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Calgary's Pride Rainbow Project, and many Ottawa supporters, demonstrated on Parliament Hill on June 19.

A rainbow goes to Ottawa

Five young Calgary Unitarians took their 500-foot rainbow banner to Ottawa in late June for a rally on Parliament Hill, to pressure the federal government to pass its same-sex marriage legislation before the summer recess. Less than 10 days after their event, the House of Commons approved Bill C-38.

"It's definitely a victory," says Emily Johnson, 16, of Calgary. "It will pass the Senate and become law before the summer is over." The Pride Rainbow Project – five Calgary Unitarian youth who've worked on the banner for the past two years – can rightly claim some credit for that equal rights achievement.

It was a whirlwind of a Father's Day weekend for the Calgary Five, as they became known in Ottawa. They attended a same-sex ceremony of union on Saturday at their home congregation (equal marriage was not yet legal in Alberta), then flew to Ottawa. On Sunday, they paraded their banner in a service at the First

Unitarian Congregation of Ottawa, then quickly scooted over to Parliament Hill.

"It really touched me when we stood in front of the peace tower," says Johnson. "I'd seen it on tv of course, but I'd never been to Ottawa or even Ontario before, so it was a huge thrill."

That night, the Pride Rainbow Project banner was featured on both CBC and CTV national news broadcasts, an amazing achievement.

On Monday, the five were invited to lunch at the parliamentary restaurant with Bill Siksay (the NDP's openly gay critic for human rights). They also met NDP leader Jack Layton, followed by a visit to the public gallery of the House of Commons to watch Question Period. They visited a couple of art galleries, the Ottawa market, and had their photos taken with the "Famous Five" – the bronze statues of the five, early 20th century Alberta women who fought for female suffrage. On Tuesday, they flew home.

• see "What's next?" next page

Third Letter to the Corinthians

BY KEITH WILKINSON

Some people believe
there is a love
that starts small
and grows slowly like a pearl

and another love
that starts large
like a supernova
and slowly diminishes

but I have known a love
that starts without boundaries
grows without boundaries
stays without boundaries

these three –
and the greatest of these
is this love.

Keith Wilkinson is a favourite poet among Vancouver Unitarians. He has served ucw as Treasurer and President, and is now Past-President.

Poetry Contributions

Short, spiritual poems by cuc members are invited. Please send them to poetry editor Franci Louann, floouann@telus.net, or by fax to: 519-846-8995.

2005 ACM REPORT:

See pages 5–11



Mary Bennett

CUC Executive Director

Searching for a new minister is a spiritual quest

Serving on a ministerial search committee was my initiation rite as a Unitarian. I think about that experience now, as nine of our 45 member congregations are in search of new ministers (representing about one quarter of the CUC's total membership).

I'd only been a member for a short time when Rev. Phillip Hewett announced his retirement from the Unitarian Church of Vancouver. I leafed through the three-inch thick binder explaining the ministerial search process, then volunteered to help.

Our committee got good advice, both from the "book" and from the UUA representatives. We were told that we'd start by surveying the congregation, and then put together a "packet" of information about the church. We could then agree to "exchange packets" with potential ministers. Finally, we would choose three or four ministers to meet with us and then would select, ideally unanimously, a candidate to recommend to the congregation.

We were also advised to quit all other church jobs (but join the choir if we wanted), and warned that a high percentage of search committee members leave the church within a few years. We were told we were to keep all information about applicants confidential, even from our partners.

During the next two years I learned a lot about my own church, this religion, and my fellow committee members. Like baptism, I felt not only fully immersed, but frequently over my head!

If your church is looking for a new minister in the coming year, may you keep your promises, struggle with your diversity and enjoy the journey. It's about finding a good match for your congregation, of course, but it's also about your own spiritual and religious growth.

Letters to the Editor

MAGIC INTO THE WORLD

I was interested to read in the latest issue of the Canadian Unitarian that Peter Tiefenbach composed the piece that the Saskatoon Children's Choir will be performing in Hong Kong this summer. Four young members of the Unitarian Congregation of Saskatoon are members of the Saskatoon Children's Choir, one of whom will be performing the piece in Hong Kong. Lots of amazing Unitarians sending their magic into the world!

— Laura McNaughton, Saskatoon

IT TAKES AN AFRICAN VILLAGE

I wanted to make a brief comment about your Lifespan Learning column last issue, in which you quote Hillary Rodham Clinton as saying, "It takes a village to raise a child." It's a small thing, but I think worth noting, that the quote is taken from an African proverb. I'm sure Ms. Clinton would be happy to hear that she has popularized the quote, but perhaps not so happy to take credit for it!

— Heidi Lasi, Ottawa

I DON'T LIKE 'U*U'

I've felt a mounting irritation over the use of "U*U" as shorthand for our Unitarian Universalist name. At first I thought I was simply resisting a new idea and in time I would adjust to the concept. But the more I see it used, the more annoyed I become. Here are some of my objections:

- The asterisk symbol has, for as long as I am aware, been used as a reference, an indication that there is an explanation somewhere in the text, usually at the bottom of the page.
- Using the asterisk, without always adding an explanation, has the overtones of an insider's secret sign. Only those inside the magic circle really know what it means.

Using the asterisk between U and U is faddish, gimmicky, unnecessary, and to me, offensive. If the decision to use it is democratically-decided, then I will try to subdue my irritation and live with the result, but in the absence of that, I object.

— Angela Beale, Ottawa


What's next?

• *continued from front page*

Their Ottawa visit was made possible by a spontaneous collection at the CUC Annual Conference in late May, when delegates felt their initiative should go all the way to the nation's capital.

What's next for the rainbow banner? Emily Johnson believes that many of the Project's original goals have been met with the passage of the equal marriage law. Now she believes they may switch the focus to other pride issues, like transgender rights or AIDS awareness. She also hopes they can attract new, younger members, since some of the original organizers are leaving to attend distant universities.

In other words, the focus will be on organizing and sharing the banner with other groups, rather than trying to make it longer.

The five Calgary youth that created and carried the banner to Ottawa were: Erin James, Sanford Kome-Pond, Cora Bailey, Christine Michell and Emily Johnson. 



Emily Johnson poses with the Ottawa statue of Famous Five suffragette Irene Parlby, who was elected to the Alberta legislature in 1921.