

International Women's Day

Report to the CUUWA AGM

The CUUWA invites all congregations across Canada to celebrate International Women's Day. We provide outlines for services and other resources for IWD on our website.

The following announcement was published on our website this year:

<http://www.cuuwa.org/resourced/service-planning/>

MARCH 8, 2016 – Consider a woman-centred service to celebrate International Women's Day (IWD)

The Canadian Unitarian Universalist Women's Association (CUUWA) invites all CUC Congregations and Fellowships to dedicate all or part of their March 6th or 13th service (close to International Women's Day). Last year for the first time, many such services were held across Canada and our goal is to evolve a set of rituals as beloved as the flower communion and water communion. We hope to list all participants on the CUUWA web page and we hope that the list will eventually include all 55 plus Congregations and Fellowships in our country.

I had hoped to connect with other members of the committee and send a new service outline in time for congregations to plan their service, but was not well-enough organized to do so. Instead, a few members shared ideas on the email group; these included Rev Meg Roberts's wonderful idea to continue the theme of Truth, Healing, and Reconciliation (for which a resource package was sent for Sharing Our Faith) in the IWD service by honouring Indigenous women or grandmothers. Starting in late February, I shared resources regularly on our Facebook page: links to several service plans on our website, links to worship resources on other UU women's websites, links to information on Indigenous women and spirituality, poems, posters, and other information posted by women's organizations about International Women's Day. In March and April I asked others to share their service outlines, and have included the three I received in the Appendix.

Next year I will be in a better position to send out notices earlier in the year and collect information to be included on the website.

Thank you to all of you who honoured and celebrated women in one way or another in your congregations.

Jo-Anne Elder-Gomes,
Chair of IWD committee

Appendix: IWD Services, 2016

Service Outlines:

1. Comox Valley Unitarian Fellowship: Spiritual Literacy
2. Unitarian Church of Edmonton: International Women's Day
3. Unitarian Fellowship of Fredericton: Our Foremothers

Additional Worship materials:

4. Additional readings and song (on theme of Grandmothers)

1. Comox Valley Unitarian Fellowship

MARCH 13 Women's SERVICE (alternative format)

ITEM for the newsletter and general circulation to our friends.

March 13 CVUF Unitarian Service: "Spiritual Literacy": Women's Contributions. Service Leader: Betty Donaldson

March 8 is International Women's Day so the March 13 alternative service will focus upon women's contributions to the spiritual aspect of life. It is an invitation to share an example of how a woman inspired you to be more "Spiritually Literate". How have women (writers, musicians, goddesses, activists, and Mother Earth herself) been spiritual mentors in your spiritual development? The format is simple and based upon the Quaker tradition: as you are ready to share a spiritual practice or ritual you have learned from a woman, you may do so. Depending upon the numbers of offerings, it is possible that the service might be slightly longer than an hour.

b) **Comox Valley**. Complete service outline and planning notes

3:15 set up by organizers. Jane and Bev—tables and greeters. Betty and Joanna—altar; cloths; Betty—flowers. Everyone—Chairs; Green boughs for circle.

3:45 Music to make the transition into sacred space—Joanna/Betty/Mary

4:00 Opening words and Chalice Lighting. Betty and other organizers (including Mary) the invitation to "Centre" and honour the 4 directions (but not to cast a Circle).

BETTY: During the past year, the Walking With our Sisters exhibit (K'omox FN) extended our awareness of the losses suffered by our aboriginal citizens and opened many hearts. The Opening words for this service have been taken from the Truth and Reconciliation and Equity KAIROS Workshop on line guidelines. Moving in a clockwise rotation, they evoke the four directions and the leaders invite you to turn with them as they read the Blessing. (Betty to light chalice; 4 leaders are Jane; Bev, Joanna and Mary)

Bev Leader: Let Us turn to the direction of the East, the place of the rising sun. In The East, Is the promise of a new day, the time of all beginnings, of all new things, of all new times, of all new hopes.

Jane Leader: Let Us face the direction of the South, the place of the warm sun and new growth. This is the time of exuberance and delight; This Is the beginning of change in our lives.

