

# The Hamilton NUUsletter

The First Unitarian Church of Hamilton ♦ Month 2026



**MINISTER: REV. DANIE WEBBER**

## Minister's Muusings

### Building Our Community, One Half Hour at a Time

On June 21st, at our Volunteer Appreciation Worship Service, I asked our congregation a simple question: Who here has been helped by someone in this community?

Hands went up across the room. Then I asked: Who wants to be that person for someone else? The same hands stayed up. That's who we are.

### We Are the Web

Our seventh principle calls us to respect the interdependent web of existence of which we are a part. Friends, we are that web. Every single one of us is a thread. And when threads are missing, the web doesn't hold.

### A Small Ask

So here's what I want to ask you: What if that showing up included one more small thing?

Not a big thing. Not a scary thing. We're not asking everyone to chair a committee. We're talking about half an hour. Before or after you're already here. Or from your couch on a Tuesday. Updating a spreadsheet. Posting on social media.

### What's Next

We're launching a volunteer job board that lists real roles—small ones, large ones, flexible ones. Roles you can do in your pajamas. Roles you can do when you are UU Hamilton. We have several listed already and will continue adding as we identify everything this community needs.

(continued on page 2)

In this newsletter you can expect:

Events at UUH This Month

Sunday Services Information

Community News

Joys, Sorrows, & Gratitude

Social Justice Information

Member Highlights

At a Glance:

## July 2026 at UUH

July 10 - Third Space Cafe (Summer Potluck)

July 14 - Men's World Cup Watch Party

July 15 - Men's World Cup Watch Party

July 19 - Men's World Cup Watch Party (Final)

July 24 - Third Space Cafe (Games Night)

July 25 - Grand River Pow Wow Outing

Follow us on social media or check out our website for events updates throughout the month!

Minister's Musings, continued:

### **We Build It Together**

Here's what I know about Unitarian Universalists: we're very good at talking about the world we want to live in. And we're at our absolute best when we build it. Together. One half hour at a time. This community exists because people like you decided it should.

Take a look for the new Volunteer Central postings in our weekly ACE, coming soon!

If you have ideas, questions, or would like to volunteer for one of the postings email [volunteering@uuhamilton.ca](mailto:volunteering@uuhamilton.ca)

*Rev. Danie*

## How to Find Us

### Contact Info

905-527-8441

[info@uuhamilton.ca](mailto:info@uuhamilton.ca)

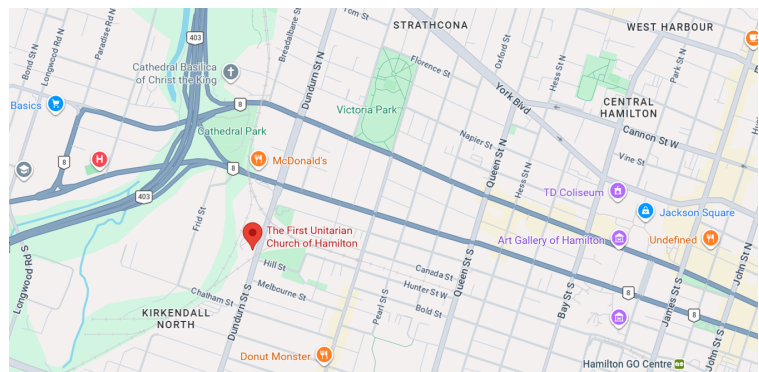
### Social Media

[Facebook](#)

[Instagram](#)

We are located at:

170 Dundurn St. S  
Hamilton ON  
L8P 4K3



Join us for our Sunday Services in Person at 10:30 am each week, or online:

[Youtube](#)

[Vimeo](#)

[Zoom](#)

## Who We Are

### Universal Unitarianism in Hamilton

In Unitarian Universalism, you can bring your whole self: your full identity, your questioning mind, your expansive heart. Together, we create a force more powerful than one person or one belief system.

