

## Testimony

by Grace Flesher

# It's all about being a good steward of my gifts

**One of the principles** I was taught as child is that we should always be good stewards of all our gifts. My family were loggers in a remote area of the B.C. coast, accessible only by seaplane or boat. A government program allowed us to harvest timber, but we did not own the land we logged, or even the land on which my father built our house. Ours was a small, family business – we cut trees, tended the forest and planted seedlings for the future.

Logging is not an industry traditionally associated with the notion of stewardship. For the large corporations whose practices involve mechanized mass-cutting, or even clear-cutting, that is true. My father and grandfather protected the streams and riverbanks, cut prudently and pioneered reforestation in the province. They considered it a privilege, indeed a gift, to live and work on that land.

The context of my life journey is always framed with the question: Given my resources, my talents, my experiences to date and the opportunities presently before me – how might I be a good steward of all my gifts?

I did not follow in the footsteps of my parents; my interests and abilities are in the area of finance rather than logging and silvaculture. For as long as I can remember, I have felt comfortable talking about money. Economics, budgeting, investing, fundraising and endowments are all subjects I understand and find interesting.

For so many people money is confusing and hard to talk about, a subject shrouded in taboo and myth, so I have always considered my comfort with the whole subject of money as a talent or gift.


I gravitated to a field of employment that reflected my interests – banking. The volunteer hours that I gave to community agencies often involved me in capital or major gift campaigns, sitting



on finance committees, writing budgets, being a treasurer or organizing fundraising events. That service work was my way of being a good steward of the talent/gift.

Unitarian\*Universalism is like the land upon which I was raised; it is a privilege and magnificent gift which I must tend by planting for the future. I must be a good steward of this free faith, nurturing my congregation and my denomination, sharing my resources and abilities.

I believe my work will always be at that place where “people” and “money” intersect. My greatest joy comes when I can help individuals and organizations discover a sense of empowerment about money – fostered by honest and open dialogue and knowledge.

The CUC offers me a wonderful new way to enact my stewardship values, working with U\*U congregations and facilitating that healing dialogue as a CUC service consultant. 

– Grace Flesher attends the London Unitarian Fellowship. She is also a volunteer service consultant for the CUC Central Region, advising congregations on finance and fundraising. Contact: [graceflesher@sympatico.ca](mailto:graceflesher@sympatico.ca).



## Elizabeth Bowen

CUC President

# I've enjoyed serving as a 'pioneer' on the CUC Board

**We are the New Pioneers!** That's the theme of this year's annual conference and meeting. When I first heard about it, I had visions of Red River carts squeaking their way to Edmonton!

Are we really CUC pioneers? I think so. Pioneers prepare the way for those who come after them. Our earliest pioneers founded the CUC in 1961. Our journey had begun.

I've been incredibly fortunate to serve on your board during the last six years of this journey. John Hopewell was CUC President when I was elected to the Board in May 1998. He said at the time that, “the CUC has entered a very critical stage in its development.” He was right!

At the 1999 annual meeting, we decided to become more independent of the UUA. A year later in Calgary, delegates gave our board a mandate to negotiate a new relationship with the UUA. Our board visited every congregation twice over the next two years, to present and get feedback on plans for the reorganization.

In 2001, delegates accepted the negotiated agreement with the UUA. A flurry of activity in the next year led to the plan to transfer responsibility for the delivery of services, from the UUA to an independent CUC. Delegates to the 2002 annual meeting in Kelowna adopted the plan unanimously. There were hugs, joy, tears and laughter following that decision. Within two more years, our staff, board members and volunteers successfully built the new CUC structure.

Our journey continues. As new pioneers, we must share our skills and talents, work together, support one another, and take a few chances as we continue to build the CUC for those who follow us. As my term as CUC President ends, I look back at the exciting journey we shared and thank everyone for their help along the way.