Joanna Leader: Let Us turn to the direction of the West, the time of ripening growth. We know the cool and sustaining waters of the West that claim our maturing hearts with courage and strength

Mary Leader: Let Us face the direction of the North, this Is the place of the cold winter winds and the rich wisdom of fruitful living. Here, we remember our ancestors and think of the generations to come.

Acknowledge K'omox FN. Welcome to visitors, then explain Spirit in Practice alternative service focus.

Dance—Joanna “Beauty Way”

Explanation of the format of the service: Betty

40 minutes in large (and small circles if necessary) sharing spiritual practice inspired by women mentors.

Song— Joanna

5:00 pm Closing Ritual and extinguishing the chalice— Betty and Jane.

Offering basket with sign will be at back and refreshments— Jane

Betty—International Women’s Day cards under some chairs—locate and read message. Invite all to stand and participate. Guardian Statement—(Bev to provide copies): I swear I will not dishonour my soul with hatred, but offer myself humbly as a guardian of nature, as a healer of misery, as a messenger of wonder, as an architect of peace.”

Carry the Flame—Everyone.

Post service Recorded music

Refreshments—Betty and Mary: serviettes, 3 types of fruit; Jane and Bev: crackers, cheese; gluten free. Water in jugs.

choir of Westwood Unitarian Congregation under the direction of Rebecca Patterson.

Unitarian Church of Edmonton, continued

b) Complete Service outline

Welcome

Prelude Jazz Cantate by Andy Beck Harmonia

Opening Responsively Reading—Prayer for International Women's Day from Education for Justice (<https://educationforjustice.org/node/1013>)—led by Lorian Kennedy

Today we honour the women of all times and all places.

Women of courage. Women of hope.

Women suffering. Women mourning.

Women living fully. Women experiencing joy.

Women delighting in life.

Women knowing the interconnectedness of the human family.

Women honoring the sacredness of the relational, the affective.

Women quietly tending the garden of human flourishing.

Women boldly leading the transformation of unjust global structures.

Women seeking Wisdom. Women sharing Wisdom.

Women receiving Love. Women giving Love. Women: life-giving.

Spirit of Life, we celebrate your faithfulness and love. On this day we commit ourselves to the promotion of the full humanity of all women everywhere.

Help us to be faithful to your call to love.

Amen.

Kindling the Chalice #447 Chalice lighter: Louise Swift

#413 Children's recessional

Hymn # 67 We Sing Now Together

Reading Celebrating the women of our faith and nation—the CUUWA

The **CANADIAN UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION (CUUWA)** was founded in May 2011.

Mission.

- To **support women-centred projects** that raise awareness about women's history, rituals, and perspectives;
- To **develop and distribute educational materials** that highlight a women-centred lifespan curriculum;
- To **grant awards to women based on merit**, and to acknowledge the creative work of women;
- To **maintain a monitoring group** with two functions:

1) **internal within our denomination** to ensure that language is inclusive, that there is equitable representation on denominational committees, task forces, etc; and

2) **external. to determine priority for issues** such as economic equality, reproductive rights, and educational access; and to influence, educate or inform policy on issues relevant to women at all levels, local, national and international.

The history of the CUUWA is quite brief. However, the roots of previous women's organizations that contributed to this organization are extensive.

The first UU Women's Retreat was held 1987 at St. Michael's Retreat House, Lumsden, Saskatchewan under the umbrella of the Western Canada District. Ruth Patrick was instrumental in making these yearly gatherings.

"Concise Portraits of Canadian Unitarian and Universalist Women" is a booklet prepared by the Uppity Women's study group, lead by Mary Lu MacDonald and Irene Baros-Johnson of the Universalist Unitarian Church of Halifax. Profiles of eminent women leaders remind us of how many other women have served with distinction as ministers, minister's wives, chaplains, and lay leaders in our respective congregations and the wider community.

When the CUC became independent from the UUA in 2002, no formal association between the UU Women's Federation (the American group) and a Canadian counterpart continued.