As Unitarian Universalists, we do not have to check our personal background and beliefs at the door: we join together on a journey that honors everywhere we've been before. Our shared covenant is known as the Eight Principles, which has led us to becoming an inclusive spirituality drawn from six sources, including scriptural wisdom, personal experiences, and modern day heroes.

We are united in our broad and inclusive outlook, and in our values.

We are united in shared experience: our open and stirring worship services, religious education, and rites of passage; our work for social justice; our quest to include the marginalized; our expressions of love.

You are welcome to join us, as you are.

## The Eight Principles

- 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.
  - Individual and communal action that accountably dismantles racism and systemic barriers to full inclusion in ourselves and our institutions
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**JOIN US ON SUNDAY MORNING FOR OUR  
COMMUNITY SERVICES.**

**July 5, 2026**

**Chasing Dreams**

Sermon by Karen Trollope-Kumar

**July 12, 2026**

**The Global Forest: How Trees Can Save Us**

Sermon by the Climate Action Team

**July 19, 2026**

**From Empty Beds to Full Living Rooms: Loneliness,  
Third Spaces and Soft Places to Land**

Sermon by Jody Aberdeen

**July 26, 2026**

**AI, Ethics, and the Fate of the Earth: An Emerging  
Spiritual Crisis**

Sermon by Stephen Scharper, A Fellow of Massey College and frequent columnist for the Toronto Star, is a professor of anthropology and the environment at the University of Toronto. He explores the intersection of ecology, justice, and spirituality.

**Join us In Person or Online**

If you can't join us in person, you can join us online in a couple different ways:

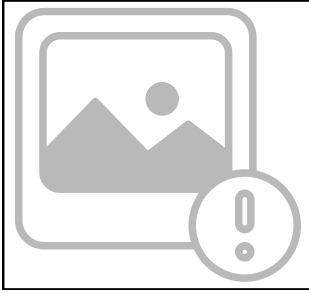
Zoom - includes a Virtual Coffee Hour after the service, Vimeo, or on Youtube.

Find the links on our website or social media pages.

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## UUH Staff



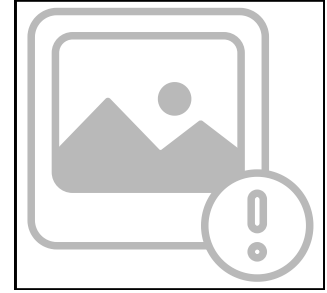
### **Rev. Danie Webber: Our Fearless Leader**

Rev. Danie grew up in Canada's prairies, first attending the Unitarian Fellowship of Regina, and later Calgary Unitarians, where they first heard their call to ministry as a young adult participating in small group ministries and serving within the leadership team.



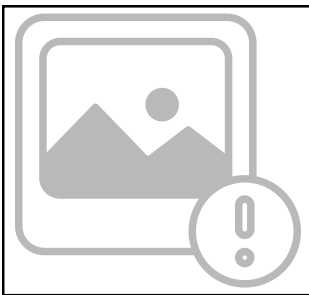
### **Jennie Koops: Religious Educator**

Jennie has been our RE since May 2025. She also works as a psychotherapist, having gotten her Master of Psycho-Spiritual Care from Emmanuel College in Toronto in 2023. Her energy has been a breath of fresh air at UUH!



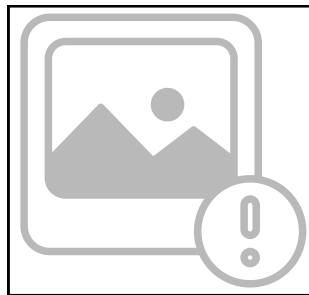
### **Jessie Golem: Support Services Manager**

Jessie has been our SSM since June 2025. In charge of all things property, digital and administrative related, Jessie can help you book a room for your meeting, support you with website issues, and hosts the Sunday morning online coffee hour.



