

*The Unitarian Universalist
Church of Olinda*
www.uuolinda.org



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Welcome to the Unitarian Universalist Church of Olinda!

Since its founding as a Universalist Church in 1880, UU Olinda has been an intentionally welcoming community, seeking to accept you as you are, honouring who you are, respecting who you love, and celebrating your presence with us in this space.

Our Universalist heritage manifests itself in an ongoing commitment to proclaim the good news that faith, hope, and love are accessible to all humanity – unconditionally. This approach has its roots in a theological view that historically has been called universal salvation. Today, we usually regard this as a call to affirm and promote the inherent worth and dignity of all – to practice radical inclusivity.

We seek to practice our faith through agreements we make on how we relate to each other: a covenant. We hold a diversity of beliefs and do not require adherence to a specific creed. Among us are people who refer to their experience of the sacred as God, while others prefer to celebrate the human spirit, and they may identify as humanist, atheist, or agnostic. Our covenant to pursue a free and responsible search for truth and meaning brings us all together.

Another tradition, that of Unitarians, holds many similar perspectives, and in 1961, the two merged as Unitarian Universalists. The differences of the two traditions tended to be mainly cultural, with Universalists often coming from rural backgrounds while Unitarians were more often urban. In our church this diversity continues to exist, as people join us from Windsor and from throughout Essex County and beyond.

In the early morning of July 11, 2023, our much loved and respected settled minister, the Reverend Rodrigo Emilo Soleno-Quesnel was killed in an automobile collision. While the community seeks to recover from this tragedy and move forward in the example set by “Rev. Rod”, we have also begun the search for a new minister. We recognize that there are many in our congregation who serve this church and its mission, be it in decision making on the Board, assisting in worship services, helping in our children’s spiritual formation, visiting members who seek company, offering hospitality by making coffee and sharing refreshments, or other involvement. However, you might wish to contribute to the life of the congregation, it all starts with your desire to be here!

We are grateful that your search has brought you here, and we invite you to continue your exploration with us!

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "William E. Baylis". The signature is written in a cursive style.

William E. (Bill) Baylis, Board president

*A haven of religious freedom, offering fellowship, knowledge, and inspiration to all
who would seek truth, live responsibly and courageously, and be of service to humanity.*

Unitarian Universalist Church of Olinda

We are a liberal UU church founded here on November 10, 1880, as a Universalist Church; the sanctuary dates from 1881. More about the history of this church has been included on a subsequent page.

Our Statement of Purpose

This church was founded on the faith that love is a more positive force for good than fear. It exists as a haven of religious freedom, offering fellowship, knowledge, and inspiration to all who would seek truth, live responsibly and courageously, and be of service to humanity.

C.U.C. Principles & Sources

(Updated 2021)

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 and in society at large;

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 part.

Individual and communal action that accountably dismantles racism and systemic barriers to full inclusion in ourselves and our institutions.

The living tradition 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 openness to the forces which create and uphold life;

Words and deeds of prophetic women and men which challenges 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 the idolatries of the mind and spirit;
Spiritual teachings of Earth-centered traditions which celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature.'

History of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Olinda

In 1881 Olinda was a little hamlet served by a general store, a post office, a school, a Methodist church and a blacksmith shop. The scene was to change that year, with the building of a new church by a congregation calling itself Universalist. It was a different kind of church in that it rejected the doctrine of eternal punishment. For Universalists, God was the loving father of all, no more capable of inflicting endless torment on any of his children than a human father would be. This meant that all would ultimately be saved; salvation was universal.

Although it was a Christian church, in more orthodox religious circles, Universalism was seen as a threat to public morality. Without fear of hell-fire to keep them in line, the reasoning went- human beings would surely yield to their inborn sinful nature and sink into hopeless depravity. Universalists rejected this pessimistic view of human nature, convinced that love was more effective than fear in making people good.

The man responsible for bringing this radical idea to Olinda was Michael "Big Mike" Fox, a local settler of upright character and kindly instincts. He had been given his nickname by the local Chippewa, with whom he felt a human kinship that was rare in that day. About 1840 he had given them a small plot of land to use as a burial site. This tiny cemetery, marked by a single stone can still be seen today on Con. 4 E. (also known as Cty. Rd. 18) just west of Cty. Rd. 34.

About 1860 Universalist literature had come into Mr. Fox's hands, and he had immediately recognized its message as one that accorded with his natural instincts. For twenty years he circulated literature and arranged for itinerant ministers to conduct occasional services, which were held in the maple grove just south of where the church now stands, or in winter, in the local schoolhouse. The message of a loving rather than vengeful God found favour with many of his relatives and neighbours, who had no taste for the lurid descriptions of hell-fire so prevalent in that day.

