



Universalist Unitarian
Community of Halifax

5500 Inglis Street
Halifax NS B3H 1J8

902-429-5500
info@uuch.ca
uuch.ca

Rev. Ben Robins
minister@uuch.ca

Andrea Dewar
Office Administrator
admin@uuch.ca
902-429-5500
Wed-Thur-Fri
1-6 pm

Joe Britto
Board President

Etta Hamm
Newsletter Editor

Sunday services
start at 10:30 am

All are welcome



Welcome!

Join us in exploring what it means to live our deepest values out loud. We extend a special welcome to visitors and newcomers, and hope you will come again.

The [Zoom](#) link stays the same from week to week and can be found at the top left of our web page at uuch.ca. If you need an ID and Password it's: ID: 666 004 431, Password: 010670.

November Services

Nov 3—*Language is Power*

The English language, its structure, vocabulary and usage, developed over centuries, is embedded with the values, the priorities, the worldview, of the cultures it grew in. When do we accept it as an imperfect hand-me-down, and when do we take a stand and say it needs to change? **Ben Robins with Mary Lu MacDonald**

Stay after the service for our Semi-annual General Meeting when the board presents a budget for 2025.

Nov 10—*We Remember*

As we launch the pledge drive, and in honour of Remembrance Day, we remember all who have gotten us to where we are today, and we remember what it is we are aiming for and what this is all about. **Stay after the service for lunch as we launch the pledge drive. Ben Robins with Pam Berman**

Nov 17—*Forgive (But Not Yet?)*








Hosea Ballou, who inspired the first Universalists in Nova Scotia, believed in a complete and loving forgiveness for all wrongdoing—but only after just retribution. His cousin Adin Ballou, who inspired Leo Tolstoy (and thence Gandhi) believed instead in an immediate forgiveness. What do you yourself need in order to feel a satisfactory reconciliation? **Ben Robins with Pam Griffin-Hody**

Nov 24—*Are You For Real?*

From white lies to keeping nuanced opinions to ourselves, we might find that the masks we wear have become too much. We'll honour the human condition of partial transparency and partial estrangement, and we'll consider when it is worth the risk to keep it real. **Ben Robins with Margaret Galbraith**

Our mission is to provide a community that nurtures personal and spiritual growth, practices inclusiveness, celebrates diversity and affirms individual and collective commitment to community service and social justice.

November 2024

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
 <p>November is Pledge Month at UUCH, with Canvass Kick-off on the 10th.</p>					<p>1 Fall back to Atlantic Standard Time CUC Co-Lab Today to Sunday</p>	<p>2 10 -11:30 am Brunch 10am-3pm Building a Better Present (see Climate)</p>
<p>3 10:30 service 12:15 pm SAGM</p>	<p>4</p>	<p>5</p>	<p>6 12-2pm Lunch Bunch</p>	<p>7 7-8:15 The Creatives</p>	<p>8</p>	<p>9 10-11:30 am Brunch </p>
<p>10 10:30 service Canvass Kick-off</p>	<p>11 Remembrance Day </p>	<p>12 7 pm Worship meeting</p>	<p>13 12-2 pm Lunch Bunch 6:30 pm Board Meeting</p>	<p>14 7-8:15 The Creatives</p>	<p>15</p>	<p>16 10-11:30 am Brunch </p>
<p>17 10:30 service Noon Humanist Group</p>	<p>18</p>	<p>19</p>	<p>20 12-2 pm Lunch Bunch</p>	<p>21 7-8:15 The Creatives</p>	<p>22</p>	<p>23 10-11:30 am Brunch </p>
<p>24 10:30 service 12:15 End of Life Talk 2:15 Park Hike</p>	<p>25 </p>	<p>26 Newsletter Deadline all day today. Early submissions welcome.</p>	<p>27 12-2 pm Lunch Bunch 7-10 pm Open Mic</p>	<p>28 7-8:15 The Creatives</p>	<p>29</p>	<p>30 10-11:30 Brunch </p>

CANVASS KICK-OFF SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 10

We'll kick-off our 2025 Pledge Campaign on November 10th with a soup and sandwich luncheon after the service. If you'd like to make a pot of soup, or bring sandwiches or sweet treats, please contact or see our luncheon organizer, Faith Piccolo.





Minister's notes

Is This a Universe in Which Love Can Win?

Is this a universe in which love can win? Is this a world in which you can lead with your heart, live a life of generosity and openness, and end up the better for it? Or do nice folks finish last, and optimists get taken advantage of as "useful idiots"?

This is how I make sense of the word 'faith' when I hear someone say that they have lost their faith. I take it to mean that they no longer believe that it is worth it to love the world.

