

International Woman's Day Sunday Services March 8, 2015



We know that many Congregations observed this day, dedicated to highlighting issues that women face wherever they live on Planet Earth as well as their accomplishments. These brief summaries from five representative Unitarian Congregations are an inspiring read and perhaps will motivate more members to organize such services, also to report them nationally so that we all might savour their rich diversity. A goal of CUUWA is to have every Canadian Congregation to voluntarily observe International Women's Day. Please join us!

Theme: Wisdom of the Generations

Decor: Quilts were used to decorate Worship Hall; these were requested from congregants, asking for quilts old and new that had a history or story; these stories were pinned to the quilt for people to browse.

Time for all ages: Two of the quilts, thought to be of most interest to the children were demonstrated and shown and their stories told by the quilt owners.

Chalice Lighting honoured women from the past, today's women and hopes for the women of the future.

Two Homilies: Prairie Women: Joan Turner, one of our members from the prairies, spoke of the resilience of women in her prairie community (the related quilt) and Unitarian Congregation; we also learned of the contributions of the Icelandic women, especially Margaret Benedictsson and Jennie McCaine Peterson, to the Women's movement and to the Manitoba Unitarian community. Joan reminded us that Manitoba was the first province to enfranchise women.

UU Pioneer: Linda Goonewardene told us the story of Mary Anne Church, a Universalist preacher and spokesperson and who is believed to be the first female preacher to form a congregation in Canada in Merrickville, about 40 km up the Rideau river from Ottawa.

Music - 'We are . . .' from teal hymn book, Two Anthems: Standing Before Us (Carole Etzler) and Kinder (Copper Wimmin).

Margaret Linton First Unitarian, Congregation of Ottawa

We had a great International Women's Day service that Pam and Karen did together. I had an idea of having a small fair after church of women's organizations, or organizations that specialize in women's issues. It turned out fabulous: we had a ton of extra people more than we usually have. Organizations included: Tara Green, Saskatoon environmental group (started by a women in our congregation) Mother's Centre, etc. We also invited the Raging Grannies to come and sing for the service, they also had a booth and recruited at least 3 people that day. So it went well.

Karen Baxter, Unitarian Congregation of Saskatoon

Comox Valley Unitarian Fellowship

Our service was presented by the Women's Spirit Circle of our Fellowship. There were readings, video quotes by famous women, a discussion, with a brief history to remind us why we celebrate IWD. Highlights were a drumbeat meditation to honour our missing, but not forgotten, Aboriginal sisters, singing the classic "Bread and Roses" song together, and singing with the music video called "One Woman" launched in 2013. **Jane Fox**

The Toronto Chapter of CUUWA sponsored a wonderful service at Toronto First on IWD, which was dedicated to honouring native women in Toronto, therefore, it was organized in conjunction with the Native Women's Resource Centre of Toronto (NWRCT).

Main speaker was Delia Opekokew, native woman lawyer who was counsel to the Residential Schools Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, which examined the experiences of native men and women who were victimized in the residential schools. She told harrowing stories of their suffering, both as children and ongoing. In addition, we heard a testimony from Darlene King, NWRCT Coordinator who described the work of the Centre. The NWRCT is a community-based organization dedicated to providing resources and support to aboriginal women and their families. It delivers culturally appropriate programs and services that encourage the capacity and self-sufficiency of aboriginal women.

Post service: A light lunch was served; then members heard from Victoria Pezzo, deputy chief of the Missanabie Cree First Nation and volunteer at Aboriginal Legal Services of Toronto.

Donations: The success of this service was reflected in donations from members, totaling \$2300, to be donated to the NWRCT. **Janice Tait, TORONTO FIRST UNITARIAN**

First Unitarian Universalist Church of Winnipeg

We reflected upon the life and work of Nellie McClung (well-known pioneer teacher, author, suffragist, social reformer, lecturer and legislator) and Margret Benedictsson who were contemporaries. Not as well-known as many other activists of her day, Margret – a Unitarian Icelandic Manitoban – has been called "the forgotten suffragette". "Nellie McClung and Margrét Benedictsson are but two of the women on whose shoulders we all stand in our efforts to make the world more just, more equitable, more humane for everyone. They modeled what it means to live a life of devotion, called to mind on this International Women's Day": Rev Millie Rochester. **Adina Lyon, First Unitarian Universalist Church of Winnipeg**

Compiled by Betty Donaldson, president, CUUWA from notes provided by members of the respective congregations. Next year we will include yours if you forward some information. Blessed Be!

www.cuuwa.org