

IT'S UP TO US!

Sunday Service Address (2009)

Good morning! And thank you for inviting me to speak this morning.

I am especially delighted to be here today as we have someone very special with us. This is someone who needs little introduction – someone who has a unique set of skills and life-long experiences that allows them to play a unique role as a Unitarian Universalist in their daily life, in this community and in the world at large.

That person is sitting next to you! (Or in some cases, right behind or in front of you!)

As you look around, realize that you are looking into the eyes of friends and strangers – thinking and smiling. Look again; those eyes are staring and smiling back at you. You're that “special person”!

In the end, it really is *all about you!* The world really does revolve around you! For only you can decide how you will employ your unique set of human skills and life-long experiences in pursuing your spiritual development and acting in the service of others.

By what name do you call your unique role – this “path” that can be walked only by you and that can be walked only once? Do you think of it as your “mission”? Your “life’s purpose”? How we each consciously discern our life’s purpose and how we choose to live out that purpose is we might call our “personal ministry” – since it represents how we choose to act in response to being personally called upon to attend to this fragile world.

What is your personal ministry? What are your highest aspirations? Your Dreams? – for yourself; your children; your family; this community? What are your Hopes – for humanity; for this planet? Your ministry is the quest you undertake to make those aspirations, those dreams, those hopes, reality.

This purpose of this morning, therefore, is to invite you to consider your own personal ministry as part of a rich tapestry woven by Unitarians and Universalists in this congregation and across this great country – for us to leave here with a strong sense that we can better achieve our shared goals for a just and enlightened society when our personal, congregational and national ministries are in sync.

Let us unleash the "power of possibility" created by that synergy.

It's up to us!

So, what or where is our synergy? What do we have in common? These are not trivial questions. Indeed, the National Identity initiative currently being co-ordinated by the CUC is helping us explore these very questions.

Typically, when people look for things they have in common, they look for specific attitudes or beliefs they may share, or common things that they do. We Unitarians and Universalists, however, seem to find it hard to agree on most things! Whether it's points of belief or theology, or which particular social action initiative we should collectively support. At first blush, the only thing we appear to have in common is that we are all different!

But perhaps we are looking at the trees and missing the forest. We have each come to Unitarian Universalism by many and varied paths and we choose to come together in this religious community in acceptance of one another; to encourage each other on our spiritual journeys and to put our values into action. It is not "answers to specific theological philosophical questions" that we have in common, or commitment to any one common social cause; it is the undertaking that we have made to support each other in loving community that binds us together.

We have expressed that undertaking in the form of a **covenant** – a formal statement that affirms and promotes a set of shared Principles. These Principles give voice to our shared values and aspirations – speaking explicitly of our acceptance and encouragement of one another, of a common goal for world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all, all within an interdependent web that weaves our human lives inextricably with this planet and with all of existence.

By entering into such a covenant with Unitarian Universalists across this country, we are acknowledging our all-so-human need for companionship – for community.

What is your UU community? It is all too easy to limit that definition to mean simply this congregation. Yet there are “UU communities” both within and beyond the walls of this congregation. Today, I invite you to explore the **community of communities** that makes up the UU movement in Canada. I invite you to look for like-minded companions in this congregation, in other congregations across the GTA, and across the country.

In the Order of Service this morning you’ll find “map” of the “known universe” of Canadian UU communities. It’s an evolving map. I would ask you, now and after the service, to consider how much of this universe you have explored so far.

Here at this congregation, members are fortunate to be able to belong to **small groups**: to focus on spiritual development, social action, or to simply foster a more intimate social relationship. Participation in these small groups is intended towards increased deepening that is not easy to find in a larger group. There is no intention to replace the celebration of the overall community on Sunday mornings.

Beyond our local congregation are other congregations, of course. There are a half dozen within 45 minutes drive from here. Also in the Greater Toronto Area and vicinity we have “**UCGT**” (“Unitarian Congregations of Greater Toronto) that provides a vehicle to allow us to demonstrate our presence in the region. Collectively, we attend organized events, such as the Pride Parade, or run our own events, such as the Sustainability Fair, hosted by volunteers from several of our congregations just a few weeks ago and last year. As a cluster of congregations, we enjoy membership of the Toronto Area Interfaith Council and Horizons Interfaith Council (which enables us to produce our own UU television shows).

As the folks who organized our participation in these activities will tell you, working and walking alongside UUs from other congregations changes your entire perspective on who we are as a collective body and it ignites enthusiasm for what we can achieve by working together.

The **Canadian Unitarian Council** (the “CUC”) supports its member congregations by providing resources for congregational vitality, religious exploration and spiritual growth, and social engagement. Having a national body means that we have a national voice on the Canadian religious and social stage.

And on the **international stage**, Canadian UUs have a well respected voice at the **International Council of Unitarians and Universalists**, and a voice on the floor of the United Nations through the **UU United Nations Office** in New York.

