

THE UNITARIAN CHURCH OF CALGARY –

THE NEW MILLENNIUM 2001-2015



HISTORY AND ARCHIVES COMMITTEE
UNITARIAN CHURCH OF CALGARY

**The Unitarian Church of Calgary – The New Millennium 2001-2015.
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**Prepared by the History and Archives Committee of the Unitarian
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With thanks to many church members for their assistance.

Unitarianism has had an enduring presence in Calgary, beginning in 1907. The first century of our history was documented in *Nine Unitarian Decades: A Pictorial Timeline of Unitarianism in Calgary, second edition 2003*. This pamphlet outlines significant milestones from that time to 2015. If you have any information or pictures that you feel should be included in a future edition of this booklet, please contact a member of the History and Archives Committee.

Chapter 1: 2001-Summer 2003

The new millennium began with a challenge, when the Reverend Rod Brown resigned to resume his teaching career. From fall 2001 through summer 2002, our congregation was lay-led, with volunteers assuming the responsibilities for operation of the church and its services.



In fall 2002, the Reverend Dana Worsnop joined us as interim minister for one year. In a 2015 interview, she described the congregation as “eager to do the work you needed to do to move forward”. Reverend Worsnop felt that, with hard work, the congregation “developed a stronger sense of confidence in yourselves and what you were capable of.” As an American, Reverend Worsnop enjoyed being a “cultural detective”, learning more about Canadian culture, how winter shapes us, and our health system.

- A dedicated group of church members became involved in community outreach through volunteering with the Inn from the Cold program which offered overnight accommodation for homeless families (this involvement continued until 2014 when the program changed its focus).
- The congregation initiated a highly-successful small group ministry program, in order to expand and clarify the definition of “ministry” to include all church members.
- The Calgary Unitarian Community Foundation was incorporated as a Society in May 2001, in order to access grants to improve accessibility of our building. A barrier-free building plan was commenced, and, by 2002, the church was wheelchair-accessible. Successive grants allowed for installation of a wheelchair ramp to the lower level, and renovations in that area.
- Thanks to a successful canvass and personal loans from members, the church was able to pay off the costs of the 1993 renovation of Panabaker Hall.

- The introduction of the Sunday Forum program (which continued for 12 succeeding years) allowed a diverse opportunity for member involvement through presentations by invited speakers on topics of current interest. This program complemented the long-running book discussion group in the church, begun in 1994.
- Many church members were involved in peaceful protest over Canada's engagement in the War in Afghanistan in October 2001.

Chapter 2: 2003- Summer 2009



In fall 2003, Reverend Meg Roberts was called as our minister. Reverend Roberts' tenure was marked by a movement towards more intentional long-range planning within our congregation along with an increased attention to wider societal issues. She has praised the congregation's planning efforts "investing in the church and in its future."

Long Range Planning:

- In 2002, the Unitarian Church of Calgary, along with the Canadian Unitarian Council (CUC) disaffiliated from the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) in order to focus on issues particular to our Canadian context. With input from member congregations, a Statement of Principles and Sources was approved (and re-affirmed in 2008).

The Principles and Sources of Our Religious Faith

Principles:

We, the member congregations of the Canadian Unitarian Council, covenant to affirm and promote: • the inherent worth and dignity of every person; • justice, equity, and compassion in human relations; • acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations; • a free and responsible search for truth and meaning; • the right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large; • the goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all; • respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

Sources:

The living tradition which we share draws from many sources: • direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces which create and uphold life; • words and deeds of prophetic women and men which challenge us to confront powers and structures of evil with justice, compassion, and the transforming power of love; • wisdom from the world's religions which inspires us in our ethical and spiritual life; • Jewish and Christian teachings which call us to respond to God's love by loving our neighbours as ourselves; • Humanist teachings which counsel us to heed the guidance of reason and the results of science, and warn us against idolatries of the mind and spirit; • spiritual teachings of Earth-centred traditions which celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature.

Grateful for the religious pluralism which enriches and ennobles our faith, we are inspired to deepen our understanding and expand our vision. As free congregations we enter into this covenant, promising to one another our mutual trust and support.

- A Vision/Mission Task Force was formed, and in 2004, the congregation approved new Mission and Vision statements and a five-year Vision. A Long-Range Planning Task Force was formed to help realize our vision.
- A Church Home Evolution Task Force (CHET) was formed in 2005 to study the options for future location of our congregation. Various possibilities were considered, with a final resolution to remain in the existing building, making improvements for optimal use of our space. In 2008, renovations were begun to the basement of the church to improve the facilities for the religious education program.

