

HISTORIC VISIT TO THE BIRTHPLACE OF SERVETUS

Discovering the 'common thread' of global UUism

Thirteen Canadians made a pilgrimage to the birthplace of Michael Servetus in Spain last November, as part of the 10th anniversary gathering of the International Council of Unitarians and Universalists (ICUU). They came away with "the thrill of realizing that Unitarianism is a world religion, not just confined to the countries we normally think of," according to participant Evelyn Frain of Ottawa.

The group included official delegates like Brian Kiely and Mary Bennett of the CUC, ICUU executive members (including Vancouver's John Slattery, who is vice-president), and for the first time, ordinary UUs who wanted an international experience. As a result, it was the largest ICUU gathering ever, with about 100 participants.

The conference was held at the ancient Catholic monastery in Montserrat, near Barcelona. The group spent Sunday visiting the birthplace of Spanish doctor Michael Servetus.

Thelma Smith of Red Deer was amazed to meet Unitarians and Universalists "from northern India, Burundi, South Africa and Central America." The conference proceedings were in English, but daily worships were led by the various regions, including sections in their own languages.



Most of the Canadian ICUU delegation surrounds the statue of Michael Servetus during a pilgrimage to his birthplace in Spain.

Despite the cultural and linguistic differences, Smith says she realized "there is a common thread that unites all of us in Unitarianism."

Evelyn Frain, 82, decided to attend the conference because she's led a life full of international experiences, with the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs. "I wanted to see firsthand the world fellowship of Unitarians."

She loved her experience and found Montserrat beautiful, but was shocked by the lavish displays of gold in the basilica. "It knocked me for

• see "Connecting Internationally" next page

Winter Light

BY STEVE LENNON

A clear cold day
And my shadow and I
Are the only objects moving
Across the snow
Marching crunch, crunch, crunch
Toe to toe
Swinging our arms
Blue and purple and black
Against whitest white.

He is the taller and bolder one
And takes great strides
Over chef-d'oeuvre
wind sculptures –
All ogees and crescents,
Fine feathering, lateen sails
and lace.

On this bright tundra day
I am winter's moth
Drunk with light
Giddy with sunrays
Dizzy with the dazzle.

I turn to face the source
Eyes closed, smiling
And feel the simple generosity
Of January's extravagance.
I am content.

Steve Lennon is a member of the First UU Church of Winnipeg. Active there in fundraising, event organizing and a writers' group, Steve reads and writes poetry almost every day as a spiritual exercise.

Poetry Contributions

cuc members are invited to submit short, spiritual poems. Please include a brief bio and send to cuc poetry editor, Franci Louann, at fouann@telus.net or by fax to 519-846-8995.

*Riding the
UU Tide*

cuc goes to NB | see supplement



Mary Bennett

CUC Executive Director

If not love, what are we here for?

Last November, about 100 Unitarians and Universalists from around the world packed themselves into two buses and drove from the ICUU conference at Montserrat (near Barcelona) to the small town of Villanueva de Sijena. There, we were formally greeted by the mayor, and by the Director and Secretary-General of the Michael Servetus Institute, followed by the unveiling of a plaque to commemorate our “historical and touching” visit.

The Institute’s website describes the event like this: “Unlike many academic events that the Institute organizes regularly, the visit of the Unitarian delegates was full of an indescribable spiritual essence, that reached its culminating point during the religious service that was held in the afternoon in the conference room of the Institute and which followed a thoughtful lecture by Mr. Jaume de Marcos (president of the Spanish Unitarian Universalist Religious Association) on the main aspects of the life and legacy of Servetus.”

Leaving the house in the growing dusk we were given a red votive candle, and formed a procession along the short distance to the town square. There, a larger-than-life statue of Servetus sits in a large chair holding a book, looking something like a kindly, wise and learned elder. It contrasts with other statues focused on his martyrdom, often showing him bound, distraught and in pain. Both are true of his life – and ours.

As Venus, the evening star, came out, the church bell began to toll, pigeons flew out and we went forward one by one to place our candles on and around the statue. What I liked best was that families from the village joined with us. As the growing dark descended, we chanted together, “If not love, what are we here for?”

Indeed.

Connecting Internationally



ICUU delegates place candles at the statue of Michael Servetus in Villanueva de Sijena.

• *continued from front page*
a loop, because I’ve been in Bolivia. I know that Spain got all this gold from Latin America and the plundering was harmful.”

Rev. Meg Roberts of Calgary was invited to attend the conference to assist in organization and programs. She thinks the ICUU succeeded in getting a little closer to grassroots Unitarians by opening the gathering to all members and offering diverse programming during the workshop sessions.

