

Welcome to Westwood Unitarian Congregation

*A POCKET GUIDE
for Newcomers and Visitors*



Winter 2008

Westwood Unitarian Congregation
11135 - 65 Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta
T6H 1W3

As You Are

***You are welcome here, visitor, friend or long time member,
You are welcome here.***

***With your family or your partner or lover or alone,
We joyfully welcome you here.***

***You are welcome here as believer
or doubter, as joiner or loner.***

***You are welcome here feeling a part of us or not,
full of energy or plain tired, seeking a vision or a rest.***

You are welcome to join us as you are.

-- Rev. Ray Drennan

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Welcome and Introductions

Westwood's Mission

Westwood Unitarian Congregation is a democratic and inclusive liberal religious community, dedicated to respectfully supporting each other's spiritual quests, nurturing our children and youth as well as the larger community, and working towards social justice.

Westwood is a friendly, participatory congregation of about 80 members and 30 friends. Here you are invited to share your spiritual journey with others who are also searching; sometimes for answers and sometimes for the right questions. You will find theological and spiritual hospitality here.

Our services and activities are creative, vital, musical and drawn from many religious and philosophical traditions. We honour the seasonal celebrations of solstice and equinox.

Westwood is a warm and bright church (capacity 120 people) located in the quiet Parkallen neighborhood south of the University of Alberta campus. In addition to being Westwood congregation's home, the building is used by the community for activities. See the back cover page for rental information.

We invite you on the introductory journey to consider if being a Westwood Unitarian Universalist is what you are seeking.

“Membership does not make you into a Unitarian Universalist by the mere fact of joining; you become one by the slow process of thought and life experience. But it does stand as a symbol of your commitment to a liberal inclusive, reasoned and contemporary approach to life. It strengthens our voice and our work in a world where illiberal forces are powerfully organized. And it brings you into full participation in the life of a richly rewarding fellowship.”

-- Reverend Phillip Hewett

Westwood's Vision

By 2010, Westwood is a thriving, inclusive and diverse religious community, with excellent programming for members and friends of all ages. Its members support one another and reach out to the larger community. It successfully balances bringing Unitarian Universalist ideals, fellowship and social justice to the larger community while maintaining a strong sense of support, friendship and sustainable commitment to its congregation.

Unitarian Universalist Principles

As Unitarian Universalists, we affirm and promote the following principles and sources of our religious faith:

- 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 within 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



Unitarian Universalist Sources

The living tradition which 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 an openness to the forces which create and uphold life;
- words and deeds of prophetic women and men which challenge 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 idolatries of the mind and spirit;
- spiritual teachings of Earth-centred traditions which celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature.

Grateful for the religious pluralism which enriches and ennobles our faith, we are inspired to deepen our understanding and expand our vision. As free congregations we enter into this covenant, promising to one another our mutual trust and support

Shared Ministry

Westwood is deeply committed to ‘*Shared Ministry*’ – where the work and promise of the congregation is balanced between members, friends, staff and professional leadership. Ministry at Westwood is more verb than noun – with the emphasis on how we live out our beliefs and commitments. Learning and growing from the insights, skills, gifts and experiences of all who participate, we aim to honour diverse perspectives and strengthen our understanding of a meaning-filled life.



Westwood's Minister,
Anne Barker

Anne Barker serves Westwood as our professional minister, sharing responsibility for congregational leadership with dedicated lay members. Anne brings a passionate devotion to justice and love, in our context of pluralistic interdependence. Through Sunday worship, groups, meetings and classes – along with pastoral visits, rites of passage and spiritual counseling – Anne works with the community to identify and manifest healthy practices.

Anne speaks at approximately one third of our worship services, the balance of which is provided by members, friends, and invited guests. Strengthening sustaining connections between individuals, groups, and the broader society is her primary focus. You are encouraged to contact her with questions, concerns and ideas. She would be happy to meet with you during office hours or by other arrangement.

The health and well-being of the Westwood community is in good hands – yours! Discerning how you will participate in and support this church's work is both a pragmatic undertaking and a spiritual practice. Serving one another ... speaking the truth in love ... standing up for justice ... meeting each others' social and spiritual needs ... these are the responsibilities and rewards of shared ministry.

Governance

Like all other Unitarian Universalist churches, Westwood is self-governing and self-supporting. “Westwood Unitarian Society” is registered under the Societies Act of Alberta. Bylaws establish the process of governance by a Board of Trustees elected by the membership at an Annual General Meeting held in May or June. Meetings also take place to discuss and decide matters of importance to the congregation throughout the year. Volunteer committees create and carry out the key activities of the church.

There is no hierarchy in our denomination. Authority rests within each congregation. However churches across Canada join together as the Canadian Unitarian Council in association to support one another and to speak in common voice on issues of social justice.