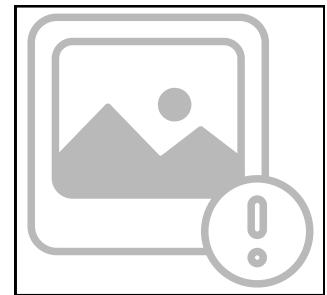
### **Rachel Derry: Lady of the Ivory Keys**

Rachel has been with The First Unitarian Church of Hamilton since about 2006. She has her ARCT degree in piano performance as well as a BFA from York University in theatre performance. She has spent her life making music as a pianist, accompanist, teacher, vocalist, as a soloist or part of an ensemble.



### **Carlos Cabezas: Tech Guy Extraordinaire!**

Carlos just joined our team in December 2025. He has 25 years of experience in television broadcasting. We are so grateful that he's joined us and is leading our AV Tech team.



### **Cindy Carrey: Lady of the Voices**

Cindy is a performing arts educator, director, composer and musician. A spiritual seeker since birth, Cindy found a home here in the mid 1990s and has been directing the UU choir for over 20 years. Cindy is a firm believer in the healing power of music, particularly group singing.

Thank you to the volunteers who came out to help us refresh the Rainbow Room!



## CYRE Update & Monthly Theme Reflection from Jennie

Summer is finally here! I've never been a summer girlie - I've always disliked how everything changes for these two months, and it gets way too dang hot. But now that I'm a mom and my daughter is getting older, I'm able to see more of the magic in summer.

Whether you're a family that travels, or goes camping, or stays close to home, there are so many different ways to see summer's extraordinary gifts. They don't have to be big and extravagant, either.

One of summer's gift's my daughter and I saw recently was a robin's nest just outside our front door. The baby birds are getting bigger, and soon they'll be flying away. We're also seeing more of our neighbours out and about and I'm hoping that we'll be able to spend lots of time with our friends on this break.

Summer is the time when everything is alive, and life shows its abundance. What are some of the ways that you've seen growth in your life this year so far? What are you in the midst of? It might not feel like you're growing, but like a plant that suddenly blooms its flowers, there's something percolating underneath.

I hope this summer is a blessing for you. Whether you're in a season of rest, or challenge, or you're just happy where things are and wish it could stay like this forever, take a moment every day to reflect on the magic of summer.

### CYRE NEWS

Did you get a chance to check out the kids' garden, and the refreshed Rainbow Room?

Join the Gardening Team on Thursday mornings (from about 9:30 until it gets too hot, or the work is done!) to help us keep it clean, free of weeds, and watered.

Volunteers are always welcome around here, whether it's to do some organizing work in the Rainbow Room/Loft storage, making social media posts, or spending time with the kids on Sunday mornings. If you have an idea you'd like to bring to the kids and youth, please email me - I'd love to work with you!

Stay tuned to our social media posts for ways to stay connected to us during the summer! We have Third Space running part-time and some FIFA World Cup Watch parties, and we're hoping to have some park-hangouts around the city!

Kids programming will take a pause this summer, but I'll still be around and will provide kids with activity sheets to do on Sunday morning or take home to do with the family.

- Jennie

# CYRE in the Summer

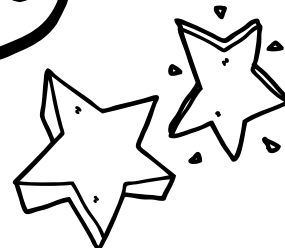
In the summers, even though the CYRE program takes a break, there are still ways for kids to be involved and a part of the Sunday services. There will be quiet activities to do during the services that can also be taken home to do together, and other events like the World Cup Watch parties or Third Space that are family friendly.

These activities will be based around the Eight Principles - each week will focus on activities, questions and ideas on one of the Unitarian principles we base our faith on.



## The Eight Principles: Kids' Version

- We believe that each and every person is important.
- We believe that all people should be treated fairly and kindly.
- We believe that we should accept one another and keep on learning together.
- We believe that each person must be free to search for what is true and right in life.
- We believe that all persons should have a vote about the things that concern them.
- We believe in working for a peaceful, fair, free world.
- We believe in caring for our planet Earth, the home we share with all living things.
- We believe in working together to build a loving and safe community that treats everyone fairly whatever their skin colour or group.