Roberts also had a hand in writing the adult curriculum called *The International Garden of Unitarianism and Universalism*. It features units on ICUU member countries, including Transylvania, Hungary, Poland, India and Pakistan. It can be used for small group ministry sessions, adult religious education courses or worship services.

As acting co-chair of the North American Regional Committee, Roberts invites anyone to contact her at meg@unitarianscalgary.org for help in using these materials in their own church.

The conference launched the Friends of the ICUU program for individuals who wish to support our global connections (see web links below).

Finally, if you’re attending the an-

nual conference in Saint John, you can attend the concurrent session about the ICUU’s *Garden* curriculum led by Meg Roberts or contact her at the address below. [U](https://www.cuc.ca/links/icuu.htm)

Connect internationally at:
www.cuc.ca/links/icuu.htm

Letters to the Editor

COMPLEX ARGUMENT

I read with interest Rev. Susan Van Dreser’s article on doubt and skepticism in the last issue. I think I understood the point(s) she was getting at. But I was reminded of a recent article on retiring Supreme Court Justice John Major: “His view was always if you couldn’t write it clearly and succinctly, and explain it to a 14-year-old, you didn’t understand it yourself.” I have some lingering doubt whether a 14-year-old would understand Van Dreser’s article.

– Peter Riches, *High River, Alberta*

UNITARIAN ERROR

In the last issue we referred to Winnipeg webmaster Karin *Carlson* as Karin *Armstrong*. Our apologies!

© MICHAEL SERVETUS INSTITUTE

New Brunswick church has long Unitarian history

UNITARIANS HAVE BEEN A part of Saint John, N.B. since the New England “Lumber Barons” settled here in the 1850s. Some of the founding families grew up in the Old Ship Church founded in 1635 near Plymouth, Massachusetts. It was known as a liberal renaissance congregation in the early 1700s and that spirit was carried to Saint John.

The local Unitarian community has taken on various forms over the years. Early services were held in Jewett’s “castle” and even in a former Baptist mission hall. At the time of the Great Saint John Fire of 1877, when nearly all of the uptown area was leveled, the first Unitarian congregation’s meeting place narrowly escaped. Although the building has since disappeared, the original bible has been retained as a memorial and link to our past.

By 1900 Saint John had two Unitarian houses of worship, The Independent Presbyterian Church on Main Street (North) and The Church of the Messiah on Hazen Avenue. The 1960s saw Unitarian House on Germain Street.

The 1970s and ’80s brought declining numbers and the near extinction of a UU presence in Saint John, but in the mid-1990s a dedicated group of the original congregation started meeting again and more people joined. The congregation evolved from fellowship to full charter status in June 2003.

Although many are surprised at our deep roots, the Unitarian Universalist Church of Saint John is very much in the present and looking to the future of maintaining a modern, liberal religious presence in our city. Our congregation is small, with about 50–60 people attending a full service. But we’ve outgrown our present rented space at a community centre and are actively

searching for larger accommodations.

Our church activities include twice-monthly formal worship services as well as informal singing Sundays, adult discussion groups, social gatherings and a professionally planned children’s program.

The church sponsors a community drum circle and helps staff an inner-city soup kitchen. Our Faith in Action committee has in the recent past contributed funds to organizations such as a local human development group and will this year make a contribution to the operation of a mobile soup kitchen.

Within our congregation, we have folks that range from Buddhist to Pagan to Christian to agnostic leanings. Discussions can be lively! At the present time, we are in process of becoming recognized as a Welcoming Congregation.

The congregation is served by a part-time minister, Rev. Kitsy Winthrop,

who travels from Portland, Maine every month to conduct a service and attend to pastoral needs. As well, once a month we hold a lay-led service, and a couple of times a year we invite other UU ministers as guest speakers.

Two congregational lay chaplains are licensed with the province to perform weddings and other rites of passage. There is also the hard-working Director of Children’s RE, and an equally hard-working and dedicated Board of Trustees.

This year, the Unitarian Universalist Church of Saint John has taken on one of its largest projects, as host of the CUC’s Annual Conference and Meeting. For a church of 43 members, hosting an event like this involves nearly everyone in the congregation – talk about a leap of faith! 

For more about the Saint John congregation, visit: www3.nbnet.nb.ca/uucsj



Volunteers from Saint John and Fredericton are hard at work organizing the 2006 CUC ACM.



**Brian
Kiely**
CUC President

When does a church building become a home?

A year ago, the Unitarian Church of Edmonton moved into a renovated office/warehouse complex. A lot of sweat equity went into the transformation and it turned out well. We like the new space, but it has been missing the certain something that would transform it into a church home.

