



The Newsletter of the Unitarian Fellowship of Fredericton

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Contents for February 2010

Sunday Services	1
Women's Pot Luck	1
Letter from Sharon	1
Fare Thee Well, Najat	1
Chinese New Year	2
Reflection on "The Christmas Story"	2
St. Valentine's Day	3
The weddings	3
Eid Milad an-Nabi	4
What motivates you to recycle?	4
Reflections on Christmas Carols	5
Purim	5
UniCamp	6
Wake-up Call	6
Annual Spring Fling Art and Craft Sale	6



Sunday Services

February 7 Patricia Ellsworth *Friends for Zambia* Patricia will talk about a cooperative effort to build a much needed school in Zambia.

February 14 Tony Tremblay *on Fred Cogswell*

February 21 Michael George

February 28 The Reverend Mac Campbell *Watch Where You're Going* Clear pixel for spacing What does a study by the Arizona Highway Department have to do with a UU community in New Brunswick's capital city?

March 7 Trisha Mersereau *OPAL*



Women's Pot Luck

The monthly women's pot luck dinner for February is planned for Friday, February 26th. at 6 PM (we'll eat at about 6:30). Lorna Drew will host the pot luck at her home, 25 Chippin Court. The topic for discussion

is a special time with a friend. Who? When? Where? What? Tell us about the time and why it was special. For more information contact Joan Brewer at 455-5169 or jebrewer@rogers.com



Letter from Sharon

John and I are pleased to report that South Carolina and We are well. We are enjoying our connection once again with the people at All Souls Waccamaw Unitarian Universalist Fellowship. John and I attend Evensong each Thursday evening at six thirty...an 8 week course. John is leading the session this week. Sunday Feb 21, I will be presenting and John will be service leader. The group here is in their own facility for the first time in their 20 years of existence. A brick ranch style bungalow is their new church home and that is working well for them. They have even established a fenced in play-yard for the children for after service while parents are socializing.. The weather is not particularly balmy, we are still wearing sweaters or light jackets..but no boots, hats gloves, scarves or winter coats are needed to venture out. Oceanside Village, gated and all, is a safe place to be. Water aerobics each day is helping us to keep moving. It is still cool enough at 60°F to keep insects and other critters at bay. We miss you all, as there is no place like home when all is said and done. See you in April. Lots of affection and warmth from Sharon and John in the sunny south..



Fare Thee Well, Najat

A good-bye to Najat Abdou-McFarland, who is leaving her post as facilitator of Children's RE, because she has accepted a job in Sackville, New Brunswick.

January 24, 2010

Dear Najat,

Thank you. Thank you, first of all, for considering working with our children when asked. Then, thank you for accepting the position of RE facilitator, with its demands and uncertainties. Finally, thank you for giving to this active part of our fellowship, your valuable and valued

Najat-grace.

We will miss you so much.

You have done a wonderful job welcoming and playing with our children, and we have loved having you. Your calm presence has identified our upstairs room as a place of sanctuary, reflection, and love—which is the very most that could be expected of a children’s RE facilitator.

The children, on the other hand, have identified our upstairs room as a place of activity—and sometimes as a place of intense activity. But you have managed.

In fact, how you managed your time and our children’s time in that room and in our hearts, has been good for parent, child, and general member of the congregation. We have all benefitted from your work with us, and we hope you have, too.

We send you on your way with a big hug, with much love, and with the most sincere wishes that you find your new job to be both challenging and satisfying. May you carry some small part of us away with you in your back pocket, and may you come back to us from time to time, refreshed, and refreshing.

From the Children’s RE committee, with love.
allison calvern, chair

Chinese New Year

February 14, 2010 begins with a conjunction of the Sun, Moon, Neptune and Chiron at 25 degrees of Aquarius (Tiger’s counterpart in Western Astrology). This is the third year of the 12 year cycle - The Chinese New Year of the Tiger. The Metal Tiger is by nature lightning fast, intelligent, powerful, and tenacious. She is the beast that both protects and expands her territories—be they realms of the mind, spirit or land. Her nature is honest, straightforward and never apologetic—a creature that knows her own heart and follows it.



Chinese New Year or Spring Festival is the most important of the traditional Chinese holidays. It is sometimes called the “Lunar New Year” by English speakers. The festival traditionally begins on the first day of the first month in the Chinese calendar and ends on the 15th; this day is

called Lantern Festival. Chinese New Year’s Eve is known as Chùxī. It literally means “Year-pass Eve”.