# Family Activity

## What kind of house do you think a fairy might live in?

Go for a walk in your backyard, your local park, or if you're more adventurous, take a hike to visit one of Hamilton's many waterfalls! Gather some sticks, pinecones, twigs, grass and bring it to a quiet area, away from busy paths or roads.

Build a fairy house the way you imagine it!

Remember: don't pull up anything living for the house - moss, flowers, and lichen are important parts of the web of interconnected dependence that we use to live, not to mention other relations of ours that live in these areas! Also, fairies don't like artificial things in their houses, so try to avoid using things made of plastic in a fairy house!

Fairy houses are natural and will return to the earth in a little while, so be prepared that it may not be here when you return. But that is part of the cycle of Fairy Houses.

Take a picture of your fairy house and share it with @uuhamiltonca on instagram!



May we use our imagination to create delight for fairies and for all alive who live in nests, holes and hives.

Amen. Blessed Be.

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## Events at UUH

**July 25, 2026**

### Dismantling Barriers & CYRE Collab



**Bus for the Ohsweken Speedway  
leaves at 10:5am;**

**Return to the church around 5:45 pm**

Dismantling Barriers & CYRE is excited to invite you to join us on an outing to Ohsweken for the Grand River Champion of Champions Pow Wow. Family and friends are invited and encouraged to join us!

We will depart from the church at 10:15 am, and return around 5:45pm. Tickets to the Pow Wow are sold on-site only: \$15 for Adults, \$5 for Kids Under 12; Cash/Debit/Credit available. CYRE & Dismantling Barriers will provide the bus for transportation to and from the pow wow. All other costs are at your own expense.

Bring your own food, lawn chairs, shade, and water bottles. Native food and craft vendors will be onsite.

Please [sign up here](#) or email [re@uuhamilton.ca](mailto:re@uuhamilton.ca).

**May 6, 2026**

### Third Space Cafe - Summer Edition

**July 10: Summer Potluck**

**July 24: Games Night**

**6-8:30pm**



This summer, we are scaling down our Third Space nights, and meeting twice a month during July and August.

Join us for a summer potluck, a low-key gathering of friends both new and old, where we can enjoy the garden in nice weather, and share stories of our magical summers.

The last Friday of the month will be our ever-popular games night!

Children and youth are welcome and encouraged to attend.

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## Events at UUH

### FIFA Men's World Cup Watch Parties

**July 14 @ 3:00pm - Semi-Final 1**

**July 15 @ 3:00pm - Semi-Final 2**

**July 19 @ 3:00pm - Finals**

Who doesn't love soccer football? Join us in the sanctuary to watch the biggest games of the tournament together.

The church will open at 2:00pm for a chance to gather, enjoy refreshments, play a bit of footy in the Fellowship Hall and stay to cheer on the teams as they fight for the championship!



### Food For Thought Book Club

The Food for Thought Book Club meets in Fellowship Hall on the 3rd Monday, Sept. through June, 1:30-3 pm, except the June meeting which is 1-4 pm. Everyone is welcome. The only requirement is that you have read the book selection for the particular meeting that you attend. Please contact Nancy Kumpf [nkumpf@icloud.com](mailto:nkumpf@icloud.com) or Barb Wallace [barbarawallace666@gmail.com](mailto:barbarawallace666@gmail.com) for more information.