Maybe you got burned by someone you love. Maybe you got climbed over at work, by someone willing to play dirty in the name of narrow-minded ambition. Maybe you were part of a movement for change, and made a real difference, only to have it reversed (or on shaky ground). Or maybe the movement fractured, or was overwhelmed by circumstance. Maybe you realized that the line between good and evil runs through every human heart, including yours.

A wave of young adults are choosing not to have kids. One reason is the belief that an additional human on the planet will be bad for the environment (I disagree: Anyone that thoughtful will likely raise someone who is net-benefit to the planet). Another reason is that the world as it is isn't a place they would bring someone they love (Again I disagree: Challenges often bring out the best of the human spirit). Our beliefs about this world we're in have a huge impact on how we live.

They say that wisdom comes when you realize that the path forward isn't to perfect all things everywhere, but to change what you can where you are. No final victory for love, just an ongoing practice. For me, that's good enough for most days, but some days I need more, I need a broader vision, imagining a just world of thriving people and peoples, and I need a realistic vision of how to get there.

Is this a universe in which love can win? I'm no utopian, but I'm optimistic. I'd say that love can be a main ingredient, as long as it doesn't try to take over.

I'd love to hear your perspective. I'm at minister@uuch.ca

Love,

Ben



Online, Nov 1-3, Friday to Sunday

Get ready for an exciting virtual (free!) adventure at the CUC Co-Lab: Experiences of Transformation, Nov 1-3.

This event brings together Unitarians, Universalists, UU congregations and communities to connect, enjoy, and engage in meaningful conversations.

Our mission is to foster authentic connections, ignite inspiration, and explore big questions about change, transformation and renewal, all in harmony with our values. Through focused discussion, captivating storytelling, and innovative events, we aim to cultivate hope and renewal.

See all Co-Lab details,
Atlantic times, etc. at cuc.ca
under Events
<https://cuc.ca/events/cuc-co-lab/>



**Don't miss the Canvass Kick-off
(a.k.a. Pledge Sunday)
after Sunday service, Nov 10th**

Come and celebrate the many comforts and joys of belonging to this wonderful community of friends—all made possible by our combined generosity of spirit, vision, energy, and not least, our financial contributions.

There's always lots of food, live entertainment, and the usual, warm UU fellowship.

See also the message on
the calendar page.

NOTICE OF SEMI-ANNUAL MEETING Sunday, November 3, 2024

The UUCH Semi-annual Meeting will be held following the service on November 3rd. It will include the proposed budget for 2025.

Pam Berman
Board Secretary

Newsletter Deadline

The deadline for submissions for the December newsletter is

Tuesday, November 26th

Please send your items to Etta
at braeside@eastlink.ca

From the Caring Committee

Some of you will not know or remember **David Ballum-Haftka**, a retired teacher and an active UUCH member from 2009 to 2016. David was director of the RE program for children and a board member. He participated in Membership, orientation sessions for new members—and notably in our musical events.

We are sorry to report that a recent fire at his home took everything he owned including his sweet dog, Henry.



Because his home is a heritage property, one of the twelve townhomes on Brunswick known as The Apostles, property insurance won't cover the resulting expenditures like temporary housing, basic necessities and required repairs. It is expected that it will be some time before David can return to his home. He has asked that we spread the word about a GoFundMe campaign set up by a friend. You can learn more about it at <https://www.gofundme.com/f/fire-recovery-fund-for-david?>

If you'd like to contact David, his number is 902-488-8086; email: davidballumhaftka@gmail.com

We would like to give David some support as he works his way through the daunting process he is facing, and welcome any suggestions you may have.

Wishing one and all an enjoyable, colourful fall season.

From the Caring Committee

(Faith, Judy, Shripad, Sylvia and Ben)

November after Sunday services

Nov 3

Semi-annual General Meeting.

The board will present the annual budget for approval.



Nov 10

Pledge Drive Luncheon, a.k.a. The Canvass Kick-off.

Nov 17

12:00 Humanist Group led by Mary Lu MacDonald

Nov 24

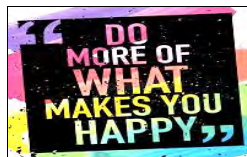
12:15-2:00 pm End-of-Life Talk led by Marilyn Shinyei and Ben Robins, the first in a series of 6 sessions.

Nov 24

2:15 Point Pleasant Park hike. Dogs welcome.

Thursday Evenings, 7–8:15 pm

The Creatives: Depending on the interests of those who come, we will write, draw, sing or dance.