Reflection on “The Christmas Story”

By a reasonably thoughtful Christian

I know I’m not the only person these days who names him- (or her-) self a Christian, but has more than a little struggle with the endless re-telling of “the Christmas Story” in late December each year. I am absolutely convinced that it just didn’t happen this way. And every time I see or hear the story re-told, I get uncomfortable. Are we seriously asking people to believe this? If so, what does that say about us? And if not, why do we keep telling it this way?

This year, finally, I’ve been more peaceful with it. The Christmas story, so beloved by millions, is really a blending of the birth of Jesus stories in the Gospels of Luke and Matthew. Any parts that disagree are conveniently ignored. (e.g. Jesus’ birthplace: Bethlehem in Luke and Nazareth in Matthew.) What is this story, and why does it seem to have such incredible staying power?

I don’t believe that either Matthew or Luke were attempting to record the actual events of Jesus’ birth. Both were writing some 70 years or so after that event, and the purpose of their writing was not to “record history,” at least not in the literal sense that has, unfortunately, been imposed on much of their writing. I believe they were trying to convey the reality of the experience of the man Jesus which those around him felt. (Neither Luke nor Matthew were present in Jesus’ ministry, according to the vast majority of Biblical scholars today.) What people felt in Jesus’ presence was a sense that, in this man, they encountered something of the divine, right there and then. How do you convey that to a widely varied group of people with very low literacy levels? With stories. It is hard for us, as residents of a highly literate culture, to grasp the power of stories in an oral culture, but it was immense.

The biology of Jesus’ day understood that women were mere incubators of babies; the nature, the essence, of the child (especially the male child) came from the father. How to convey that sense of divinity in Jesus’ presence in a story? How about arranging a divine father for him? In one stroke, the story teller conveys some sense of what it was like to be around Jesus, without ever fumbling around for words which attempt to describe that experience. Virgin birth myths were fairly common in Jesus’ time, so it was no great stretch to use that myth to explain how Mary became “divinely” pregnant.

Luke, of course, took it much farther when he introduced a radical political statement into the story. All of those terms we associate with the announcement of Jesus’ birth-

“Emmanuel”, “bringer of light”, “prince of peace”, and so on - were titles which Caesar claimed for himself. Luke’s story thus was a slap in the Roman face: “This man [i.e. Jesus] is our God, and you’re not!” Our literalization of the story over the centuries has robbed it of much of its original meaning, and that is a great loss for us.

So I watch the Christmas pageants, read the Christmas cards, and sing the old carols fairly peaceably these days. They are all telling a story, but it is not a literal one. They are symbols of a story which was itself a symbol of a far deeper and more enduring reality.

—Mac Campbell



St. Valentine’s Day

Numerous early Christian martyrs were named Valentine. The Valentines honored on February 14 are Valentine of Rome and Valentine of Terni. Valentine of Rome was a priest in Rome who suffered martyrdom about AD 269 and was buried on the Via Flaminia. His relics are at the Church of Saint Praxed in Rome and at Whitefriar Street Carmelite Church in Dublin, Ireland.



Various modern sources attempt to link St Valentine’s Day with pagan fertility and love festivals in mid-February but the earliest reliable reference appears to be Chaucer. Even to this, though, there is dispute. A publication in 1797, *The Young Man’s Valentine Writer*, appears to have inspired the tradition of sending Valentines which grew through the 19th century and, apparently, inspired the tradition of sending cards for other festivals as well.



The weddings

What makes grandmothers cool- types these days. I paint my toe nails vermilion, wear silver ankle bracelets when the summer sun tans, and even a Speedo bathing suit when sitting alone by the river. And I earnestly listens to CBC’s Jian Ghomeshi’s hard rock in the mornings thinking there must be something here that I ought to understand.

There are some things however that befuddle, case in point, my granddaughter’s wedding, It’s not the union itself that confuses but rather the changes in the mechanics

of how it’s done, the ceremony, that is. And why not. These girls are professionals of ancient age, in the vicinity of thirty perhaps and making lots of cash. Very different from the kids of my generation barely out of their bobby-socks who tied the knot with no more than a bag of beans in their packsacks. There never seemed to be enough time then. This attitude was a remnant of wartime when there really wasn’t any time. Guys got killed and beds could became lonely at warp speed. As children of the depression we didn’t need money either. We’d learned with our mother’s milk how to stretch a dollar and we took a perverse pride in our own frugality. The wedding was something we had to get through to make Mother happy and give the neighborhood a reprieve from their consuming interest in who would be caught with a bun in the oven. The wedding document meant that ‘Wow, I can wake up with this beloved in the morning without having sinned.’