### Book Selections 2026-27

Sept. 21: Shelley Read (2023) Go as a River

Oct. 19: Kazuo Ishiguro (2005) Never Let Me Go

Nov. 16: Emma Donoghue (2015) The Paris Express

Dec. 21: Alan Doyle (2025) The Smiling Land: All Around the Circle in My NFL and Labrador

Jan. 18: Percival Everett (2024) James

Feb. 15: Elinor Florence (2025) Finding Flora

Mar.15: Amor Towles (2011) The Rules of Civility

Apr.19: Karen Armstrong (2022) Sacred Nature: Restoring Our Ancient Bond with the Natural World

May.17: Logan Paylor (2024) The Cure for Drowning

June 21: Pot Luck Lunch and Book Choosing for next year

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## Community Building and Fundraising: How do we Dismantle Barriers to Inclusion

By Gail Rappolt, Fundraising/Festival Lead

Among other things, the 8th Principle of our “UU Purposes and Principles” calls us to dismantle systematic barriers to full inclusion in the life of our Church. One of many questions which flows from this principle is: How do we fundraise in a way that is equitable and that makes all feel seen, welcomed, and included? As Fundraising/Festival Lead, this is a question with which I am grappling. And it is a question that I encourage all of us to consider.

In the fall of 2024, at Rev. Danie’s suggestion, I joined “Stewardship 4 Us”, a small Unitarian Universalist group tasked with revising the UUA Giving Guide for congregations in Canada and the US. The result was a new guide that our Canvass Team adapted for use by our congregation for the 2026 canvass. The most powerful learning for me during that work was the following answer to my question, **“How do I talk to my congregation about money without upsetting some people?”**

- You can’t, but you are asking the wrong question.
- People’s sensitivity about money is so ingrained and deeply rooted that you are bound to trigger some congregants.
- Here is the question your congregational leaders might better be asking...
  - “How can we change the culture and conversations about money in our faith community?”

Over the past 18 months our minister, Board, Finance Committee, and Canvass Team have worked to answer this larger question for themselves and with the congregation.

The Dismantling Barriers Team has addressed the issue from their perspective as well. The president, treasurer, and canvass chair shared how the operating budget reflected the church mission and strategic goals. Planning and budget information has been shared earlier in the year, and in different formats, to get input and response. The updated Giving Guide incorporated the 8th Principle by providing a more equitable approach to pledging. At a recent budget meeting the question was asked “How is the 8th Principle incorporated into budget discussions?”

I extend that question further to **“How it is reflected in fundraising and community building?”**

Questions and considerations for fundraising and community building that flow from this include:

- If we price events or activities to raise funds at fair market value, we exclude some congregants.
- If we price events to be accessible, we don’t generate the revenue expected in the budget.
- Are we holding this event for community building or are we holding this event for fundraising?
- Can we do community building and fundraising in the same event?

When we share event revenue with one of our Social Justice partners, it encourages those outside our congregation to support the event. When we share revenue with outside partners, some congregants give less because they only want their church donations to go to the church.

## Community Building and Fundraising: How do we Dismantle Barriers to Inclusion

Monica Bennett, co-lead of the Dismantling Barriers Team, offers these thoughts: "Seeing our 8th Principle in action includes open conversations about how to be radically inclusive at all levels of our congregation – including our finances and fundraising."

"Reflecting on the following ideas can help us engage in these conversations:

- a myriad of experiences lie beneath how each of us thinks, feels, talks, and acts about money.
- we are all impacted by money in diverse ways at various times.
- one's class impacts one's perspective on and values around money.
- there is no "right" way to think, feel, talk, or act about money.
- differing ideas and mindsets about money can create barriers between people and within our congregation."

There are no simple or easy answers to any of the questions posed here but conversations around them will bring us closer to answers.

I am grateful to members of the Board, Finance, Canvass, and Dismantling Barriers for their editing and input to this article. As I work with volunteers and staff to consider events and fundraising activities for fall 2026 and 2027, I welcome ideas from and conversations with each of you.

Just send a note to [fundraising@uuhamilton.ca](mailto:fundraising@uuhamilton.ca) and let's chat!

