to be reminded that he represented one of the 3 monotheistic world religions...Islam, Judaism and Christianity. I noted with interest that the hymn following the lecture was titled, "Love will Guide Us". It made me think of the passage in 1John -

"...love is from God, everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love...if we love one another, God lives in us, and God's love is perfected in us."

Two significant things happened at the close of the service in the section called "Joys and Concerns". Two people came to the front of the room to speak. All present lis-

tened intently as one shared her distress over a job loss coupled with the death of her mother. The depth of her feeling was eloquently conveyed as she cried out about ‘all of this shit that’s been thrown at me’.

What impressed me most, perhaps about the entire service, was the patient listening to others, the compassionate attitude that was shown by the hugs and pats on the back. I could only describe it as Christ-like.

However these Unitarians define themselves, they demonstrated to me, attributes that were “Christ in the midst”.

The friendly atmosphere continued to be manifested following the meeting as I was welcomed as we partook of coffee and sweets. I cannot conclude my observations without mentioning that I was accompanied by Marjorie Atkinson who is known to many of their congregation since she is a long-time resident of the city, but also because her son Stephen is about to be ordained in a large Unitarian Fellowship in Vancouver.

Submitted by Bob Jones



Editorial

This issue of Touchstone is rather thin and there were not a lot of articles that had to be converted to the markup language I prefer for typesetting the newsletter and I have some time to put fingers to keyboard.

In another article, written by a visitor, which gives an interesting view of our community from an “outsider’s” eyes, the phrases “Christ-like” and “Christ in the midst” are used to describe us. Until that point, I was reading in a yes, that is interesting and now nice frame of mind, but upon encountering those phrases, something rankled. Something in the arrogance that when people are nice to one another, somehow, Christ must be involved!

I was also minded of an old cartoon. The patient is saying “good morning” to the psychiatrist and the psychiatrist’s thought balloon contains the response “I wonder what he means by that?” What means “Christ in the midst”? A search through Google found a number of references, from the literal bodily resurrection of Christ who was now

physically in the midst of his followers to more allegorical references. One very poignant reference by a lesbian to the trepidation with which she approaches congregations in the faith of her birth, a conservative fundamentalist sect, and is never sure how she will be received. In her reference, “Christ in the midst” are good people who are reviled as was Christ for being who they are. And many other references, a few well worth browsing.

It seems then, that like so many religious references, “Christ in the midst” is one of those slippery meaning shifting phrases that can be thrown around and everyone can be happy with their own personal interpretations and only the “trouble maker” will pause to ask “and... exactly what does that mean?”

As an atheist and a secular humanist who (as I like to say) has found a religious home among the Unitarians, I find my explanations without reference to Christ, so I suppose I should not be surprised that a devout Christian would analyze the world with references to Christ. It makes sense from their world view even though I consider it a needless complication at best and possibly disingenuous at times.

Homo (self-styled) sapiens is a social animal. Social animals all share certain characteristics to varying degrees: altruism, loyalty, trust, sociability, dedication, love. As pre-industrial hunter/gatherers we evolved in a natural state wherein we lived in tribal groups of up to a hundred individuals, about the size of a Fellowship. More than that and we become overwhelmed and lost in the loneliness of the city, the anonymity of the crowd.

Call it “Christ in our midst” if you must or if that makes sense to you. I call it community, the natural environment of human beings. A community within which even I, a reprobate and heretic if ever there were, can feel welcomed and respected. No community of human beings will be perfection and utopia, but through our foibles, flaws and failings we generally try to do what is best for our community because we understand instinctively the importance of community. Thank you for being a community which accepts me, accepts my contributions such as they are and makes me want to be a part of it.

Blessèd be, Namasté, So be it
Tony Fitzgerald

Tell your congregation!

Winter Gifts

20% discount
through January 2009
when you
mention the words
"Newsletter Fillers"

from the

Church of the Larger Fellowship
clfuu.org/catalog/

Looking for that **special gift** for the
Unitarian Universalist in your life?

We offer UU gifts for friends, family & volunteers of all ages!

The Church of the Larger Fellowship (CLF) sells several styles
of **chalice pendants & lapel pins** for all genders and all ages.

The CLF also offers colorful UU-themed **note cards** for all occasions.
They make great holiday gifts, too!



To reach a real person,
contact The Church of the Larger Fellowship
e-mail clfshop@clfuu.org 617-948-6150

Purchasing UU gifts from the CLF is another way
to support the work of Unitarian Universalism throughout the world.
All proceeds from the CLF Shop support the many ministries of the
Church of the Larger Fellowship.

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This Space Wants Your Material