Finally, on November 10, 1880, 14 men and 9 women met to organize the church and establish the First Universalist Parish of Olinda. Once a month a minister came from Michigan (by ferry to Windsor, train to Essex, and horse-drawn buggy to Olinda) to conduct two mid-week services. The following year, on land donated by Mr. Fox, a church was erected for \$1950. Today that building holds the distinction of being the oldest church in Canada built by a Unitarian or Universalist congregation, and still in use as a UU church. This distinction has been recognized by the Province of Ontario in the form of an Historic Plaque erected outside the church.

In 1881 there were five other Universalist churches in the province (in Bloomfield, Smithfield, Port Dover, Nixon, and Blenheim), all members of the Universalist Convention of Ontario. The little churches were handicapped from the beginning by scattered membership, money problems, long periods without ministers,

and sectarian bigotry. At the time of the building of the Olinda church one scornful skeptic predicted that he would live to see it used as a sheep-pen. Universalism's heretical doctrine and its scandalous practice of ordaining women made it a tempting target. As late as 1921, at Olinda, the validity of a marriage was challenged because one of the officiating ministers had been a woman. Only two of the six Ontario churches survived into the Twentieth Century. Blenheim closed in 1938. After that, Olinda remained one of only three Universalist churches in all of Canada (the other two being in Halifax and North Hatley, Quebec.)

After World War One, the parsonage was built at Olinda. For the next twenty years the church was to play a unique role as a social centre for the community. The young people's organization held dances that were popular for miles around with young people of all religious persuasions. They also staged ambitious plays in the church and in theatres in neighbouring towns. The sturdy hooks still embedded in the front walls of the sanctuary date from the period. They anchored wires from which hung the stage curtains and smaller curtains across the corners which provided tiny dressing rooms. These activities were profitable, and contributed substantially to church finances. One durable legacy from the period is the cutlery used today for our potluck meals.

A women's organization was formed about 1914, and since that time has been a source of invaluable support to the church. As well as equipping, furnishing, and decorating the parsonage, it also contributed in earlier years to operating expenses and capital improvements. This support was all-important through the depression in the Thirties. In 1938, the money contributed by the Women's Association exceeded the amount received in congregational offerings. For many years after that, with the association reduced in numbers, they continued to raise money at its annual rummage and bake sales, to fund the coffee hour and make improvements to the church. For a few years the Women's Association organized the sale of baked goods and crafts at a booth hosted by the UU Church of Olinda at the Ruthven Apple Festival, where most of the proceeds benefitted the Community Living Program of Essex. The Women's Association is no longer operating due to the very small number of women able to participate in the function at that time. However, in recent years, an annual Goods and Services Auction is held in the Spring which has successfully raised money every year for special purposes, such as capital improvements to the building.

After the Second World War, social change began to take its toll. Families were smaller and many of the younger generation of traditional Universalist families were leaving the farm for schooling and employment. Young people frequently married non-Universalists, and more often than not, gravitated to the larger church of their spouse. However, two 12-year long ministries gave the church beneficial periods of stability and continuity. Stewart Moore came in 1951, and Leonard Thompson in 1965. The Unitarian Universalist merger in 1961 (for which the congregation had voted 19-2), and the creation of the Canadian Unitarian Council ended the church's isolation, and Olinda gradually joined the denominational mainstream. The church's name was changed to reflect the fact of the merger. The traditional Universalist message was interpreted more broadly, to embrace all shades of belief and unbelief. It was a sign of growing confidence that many building improvements were carried out.

In 1966 the church made history and headlines when some members protested to the township school board about the fundamentalist religious indoctrination being carried on in the local elementary schools. It was a harrowing experience because of the local hostility stirred up, and a frustrating one because it appeared at the time to have been in vain. It was therefore a source of satisfaction to the veterans of this affair when the Ontario Court of Appeal, 24 years later, declared religious indoctrination in the public schools to be unconstitutional and it was discontinued.

Olinda saw a gradual but steady progress under the leadership of Conrad Dippel (1978-1981, 1992-1993), Martha Musson (1982-1987) and Maureen Thitchener (1988-91). Conrad Dippel introduced Coffee Hour, an

enormously popular innovation, as it is elsewhere in the denomination, and a monthly newsletter. His sermons were widely admired as being intellectual and relevant and brought several new members to the church. Martha helped the church to develop much needed Bylaws and improve its organizational structure. She successfully continued Conrad's efforts to reach out, especially to Windsor. She also got the church to think about moving the minister's residence out of the church parsonage. This did not happen, however, until Maureen arrived at the church. Her ministry was comparatively short, but she made the church more visible in the county due to her active membership on several boards. She initiated the Windsor luncheons and helped to solidify the church's presence in the community.