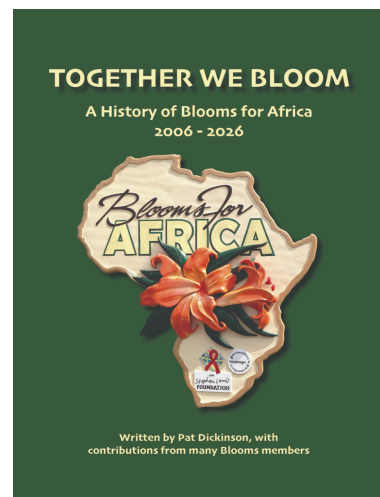
Warmly,  
Gail

### Blooms for Africa

## Together We Bloom: A History of Blooms for Africa 2006-2026

A book detailing the history of this amazing group of women has been written as part of their 20th anniversary celebration. All publishing and printing costs have been donated so that the entire proceeds from the sale of this book (\$25) will go to the Stephen Lewis Foundation Grandmothers Campaign.

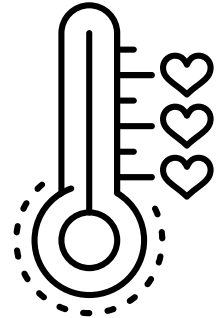
Contact Pat Dickinson  
[leonepd@hotmail.com](mailto:leonepd@hotmail.com) to obtain a copy.



# Climate Action

## Garden Scavenger Hunt & Summer Challenge

Pick up your copy of the Garden Scavenger Hunt and Summer Challenge from the foyer! Can you find all the items in the scavenger hunts? Check off all the challenges you were able to accomplish and bring your total list into the church at the end of the summer. We'll tally everyone's numbers together and see how many our community can do!



Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Our Summer Challenge – check all that apply Total # \_\_\_\_\_

I eliminate or reduce car emissions by	
<input type="checkbox"/> Using public transit	<input type="checkbox"/> Biking
<input type="checkbox"/> Walking	<input type="checkbox"/> Driving an electric/hybrid vehicle
<input type="checkbox"/> Carpooling	<input type="checkbox"/> Not idling my vehicle
<input type="checkbox"/> Planning my route ahead of time	
I help nature thrive by	
<input type="checkbox"/> Wildlife/pollinator friendly gardening	<input type="checkbox"/> Planting trees
<input type="checkbox"/> Removing invasive plants	<input type="checkbox"/> Cleaning up litter
<input type="checkbox"/> Adopting bird-friendly actions (cats indoors, window markers, feeding birds, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/> Advocating for the protection of nature
<input type="checkbox"/> Participating in citizen science (bird counts, monitoring)	
I conserve or reduce energy consumption by	
<input type="checkbox"/> Using energy efficient appliances	<input type="checkbox"/> Using LED lighting
<input type="checkbox"/> Cooling/heating with an electric pump	<input type="checkbox"/> Air drying my laundry
<input type="checkbox"/> Conserving energy (light timers, insulation, window sealing, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/> Washing laundry in cold water
	<input type="checkbox"/> Reducing AC & heating use
I reduce or eliminate waste by	
<input type="checkbox"/> Repurposing items	<input type="checkbox"/> Repairing items
<input type="checkbox"/> Reducing food waste	<input type="checkbox"/> Recycling
<input type="checkbox"/> Composting	<input type="checkbox"/> Donating unwanted items
<input type="checkbox"/> Avoiding plastic (buying in bulk, plastic-free packaging, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/> Using reusable items (bags, straws, bottles, etc.)
Lifestyle and leadership	
<input type="checkbox"/> I buy second-hand items/clothing	<input type="checkbox"/> I primarily enjoy a plant dominant diet
<input type="checkbox"/> I vote for climate action leaders at the polls	<input type="checkbox"/> Gifting experiences instead of things
<input type="checkbox"/> I support Indigenous-led leadership events and initiatives	<input type="checkbox"/> I replaced my lawn with drought tolerant plants/ground cover
<input type="checkbox"/> I make an effort to shop locally	<input type="checkbox"/> I grow some food (produce, fruit)
<input type="checkbox"/> I conserve water in various ways such as brief showers and fewer baths, not running faucets, etc.	<input type="checkbox"/> Using natural cleaning/hygiene products
<input type="checkbox"/> I have limited paved surfaces on my property, and various permeable surfaces	<input type="checkbox"/> Using natural ingredient cosmetics/hygiene products
<input type="checkbox"/> Volunteering for or donating to an environmental organization	

Would you like us to send Climate Action articles directly to your email?