A group of Canadian women hoped to develop a Canadian UU organization to address such issues as education, human rights and equality of income for women. Tentatively, this organization was called the Canadian Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation. Finally, at a pre-conference workshop in Victoria, sufficient momentum was attained to organize a meeting within the Toronto ACM in 2011. At that meeting, the organizational name was changed to Canadian Unitarian and Universalist Women's Association (CU&UWA) and a national Council was elected, which included Ruth Patrick.

"Invisible Influence", a Kingston Unitarian Press publication was launched at the inaugural meeting of CU&UWA. It includes an RE curriculum that is the first Canadian national women's curriculum.

Informal contact with the British League of Women were established during the 1990s when Connie and Joyce Thompson, both past Presidents of the League visited Canada and attended the Prairie Women's Gathering several times. As a consequence, Betty Donaldson and Ruth Patrick have also participated in various British League activities in England.

Responsive Reading # 722 I Think Continually of Those

Hymn # 91 Mother of All

Response – From You I Receive

Reading Unitarian Universalism and Feminism by David Jordan (adapted)

read by Tanya Vandenberg

"Every Unitarian is a feminist so he has to watch his language." Kidding aside, Mary Fairchild states in "Unitarian Universalism: Christian or Not," "The Unitarians and Universalists were religious denominations that accepted the ordination of women earlier than most Protestant denominations did, and many early woman suffrage and women's rights leaders came out of one of these denominations."

According to Reverend Kenneth Collier in his Sept. 23, 2000 Sermon, the history of feminism in the UU movement "goes back to the very beginnings of Universalism and Unitarianism in America. Women like Judith Sargent Murray—a Universalist—and Margaret Fuller—a Unitarian—were feminists before the word was invented. The first woman ordained by a major denomination in America was Olympia Brown, who was ordained by the Universalists in 1863. And most Suffragists were either Unitarians, Universalists, or Quakers. And so it goes, right up until this moment."

The first two of seven Unitarian Universalist principles are firstly, *The inherent worth and dignity of every person* and secondly, *Justice, equity and compassion in human relations*. These two principles establish a base for social action and Unitarians and Universalists have been prominent in fighting for women's rights and freedoms, as well as anti-racism, anti-homophobia, same-sex marriage, and dying with dignity. Unitarian women have been a leading force in these efforts.

Jone Johnson Lewis lists over one hundred UU women who were prominent in women's struggle for "personhood", acquiring the vote for women and representing women in leadership roles (*About.com Women's History*). Some of the more familiar include:

- Abigail Adams (1744 –1818) – the second first lady of the United States, a mother and managed a farm. She made homemade bullets for the Revolutionary War and told her husband, in no uncertain terms, when he was writing the Constitution, "Remember the Ladies!",
- Mary Wollstonecraft, (1759–1797) – a writer and philosopher, and one of the earliest feminist writers. Her book, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, is one of the most important documents in the history of women's rights,
- Louisa May Alcott (1832 –1888) – best known as the author of *Little Women*, was an advocate of abolition, women's rights, and temperance.,
- Susan B. Anthony (1820 –1906) – key spokesperson for the 19th century women's suffrage movement, and
- Olympia Brown (1835 –1926) – an American suffragist and one of the few original suffragists who lived to vote in the 1920 presidential election. She is regarded as the first woman to graduate from a

theological school, as well as becoming the first full-time ordained minister.

Material about UU women contributions to women's rights in Canada is less well known. The book, *Invisible influence: Claiming Canadian Unitarian and Universalist Women's History*, describes the lives and contributions of six women. The following brief descriptions do not do justice to the contributions of these women, but I include them here so that readers have a starting place for further exploration:

- **Mary ann Hayden Church** (1807-1877)—believed to be the first female preacher to form a congregation in Canada.
- **Rev. Fidelia Gillette** (1827 - 1906)—likely the first ordained woman of any denomination to serve as the minister of a congregation in Ontario—perhaps in all of Canada.
- **Helen Richmond Young Reid** (1870 - 1941)—Social welfare champion helped persuade McGill to admit women students, and dedicated to the betterment of social conditions among the poor and underprivileged.
- **Caroline Dall** (June 22, 1822-December 17, 1912)—author, journalist, lecturer and champion of women's rights, was a Unitarian community service worker, minister's wife and lay preacher. Originally from Boston, she moved to Toronto in 1851.
- **Jennie McCaine Peterson** (1838 -1918)—with her husband, Bjorn Petursson, founded the First Icelandic Unitarian Society of Winnipeg.
- **Margret J. Benedictsson.** (1866 - 1956)—One of Canada's greatest feminist leaders, largely ignored by history, launched *Freyja* a feminist periodical, and built coalitions across the divides of gender, partisanship and religion.

In our Unitarian Congregation, women have served in all of the leadership capacities including lay chaplaincy—though it is interesting to note that while we have had women intern and interim ministers and Audrey Brooks as our community minister, the Unitarian Church of Edmonton has not had a female settled minister in its history - yet.

Musical response Gracias Madre Mia by Gordon Ritchie Chorealis and Harmonia

Homily Women Hold Up Half the Sky, excerpted from a sermon by Rev. Alan Taylor

When Bill Gates went to Saudi Arabia to speak on technology, the men filling up four fifth's of the auditorium sat on the left and center, the other fifth were women dressed in black cloaks and veils. They all sat on the far right. A partition separated the two groups. During the question and answer period, someone asked whether it was realistic that Saudi Arabia become one of the top ten countries in the world in developing technology. Gates responded, "Well, if you're not fully utilizing half the talent in the country, you're not going to get too close to the top ten." The women's side erupted in wild cheers.

The famous Muslim Muhammad Ali Jinnah insisted: "No nation can rise to the height of glory unless your

women are side by side with you. We are victims of evil customs. It is a crime against humanity that our women are shut up within the four walls of the houses as prisoners. There is no sanction anywhere for the deplorable condition in which our women have to live.”

When I came across this quote, I was knocked over because it's perhaps one of the only Trivial Pursuit questions I might get: “who was Muhammad Ali Jinnah?” He's the founder of the nation of Pakistan. Pakistanis celebrate his birthday every year like people [in the US] celebrate the 4th of July. He said, “No struggle can ever succeed without women participating side by side with men. There are two powers in the world; one is the sword and the other is the pen. There is a great competition and rivalry between the two. There is a third power stronger than both, that of the women.”

It's so heartbreaking and ironic that today Pakistanis risk their lives when standing for the education of girls. Particularly in the more rural parts of the country, the Taliban seek to frighten and coerce the communities into submission. But there are many who resist. One of them is named Ziauddin. He lived in the beautiful Swat valley. His father had run several schools, yet his sisters weren't allowed to attend school and become educated.

Ziauddin became convinced that the people's lack of education was the root of all of Pakistan's problems. He founded a school that was originally co-ed, but he was forced to segregate, so it became a girls' school. Male teachers left the school under threat of intimidation. Ziauddin himself peacefully resisted the Taliban's efforts to shut down his school for girls. He received death threats and then threats towards his children, particularly his daughter, who began getting local notoriety for speaking publicly for the need of girls' education. Then on October 9, 2012, he was at his school when he received word that his 15-year-old daughter was shot while she was on her bus.

His daughter's name is now internationally known and admired, for Malala Yousafzai has written an extraordinary book about her life in Pakistan and efforts to resist the Taliban and defend education for girls, and she is the youngest recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize.

[This morning and throughout this month, we are exploring what it means to live a transformed life. Reverend Taylor talks about resilience in his sermon, but I think it also speaks to transformation. He says,] I want to look at resilience from a global perspective; I want to approach this extraordinary theme of resilience facing the challenging reality that there are so many people who are abused, exploited, whose voices are often silenced by fear, whose spirits are often broken through physical coercion, and whose access to a bank account, should they ever save a little money, is forbidden. And yet amidst the terror and the horrors, among them are people who resist and demonstrate resilience, especially when offered education and basic economic development.