It needed memories. It needed weddings and memorials and child dedications. It needed special events and shared meals and unforgettable youth services.

Perhaps it also needed something shocking. On Sunday, Jan. 22, we got that shock. In the wee hours, someone defaced our beautiful blonde wood front doors. There was a Nazi swastika and slogan and the door handles had been covered with thick, black goop.

Rosemary Manning, our DRE, called the police and the media. Both groups responded promptly.

I never saw the hateful images firsthand, for I am on sabbatical. Under the leadership of Rosemary and President Sylvia Krogh, this wonderfully competent congregation just handled it.

TV wanted to film the service – on social responsibility, as it turns out. The cameras visited our classrooms where Rosemary created a lesson about bullying and Nazism on the spot. Reporters interviewed members, each finding the perfect balance between outrage and courage, anger and determination.

Our people used the opportunity to explain our UU principles of acceptance and openness to all faiths and made it clear that this attack on *our church home* would only make us work harder.

And then another group got out pails and solvents and went to work scrubbing away the hateful images.

I have never been more proud of this congregation. That day, the new church became a lot more like home.

Testimony

by Christine Michell

Our youth movement is vibrant and sharing

I wasn't quite born UU, but I was close. When I was three years old my mother started attending the Unitarian Church of Calgary (ucc) and took me with her. By the time I left the RE program last June and moved to Lethbridge for university, I was the only one left from my original group – 15 years later!

I became a member of ucc when I was 17 and although I sometimes attend services at the Lethbridge fellowship where I now live, ucc is my spiritual home and always will be.

I don't know which came first: my passion for social justice or my UU values. I do remember my conscious decision to be a UU. I was reading the children and youth adaptations of the principles. When I came to number seven – “We need to take care of our planet, Earth, the home we share with all living things” – I remember thinking, “Yeah, okay, I'll be Unitarian.” And that was that!

The environment was my passion when I was little, but since then I've grown to feel strongly about a whole range of social justice issues. My involvement with the UU youth community has given me a lot of opportunities to use that passion. I'm currently the CUC's Social Justice Coordinator for Youth in Canada, and am developing a social justice website as well as working on my own projects.

Our Pride Rainbow Project (PRP) banner of the last two years has allowed me to work with other UU youth for equality for Bisexual, Gay, Lesbian and Transgender (BGLT) persons. Although we reached our original goal of Equal Marriage in Canada, the project is still going with a broader focus on all BGLT rights. We're setting up PRP Chapters in the four CUC regions, and a parallel project in the U.S.



I've always gone to church regularly, helped organize events for my youth group, and since 2003 have attended nine youth conferences. The UU youth movement is vibrant, inclusive and inspiring. It has given me a place to relax and be myself, surrounded by people who share my values, plus opportunities to use my passion for leadership.

I feel so fortunate to have found such a wonderful community that has given me so much nourishment, support and opportunity.

I've definitely found my religious home in the Unitarian Universalist faith in Canada. The principles help ground my values, the people are inspiring and the social justice focus allows me to make a difference in the world. The youth community will always be a part of me, and I'm sure I'll spend many years as a youth advisor and ally in the future, helping other youth to enjoy the wonderful experiences I've had. 

- Youth and Social Justice: www.cuc.ca/youth/socialjustice
- Pride Rainbow Project: www.priderrainbowproject.com

From the Pulpit

by Rev. Carole Martignacco

Easter, seeds, miracles and mysteries

"To be of the Earth is to know the restlessness of being a seed, the darkness of being planted, the struggle toward the light, the pain of growth into the light, the joy of bursting and bearing fruit, the love of being food for someone, the scattering of your seeds, the decay of the seasons, the mystery of death and the miracle of birth."

– John Soos

In spring, around the vernal equinox, comes the great festival Easter, named for the goddess Eostre, giving us our word east – the place where the sun rises. Every year we are amazed, enchanted, jubilant all over again as new growth appears out of the dark earth. First the ice on rivers and lakes begins to crack and crocuses poke their heads out of the snow; then comes the parade of daffodils, tulips, hyacinths. Grass turns from brown to green, watered by melting snow and silver rain. Days lengthen, the sun rises earlier, warmth returns to the land. As if awakening from a deep sleep plants come alive again after long months of lying dormant in the dark soil, seemingly dead.

Primitive cultures observed and celebrated this annual renewal as a holy, sacred time. The first Easter, shrouded in mystery, goes back to the dawn of human consciousness, as our kind first observed the growing patterns of plants, then charted the seasons and phases of the moon.