Send your request to  
[climate@uuhamilton.ca](mailto:climate@uuhamilton.ca)



# Climate Action

## The future of Climate Action

Watch this timely conversation between Canadian-born climate scientist Katharine Hayhoe and Jonathan Foley of Project Drawdown.



## Where does climate action go from here?

Watch the recording of our recent Drawdown Ignite webinar featuring a conversation with Dr. Katharine Hayhoe.

From attacks on climate science by the current administration to the faltering of international climate negotiations and the rise of disinformation, the past few years have presented unprecedented challenges for everyone working on advancing science-based climate solutions.

Watch and listen as Katharine and Jon explore what it takes to connect across differences, how to communicate climate science with accuracy

and empathy, and where in the world to look for meaningful action.

Their conversation unpacks many common misconceptions about climate solutions. Plus they discuss why breaking the “climate silence” and imagining a better future is so essential, and why and how we talk about climate change may matter just as much as the science itself. After watching and listening to this conversation between two of the titans in the world of climate science and solutions, you’ll come away equipped and inspired with new insights into how to catalyze change.

# Affordable Housing

## Solving the housing crisis in three do-able steps

by Bill Johnston

Solving the housing crisis in three do-able steps

We can solve our housing crisis. It's as easy (conceptually) as 1, 2,3. We need:

1. Robust rent control and other measures to protect tenants' rights.
2. Measures to save existing affordable units and build many times more new ones.
3. Policies to redirect private investment so it expands the stock of affordable rental housing or creates jobs, rather than making the housing crisis worse.

Let's look at each.

### **1 Robust rent control**

Today, rent controls are so weak that landlords can legally raise rents by any amount when a tenancy ends. That gives landlords a powerful incentive to get long-term tenants with affordable rents to leave so they can raise rents. The result is insecurity for all tenants and rents that have risen much faster than incomes. Rent control must apply to ALL units, including vacant ones, and there must be mandatory registries of all rental units so tenants can verify what previous tenants paid to prevent rent gouging.

### **2 Measures to save existing affordable units and to build many new ones**

We also need laws requiring that when existing rental housing is demolished, or renovated, every affordable unit is replaced, and every tenant forced to move out can move back in at the old rent plus inflation. Landlords must cover moving costs and any extra rental costs during renovations or rebuilding.

Federal investments saved 146 units of affordable housing and turned this old MacNab North building into one of Canada's greenest highrises.

Federal and provincial governments need to invest in keeping existing non-profit, co-operative and Indigenous housing units in good shape and affordable.

Federal and provincial governments need to invest to allow non-profits and co-ops to acquire and refurbish existing for-profit rental buildings that still offer affordable or nearly affordable rents, to keep them permanently affordable.

And the senior governments need to dramatically increase investments in new non-profit, public, co-operative and Indigenous housing. We need four times as many units of this type of housing as we have now.

# Affordable Housing

## Solving the housing crisis in three do-able steps

### 3 Policies to redirect private investment

Canadian private investors overinvest in housing and mortgages, compared to many other countries, reducing investment in new businesses that make our economy more productive and create jobs. Second, a lot of that private-sector housing investment goes into gentrifying neighbourhoods and buying up existing rental buildings where the buyers push out existing tenants and bring in new ones at higher rents. In addition to the rent controls mentioned above, we need policies to steer that money into new builds of the type, size and location that meet public needs and into other more productive activities.

### 4 Political will

A fourth thing is needed, of course—political will to do these things. Politicians tend to respond to public pressure. That's why your Affordable Housing Team focuses on educating and advocating, with others, to build momentum for these policy changes that give top priority to ensuring that moderate and low-income people have suitable, quality housing that's affordable.