Social Justice/Community Outreach Initiatives:

- In 2004, the process was begun for the church to receive certification from the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) as a Green Sanctuary. In 2007, the church received formal recognition of the congregation's service and dedication to the Earth. In 2009, the church was awarded a Community Spirit Grant (the first of four) for expansion of our front rain garden and for the presentation of events, open to the community, on environmental issues. The Community Garden plots were opened the same year.



- The church Youth Group initiated a project to make a fabric Pride Rainbow banner in support of same-sex marriage in Canada. The Pride Rainbow Project resulted in the creation of a 500 foot banner that was unfurled at a rally on Parliament Hill before the July 2005 passage of the Civil Marriage Act, providing a gender-neutral definition of marriage. The banner was divided into four sections (with one section later subdivided), and sections of the banner have been displayed across Canada, at Pride Parades and other functions.
- From 2004 to 2007, a collective kitchen group met at the church, in partnership with the Calgary Mennonite Centre for Newcomers. Church members joined with women from various cultural groups to prepare and share dishes from each culture. When the formal group disbanded, several church members continued a cooking group, which evolved into a Casserole Ministry (2014), preparing and freezing meals for distribution to church members or casual visitors in need.



- In 2005, the church began the 4Others program, to provide the opportunity for congregants to donate funds to designated community groups whose aims are consistent with Unitarian principles.
- In 2005, we began renting space to a community musical group (the Vocal Latitudes World Music Choir). The relationship with other musical groups expanded over the years to the point that in 2015, there were three choirs renting space in our building.
- In 2006, the Wild Rose Sangha, a Zen Buddhist Mindfulness Community, began renting space in the church for Monday evening meditation sessions open to the public.
- In 2007, a UCC Facebook Discussion Group was formed.
- For 5 years (2008-2011, 2013), the church co-sponsored and hosted a children's camp, the Art of Peace, which encouraged children to explore their creative ideas for a peaceful world.
- In 2009, the church contributed to the construction of a playground at Balmoral School, located on the adjacent property, by providing a financial donation and meals for volunteers.

Shared Ministry:

- An afternoon social event for church seniors was held in 2006, as outreach to our less mobile members. This event continued to be held periodically over the following years.
- Policies were developed to make the church more of an "all-ages" community, deliberately inclusive of parents and children in church events and activities.
- Reverend Roberts initiated a Turn of the Wheel ½ day spiritual retreat, which continues to occur four times a year up to the present (2015).

In 2008, a grand celebration was held to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the formal establishment of the Unitarian congregation in Calgary.

Chapter 3: Fall 2009-summer 2010



During the 2009-2010 church year, the congregation welcomed Interim Minister Reverend Fran Dearman, following the departure of the Reverend Meg Roberts, while embarking on the search for a new settled minister. Reverend Dearman's focus was on helping the church become more welcoming to all, and to develop deeper relations within the congregation.

- A model was developed for conflict resolution.
- More concrete efforts to welcome newcomers were developed.
- A wide variety of special programs and groups offered formal content on Unitarian-Universalism and informal opportunities for fellowship.
- Through grants from the Calgary Foundation and the provincial Community Facility Enhancement Program, the downstairs theatre space was renovated.

Chapter 4: Fall 2010-2015

In fall 2010 Reverend Debra Faulk was called as our minister. The first years of the Reverend Faulk's tenure were marked by a congregation-wide effort to develop a new Purpose Statement as part of a gradual transition from a pastoral to a program church, based on the work of Rev. Robert L. Latham outlined in "Moving on from Church Folly Lane".



In December 2012, the congregation approved the adoption of the following statement:

*We come together in beloved community, guided by our
Unitarian Universalist principles and sources, to grow
in wisdom, welcome and deepen relationships,
and act for a just and sustainable world.*

The activities of the congregation, along with Reverend Faulk, became focussed on achieving our purposes. This was also a period of exploration on new ways of engaging prospective or existing members, mobilizing volunteers, and utilizing technology.

Governance/Planning and Denominational Growth:

- From her installation to present, Reverend Faulk has assumed leadership roles within the Canadian Unitarian Council (CUC). Church members also continue to serve on CUC board and committees.
- In 2012, Reverend Faulk assumed responsibility for all staff in the church.
- In fall 2012, the church took on the role of a teaching congregation, helping develop and hone the professional skills of ministry, with the appointment of our first Intern Minister, Samaya Oakley. This was followed the succeeding year with Intern Minister Chris Rothbauer, and part-time Field Student, Danielle Webber. Ms. Webber, who was raised in the church, was subsequently appointed as Student Minister for the 2014-15 year, and Intern Minister the following year.
- In spring 2013, archival materials pertaining to William Irvine, former minister of the Calgary church and prominent Canadian politician, were entrusted to the Glenbow Archives, following their donation to UCC by Irvine's granddaughter, Dawn Holmlund.
- In May 2013, the church hosted a successful National Conference and Annual General Meeting of the CUC.