For more information on the CUC, check their website at www.cuc.ca.

Continentially, Westwood has links to the Unitarian Universalist Association of the United States. For more information, check their website at www.uua.org.



Welcoming Congregation

Westwood has completed the Welcoming Congregation program. Its membership voted to affirm that it welcomes and celebrates the membership and participation of bisexual, gay, lesbian, and trans-gender (BGLT) persons. The congregation has undertaken activities such as worship services and workshops to increase our understanding of the BGLT community and to make the congregation a welcoming place. Unitarians have long supported the BGLT community and their fight for equal human rights. Historically, the church has provided celebrations of union for many years before gay marriage was a possibility.



Sunday Services and Programs

Sunday Worship Services

Sunday worship services begin at 10:30 AM, last approximately an hour, and feature:

- Eclectic worship planned by a dedicated Worship Committee
- Live music
- Supervised nursery for children 3 years and under
- Children's program for ages 4-11
- Youth program for ages 12-18
- Coffee, tea and conversation following the service
- Summer serendipity informal summer services

Religious Education Programs for Children and Youth

Children are very important to the Westwood community. Typically, children are encouraged to participate in the first part of the Sunday service, and then they play in the nursery and/or participate in religious education classes downstairs.



Westwood religious education:

- encourages spiritual awakening and development;
- builds on children's natural sense of wonder;
- channels the positive impulse to inquire; and
- creates and shares stories from our religious heritage and other faiths.

Newcomers are welcome to join classes anytime throughout the year. A large congregational volunteer component assists with programs for children.

Infants and toddlers

Our staffed nursery welcomes children three years and under for the entire duration of the Sunday service. (They are also welcome to stay upstairs during the service.)

Preschool and school age children

Our religious education class is a multi-age classroom where children of all ages interact and are encouraged to play and learn cooperatively. In this program we draw on a variety of UU curriculum and other sources to explore and affirm connections to the larger community, to the natural world and to the Principles and Purposes of Unitarian Universalism. In multi-age groupings, we do stories, activity centres, discussions, play, crafts, and other activities, often drawing on inspiration from the children themselves.

Youth Group

Gathers Sunday mornings and occasional evenings for youths 12 - 18 years. Teens enjoy just hanging out, discussing the past week and anything else that might come up. Meetings are open to all points of view, good discussion and provide opportunities to keep up on current events through many forms of media.

Safe Spaces Program

Westwood affirms a safe congregation for all and has policies, practices, handbooks and information to support the importance of safe programs for children.

Earth-Centred Spirituality Group

Celebrates the cycles of the year and facilitates activities for being inspired from nature. For more information, e-mail: earthcentred@westwoodunitarian.ca.

Weddings and Ceremonies

Weddings and other ceremonies are performed by Westwood's minister, Anne Barker, and lay chaplains who welcome the opportunity to adapt ceremonies to meet the needs and wishes of the celebrants.

Rites of passage provide an opportunity to publicly honour an important life event in the company of those we hold dear. Unitarian Universalists offer celebrations of birth and naming, marriage or partnership or to acknowledge the end of a life.

Unitarian Universalist practice starts from human needs rather than fixed religious ideas. The development and enactment of rites of passage ceremonies are often deeply spiritual and memorable. Rites are firmly based on the spirituality of those for whom the service is conducted and the integrity and compassion of the minister or lay chaplain.

Westwood's minister and lay chaplains strive to create a personalized experience affording individuals, couples or families an opportunity to mark a life passage in a spiritual way, even if they do not affirm any particular religion.

Lay chaplains are members of Westwood who are trained to plan and perform rites of passage, including:

- Weddings (officially licensed by the Government of Alberta);
- Funerals and memorial services;
- Child namings and dedications;
- Other ceremonies recognizing significant life passages such as reaffirming vows, dissolution of a relationship, coming of age, loss of a pet, graduation or retirement.



Westwood Welcomes Your Involvement

Sunday Hospitality Volunteers

Many volunteers help to make the Sunday Services run smoothly. Each Sunday, Westwood is in need of greeters, coffee hosts, someone to welcome visitors and newcomers, someone to monitor the library, someone to clean up the sanctuary after the service and lock up, and people to help out with the children's program. These small yet important jobs provide a valuable opportunity to get involved.