Perhaps it will open our hearts and minds; connect us with ourselves, each other and something larger; and awaken awe at something just beyond reach.



If you've marked your calendar for December 7th for the Christmas party, please change that to

Sunday the 8th.

Fellowship, Festivity, Fun, Frivolity!



From the Climate Crisis Team

Climate actions, past and present

It's fall – time for Climate Action!

Seniors for Climate events: These started off this past month with at least 75 events on October 1st across the country. Here, it was October 2nd to respect Treaty Day on the 1st. The event in Halifax included six very interesting talks on a wide range of topics, from local actions through an update on political action to counteract energy poverty from our own Brian Gifford, to a powerful call for more attention to the oceans – the most neglected, and arguably the most important feature of our planet. There were many displays from a variety of organizations hoping to recruit new members or just inform you of their role in reducing carbon emissions. It was an interesting afternoon. I hope some of you were able to get there.

Students Strike for Climate: On Friday October 25th there was a Students Strike for Climate rally at Victoria Park. There were only about 50 people there – perhaps half young people and most of the rest probably retired. It was quite a change from the rally in September 2019 when 10,000 people turned out in Halifax to let the government know we are all concerned about the changing climate. On this Friday the young people spoke well and passionately about their fears; then we all marched down to chant outside NS Power offices, then on to Province House. Somehow the small numbers seemed to emphasize the apparent futility of the actions, but if we don't take any action, together, what hope is there?

What about Interfaith? Can interfaith be a route for both togetherness and action? **On Saturday, November 2nd,** there will be an all-day interfaith event discussing climate actions, called Building a Better Present. It is presented by the Ecology Action Centre and the Spiritual Coalition on Climate Action, Nova Scotia. There will be storytelling, information on community projects, and time for discussion of future actions. It is free, with lunch provided. There may be last-minute space. See contacts below if you are interested.

margalbraith@eastlink.ca

or <https://ecologyaction.ca/get-involved/events/building-better-present>

But there is Good News! It seems there is nothing but despairing news out there everywhere you look, locally or globally, but there is a fix for that: **fixthenews.com**. This is a website founded by a group of Australians who realized that there is a great deal of good things happening around the world that the main media don't report on at all. Fixthenews sends out a free newsletter once a week, full of great facts that will cheer your heart and give you strength to get back to the fights we must still carry on. You can also subscribe for more in-depth articles, and listen to their podcast. They also contribute to charities – check out their views on charitable giving. Fixthenews.com – it's good for you!

Margaret Galbraith
for the Climate Crisis Team

TIME TO TALK AGAIN (about end-of-life issues)

For many of us, death has been a taboo subject, but now there is a groundswell happening with Death Cafés springing up, death doulas setting up practices and a "natural death" movement underway. We hope you will join us. Your friends would be welcome too.

Facilitators: Ben Robins and Marilyn Shinyei

Spoiler Alert: There will be dark humour and lots of laughs.

Tentative dates are:

Nov 24, Dec 8, Jan 12 & 26 and Feb 9 & 23

Time: 12:15 – 2 pm

Session 1 – Nov 24th

Please bring your own lunch.

We have an End-of-Life planner available that you can purchase for \$12 (optional). In this first session we will get to know each other, and find out what you would like to see in the sessions that follow. Here are some possible topics to be thinking about:

- Our beliefs around dying and an after-life
- Dealing with the aging and death of parents
- Having those difficult conversations with your parents, your spouse, your kids
- Dealing with your own aging and inevitable end
 - downsizing: your stuff, your accommodations
- Planning your own memorial service
- Writing your own obituary
- Dying with Dignity and Medical Aid in Dying
- Unfinished business: wills, executors, personal directives, power of attorney, etc.
- Optional endings: death doulas, home funerals, green burials, how to avoid the big sell
- Dealing with grief, asking for help, finding support

Looking forward to seeing you there. Please RSVP to marilyneshinyei@gmail.com . so we have an idea of numbers.

Marilyn Shinyei



Meet a Fellow UU, our minister, Rev. Ben Robbins

by Andrea Dewar

I have enjoyed getting to know Ben and hearing his down-to-earth, honest, and vulnerable sermons at UUCH over the past two-and-a-half months, so it was a treat to sit and chat with him for this month's newsletter.

We talked about his winding path to ministry which has been anything but typical! As a young adult, Ben took some detours, dropping out of university, hitchhiking around, and connecting with “unschoolers” – folks who encourage kids to pursue what sparks their interest, free from traditional school structures. Eventually, he returned to school and attained a teaching degree at Queen's University, focusing on alternative education. He later visited schools where kids had the freedom to decide how to spend their day, as long as they weren't disrupting others. Students took responsibility for school decisions, making and enforcing rules – a setup Ben found thrilling.