One of the most important books I have read in a long time is a book recommended to me this past month. *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide* by Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl

WuDunn. I now understand why it won the Pulitzer Prize. *Half the Sky* is one of the hardest books to read because it chronicles stories of women being coerced into sexual slavery, honor killings, and needless injuries and fatalities from childbirth due to a lack of basic healthcare. Yet the book is surprisingly uplifting, because rather than simply sharing the horrific stories that are representative of millions of women throughout the world, the book also traces what extraordinary work is being done and how ordinary people, people like you and me, can make a difference if we choose to.

This sermon title is a Chinese saying: “Women hold up half the sky.” When women are prevented from sharing of their gifts and wisdom in a community, the sky literally falls. And violence flourishes. Terrorism flourishes. As Kristof writes, “Some security experts note that countries that nurture terrorists are disproportionately those where women are marginalized. The reason there are so many Muslim terrorists, they argue, has little to do with the Koran but a great deal to do with a lack of robust female participation in Islamic countries. The single most important factor to assure a better future is to educate girls and invest in economic development among women.”

Let’s face it: women are more vulnerable than men. Women on average are physically weaker than men, capable of being coerced to act against their will. When anyone is coerced into submission, they become less creative, less productive, less visionary, and therefore less resilient. So communities that coerce half their members to strict norms destroy the resilience of the community, and a spiral of intimidation, fear, coercion, and submission ensues. And such a life-denying spiral is challenging to break. But not impossible.

My friends, we are watching a struggle for the very foundation for civilization--no we are not watching--we are participating. We are participating in a global struggle for the very foundation of civilization. And at the root of this struggle is how we as a people of great power and influence view human vulnerability, whether we take steps to protect and cultivate the inherent worth and dignity of all people, or whether we view people and life essentially as property in material terms. Through our actions, we contribute directly to greater resilience and greater flourishing [or transformation] of human life or we contribute to the suffocating of the human spirit.

If we want to promote resilience among the most vulnerable in our midst and in the world, we must stand up and support education and economic empowerment for women. As Malala says, “With guns you can kill terrorists; with education you can kill terrorism.”

The education and economic empowerment of girls and women are the single most significant efforts to secure a brighter future. And here’s the good news: today we can see the seeds of a global movement to emancipate women and girls. There are micro-finance groups supporting women in many countries. Countless opportunities to build schools and support teachers abound.

So here's my message for us. I believe we are called to lead from our vulnerability. When we lead from our vulnerability, we develop resilience and move beyond the pain and grief within our own lives. But when we ignore the plight of others, we not only dishonor their vulnerability, we dishonor ourselves. For we are connected, interconnected. We fail to honor our own vulnerability when we ignore what's going on in the world, when we ignore how the vulnerability of others is being exploited.

We as a privileged people, a part of the richest nation on earth, need to lead from our vulnerability rather than our capacity to wield power over others. Our resilience comes ultimately from leading from vulnerability, not sovereignty. And cultivating resilience, where there is so little, requires us to wake up to what truly connects us to other human beings.

On this Sunday that we recognize International Women's Day, I ask you to identify where you can participate in protecting human vulnerability and cultivating human resilience in a community either near or far. I ask you to look at the larger picture of the struggle, not simply the pain and horror in the world--and recognize the extraordinary and inspirational currents already cultivating resilience and honoring the worth and dignity of some of the most vulnerable.

Talk to people who readily see life abundant. Engage with people moving from the source of their joy and connect with your own joy. And may we discover and actively bring forth the deep meaning and gladness that come with joining with others to bring more justice, compassion, and opportunity into our world.

Blessed be. Amen.

Hymn of the Month #83 Winds Be Still

Silent Candles of Concern and Celebration

Meditation

In Words Silverisms: Nine Articles of Faith by E. Silver Keeping , read by Karen Mills, Audrey Brooks and Marilyn Gaa

Nine Articles of Faith by E. Silver Keeping

Karen: Galileo believed that one must first observe. Through his telescope, he showed the world that our 'milky way' was really a galaxy of stars. Later on we came to believe that our planet, which we call Earth, revolves around a star that we call the Sun, and that there are many more galaxies, one of which we are a part. Today our radio telescopes bring us messages from the very edge of the observable universe, many billion light years away. Light takes time to travel. These messages must have originated at the dawn of creation, billions of years ago. This brings us to the first of our Articles of Faith concerning the cosmos.