The “**grand design**”, as it were, behind this mosaic of entities, is such that we individuals, we Canadian UUs, can explore, experience and engage our passions more fully though empowered, inter-connected religious communities...

What are your interests, your passions? If you haven't already, I invite you to reach out to work alongside other UUs across the country. Easy-to-use technologies exist today to create meaningful communities on-line to exchange information and ideas, and above all to share stories – from one person's heart to another's. And there are opportunities to meet face-to-face with our on-line buddies at our fall gatherings and at our annual conference.

It is for each one of us to consider how we might weave our lives – our individual thread – so that it supports, and is supported, by this web of communities.

At a minimum, of course, we can simply participate in the programs and services that our national communities offer...

- We can extend our spiritual community to the national level, by connecting with the practitioners of a particular faith tradition across the country; or
- We can engage in social justice issues by joining one of the Social Responsibility Monitoring Groups or Canadian Unitarians for Social Justice (“CUSJ”).

If you're passionate about:

- Racial, Religious and First Nations Justice and Equity issues;
- Peace or Democracy;
- Globalization, Economic Justice or the Environment;
- Gender & Social Diversity;
- or, if you want to find alternatives to Drug Prohibition or choices for Dying with Dignity

... please add your voice and the voice of this congregation to the national voice that is already speaking through our Monitoring Groups.

In addition to enjoying the fruits of our Canadian UU communities, we can sustain our Canadian UU movement by building and sustaining these communities through a commitment of our time and/or our financial resources on both a local and national level.

Perhaps you have a specific skill that would be valuable to others? Perhaps you're a good organizer, teacher, or trainer? Maybe you're a wiz with finances or technology? How might you share those gifts, within this community, with the wider UU movement, and with the world at large?

It is in the areas of our Youth and Young Adults that we are currently struggling. Youth services are currently provided by the Unitarian Universalist Association in the States (the "UUA"). Last year, the UUA announced that it planned to make extensive changes to these programs. Canada's position is unclear. Our Youth need our support more than ever at this difficult time. Our Young Adults are not fairing much better, and have yet to form any cohesive community. Can you do something to help these important under-resourced communities?

If you can't find the right community for you, start it! It's up to us, after all! The CUC can act as a catalyst and provide tools to help these groups get established – but they depend on the passion of committed individuals if they are to flourish.

Understanding the role of the CUC is important. The CUC is not some external entity, some higher authority that exerts some kind of power over us, with an abundance of cash just waiting for ideas to spend it on! The CUC is the intentional creation of our collective congregations to undertake the national activities we choose collectively.

Whether we are talking about the this congregation or about the CUC, there is a simple fact that needs re-stating frequently... What we achieve collectively is determined and constrained by the **resources** we personally commit and by the level of **constructive feedback and support** we give to our elected boards and staff – those folks we have asked to be “stewards” on our behalf in this congregation and at the national level. The more we put in individually – in terms of effort and dollars, and in constructive feedback and support – the more we can achieve together in our congregations and as a movement of religious and social progressives in Canada.

In terms of **committing our personal resources**, we are all familiar with organizations, including this congregation and the CUC, undertaking intentional planning processes. I am asking how we might, individually, intentionally weave our lives – our individual threads – so that they support, and are supported by, the independent web of communities.

How might we each undertake this “personal planning” process? In my experience, such a process needs to be somewhat formalized – to keep us serious and accountable to ourselves – but only as formal as we are comfortable with. Here’s just one idea for those who like to have a framework to work within...

Inside your Orders of Service you’ll find another sheet of paper that you might find interest to play with... Use it, adapt it or recycle it as you feel so moved!

The purpose behind this planning template is to help us “join the dots” between our individual needs and the plans and commitments we make to ourselves, to this congregation, and to our fellow UUs across the country.

A few weeks ago, Shawn challenged us that a faith to be kept is a faith to be lived. How much of our time, how much of our money, how much of our being will each of us commit in order to fully live this faith.

I understand that it's scary to put it on paper – to be accountable to ourselves, let alone others. Yet here you stand – or rather sit – in community – not only with members of this congregation but with UUs across Canada. You are the Chosen One – because only you alone can make that unique difference that a committed human being can make.

In closing, may I ask you, “What will be your path?” How will you weave the strands of your purposeful life – your “ministry” – with those of others? How will you choose to deepen your experience of, and engagement in, this world? Who will you choose as your companions in pursuing your spiritual development and acting in the service of others?

I humbly ask you, but a world in need screams and begs you, to take the hand of your fellow UUs – in this congregation and across Canada – and unleash the "power of possibility", knowing that our personal, congregational and national ministries are in sync, and that we are on our way to achieving a just and enlightened society.

It's up to us!