I suppose that my own wedding was an occasion memorable for its simplicity and cost. We stood in front of the minister’s fireplace and vowed to love each other forever. This was witnessed by sundry souls who happened to be present, a few wilted flowers from someone’s garden and no parents since they took a passing interest only in the event, their own lives being a scramble. From the ‘for sale’ table at Daytons, my bridal gown was a short green drapey thing of demur length and bodice. And then there was the honeymoon, a couple of days of hitchhiking the New Brunswick roads, and nights in a fly speckled logging camp in the company of two drunken loggers who had gotten their truck stuck in a nearby river bank.

When it came to the wedding of my daughter, the next generation, parents were in control and were expected to pay up. This took some planning especially for mothers. Daughters more or less fell into line since Daddy handed out the money. Mother made sure that popular protocol was followed, invitations delivered to relatives and friends, a sashay down the isle, and piles of palely wrapped and sliver bowed toasters, tea cups and stuff, gifts for the yet-to-be-formed household. Admittedly, there was some overlap here in kitchen needs since a few of this generation were tentatively experimenting with cohabitation before marriage. This cohabitation was never seen as a permanent state, a trial-run perhaps requiring little back-up furnishings. So wedding gifts were welcome. This daughter’s honeymoon was an upgrade from mine. She departed the scene on a motorcycle trailing tin cans for clatter.

So we come to the next in-line, the granddaughter. By this time we are in Southern Ontario, the place of my birth which should have elicited some familiarity with local customs but didn’t in this case. The wedding was to be a spectacular event held in a well appointed winery hugging Lake Erie. And it was to be orchestrated and financed primarily by the bride and groom. They had been seriously living together for at least a year planning this day and jacking-up the bank account to finance it.

Piles of thousands of dollars were budgeted and in consultation with friends an appropriately competent staff had been engaged, caterers, flower arrangers and decorators, DJ as master of ceremonies, seamstresses, jewelry designers to make accessories, hairdressers, masseuses, skin and nail specialists, a bartender manning an open bar and of course the photographer who would record the event in detail. Clothing for the wedding party of ten had been carefully chosen, coloured vests for the attendants under dark suits and apple-green gowns for the brides-maids. An excellent sit down dinner was planned for one hundred and fifty people followed by a slide show of childhood events, speeches, much champagne, the cake cutting and dancing under tiny lights. This gala day of days was to be followed by a cruise to the Caribbean.

My tightfisted conservative practically born of the depression kicked in. This is a very ordinary hardworking couple. What could they possibly be thinking. 'Surely this is a foolhardy adventure.' I thought. 'Surely money would be better invested in a house or saved in the bond market for old age, at least somebody's old age or saved for college money for kids or a crazy safari trip to darkest Africa to save the lions.' Never-the less planning tore along at a happy pace despite my negative comments which were slid into the conversation and ignored whenever possible.

Then I was apprised of the 'Jack and Jill' party, apparently a new custom in Southern Ontario. The bride and groom-to-be host a party that includes a roast pig on a spit, a dinner of sorts and many gambling type games and much beer, this all for twenty dollars a head plus five bucks per gamble. This event is held under a large tent a few weeks before the wedding with the understanding that moneys collected will go toward the nuptials. What you have to have here, it was explained to me, is a large group of friends who would rather contribute this way then spend an evening partying in celebration at some local bar.

'Good God,' I thought. 'How crass, no class at all.' 'Shut-up grandmother,' I told myself. 'What do you know. This is one event that I'll skip,' I told myself. Parents weren't welcomed for more than few moments of the opening salvo in any case.

The day of the wedding arrived, the sun shone, the lake sparkled and events proceeded with the pomp and beauty of any royal wedding. The bride and groom were resplendent, flower girls tossed petals into wispy breezes, and ex husbands and wives were acting civilized. It couldn't have been more of a success. The gift table was piled with envelopes. The cake was cut and the knot tied. To make the event even more memorable the bride announced that she was pregnant. This was greeted by shrieks of delight from friends and tears of joy from the rest of us; from me especially.

I'm not sure when the wedding-gift tally took place but it was confirmed that yes indeed, the money collected at the Jack and Jill party along with donations presented

in thin envelopes had more than covered the cost of the glorious day as well as the cruise. All you need for success when attempting this kind of adventure is a group of friends who like to party and expect reciprocation when their time comes. And you need parents who are willing to give up idea that daughters are passed from one household into another. Daughters think differently these days and at this point so do grandmothers.