Audrey: The earth is not the centre of the universe. Our earth is wonderful, beautiful, awe-inspiring and to be part of it is good.

Marilyn: In the evolution of species, extinction is the rule and survival the exception. We must not take for

granted the survival of humanity.

Audrey: People are wise enough and we are able enough to improve the life and beauty of the earth.

Karen: Now I come to a few of my Articles of Faith that may not be as generally accepted as the previous ones.

Marilyn: Whosoever would be saved, before all things, it is necessary to accurately observe, faithfully record and humbly ponder the problem.

Audrey: I am my brother and my sister. I am part of all that I have met. Communication is the tie that binds. Since we are all in this thing together, it is not necessary for any of us to feel lonely or afraid.

Karen: Now if you would care for more personal Articles of Faith, I will give you three of my wilder ones. One of the Articles of Faith in a creed used by some churches is, "I believe in life everlasting." I myself just feel that. I am a link in the chain of life. I do not know that this feeling is a belief in life everlasting, but it leaves me content.

Marilyn: We must keep on with the search; we must not stop.

Karen: We know so little. The ancient Greeks thought that they knew everything. But they were wrong. The eighteenth century savants thought they knew it all. They were wrong. We think we know it all. We are wrong. Now, an Article of Faith in the Athanasian creed is;

Audrey: "I believe that we worship one God in a Trinity; the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit."

Karen: For "the Father" we might read "change-evolution"; for "the Son" we might read "compassion-charity"; for "the Holy Spirit" we might read "communication-bio-communication". So, I believe in the blessed trinity of the three C's: Change, Compassion and Communication.

In Silence

In Song Jenny Choreal

Hymn #51 Lady of the Season's Laughter

Blessed Be words by Robin Morgan

Blessed be my brain that I may conceive of my own power.

Blessed be my breast that I may give sustenance to those I love.

Blessed be my womb that I may create what I choose to create.

Blessed be my knees that I may bend so as not to break.

Blessed be my feet that I may walk in the path of my highest will.

Closing Words #706 May the Light Around Us

Extinguishing the Flame

Postlude In the Morning, Joy

Chorealis and Harmonia

Announcements

Carry the Flame

3. Unitarian Fellowship of Fredericton

a) Service announcement:

Sunday Worship, March 6, 11:00 am. For International Women's Day, Jo-Anne and Anneke will share the work of the Canadian UU Women's Association in a worship service focused on our foremothers and nurturers. There will be an opportunity to share your stories of your grandmothers, ancestors, or mentors. Since this month's theme is Self-Awareness, you may want to think of how some of these women made you aware of what you were capable of being or doing in your life.

b) Service script

Welcome and Introduction

Welcome. My name is Jo-Anne Elder-Gomes and Anneke and I are happy to do this service to mark International Women's Day and to introduce you to the work of the CUUWA.

CUUWA stands for the Canadian Unitarian Universalist Women's Association. In 2011, a determined group of women – from different backgrounds, different regions, often following different agendas – came together at an Annual Conference and Meeting to form the Canadian Unitarian and Universalist Women's Association. (Jo-Anne)

There is a National Council of six located from Fredericton to Vancouver Island, with stops in Ontario and Alberta. Anneke and I share one seat on that council as a mother-daughter team. We conduct our Council business electronically, by Skype and by email. (Jo-Anne)

The CUUWA has a very broad mission, including the support of women-centred projects that raise awareness about women's history, rituals, and perspectives and developing and distributing service materials and religious education curricula. (Jo-Anne)

The CUUWA is active on a number of issues, especially reproductive rights; last year in Ottawa it championed the renewal of the CUC's Abortion Rights resolution, and is now working to encourage full access to abortion in places like New Brunswick. We have a Facebook page, and that is one of the contributions my mother and I make. I have chosen to focus on gender and sexual diversity, and my mother on women's spirituality. We also post on many other current issues. The CUUWA arranges an annual meeting, usually at the CUC Conference, and this year in Vancouver the guest speaker is Audrey Siegl, a First Nations elder and activist. (Anneke)

