



Brian Kiely

CUC Past President

We're in this together – so let's go 4 it!

In this final presidential column, I want to thank my fellow Board members (past and present), the CUC staff and all the delegates and individuals who have supported the CUC over the last six years. Together we have made the CUC into a viable, autonomous organization with great people and a great forward-looking attitude. Whatever lies ahead for me, being part of the new CUC will be a highlight.

Lately, I have stepped back to make room for new CUC leaders. Retiring Board members Christine Johnston and I belong with the past, with leaders like John Slattery, John Hopewell, Kim Turner, Elizabeth Bowen and Mark Morrison-Reed. They dreamed of an autonomous CUC and negotiated with the UUA. Much of my presidency has been devoted to completing that work.

It's time for a new vision, and "the new kids" have it. Building on the work of the Visioning Task Force, Calvin Drake has developed a strategic planning model. It's called *Go 4 It!* It was featured at the Saint John ACM last spring, to be followed by significant stream discussions at the four Regional Gatherings next Fall. It has four points:

- **Go On!** Keep doing – and improving – the good things we have been;
- **Go Deep!** Enhance opportunities for spiritual development and connections;
- **Go Out!** Tell the world our "good news" in a clear and consistent manner; and
- **Go Big!** Look for new growth opportunities by expanding our "target market".

Some of this can start immediately, some will take years to even begin, but I believe this model will give the CUC and our congregations great tools for building our future faith.

Testimony

by Dianne Heise-Bennett

Looking for an authentic way to live and worship

When I was growing up, our family attended the Lutheran church in our village every single Sunday. I learned important things and filled a suitcase with unhelpful things and left that religion when I left home. As a young adult, my spirituality was expressed in paid and volunteer work for various social justice causes.

I encountered religion again in a profound way when I spent six months on an exchange program in Nepal as a young adult. It was blissful to experience Tibetan New Year with dramatic story-telling and singing and circle dancing all night long in the community that I'd become some part of. And I was moved by the authentic way people lived and worshipped as part of daily life. That's when I began to unpack my suitcase of religious baggage and open to new possibilities.

My daughter Samantha, who is now 13, proudly takes full credit for finding a UU home for my husband Ed, our son Ben and herself six years ago. Her Big Questions and insistence that she needed a church too, led us to seek a place. At the first service we attended, I remember crying for joy that such a community existed. And I've grown to cherish this UU faith and community of fascinating people.

As a young person, I named ministry and truck driving as my least likely occupations. But I have spent the last four years as the Director of Religious Education at the First Unitarian Congregation in Waterloo. (Samantha also takes credit for this job having found me.)



It has felt like a calling. The relationships are the best part. It is joyful to work with people in my community, and my family, day by day, creating together a learning and celebrating community of all ages. My favourite times are inter-generational drumming

and singing nights, and worshipping all together with rituals like Solstice and Beltane (including a May pole dance). I believe many of us yearn for ways to be spiritual that connect our bodies too. For many young people, it's the natural place to begin.

Attending EAGLES (Eastern Great Lakes Leadership School) and subsequently serving in a leadership role with the Canadian Unitarian Universalist Leadership (CUUL) School have been amazing experiences in spiritual community. The worship, connecting with other UUs, stretching and sometimes lots of laughing, is wonderful.

Most surprising to me, was returning from EAGLES with a compulsion (no will power needed) to play guitar and discover my own singing meditations. It's become a daily personal practice that nourishes playful spirit. At CUUL School you can grow in your skills and understanding of leadership and maybe something important will happen with your soul.

I am full of gratitude for this UU faith and community for all it brings to the world and to my family, and for helping me find my grounding songs for living. **U**

Dianne recently retired from the DRE role and is enthusiastic about working with youth as a volunteer. cuul@cuc.ca