Too bad the bride's condition precluded total enjoyment of the rolling seas. They just bought a little house with potential too.

Betty Ponder



Eid Milad an-Nabi

Sunset, the 25th of February this year, marks the beginning of the celebration of the birth of the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him. Fixed as the 12th day of the month of Rabi' al-awwal, the third month in the Islamic calendar, Eid Milad means birthday of a holy figure and an-Nabi means prophet.

The day is commemorated with recollections of Muhammad's life and significance, however, some fundamentalist Muslims, such as the Wahhabi sect, do not celebrate it, perhaps to avoid the sort of heresy which they see attending the birth celebrations of other prophets.

Although Milad an-Nabi is always on the same day of the Islamic calendar, the date on the Gregorian calendar varies from year to year, since the Gregorian calendar is a solar calendar and the Islamic calendar is a lunar calendar. This difference means that all Islamic dates move in the Gregorian calendar approximately 11 days every year. Dates may also vary from country to country depending on whether the new crescent moon has been sighted or not.



What motivates you to recycle?

I would like to pose a question to the congregation:

"What motivates you to recycle & how can you make it easy for yourself to do it?"

My conscience tells me that recycling is the right thing to do, but my conscience doesn't have to wash the cans, cartons, & containers, and store them in the basement until I decide to take them to the blue bins.

I started off recycling cardboard from food boxes because it is easy to do. Flyers & paper are easy too. My children enjoy putting these items in the bins.

I gather refundable drink boxes & bottles and donate them to my daughter's day-care so I don't have to deal with the bottle depot.

I keep empty coffee cans for Eric to use as cigarette butt cans outdoors. I throw out other cans.

I throw batteries into the garbage because I do not know where I can recycle them.

Once in a while I recycle plastics, but most of the time I throw them in the garbage. You see plastic would take the most effort because it has to be washed. The blue bins do not want anything "soiled."

I feel guilty EVERY time I throw something plastic into the garbage but I continue to do it. I view this behavior as harmful to myself, my family, and the environment.

I guess no one said recycling would be easy.

I hope this submission will help me be more accountable.

Please email me at heidiod@rogers.com or talk to me on a Sunday if you would like to share your stories & ideas.

Thank you all for being an inspiration to me.

Heidi O'Donnell



Reflections on Christmas Carols

By a reasonably thoughtful Christian

I read with interest in last month's Touchstone Garrison Keillor's rant about "Silent Night." So then I dug up Keillor's whole article and read it, as well as some of the UU responses to it. Much as I like Garrison Keillor in general, he really did miss the mark on this one.

It is true, beyond any question at all, that the early Christian church borrowed quite freely from surrounding cultures and traditions. Winter solstice celebrations pre-date the time of Jesus by at least a millennium or two. Stories of virgin births were fairly common among cultural heroes and traditions, as were stories of divine-human conception. Other examples abound. This "borrowing" process has been carried out by every religion as it formed. Religions grow out of cultural contexts, not thin air, and Christianity is no exception. As several UU writers have pointed out, this historical reality puts Keillor on very thin ice when he accuses others of "stealing" from the Christian tradition.

I suspect that what got under Keillor's skin was a sense that the UU's, in modifying "Silent Night," were saying, in effect, "This is the way it really should be sung." The implied sub-text, for some, might have been, "You've been singing it wrong, but we will fix it for you." I agree that such a statement would be offensive, but I don't hear that statement being made, either here or in any other case where the UU's have modified the lyrics of a familiar hymn

or carol. When I encounter new or modified words in "Singing the Living Tradition," I assume that the changes were made to make those hymns more clearly express a UU perspective, and were intended for use primarily within the UU community (though others might also use them if they wished). As a Christian minister with a strong interest in music in general and hymnody in particular, I fail to see any problem.

So the question becomes, do non-Christians have any right (or any business) making a few changes, large or small, in well-known Christmas carols and then claiming them as their own? Considering that a number of very "traditional" protestant hymns got their tunes from barroom drinking songs, and that the original lyrics for many hymns would be almost unrecognizable today, I think this is a question that has to be asked with considerable caution. Given the place which many of those hymns (particularly Christmas carols) hold in the Christian tradition, it is clear that such changes must be made very respectfully. But such changes will be made.