After university, he spent a year working in pubs in England, inspired by historical figures who did this on their path to public service. Then, after saving up money to have more space to explore, he spent five years at a dance centre, diving into improv dance and finding a sense of spiritual community there.

Ben grew up attending a UU congregation in Kingston, Ontario, and reignited his journey with the UU community when he attended a young adult weekend at Unicamp (a UU camp in Ontario). There, he found his people: kind, creative, and a little quirky. His involvement with Unicamp deepened, and he also connected with UU folks in Toronto, including members of a UU choir he met at a pub who sang a beautiful rendition of *O Holy Night*, which he recorded and kept on his phone for years. He became involved at Neighbourhood UU in Toronto and joined the worship team there.

In 2013, when Ben's involvement in various organizations in Toronto became too much, he dropped everything to see where his energy went. A couple of months later, his dance community needed someone to coordinate their annual weekend and he volunteered. He jokes that once he realized he was trying to turn it into a UU community, he decided to become a minister. The deadlines to apply for seminary were approaching, so he quickly did research and chose to stay local, attending Emmanuel College at the University of Toronto. Historically a United Church seminary, it now includes Buddhist, Muslim and Jewish students, and more. There isn't (yet!) a UU program, but most professors were flexible with Ben's UU focus. He recalls having to study the question “How do you know what you know?” with a biblical focus – he also dove into the philosophy of knowledge on

Continued on next page ...



Ben, Oct 28-24. Photo by Tanya Bilsbury

Open Mic Night!
Wednesday, Nov 27, 7 - 10 pm



Calling all singers, singer-songwriters, poets, comedians and more—here's your chance to shine.

Let's light the place up!

All are welcome.

**If you'd like to perform
(up to 3 songs, space permitting)**

tell Joe,

or minister@uuch.ca

or sign up when you arrive

Humanist Discussion
November 17



The Humanist Group will meet after church on November 17.

The topic we will be chewing on, from a humanist point of view, is the pluses and minuses of Artificial Intelligence. AI affects our lives in so many ways.

All are welcome to join in the discussion.

Rev. Ben Robins, continued ...

his own time to make it more relevant. Since then, his ministry has taken him to congregations in Hamilton, Peterborough, Oregon, and now Halifax.

When he's not busy with ministry, Ben loves reading analytical histories on the patterns of civilizations, singing, and diving into Sudoku variations (If you're curious, check out *Cracking the Cryptic* on YouTube).

Five books that Ben loves, in no particular order:

Orson Scott Card's *Enders Game*
Starhawk's *The Empowerment Manual*
Jung Young Lee's *Marginality*
David O. Rankin's *So Great a Cloud of Witnesses*
Julia Galef's *The Scout Mindset*

When not on the job, Ben is happily exploring Halifax, usually on his bicycle—and getting to know us one by one. We are glad to have you with us, Ben! — *Andrea Dewar*

From The Canadian Unitarian Council

CUC connections to check out:

Social Media and eGroups



- “Like” the CUC FaceBook page for news, stories, pics and more
- Join the “Love and Justice” FaceBook group for discussion and ideas on social justice issues
- Follow us on Instagram@canadian_unitarian

E-Group

(Supported by CUC Staff, Board & Volunteers)

- CUC Administrators: a space for UU congregational administrators to share information, ask questions, have discussions and pass on best practices.

Many more at

[Social Media & eGroups - Canadian Unitarian Council](#)
[Conseil unitarien du Canada](#)

Building Safety Updates after Fire Safety Inspection

After a recent routine inspection by the Halifax Regional Fire Department we've made some key changes around the building to ensure we're meeting fire safety standards to keep everyone safe. We tackled a mix of small and large projects, and we're happy to share what's been done.

On the smaller side, we updated some cables that needed attention and added latches and automatic door closers to certain doors for better fire safety. We also put up some extra emergency exit signs to make sure all escape routes are clearly marked.

The bigger stuff: we removed the deadbolt from the back door and installed a push bar to make it easier to exit in case of an emergency.

We also did a massive basement cleanout! Heather Watts, Marilyn Shinyei, and I first sifted through to save items of historical significance. Two bins full of junk later, the space is looking much better and much safer. See photos on the right.

Special thanks to Colin and Ishkirat Singh from 1-888-JunkBin for their help with the heavy lifting.

A huge shout out to Joe Britto and Max Hody; they volunteered many hours to get these tasks done on time. We could not have done it without them!

Andrea Dewar
UUCH Admin

Before and after