The personification of this annual rebirth as god and goddess mythology goes back 50,000 years or more. Christians who celebrate spring with the resurrection story – the holy one

who was dead is alive again – are participating in one of the newer versions of an old, old story. But the oldest story is of the seed.

It was the seed that captured the imagination of early humans and enticed us toward new ways of living, leading to the first experiments in civilization, the settling of villages and towns and cities. Before that, we were dependent on foraging for food, and only gradually learned to cultivate crops, to irrigate land where there was no natural source of water. If you were one of those early humans, you would have lived a long time with seeds before the concept dawned that here, in this seemingly lifeless stone, was all that was needed for resurrection.

Consider the seed – a gift in an unlikely package. On the outside it appears dry, lifeless. Whether shrivelled and crusty or round and smooth, all its potential is hidden. Inside, the seed is a capsule full of

longing, a kernel of possibility, encoded with a complete blueprint for growth. Glorious colours await, graceful shapes of stem, branch and leaf, and all the energy required for blossoming.

We live in one Earth garden, life as usual the most amazing miracle. Seeds are not only scattered everywhere around us, but inside us. Out of our deepest longings, from whatever darkness we know, let us awaken now to our potential. Reaching toward light, let us grow and blossom with this miraculous season of renewal and rebirth. 

Carole Martignacco ministers to the UU Church of North Hatley and is author of *The Everything Seed: A Story of Beginnings*, Tricycle Press, 2006

The Everything Seed

BY CAROLE MARTIGNACCO

Have you ever watched a seed grow?
Have you ever noticed
how it begins
so small,
so still,
so quiet,
like a gift waiting to be opened ...

and how slowly
it wakes up,
begins to unfold,
growing
into something
larger ...
and Larger ...
and LARGER?

What once began
in a blazing blossom of light
continues every day.

New stars sprout open
in the deep soil
of space.

New plants and animals
appear on the Earth.

Seeds of many kinds
are scattered
all over the earth ...

to help us remember.

And new people
are born everyday
with the spark
of that first light
still alive
and burning
deep inside ... waiting

like the Everything Seed
to shine
in ways
that are yet
to be known.



Unitaridées

par Gilles Marchildon

Un nouvel élan sans Nouvel An

Le changement d'année, selon le calendrier qui prédomine dans notre culture, signale pour plusieurs un point tournant. Le 1^{er} janvier nous pousse à « tourner la page » ... littéralement et aussi, au sens figuré.

On a beau dire que c'est un moment très artificiel qui ne reflète pas la transition des saisons. Pourtant, plusieurs d'entre nous utilisons cette date pour au moins réfléchir à notre vie. Certains vont même prendre des « résolutions du Nouvel An »!

En quelque sorte, une « Résolution du Nouvel An » est une promesse qu'on se fait. Elle peut nous inspirer à nous dépasser.

Cependant, une résolution cache aussi un danger : laissée de côté, elle peut nous décourager.

Dans tel cas, c'est peut-être que notre résolution n'était pas réalisable, qu'elle ne reflétait pas nos intentions profondes ou encore, que nous n'avions pas le soutien d'autrui qu'il nous fallait.

Vous en êtes peut-être là au moment de lire ces lignes.

L'idée de prendre une résolution vient de la conjugaison de deux facteurs. D'abord, on éprouve un désir de changement ou d'amélioration. Ensuite, la date incontournable nous donne la petite poussée qu'il nous faut pour agir.

Bien que le début de l'an offre l'occasion de faire le bilan et d'établir une nouvelle direction, rien nous empêche de faire ça à n'importe quel moment de l'année.

Tout ce qu'il faut, c'est de souhaiter un changement et de choisir une date.

Sur ce, je vous dit « Bon succès! » avec vos multiples résolutions tout au cours de 2006.

Across the Country

Munsch does Calgary

Calgary Unitarians Rachele and Trevor Lee recently won a contest sponsored by ABC Literacy Canada, and received an at-home visit from renowned children's author (and Unitarian) Robert Munsch of Guelph on Family Literacy Day (Jan. 21).

Munsch actually joined the family the night before the big event, in order to get to know the Lees and their three boys a little better. The Saturday event drew over 30 people, dressed in costumes of their favourite Munsch characters. Although it was also a bit of a media circus, Bob focussed on the kids, performing many of his published and unpublished stories, while the Lee parents served "munschies" for their guests.