Music evolves. That is its nature, and one of the things that I love about it. Music that never changes soon becomes, well, OLD. And usually stale. And it often carries less and less connection with the world in which it is played or sung. Much of that "evolution" comes from people "tinkering" with music which already exists. The United Church of Canada hymnal "Voices United," published in 1995, contains several familiar hymn tunes with new words set to them, and many more traditional hymns in which the words have been changed in a few places to be more in line with modern sensibilities and understandings. There was a considerable ruckus raised about the changes, but that hymnal has been in high demand from its publication, and is now into multiple printings. That's the way it works. It always has. I suspect it always will. I will keep reading Garrison Keillor simply because he writes a very good rant . . . even when he misses the mark.

—Mac Campbell



Purim

Sunset, February 27th sees the start of Purim 2010. This is the 14th day of the month Adar in the Hebrew



calendar. The festival commemorates the deliverance of the Jewish people of the ancient Persian Empire from Haman's plot to annihilate them, as recorded in the Biblical Book of Esther. According to the story, Haman cast

lots to determine the day upon which to exterminate the Jews.

Jewish exiles from the Kingdom of Judah who had been living in the Babylonian captivity (6th Century BCE) found themselves under Persian rule after Babylonia was in turn conquered by the Persian Empire. According to the Book of Esther, Haman, royal vizier to King Ahasuerus planned to kill the Jews, but his plans were foiled by Esther, his queen. Mordecai, a palace official, cousin and foster parent of Esther, subsequently replaced Haman. The Jews were delivered from being the victims of an evil decree against them and were instead allowed by the King to destroy their enemies, and the day after the battle was designated as a day of feasting and rejoicing.

Purim is characterized by public recitation of the Book of Esther, giving mutual gifts of food and drink, giving charity to the poor, and a celebratory meal (se'udat Purim). Other customs include drinking wine, wearing of masks and costumes, and public celebration. One tradition is to use a Purim ra'ashan or noisemaker to drown out the name of Haman whenever it is read during the recitation of Esther.



UniCamp

UNICAMP Day is February 7, 2010. It's the middle of winter and it's a good time to think about Unicamp. Hiking the trails, swimming in the pond, star gazing, walking the labyrinth. Spring and Unicamp are not far away. Please take a minute on February 7th, during your Joys and Concerns time to mention Unicamp and briefly share your experience.



Editor's note: I have a fresh copy of the brochure for this year's camp available in electronic form which I can send to or print for anyone who wishes. UniCamp is near Shelburne Ontario and activities continue from May through September with Youth and Kid camps in July. Discounts for the July camps are available if reservations are made before mid-March.



Wake-up Call

Tales from a Frontier Doctor

By Sterling Haynes

In his second book, Wake-Up Call, Sterling Haynes begins by telling us that at the age of seventy a left hemisphere

stroke rearranged his brain. "My right creative side took over and I started to write poetry and humour. I was left with a partially paralyzed right foot, but a writer's creative right brain. I think I got the better of the deal, a new brain in trade for a foot. The funny episodes in my medical practice became hilarious. The sad, melancholy parts of my life's memories looked less bleak."

Haynes shares the humorous and sometimes bizarre tales of his life as a doctor: a man shoots off his big toe in a drunken binge and then begs the doc to get him to Sunday Mass on time; an inmate swallows a spoon to avoid solitary confinement; an accident with a Murphy bed leaves a man hanging for more than ten hours. "I worked long hours, made house calls, went out with the ambulance and flew to remote accident areas, sometimes receiving payment in kind: hinds of beef, lamb and moose, bags of potatoes and turnips and, on one occasion, a big game guide brought me a four-point buck in payment for delivering his first son, leaving the dressed carcass in the centre of my waiting room." Haynes tells it like it was in these tales of a frontier doctor, from Williams Lake to Alabama.

His poem "I Don't Do Old" published in the Canadian Unitarian in the Fall 2009 issue brought him many calls from across Canada.

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Annual Spring Fling Art and Craft Sale

At the Fellowship will be held April 22, 23 and/or 24th. dates will be confirmed soon. Your help is needed,

- 1 Donations of food for the bake table, the kitchen and lunch for the vendors
- 2 Volunteers to help with parking.
- 3 Volunteers to help in the kitchen.
- 4 Volunteers to help spread the word (posters will be available).
- 5 Volunteers to greet people and explain about the fellowship if asked.
- 6 Volunteers to set up tables, organize garage area and clean up after.

Please let one of us know if you can volunteer

Janet Crawford	454-0441	janetcra@nbnet.nb.ca
Nancy Beltrandi	459-8004	beltrand@rogers.com
Carol Ann Hanley	459-8550	thanley@nbnet.nb.ca
Betty Lou Daye	357-8256	daye@nb.sympatico.ca
Glenna Hanley	472-8431	ghanley@nb.sympatico.ca

This space wants your material!