The congregation continued to deliberate on options for our church home, considering ongoing maintenance costs and capacity to accommodate growth. Windows were upgraded, roof replaced, and security systems installed. A dedicated cadre of volunteers maintained the safety and comfort of our aging building.

- In fall 2013, significant media upgrades to create full media capabilities were commenced, increasing projection capacity in both halls, allowing more options and flexibility for Sunday services (including live streaming), and increasing rentability of the building.
- Church fiscal year was changed to August 1-July 31 in 2014, to better reflect the schedule of church activities.
- In April 2015, the UCC Endowment Trust Fund, established in 1981 to foster the long-range life and financial stability of the church, was co-mingled into a General Investment Fund of the Canadian Unitarian Council. This was done to gain the advantage of professional, ethical investment advice while retaining ownership of the Fund.

Shared Ministry and Worship:

- In fall of 2011, Jane Perry joined the staff as Choir Director and Sunday accompanist. Her role evolved into a half-time position as Director of Music, with expanded responsibility for enhancement in Sunday services, and higher profile for music in the church. A multigenerational choir was formed to sing at services from time to time, and the first winter choir concert was held that December. A variety of resident and guest musicians provided numerous opportunities to enjoy music, both during Sunday services and at special concerts.
- Small group Chalice Circles were formed in fall of 2011, providing the opportunity for discussion of issues of social and spiritual concern.
- In 2011, a tradition of Second Sunday suppers was established, for individuals and families to enjoy a meal together in the church.
- In January 2013, the church offered, for the first time, the Our Whole Lives: Lifespan Sexuality Education (OWL) program to adults and young adults, to complement the sexuality education program for children and youth that has been offered in the church for decades. The program allowed participants to explore their personal values around sexuality, and an OWL program has been offered annually to the present.
- In fall 2013, Sunday Welcome Enhance and Engage Teams (SWEET) were formed based on five geographic districts to assign the tasks associated with Sunday services (such as greeting, coffee, etc.) and expand contact among members, through a web-based volunteer sign-up system.

- A new course, Opening Doors, was offered for the first time in February 2013 for new members or interested individuals, intended to deepen their knowledge of UCC and denominational history and to strengthen their sense of belonging in the church community.
- The Compassion Exchange was initiated in 2014 to provide an online connection between members needing assistance with those willing to provide the service, for such things as listening support, transportation or household help, for example.
- In fall of 2014, Reverend Faulk began offering Sunday services based on monthly themes, supplemented by suggested readings and exercises for exploring each theme in greater depth, and by the opportunity for further discussion in Theme-Based Listening Circles.

Social and Environmental Justice/Community Outreach Initiatives:

- Reverend Faulk has remained actively involved in interfaith alliances since her arrival in Calgary. Through her leadership in the Metro Alliance for the Common Good, she was involved in the public consultation process of the Calgary Poverty Reduction Initiative which has led to the Enough for All strategy, a collaborative community effort to address the root causes of poverty in Calgary.
- In fall of 2010, the church, through the Green Sanctuary Committee, forged an agreement with the Calgary Horticultural Society, to host events of mutual interest. An annual Local Food Supper, in partnership with the Permaculture Calgary Guild, was hosted in the church beginning that fall, and continuing to the present. In 2014, a Horticultural Therapy program began meeting at the church, providing support for persons with mental health disorders, while tending our gardens. This program was the first of its kind for Calgary.
- Through a series of Community Spirit grants through the Green Sanctuary Committee, solar demonstration lighting was installed, more sustainable elements were added to garden areas.



• The hanging of a banner in spring of 2011, affirming our presence on Blackfoot lands, marked the beginning of a more intentional and concerted effort to understand indigenous issues and to engage with our indigenous neighbours. In June 2013, a flood, the worst in Alberta's history, caused significant damage in Calgary. Though the church building was

unaffected, a team was assembled to ensure the safety of all the members, to help affected individuals, and to assist with cleanup on the Siksika Nation. Danielle Webber, Field Student at the time, began offering her services to the youth group at Siksika Family Services. Events and church services were offered to expand our understanding of indigenous spirituality.

- An official UCC Facebook page was opened in October 2014, to complement the church website, first developed in the late 90's.
- Church members continue to be a significant presence at the Alberta Wilderness Association Tower Climb for Wilderness, with participation since the late 1990's.
- In 2015 a Stepping Stones Grant from the Calgary Foundation was received to establish Caring Cooking Connections, a community kitchen program, in the church. This was a joint initiative of the church, the Siksika Nation and Carya Society's Act III, an elder-friendly group in neighbouring Winston Heights.
- In late 2015, in response to the global refugee crisis, a Refugee Sponsorship Committee was established to enable us to support a refugee family's move to Calgary.

The congregation ended 2015 by preparing for the sabbatical of Reverend Faulk.