Anne Treadwell's ministry (1993-1998) was marked by a significant growth in numbers by appealing to segments of the community which had not been part of the traditional make-up of the church. Once she departed, some of the newer members resigned to form a fellowship in Windsor in which to engage in kinds of social action that are perhaps more appropriate for an urban church.

Rev. Christine Hillman served the church faithfully for 14 years from 2001 until her death in August 2015, making her Olinda's longest serving minister. She was a member of the Canadian Unitarian Council Board of Trustees and the Leamington District Memorial Hospital Pastoral Committee. She started the church's Social Responsibility Committee and led the congregation through the steps in becoming a Welcoming Congregation. Christine also started the custom of holding teas with the minister on a monthly basis. The hymnal called *Singing the Journey* was introduced by Christine and she was instrumental in getting the church choir involved in the Detroit Churches Mass Choirs every other year.

During the one-year period without a minister, services were well attended, programs continued as before and the experience the church had garnered during several interregnums has been put to good use. In September 2016, our new interim minister, Reverend Fran Dearman arrived at Olinda. She came to us from Victoria, BC, with a wide base of experience and knowledge to help assist the congregation in its search for a new minister. She remained for 2 years.

Our next settled minister was the **Reverend Rodrigo ("Rod") Emilio Solano-Quesnel**, who came to Olinda in August 2018.

Originally from Mexico City, Rod lived in Canada since the early 90s, and called many places home. Rod's first Canadian home was London, ON, which was followed by Ottawa, where he attended Carleton University, graduating with a Bachelor of Public Affairs and Policy Management (B.PAPM).

It was in Ottawa that Rod found Unitarian Universalism, where he attended the *First Unitarian Congregation of Ottawa*. Following much involvement with its Young Adults group, serving on its Board, and occasionally leading worship, it was here that Rod found his calling to UU ministry.

After going to seminary at the Montreal School of Theology (affiliated with McGill University), and serving as Board Secretary at the *Unitarian Church of Montreal*, Rod made Toronto his next home, serving as Intern Minister at *First Unitarian Congregation of Toronto*. It was in Toronto that Rod found his partner Sarah.

After his internship, Rod and Sarah joined *Neighbourhood Unitarian Universalist Congregation*, which is in Toronto's east end. Neighbourhood UU is the congregation that ordained Rod in 2016.

At this time, Rod found another opportunity to revisit Ottawa, serving for two years as the Half-time Developmental Minister at the *Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Ottawa*, alternating weeks between Toronto and Ottawa, and calling both places home.

As Settled Minister for the ***Unitarian Universalist Church of Olinda***, Rod found a new home in Essex county, living in Leamington, and serving congregants who come from as far as Windsor.

Rod was honoured to share ministry with this historical and vibrant community!

On July 11, 2023, Reverend Rod, to the dismay and shock of many, was killed in a car crash on Highway 401 in Kent County. On July 21, his funeral was held in Leamington with his mentor, Reverend Debra Fault, officiating. Many attended including family from Mexico and Toronto, colleagues, congregants, friends, classmates, and community representatives. His burial was in Graceland Cemetery, across the street from the Unitarian Universalist Church of Olinda. A service of remembrance was subsequently held in both Toronto and Mexico. As we mourn and grieve the loss of our minister, we continue with Sunday Services with guest ministers and speakers and continue with other church activities while we begin the process of seeking our next minister through a Search Committee and process which usually takes a year.

As always, the people of the church are moving forward with hope, tenacity, and optimism for the future.

The Unitarian Universalist Church of Olinda is a happy, warm, and friendly place. It looks forward to providing a dynamic form of liberal religion in the Southwestern Region of Ontario.

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

WHAT DO UNITARIAN UNIVERSALISTS BELIEVE?

We value wisdom and insight from all religions and from other sources. Our beliefs are centred in a way of being, rather than in a closed statement of faith. Unitarian Universalists value individual freedom and responsibility, the use of reason and tolerance of differing views.

Instead of requiring assent to creeds or doctrines, we encourage all members to seek truth freely, according to their own conscience, and to continue to develop their beliefs in the light of new knowledge, growth and experience.

Unitarian Universalists affirm the equal worth and dignity of all human beings, whatever their race, background, or sexual orientation.

ARE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALISTS CHRISTIAN?

Historically, Unitarian Universalists have Christian origins, but individual freedom of belief is vital to our religious approach. If to be a Christian is to attempt to follow the way of living taught by Jesus, then many UUs can be considered Christians. We believe, however, that we should all be free to draw upon religious truth from whatever ancient or modern source that may be found valuable for our individual religious growth. We do not accept that belief in Jesus as Saviour is the only valid form of faith.

DO UNITARIAN UNIVERSALISTS BELIEVE IN GOD?