One of the goals of CUUWA is to have every Canadian Congregation voluntarily observe International Women's Day. We know that many Congregations observe this day, dedicated to highlighting issues that women face wherever they live on Planet Earth as well as their accomplishments, and provide materials for worship and reflection, some of which we are sharing with you today as we honour the strong and resilient

women who came before us. (Anneke)

Call for Announcements (Jo-Anne)

Opening Words (Jo-Anne)

The Hope of Seven Generations

By Susan Werner

"There is a hope that's been expressed in you: the hope of seven generations, maybe more.

And this is the faith that they invest in you: It's that you'll do one better than was done before.

Inside you know, inside you understand; inside you know what's yours to finally set right..."

Opening Hymn #325 Love Makes a Bridge (Jo-Anne)

Chalice Lighting (Anneke reads, Jo-Anne lights)

The Chalice Lighting this morning is adapted from Sara Eileen LaWall's reading, "We Take Time to Remember."

We take time to remember

The ancestor's journey

Lit by a thousand stars

What their struggle taught them

Trust in the path

Celebrate with joy

What their struggle might teach us

Where can we pray to our thousand stars

To feel our own life's blessings

To know our own journey

Lit from within

We take time to remember

and celebrate with joy

We light out chalice in honour of this celebration of the women who came before us, and the women who made us what we are today.

Time for All Ages

Joys and Sorrows (Jo-Anne)

Ours is welcoming community where we find connection, and a spiritual community where we find meaning; Ours is a sharing community where our joys are amplified; a caring community where our sorrows are lessened;

We take this moment to reflect on our joys and sorrows and acknowledge the mutual support of our community. If you would like, you may come forward and touch one of these stones, hold it in your hand in silence, or with a brief verbal expression of a special joy or sorrow.

May we remember those who have spoken, those they have named, and those we hold in silence in our hearts.

Offering (Jo-Anne)

We have been warmed by fires we did not build; we have drunk at wells we did not dig; we have been cared for by those who have come before us; we have now gathered in a place formed and sustained by many hearts and hands. In gratitude for our many blessings, if you are able, we invite you to place your donation in the basket we pass. (Jo-Anne)

Please watch this video and listen to this song written by Julie Gold, the first of our stories about the people who came before. (Jo-Anne)

Video: "Goodnight, New York." (See note below) After (Anneke)

For all those who came before us, that we may be free in our words and deeds, may we be grateful.

For those who are with us now, may we be the careful stewards of our shared commitments.

For those who come after us, may we remember that love and justice will live in our common future.

(Anneke)

Reading (Jo-Anne)

The worship of Mother Earth, the Great Mother, Gaia, and the Goddess is the most ancient and deeply-rooted practice of spirituality, predating patriarchal religions by many centuries. The mother goddess is a foundational and deep belief for me. These powerful and all-encompassing mythical images live on in the figures of Mary, Mother of God and in the many forms of Crones and wise elders. For Celts, the Crone is "the dark goddess of many names, the prophetess and holder of mysteries. She bestowed dreams, visions, and magickal knowledge whereby one could fathom the mysteries of the unknown, and this understanding of secret and hidden things brought power in itself." The Malay thought there were three grandmothers, the Kari-Under-The-Earth, who would cause floods if not listened to respectfully. There were the Druids, who believed that the souls of old wise women lived on in the trees that surrounded them. The Norse Nanna, or Anna, doubled as Earth Mother. And on this Turtle Island where we live (North America), the Iroquois teach that the Woman who fell down from the sky was the Mother of All. From the most ancient times, the strong, wise, older women were the ones who advised, mediated and fought for what was right.