Committees

Westwood has a number of committees that serve various needs within the congregation. Every year in September, a committee fair helps raise awareness of Westwood's committees and hopefully generate interest in and enthusiasm for belonging in this way. Competitive snacks have been known to fuel a friendly rivalry among the committees hoping to attract interest! Some of Westwood's many committees include:

- Social justice
- Long-range planning
- Adult programming
- Children's religious education
- Building and grounds
- Communications and publicity
- Worship
- Membership
- Care and connections
- Lay chaplaincy
- Stewardship team

Social Justice

Working for justice in our world is a principal way for Unitarian Universalists to responsibly express faith. Westwood Social Justice Committee plans, initiates and coordinates the following activities:

- Joins in marches and rallies for peace, the environment and social justice causes.
- Hosts all candidate election forums.
- Encourages the congregation to participate in advocacy, education or protest activities (i.e. letter writing, election and topical forums, or participating in demonstrations).
- Researches and brings to congregational vote recommendations for major projects or causes
- Participates in Canadian Unitarian Council research and position statements on many controversial and/or neglected social issues such as drug legalization, same sex marriage, aboriginal rights, etc.
- Raises funds for international building projects, wells and schools in Central America, and a water project in Peru in partnership with a local organization called Sombrilla.
- Raises financial support for local Edmonton organizations, including iHuman helping youth get off the street through unique art, music, and drama programs and Camp fYrefly, a leadership development camp for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender youth.



Adult Programs

Unitarian adult education programs are life-long learning opportunities for visitors, friends and members to help build personal theology and explore the ways in which spiritual values may be applied to life. Generally these programs are free or cost recovery and open to the wider community. Westwood offers childcare during adult programs.

A sampler of programs and workshops periodically offered:

- Exploring your Theology
- New to UU sessions
- Radical Hospitality
- Speaking in Your Own Voice
- Spirit of Life

Westwood's Choir: Harmonia



An adult choir meets to rehearse Tuesday evenings from September to June at the church. The choir performs at approximately one Sunday service each month. A children's choir organizes in December to sing at Solstice services

Spinning the Web Dinners

Spinning the Web Dinners are potluck dinners held 2 or 3 times during the church year. They offer an opportunity for people to gather in members' homes for supper, conversation and discussion of a spiritual topic. These evenings strengthen the web of the Westwood community. Watch for notices of upcoming dinners.

Lay Leader Training

As a lay-led community, participation in and the planning of Westwood's Sunday services is a responsibility of our membership. Members interested in leading services are supported and guided throughout the process.

Chalice Circles

Circles of up to nine people meet for two hours twice a month to make connections with others and explore subjects of a spiritual nature. Each group has a trained facilitator. Groups meet in members' homes or at the church. As a small group it enables and develops a more intimate personal relationship with others. Circle purposes include:

- Facilitating spiritual explorations and development
- Deepening relationships with one another
- Experiencing a close, caring community

UUGuys

UUGuys, Westwood's men's group, offers men a non-judgmental place to talk about their lives. The group shares recent revelations, joys, and challenges during the check-in. Specific topics, focusing on experiences and beliefs is a regular meeting feature. Past topics have included love, fear, and spiritual journeys. UUGuys typically meets the first Sunday of the month. Newcomers are always welcome.

Simplicity Circle



A Simplicity Circle meets monthly for a discussion about ways to simplify our lives. Sample topics include recycling, food production, and veganism.

Annual Events

Watch the Sunday bulletin, newsletter and notice boards for information about church annual events. Westwood hosts an ingathering service after the summer break, flower communion services, and child and youth led services. Recent years have featured a Talent Night, Hot Salsa Night fund raiser, UU History lecture, winter and summer solstice celebrations and 25th anniversary special events.

Pathways to Spiritual Community: NEW2UU



Is Unitarianism for you? Westwood membership offers a one session introduction to Unitarians and our beliefs. NEW2UU sessions are popular with newcomers, visitors and those interested in learning about Unitarians and Westwood Congregation.

Orientation to Westwood Membership

Interested folk get together following a Sunday service for conversations and considerations of spiritual journeys. An overview of UU principles, Westwood core programs, and the rewards and responsibilities of friendship and membership are discussed.

Campus Unitarian Ministry

This is a University of Alberta ministry bringing awareness to the campus community of UU interests and issues. The goal of the group is to serve as a resource to staff and students and to provide a breezy yet challenging intellectual forum. A Unitarian Chaplain and volunteers host a series of discussions and events.

Becoming More than a Visitor

Friends of Westwood

Becoming a Friend of Westwood includes the following benefits:

- Participation in all aspects of Westwood church life
- Committee participation, though not as Chair
- Receipt of the monthly newsletter and inclusion in the electronic mailing list for Westwood
- Inclusion in and a copy of the church directory
- Free use of the church building under certain criteria

Friends of the congregation are individuals who support the goals of Westwood and who also contribute to the activities of Westwood through meaningful donations of time and/or money over the years.