Our freedom of belief is broad enough to include a belief in God (which can be expressed in a wide range of definitions, from that of ‘personal Being’ to ‘ultimate reality’ as well as humanist, agnostic, and atheist. Some find the term ‘God’ a stumbling block to religious communication and choose to use the word sparingly.

HOW DID THE NAMES ‘UNITARIAN’ AND ‘UNIVERSALIST’ ORIGINATE?

The name ‘Unitarian’ was used during the Protestant Reformation to describe those who believed in the unity of God and dissented from the doctrine of the Trinity. By the year 1600 there were 425 Unitarian churches in

Transylvania (now part of Romania) the area often regarded as the birthplace of the organized Unitarian movement.

The name “Universalist” originally applied to those Christians in the 18th century who rejected the idea of eternal punishment for the many and salvation for the few. They were convinced no loving God would allow anyone to be condemned to Hell. Later, the name came to be associated with inclusiveness of belief, embracing universal religious ideals.

In 1961, the Unitarians and Universalists of North America joined to become the Unitarian Universalist Association. The UUA adopted as its symbol the flaming chalice in two overlapping circles, representing the two traditions.

DO UNITARIAN UNIVERSALISTS BELIEVE IN IMMORTALITY?

Views on immortality vary widely among Unitarian Universalists. Some of us are close to Judaism or Christianity on this matter, others are closer to Eastern religions such as Hinduism and Buddhism. Many of us are agnostic about it, feeling that no one knows what happens after death. Generally speaking, we emphasize the ongoing effect of each person’s life and relationships with other people, rather than the continuation of the individual personality or the “soul”.

HOW ARE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALISTS ORGANIZED?

We are part of an association of autonomous churches and fellowships. No ecclesiastical hierarchy imposes rules and dogma on the individual churches. We make our own decisions about ministers, facilities, programmes, and the by-laws under which we operate. Most UU churches and fellowships in Canada are members of the Canadian Unitarian Council, which is an affiliate member of the Unitarian Universalist Association with headquarters in Boston, Mass. From both of these organizations, we receive assistance in matters as diverse as religious education material, ministerial settlement and worship resources. Our Association has its own book publisher, the highly respected Beacon Press.

WHAT GOES ON IN YOUR SERVICES?

Each congregation is free to develop services which serve its people best. Some services resemble Protestant worship such as that found in the more liberal United Church congregations, while in others there is a marked absence of traditional symbolism and ritual. Many variations of meditation, poetry, music, and other arts may be included along with those at Olinda, the lighting of a flaming chalice, and lively discussions following a talk or sermon.

DO CHILDREN ATTEND UU CHURCH SERVICES OR SUNDAY SCHOOL?

Children are often included in the first part of the service, and then go to their own religious education classes. In addition, family services are sometimes scheduled at appropriate times in the church year, at which time children are encouraged to be present for the entire service, and to participate in various ways. Our Sunday School is now experiencing a pause with plans to resume in the future.

WHAT GOES ON IN A UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST SUNDAY SCHOOL?

Since ours is a faith without fixed or required doctrines, our religious education program are always open to change and development, so that we can offer our children the widest possible range of experiences in living and learning. We provide occasions for them to investigate and clarify their values, while encouraging them to develop self-reliance, moral and ethical decision-making, a sense of belonging to the church and the

community, a worldview that promotes respect for all persons, knowledge of other religions, and a familiarity with the Unitarian Universalist tradition.

We like the words of one of our Unitarian forebearers, William Ellery Channing: “The great end in religious instruction is not to stamp our minds irresistibly on the young, but to stir up their own...so they may discern for themselves what is right and good.” Our Sunday School is now experiencing a pause with plans to resume in the future.

IS THERE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION FOR ADULTS?

We offer a variety of programs for adults, generally centred on philosophical, moral and ethical issues. At Olinda, as elsewhere, we hope that program participants will feel free to question, to probe and to change in the light of new knowledge or new insights. In an open atmosphere of sharing, we learn from each other without condemning different ideas.

HOW CAN I JOIN A UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH?

Membership requirements vary from congregation to congregation, but there are never any doctrinal requirements. It is highly recommended that anyone considering joining a UU church meet with the minister or other church leader to explore whether this is the right place to most fully live out their religious beliefs.

At Olinda, you can become a member (if you are over 16) by indicating that you are in general agreement with our purpose and by signing our membership book. You will be welcomed as a new member during a subsequent service, and when you have been a member for 30 days and have made a ‘contribution of record’ you will be eligible to vote at congregational meetings.

WHAT IS THE OLINDA CHURCH’S PURPOSE?

This church was founded on the faith that love is a more positive force for good than fear.