Kalvin Drake

Our Canadian UU Movement - A Community of Communities

	GOALS			ROLES									
	PERSONAL GROWTH	COMMUNITY	SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY	LAY LEADERSHIP	STAFF	YOUTH	YOUNG ADULTS	PROFESSIONAL MINISTRY		LIFESPAN LEARNING	LAY CHAPLAINCY		
INDIVIDUALS	Self Directed Individuals	Individual UUs	Socially Responsible Individuals	Lay Leaders	Staff Members	Youth	Young Adults	Parish Ministers	Community Ministers	Directors of Lifespan Learning	Lay Chaplains		
LOCAL COMMUNITIES				Local Boards	Congrega-tional Staff	Youth Groups	Young Adult Groups	Shared Ministry Teams		Lifespan Learning Committees	Lay Chaplaincy Committees		
							Campus Ministry Groups						
				SmallGroups									
<u>CONGREGATIONS</u> (~50)													
REGIONAL COMMUNITIES		<u>Unicamp</u>		Regional Network Groups (4)			<u>YACs</u> (3)		Regional Ministers Groups: BC Ministers, Wood Bison (Western), UUMOSO (S. Ontario), Moose Creek (Eastern).		<u>Lay Chaplaincy Committees</u>		
	REGIONAL CLUSTERS: <u>BC Region</u> , <u>UCGT</u> , Vancouver Island Unitarian Committee												
NATIONAL COMMUNITIES	<u>SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS</u>												
NATIONAL LEADERSHIP			<u>SR Monitoring Groups</u> ³	<u>CUSJ</u>	"Advisors"	"Elders" ("Knights", etc.)	<u>ACM Delegates</u>	<u>CUC Staff</u>	<u>YouthCon Attendees</u>	<u>C*UUYAN</u> [†]	<u>UUMOC</u>	Canadian UU Religious Educators	<u>Lay Chaplaincy Committees</u>
									<u>CAYAC</u>				
									Canadian Youth Leadership				
<u>CUC Board, Committees¹ & Task Forces²</u>													
<u>JOINT FORUM</u>													
INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITIES	<u>CLF</u>							Services from: <u>UUA</u>		Services from: <u>UUA</u>	<u>LREDA</u> [†]		
	<u>ICUU, IARF</u>												
	<u>UU-UNO</u>									<u>UUMA</u> [†]			

¹ COMMITTEES

- Nominating Committee
- Executive Director Contract Committee
- Investment Committee
- Theological Education Funds Committee
- [Policy Advisory Committee](#)
- Lifespan Learning Committee
- Technology Advisory Committee

² TASK FORCES

- [National Identity](#)

³ SR MONITORING GROUPS

- [Alternatives to Drug Prohibition](#)
- [Choice in Dying](#)
- [Democracy](#)
- [Diversity](#) (Racial, Religious and First Nations, Métis & Inuit Justice and Equity)
- [Economic Justice](#)
- [Environment](#)
- [Gender & Sexual Diversity](#)
- [Globalization](#)
- [Peace](#)

LEGEND

- C*UUYAN(†) - Continental UU Young Adult Network
- CAYAC - Canadian Advisory Youth/Adult Committee
- CLF - Church of the Larger Fellowship (Member of UUA)
- CUC - Canadian Unitarian Council
- CUSJ - Canadian Unitarians for Social Justice
- CUULCA - Canadian Unitarian Universalist Lay Chaplains Association
- IARF - International Association of Religious Freedom
- ICUU - International Council of Unitarians & Universalists
- LREDA(†) - Liberal Religious Educators Association
- RNGs - Regional Network Groups (Network of volunteers)
- SIGs - Special Interest Groups
- SR - Social Responsibility
- UCGT - Unitarian Congregations of Greater Toronto
- UUA - Unitarian Universalist Association (USA)
- UUMA(†) - Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association
- UUMOC - Unitarian Universalist Ministers of Canada
- UUMOSO - Unitarian Universalist Ministers of Southern Ontario
- UU-UNO - Unitarian Universalist United Nations Office
- YAC - Youth/Adult Committee

EXAMPLE OF A PERSONAL PLANNING TEMPLATE

MY NEEDS
INTELLECTUAL
EMOTIONAL
SPIRITUAL
SOCIETAL & EXISTENTIAL

MY PLANS (Things to participate in; things to commit my personal effort/financial support towards)		
AS AN INDIVIDUAL	AS A MEMBER OF MY LOCAL COMMUNITY AND/OR SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS	IN SUPPORT OF THE CANADIAN MOVEMENT (Nationally and in the GTA)
	INTELLECTUAL & SPIRITUAL GROWTH	VISION & LEADERSHIP
	SPIRITUAL CONNECTIONS	RESOURCES TO COMMUNITIES
	OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE	COMMUNICATIONS & CONNECTIONS
	A SENSE OF BELONGING	

“From You I Receive; To You I Give”