Munsch is Canada's best-selling author with nearly 40 titles in print; the classic *Love You Forever* has sold over 20 million copies alone. He makes 200 public appearances a year, but is extremely cagey about them. You can't "book" a Munsch reading (he gets too many requests for that), nor can you



Robert Munsch reads with the Lee family.

hire him (he charges nothing for his appearances, not even travel costs). It's something he does spontaneously, or as publicity for an organization he supports (he's ABC's honorary chair for Family Literacy Day). [U](#)

In Memoriam

PHIL DE GRUCHY

Phil de Gruchy, a long-time active member of the First Unitarian Congregation of Waterloo, died in late December at the age of 82. He became a Unitarian after moving to Montreal from Liverpool, joining the Lakeshore congregation in 1961. He began his long association with Amnesty International in Montreal and would continue his commitment to Amnesty even after he retired to Waterloo in 1989 and joined the Unitarian Congregation there. De Gruchy was involved in all sorts of social action in Waterloo, including Child Haven, refugee sponsorships, the community pantry and peace, among others. He is survived by his wife Pamela, four children and five grandchildren.

BROCK RIDEOUT

All Don Heighters knew Brock, and realize how much we will miss him. But those who are not long-time members probably don't know all he did for our congregation. Brock was one of the active pioneers who started our congregation (then known as Birchcliff) in 1954. He was Sunday services chair in 1959-60, chair of the Board 1961-62, a "Circuit Rider" (one of our members who served as speakers for other Unitarian congregations and fellowships in the 1970s), our lay chaplain from 1980 to 1988 and denominational affairs chair 1993-1994. With his great voice, he was a member of every choir we ever had. An accomplished cook, he was noted for his "Uncle Brock's Hot Unitarian Sauce" which sold quickly at all our fund-raising events.

— Vivian White

Friends Profile

John and Anita Hagen

CUC is 'the big picture' for these B.C. friends

Seeing the big picture is an acquired art. CUC Friends John and Anita Hagen of Beacon Unitarian Church in Coquitlam, B.C., have become masters at understanding the interplay of personal spiritual experience with the interdependent web of all things.

Anita has seen the breadth of this country, born and raised in Sydney, N.S. and now a west coaster of many years. John, a native British Columbian, has followed his passion for the outdoors, for birding, for the roads and trails less travelled. A retired civil servant, he is a life-long and frequent musician.

John and Anita have never been bystanders. Teaching others and becoming engaged in political life, Anita parlayed years as an activist for education, women's and senior's issues into 10 years as an elected MLA in the B.C. legislature.

Born into Christianity, John and Anita drifted away from their respective churches as young adults, but later found themselves missing a church



home and a place for their sons to gain a knowledge of the world's religions. Drawing on their enjoyment attending the Unitarian Church of Vancouver, the Hagens became charter members of the 100-strong Beacon congregation in 1983 and have since served on almost every committee and in most every capacity possible.

As their circle of involvement in UU affairs broadened, the Hagens became convinced of the importance of a made-in-Canada approach. That's why they are Friends of the CUC. "We've been Friends from the beginning because we still have a way to go to help Canadian UU organizations grow and thrive," says Anita. "The CUC is part of who we are – the big picture – and we give financially what we can each year to support that larger movement." 

- You can become a CUC Friend online: www.cuc.ca/friends or by contacting the CUC (see back cover).

Toronto First builds Habitat home

Mulumbet Regasa got the keys to her new home on Dec. 18. The keys were presented by members of the First Unitarian Congregation of Toronto, who sponsored and helped build her house. Regasa arrived in Canada from Ethiopia in 1987, set out to upgrade her English and then trained as a hair

stylist. She is thrilled with the new home for her and her three children. The family will purchase the house over the next 25 years with an interest-free mortgage from Habitat for Humanity. Members of Toronto First Unitarian are especially proud to have raised \$60,000 over the last year to fund the Mulumbet's home. They are the only faith community in Toronto that single-handedly funded a Habitat home through the work of their members, dozens of whom volunteered during its construction. 

New DLRE at Unitarian Church of Vancouver

The Unitarian Church of Vancouver is pleased to announce the appointment of **Caroline Farley** as our



Vancouver Unitarians

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The Canadian UU Leadership School happens July 20–23, 2006 in Ottawa. For more information go to: www.cuc.ca/CUC_calendar.html

THE CANADIAN

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* Non-members can subscribe to the Unitarian for \$15 Can. or \$10 U.S. Send name, address and cheque to CUC office.

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their families and friends*

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More info. at www.EliotInstitute.org or 206-374-2497.

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Designs by Donna

Need “appreciation” gifts? Donna has her own colourful, copyrighted chalice designs on T-shirts, book bags, sweatshirts, “hoodies” and more! These designs include the one at the left, plus a musical variation (with a music note for the flame). Church hangings and ministerial stoles are also available.

Donna Hamilton

604-944-3113
donna-h@telus.net
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