It exists as a haven of religious freedom- offering fellowship, knowledge, and inspiration to all who would seek truth, live responsibly and courageously, and be of service to humanity.

(adopted as our Statement of Purpose in 1980)

HOW CAN I FIND OUT MORE ABOUT UNITARIAN UNIVERSALISM?

The best way is to attend services and meetings and discuss your interest with members. You will find that most UUs are more than willing to discuss religious matters with you, and that they will listen to you and respect your views. The best way to get to know us better is to come and participate in our church community.

A full statement of the Principles and Purposes of the Unitarian Universalist Association is available on request, as are many pamphlets on aspects of our movement. The church library, and the minister’s study, are further resources for the exploration of Unitarian Universalist history and ideas.

HOW DID UNITARIAN AND UNIVERSALISM DEVELOP IN NORTH AMERICA?

Unitarianism in the United States arose at the time of the American Revolution. In New England, many Congregational churches became Unitarian under the ministries of William Ellery Channing, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Theodore Parker. Joseph Priestly, the discoverer of oxygen, fled persecution in England for his religious beliefs and founded a Unitarian church near Philadelphia.

Unitarians in Canada held services in schools and other places as early as 1832, before they were organized as a legal religious body. The first Canadian Unitarian church was formed in Montreal in 1842. Canadian Unitarians originally came mainly from the British Isles, the U.S. and Iceland.

The first Universalist church in America was organized in 1779 under the leadership of John Murray and drew supporters from several groups, including Moravians, Quakers, and liberal Baptists. Hosea Ballou was an influential theologian of early Universalism. His motto, "If religion cannot be put into practice, have none of it," still guides many Unitarian Universalists today. Another pioneer was Olympia Brown, the first woman minister in America to be ordained with full denominational sanction, in 1863.

Universalism was originally brought to Canada by itinerant preachers and immigrants from the United States. The first Universalist preacher in Canada was Christopher Huntington, who settled in Quebec's Eastern townships in 1804, and the first woman preacher was Mary Ann Church, in Merrickville in the 1830's.

This church, the Unitarian Universalist Church of Olinda, was founded in 1880 by 14 men and 9 women who opposed the concept of hell for the many and heaven for the elect few. The present building was erected in 1881, with additional rooms built as a parsonage in 1918. It is the only church in Ontario (and the oldest in Canada) built for Universalist worship and still used for that purpose today, and has been recognized by the Ontario Heritage Foundation as having historic significance.

WHAT DO UNITARIAN UNIVERSALISTS BELIEVE ABOUT THE BIBLE?

We consider the Bible to be a collection of religious, historical, and mythological books written over a period of around a thousand years. While we find many insights and truths in the Bible, most of us believe that other great religions also have valuable scriptures, and that inspired words are still being written today.

WHAT DO UNITARIAN UNIVERSALISTS BELIEVE ABOUT JESUS?

Most of us consider Jesus one of the world's greatest religious teachers and endorse his recorded moral teachings and spiritual insights. We do not think of him as a supernatural saviour or a unique incarnation of God as stated in the doctrine of the Trinity.

IS IT TRUE THAT I CAN BE A UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST WITHOUT BELONGING TO THE CHURCH?

Anyone can have Unitarian Universalist kind of values without being part of a UU community, but it is in becoming part of a congregation where each of our values grow and are challenged so that we become the best we can be and help others at the same time. Not all of us call our communities churches; some are fellowships, societies, or congregations.

CAN I BELIEVE ANYTHING I WANT TO?

Almost anything, but not quite everything. For example, the belief that harming others is okay is not an acceptable notion. Having your own ideas about the great questions of life, like how we got here, why we are here, what happens when we die and why bad things happen to good people, is not only welcome, but encouraged. We are invited to share our ideas- as long as we are willing to listen to other ideas too.

ARE THE PRINCIPLES AND SOURCES OF THE UU FAITH WHAT YOU ALL BELIEVE?

The Principles and Sources are affirmations which bond our congregations across Canada. Many Unitarian Universalists affirm them also, but they aren't the only values Unitarian Universalists affirm and they aren't quite the same as our beliefs in all cases. Each of us develops our own credo (our personal statement of belief) instead of all Unitarian Universalists believing the same thing.

ARE ALL UNITARIAN UNIVERSALISTS HUMANISTS WHO DON'T BELIEVE IN GOD?

There are lots of Religious Humanists in Unitarian Universalist congregations. There are also Christians, Theists, Deists, Pagans, Pantheists, Jews and Buddhists and other ideas or traditions. While we each understand our own way of how things work and what kinds of practices bring wholeness to our lives, we come to this Unitarian Universalist church BECAUSE ideas will be diverse among us. What's most important is gathering in a beloved community to explore, learn, grieve, express joy and celebrate life.