Federal investments saved 146 units of affordable housing and turned this old MacNab North building into one of Canada's greenest highrises.



For more information about the work of the Affordable Housing Social Justice Team, visit the [Social Justice - Affordable Housing](#) page of our website.

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## Denomination Connection

CUC Blog:

### Unicamp: A Place that Helps People Become Themselves

BRIGITTE TWOMEY

Some places shape your life so deeply that it becomes difficult to imagine who you would have been without them. For Lauren McKinley Renzetti, that place is Unicamp.

She first arrived there in 1984 as a 14-year-old participating in the EAGLETS program, searching for something she couldn't quite name — a spiritual practice, a sense of belonging, a place where she felt fully herself. What she found at Unicamp was not just a camp, but a community that immediately felt like home.

More than forty years later, she can still say that feeling has never left.

One of the most remarkable things about Unicamp is that it creates space for people to discover who they are. Especially for young people, it offers freedom to explore identity, creativity, spirituality, and community in a setting rooted in acceptance and care.

The Unitarian Universalist values that guide camp life are not just discussed — they are lived. At Unicamp, children, teens, young adults, parents, and elders all share space naturally and joyfully. It is one of the few places where intergenerational friendships flourish so easily.

Many of the relationships formed there become chosen family, relationships built over years of shared meals, campfires, laughter, and showing up for one another.

People gather there because they want to be together.

Over the years, Unicamp became far more than a summer destination. It became a place of learning, growth, and transformation.

Every job McKinley Renzetti held there taught her something that shaped the rest of her life. She learned maintenance, childcare, cooking, kitchen management, art instruction, and operations.

Eventually, as camp director, she learned leadership, organization, volunteer coordination, and how to support large groups of people working together toward a common purpose.

Unicamp gave her practical skills, but more importantly, it gave her confidence, resilience, and community.

#### **Why Community Matters More Than Ever**

In today's world, intentional community feels increasingly rare and increasingly necessary.

## Denomination Connection

### Unicamp: A Place that Helps People Become Themselves

So much of modern life is built around geography and obligation — where we live, where we work, where we go to school. While those spaces matter, they are not always places where we feel deeply known or connected.

Unicamp is different.

It exists outside the rush of everyday life. It is immersed in nature. It encourages people to unplug, slow down, and interact face-to-face. Conversations happen around campfires, at shared meals, during swims in the pond, or while walking through the trees.

There is time to simply be together.

Post-pandemic, many people are realizing how much we need spaces like this. After years of distance and screens, places where people can simply sit together around a fire, eat together, and talk without rushing can feel surprisingly rare.

#### **Challenges That Strengthened the Community**

Like any long-standing community, Unicamp has faced its share of challenges.

There have been storms that brought down trees, infrastructure problems, fundraising struggles, and years spent fighting to secure ownership of the land itself. One of the biggest battles came in 2012 with the proposed mega quarry that threatened the land surrounding camp.

What stands out to McKinley Renzetti most about that time is how powerfully the community responded.

People of all ages became involved — writing letters, attending rallies, calling MPs, marching in protest, organizing gatherings, and supporting one another through years of advocacy. It was Unitarian Universalist social justice in action, and ultimately, the campaign succeeded.

Even during difficult moments, the spirit of Unicamp remained unchanged.

There was still a Saturday night dance. Still a Sunday service. Still music around the fire, shared meals, and long conversations under the stars.

That continuity matters. It reminds people that community can endure through change.

#### **Chosen Family**

For McKinley Renzetti, Unicamp and her UU congregation have become chosen family.

She has few living relatives, and while extended family relationships remain important, the people she's met through Unicamp and Neighbourhood have been the ones who consistently walked beside her through the seasons of life.

They celebrated milestones, supported hardships, nurtured creativity, and helped shape her children's formative years.

That kind of belonging is not accidental. It is built slowly, over years of shared meals, campfires, conversations, volunteer work, music, art, laughter, and care.