Our next reading is a poem I wrote about my grandmother and Carlos's grandmother; Puyé is a now-extinct

Indigenous nation in Northern Brazil. It is entitled Phantom Languages (Jo-Anne)

phantom languages
burning under awkward tongues
words that light up like ships on fire
then fade into the fog
of unvoiced sound

white noise

unspeakable grief

scorched consonants raised
from the depths of story

the parched voice
one generation down from Gaelic
one generation down from Puyé
many generations down from women
who learned to be silent

there is a burn mark,
here, on my wrist,
above the hand I write with

(Anneke) Our second poem is "Green Rain," written in 1932 by Dorothy Livesay, a Unitarian Universalist. (see below for poem)

I remember long veils of green rain

(...)

As I remember my grandmother.

I remember the rain as the feathery fringe of her shawl.

Hymn #212 We are Dancing Sarah's Circle

Stories (Jo-Anne)

At this point in our service, we invite you to come and share your stories about the strong and resilient women from the past who have nurtured and shaped you. You might tell us about an ancestor whose legacy as a pioneer settler inspired you, a grandmother who believed in you, or an elderly person with whom you have a special relationship. (4 women came up and told their stories)

Closing Hymn #95 There Is More Love Somewhere

(with variation in last verse: There is more love right here / I'm so grateful that I've found it)

Closing Words (Anneke)

We Are Unitarian Universalists (adapted from UUA)

We are brave, curious, and compassionate thinkers and doers. We have diverse bodies, backgrounds, histories and beliefs, but are aligned in our desire to make a difference for the good. We have a track record of standing on the side of love, justice, and peace. We have been on the forefront of gender and sexual diversity for more than 40 years. We are people of all sexual orientations and gender identities.

We have radical roots and a history as free thinkers and spiritual beings. We celebrate our whole selves, with our truths and doubts, our worries and our hopes.

As we extinguish this chalice, we entrust the task of carrying flame to each one of you, as you continue on your extraordinary adventure of faith and love.

Blessed Be.

4. Additional Readings

(Grandmothers)

a) (may be shared with acknowledgment)

Phantom Languages

Jo-Anne Elder-Gomes

phantom languages

burning under awkward tongues

words that light up like ships on fire

then fade into the fog

of unvoiced sound

white noise

unspeakable grief

scorched consonants raised
from the depths of story

the parched voice
one generation down from Gaelic
one generation down from Puyé
many generations down from women
who learned to be silent

there is a burn mark,
here, on my wrist,
above the hand I write with

Good Night, New York

My mother came to America
Sailed through the harbor of hopes and of dreams
Back in the Thirties with the streets paved in gold
And the sky laced with moonbeams
Mothers and daughters, fathers and sons
Here in the free world, we're the lucky ones

All of my yearning, all of my hunger
Maybe we're learning sometimes I wonder
Good night, New York

Complete lyrics for Nanci Griffith—Good Night, New York Lyrics | MetroLyrics can be found at:

<http://www.metrolyrics.com/good-night-new-york-lyrics-nanci-griffith.html>

(Complete lyrics should not be published on a website, but may be read or played during a service)

Green Rain (1932) by Dorothy Livesay

I remember long veils of green rain
Feathered like the shawl of my grandmother –
Green from the half-green of the spring trees
Waving in the valley.

I remember the road
Like the one which leads to my grandmother's house,
A warm house, with green carpets,
(...)
I remember on that day
I was thinking only of my love
And of my love's house.
But now I remember the day
As I remember my grandmother.
I remember the rain as the feathery fringe of her shawl.

(The complete poem can be found at <https://dorolivesay.wordpress.com/page-5/>
complete poems should not be published on a website, but may be read during a service)

This is a good reading to share when non-Indigenous people are talking about Indigenous subjects.

“Your ancestors were rooted in the Earth from which they arose, they had their own ways of communicating with the spirits and respecting the natural world. They were an inseparable part of the landscape around them, and of the spirits and stories that animated and explained that landscape. As a 'white' American, you don't have to be envious of Indigenous cultures, you don't have to imitate or appropriate the ways of other cultures, because if you just look back far enough, you can reclaim the ways of your own ancestors.”

Kathryn Price NicDhàna, Gaelic teacher