DO I HAVE TO TALK TO SOMEONE BEFORE I CAN COME TO ONE OF YOUR SERVICES? IS THERE ANYTHING SPECIAL I NEED TO KNOW FIRST?

Not at all! Everyone is welcome. You'll be greeted at the door and shown where to hang your hat and where the services are held. Follow along in the Order of Service and anyone will be willing and happy to answer your questions. Just one note, that after church when we have refreshments, it's a good thing to know you'll find a cup for your tea or your coffee in the cabinet beside the dining table in the parsonage. We look forward to seeing you.

GETTING INVOLVED WITH THE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH OF OLINDA

There is always plenty to enjoy doing in our inclusive and ever-expanding community.

The Minister, Lay Chaplain, Board of Trustees, and other Olinda members head and/or participate on committees that support and enrich all facets of church life.

Minister: The minister usually is in the pulpit leading the service 3 out of 4 Sundays in the month, except during the months of July and August. Providing pastoral care and participating on all the church committees keeps the minister very busy, along with engaging in other duties involving denominational affairs. Our current minister is very actively making an effort to get to know all the congregational members and trying to help stimulate growth in the church by reaching out to newcomers and our broader communities.

Lay Chaplain: The role of the chaplain is to perform marriage ceremonies and child dedications and to preside over funerals in the absence of the minister. The congregation elects this person to represent the church to perform these functions if the minister is not able to be present.

Board of Trustees: It is made up of ideally 9 members to fulfill the roles of President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, Finance, Property, Religious Education, Sunday Services and Membership and Publicity. The Board members meet once a month but these members have more business to do on their own and/or with a committee taking several days of hours of their time each month to ensure that the work of the church is getting done with due diligence. The Board members are voted upon by the congregation to serve for up to 5 years, or less if not able to do it for that long.

Trustee Committees

Sunday Services Committee works on obtaining interesting speakers and creating lay led services for Sundays when our minister cannot be present.

Property Committee maintains our church building and grounds and oversees capital improvements.

Finance Committee prepares the budget and keeps the congregation informed of its financial status. It is also in charge of our wonderfully successful Goods and Services Auctions.

The Lloyd Fund Committee is a sub-committee of the Finance Committee, responsible for managing the church's investments.

Membership & Publicity Committee keeps membership records, enables member communication (with the Church Directory and Phone Tree), and advertises church services and special events.

The Committee on Shared Ministry is a committee of the Congregation, reporting to the Board of Trustees. It aims to provide a better ministry for all members and friends of the congregation; by asking for input, listening to the congregation, it develops sensitivity to the expectations of the Congregation and the minister in all areas. It is also responsible for business obligations relating to the minister. The committee consists of at least 3 members plus the minister, each member serving a 3-year term and meets monthly. One member must be a member of the Board and must communicate the activities of the Committee to the Board.

Transitional Team Committee is formed in place of a Committee on Shared Ministry when there is no full-time minister. It assists an interim minister by helping him/her to get settled in the new church and environment. It is available to offer help and support when needed for the limited time the interim minister is engaged.

Other Committees and Initiatives

Caring Committee assists with pastoral care, member visits and communication. It also assists with memorial services and/or the reception afterwards if required.

Monthly Church Newsletter- *The Olinda Outpost*

Our newsletter is an exciting and informative publication with something for everyone. Two to three church members and friends of the church who are on the mailing list and wish to receive a copy. It is emailed to most people but a few copies are placed on the hall table of the church. Reports from the various committees

are submitted when it is deemed important to do so as well as a monthly message from the minister and the President of the Board. The front page provides all the information about the services for the month.

Music Committee provides the music for church services and special events. If you play an instrument or sing well, please join the group. Currently, there are 6 musicians who share this duty. There has been a church choir that occasionally sang at special events and services which may resume in the future.

Social Responsibility Committee: Our liberal faith calls us to have concern for social justice. The Social Responsibility Committee seeks ways in which Olinda can spark community awareness of important local and global issues. They assist in obtaining speakers for Sunday services, hold forums, or circulate petitions and organize an annual International Dinner.

Website: Our website- www.uuolinda.org and Facebook page can be found online. At this time, 2 members maintain the website and another maintains our Facebook page.

Hospitality Committee provides refreshments and nourishment for the congregation during coffee hour following the church service and assists in other special events. Let a committee member know if you are willing to help.

Religious Education Committee at present an Ad Hoc Committee and under review to prepare for the future. We aspire to deliver religious education program to young people, but with small numbers and irregular attendance of children make this difficult. We aim for as many sermons and services as possible to be child friendly, and sometimes include a Story for all Ages component near the beginning of the service.

Ad hoc committees, made up of different members from established committees and other church members and friends, often help to organize church activities and events.

If you have a talent, don't hide it...share it. We try to maintain an inclusive people-positive space and encourage all to participate. If you wish to get involved or have a new and exciting idea but not know where to start, contact the Membership Director to help direct you. Anyone in the congregation can also help guide you at any time.

Unitarian Universalist Church of Olinda

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Minister: While we are between ministers and seek our next minister, you can contact:

President: Bill Baylis: baylis@uwindor.ca or (519)738-2118 or Cell phone 519-980-2431

Chaplain: Sue Markham: worthysole4u@hotmail.com or (226)350-2879

Membership Chair: Toni Janik: djanik1@cogeco.ca or (519)966-6434

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Unitarian Universalist Origins

Our Historic Faith

Mark W. Harris

Unitarians and Universalists have always been heretics. We are heretics because we want to choose our faith, not because we desire to be rebellious. “Heresy” in Greek means “choice.” During the first three centuries of the Christian church, believers could choose from a variety of tenets about Jesus. Among these was a belief that Jesus was an entity sent by God on a divine mission. Thus, the word “Unitarian” developed, meaning the oneness of God. Another religious choice in the first three centuries of the Common Era (CE) was universal salvation. This was the belief that no person would be condemned by God to eternal damnation in a fiery pit. Thus, a Universalist believed that all people will be saved. Christianity lost its element of choice in 325 CE when the Nicene Creed established the Trinity as dogma. For centuries thereafter, people who professed Unitarian or Universalist beliefs were persecuted.

This was true until the sixteenth century when the Protestant Reformation took hold in the remote mountains of Transylvania in eastern Europe. Here the first edict of religious toleration in history was declared in 1568 during the reign of the first and only Unitarian king, John Sigismund. Sigismund’s court preacher, Frances David, had successively converted from Catholicism to Lutheranism to Calvinism and finally to Unitarianism because he could find no biblical basis for the doctrine of the Trinity. Arguing that people should be allowed to choose among these faiths, he said, “We need not think alike to love alike.”

In sixteenth-century Transylvania, Unitarian congregations were established for the first time in history. These churches continue to preach the Unitarian message in present-day Romania. Like their heretic forebears from ancient times, these liberals could not see how the deification of a human being or the simple recitation of creeds could help them to live better lives. They said that we must follow Jesus, not worship him.

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Unitarianism appeared briefly in scattered locations. A Unitarian community in Rakow, Poland, flourished for a time, and a book called *On the Errors of the Trinity* by a Spaniard, Michael Servetus, was circulated throughout Europe. But persecution frequently followed these believers. The Polish Unitarians were completely suppressed, and Michael Servetus was burned at the stake.

Even where the harassment was not so extreme, people still opposed the idea of choice in matters of religious faith. In 1791, scientist and Unitarian minister Joseph Priestley had his laboratory burned and was hounded out of England. He fled to America where he established American Unitarian churches in the Philadelphia area.

Despite these European connections, Unitarianism as we know it in North America is not a foreign import. In fact, the origins of our faith began with some of the most historic congregations in Puritan New England where each town was required to establish a congregationally independent church that followed Calvinist doctrines. Initially these congregational churches offered no religious choice for their parishioners, but over time the strict doctrines of original sin and predestination began to mellow.

By the mid-1700s a group of evangelicals were calling for the revival of Puritan orthodoxy. They asserted their belief in humanity's eternal bondage to sin. People who opposed the revival, believing in free human will and the loving benevolence of God, eventually became Unitarian. During the first four decades of the nineteenth century, hundreds of these original congregational churches fought over ideas about sin and salvation, and especially over the doctrine of the Trinity. Most of the churches split over these issues. In 1819, Unitarian minister William Ellery Channing delivered a sermon called "Unitarian Christianity" and helped to give the Unitarians a strong platform. Six years later the American Unitarian Association was organized in Boston, Massachusetts.

Universalism developed in America in at least three distinct geographical locations. The earliest preachers of the gospel of universal salvation appeared in what were later the Middle Atlantic and Southern states. By 1781, Elhanan Winchester had organized a Philadelphia congregation of Universal Baptists. among its members was Benjamin Rush, the famous physician and signer of the Declaration of Independence.

At about the same time, in the rural, interior sections of New England, a small number of itinerant preachers, among them Caleb Rich, began to disbelieve the strict Calvinist doctrines of eternal punishment. They discovered from their biblical studies the new revelation of God's loving redemption of all. John Murray, an English preacher who immigrated in 1770, helped lead the first Universalist church in Gloucester, Massachusetts, in the battle to separate church and state.

From its beginnings, Universalism challenged its members to reach out and embrace people whom society often marginalized. The Gloucester church included a freed slave among its charter members, and the Universalists became the first denomination to ordain women to the ministry, beginning in 1863 with Olympia Brown.

Universalism was a more evangelical faith than Unitarianism. After officially organizing in 1793, the Universalists spread their faith across the eastern United States and Canada. Hosea Ballou became the denomination's greatest leader during the nineteenth century, and he and his followers, including Nathaniel Stacy, led the way in spreading their faith.

Other preachers followed the advice of Universalist publisher Horace Greeley and went West. One such person was Thomas Starr King, who is credited with defining the difference between Unitarians and Universalists: "Universalists believe that God is too good to damn people, and the Unitarians believe that people are too good to be damned by God." The Universalists believed in a God who embraced everyone, and this eventually became central to their belief that lasting truth is found in all religions, and that dignity and worth is innate to all people regardless of sex, colour, race, or class.

Growing out of this inclusive theology was a lasting impetus in both denominations to create a more just society. Both Unitarians and Universalists became active participants in many social justice movements in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Unitarian preacher Theodore Parker was a prominent abolitionist, defending fugitive slaves and offering support to American abolitionist John Brown.

Other reformers included Universalists such as Charles Spear who called for prison reform, and Clara Barton who went from Civil War "angel of the battlefield" to become the founder of the American Red Cross. Unitarians such as Dorothea Dix fought to "break the chains" of people incarcerated in mental hospitals, and Samuel Gridley Howe started schools for the blind. For the last two centuries, Unitarians and Universalists have been at the forefront of movements working to free people from whatever bonds may oppress them.

Two thousand years ago liberals were persecuted for seeking the freedom to make religious choices, but such freedom has become central to both Unitarianism and Universalism. As early as the 1830s, both groups were studying and promulgating texts from world religions other than Christianity. By the beginning of the twentieth century, humanists within both traditions advocated that people could be religious without believing in God. No one person, no one religion, can embrace all religious truths.

By the middle of the twentieth century it became clear that Unitarians and Universalists could have a stronger liberal religious voice if they merged their efforts, and they did so in 1961, forming the Unitarian Universalist Association. Many Unitarian Universalists became active in the civil rights movement. James Reeb, a Unitarian Universalist minister, was murdered in Selma, Alabama, after he and twenty percent of the denomination's ministers responded to Martin Luther King, Jr.'s call to march for justice.

Today we are determined to continue to work for greater racial and cultural diversity. In 1977, a women and religion resolution was passed by the Association, and since then the denomination has responded to the feminist challenge to change sexist structures and language, especially with the publication of an inclusive hymnal. The denomination has affirmed the rights of bisexuals, gays, lesbians, and transgendered persons, including ordaining and settling gay and lesbian clergy in our congregations, and in 1996, affirmed same-sex marriage.

All these efforts reflect a modern understanding of universal salvation. Unitarian Universalism welcomes all to an expanding circle of understanding and choice in religious faith.

Our history has carried us from liberal Christian views about Jesus and human nature to a rich pluralism that includes theist and atheist, agnostic and humanist, pagan, Christian, Jew, and Buddhist. As our history continues to evolve and unfold, we invite you to join us by choosing our free faith.

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For further reading:

Publications written and published by Unitarian Universalist Church of Olinda

A Search for Truth by Louise Foulds: revised and expanded 1999

The Little Church at the Crossroads: The Unitarian Universalist Church of Olinda, a History of the Years 2000 to 2020 by Jane A. Innerd: 2020

Universalists in Ontario by Louise Foulds: revised second edition 2005

We recommend the following books, available from the [UUA Bookstore](https://www.uuabookstore.org/) 1-800-215-9076 or through the web site at: <https://www.uuabookstore.org/>

A Chosen Faith: An Introduction to Unitarian Universalism

Second edition, by John A. Buehrens and Forrest Church
Boston: Beacon Press, 1998.

Universalism in America: A Documentary History of a Liberal Faith

Edited by Ernest Cassara. Boston: Skinner House Books, 1997.

The Larger Faith: A Short History of American Universalism

Charles A. Hose. Boston: Skinner House Books, 1993

Challenge of a Liberal Faith

George N. Marshall. Boston: Skinner House Books, 1988.

The Epic of Unitarianism: Original Writings from the History of Liberal Religion

Compiled by David B. Parke. Boston: Skinner House Books, 1985

The Unitarian Universalist Pocket Guide

Edited by John A. Buehrens. Boston, UUA, 1999.

A Stream of Light: A Short History of American Unitarianism

Edited by Conrad Wright, Boston: Skinner House Books, 1989.

Congregational Polity: A Historical Survey of Unitarian Universalist Practice

Conrad Wright, Boston: Skinner House Books, 1997