Members of Westwood

Becoming a Member of Westwood Unitarian Congregation includes these ADDITIONAL benefits:

- Voice and voting privileges at general meetings of the congregation.
- Participation in all aspects of church life, including leadership and membership on committees and task forces.
- Election or appointment to church office.
- Acting on behalf of the congregation as delegate at denominational meetings.
- Representing Westwood on regional/national committees and task forces.
- Registration with the Canadian Unitarian Council as a Westwood member. Receipt of the quarterly Canadian Unitarian newsletter.

Members, 16 years and over, are expected to support the Society, financially and otherwise, in accordance with their resources and abilities.

Information and Communications

Sunday Service Announcements and Weekly Bulletins are offered to attendees of the Sunday services.

The Visitor Information Table

The visitor information table is in the sanctuary next to the library cabinet at the back of the church. It is home to pamphlets, guides and brochures, the monthly newsletter, and this *Pocket Guide* for those exploring what Westwood has to offer.

Newsletter: *The Westwoodian*

The newsletter is published monthly between September and June. Copies are available on the visitor information table. You can sign up for electronic copies via the request form on the information table.

Westwood Yahoo Group

An ongoing e-group for congregational announcements and e-conversations.

Phone Calls for Special Events

For those who do not have e-mail and want to participate. If you wish to be notified, please fill out the request form at the visitor information table.

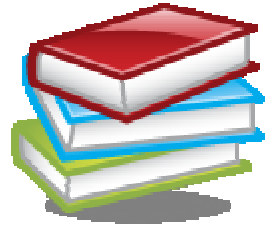
Name Tags

If you are ready to be identified as a regular visitor, fill out the request form at the visitor information table.



Westwood Library

The library is open in the sanctuary following the Sunday service. Books can be borrowed for up to three weeks by signing them out in the library binder. Key titles introducing Unitarian Universalism, include:



- 100 Questions that Non-Members Ask
- The Unitarian Universalist Pocket Guide
- Introduction to Unitarianism
- Our Chosen Faith
- With Purpose and Principle: Essays about the 7 Principles
- The Unitarian Way

Unitarian Universalist Web Sites

- Westwood Unitarian Congregation
www.westwoodunitarian.ca
- Canadian Unitarian Council
www.cuc.ca
- Unitarian Universalist Association
www.uua.org
- UUWorld magazine
www.uuworld.org
- International Council of Unitarians and Universalists
www.icuu.net

About Westwood

History

Westwood Unitarian Congregation was founded in 1982 as an extension project of the Unitarian Church of Edmonton, when a small group of dedicated and enthusiastic individuals plus a minister began to meet in the music room of a south side school. The congregation subsequently moved to a storefront location, and then in 1987 chose and purchased the current multi-purpose building as a religious home.

Westwood was named for the Reverend Horace Westwood, a passionate and energetic Unitarian minister who contributed greatly to the establishment of Unitarianism in Western Canada in the early part of the last century. His strong interest in and dedication to social justice continues to be reflected in the present congregation.

UUs should remain mindful of the three principles ... freedom, reason, and tolerance. They have held for four centuries. They are our touchstones. They sum up the disciplines of our liberty. Whatever we think or do or become, we should keep our balance with them as the gentle reminder from our past. Jacob Trapp, a leading Unitarian minister and mystical humanist of a generation ago, put it this way in a prayer he wrote:

"May we keep our capacity for faith and belief and wonder, but may our judgment watch and question what we believe."

-- Rev. Charles Eddis, Minister Emeritus, Unitarian Church of Montreal

Finances

Like you, Westwood has expenses and needs money to pay for them. Westwood's principal expenses are staff, programs, building-related costs, denominational fees and administrative expenses. Westwood voted sometime ago to no longer seek casino revenue, due to moral and social justice concerns. Therefore Westwood depends almost entirely on the support of its members and friends, financial and otherwise. More information can be found in the Dollars and Sense brochure at the visitor information table and from the Treasurer.



Annual Stewardship Canvass

Stewardship canvass is the yearly process whereby members and friends are surveyed about their desired contributions of time, talent and treasure. The canvass creates an annual opportunity to identify financial pledges for the upcoming financial year. Alberta taxpayers receive a tax credit of 50% for annual donations to all charities greater than \$200. Check the pamphlet rack for Westwood's Dollars and Sense pamphlet which has financial information for all members and friends.

Want to find out more about Unitarians or Westwood?

Please contact us:

Office Administrator..... Susan Kraft
Office hours: Tues 1 – 3; Fri 10 – 2 (Sept – June)
11135 - 65 Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta
T6H 1W3
780-434-5819
info@westwoodunitarian.ca
www.westwoodunitarian.ca

Minister..... Anne Barker (434-5819 ext#1)
anne@westwoodunitarian.ca

Board of Trustees 2008-2009

President..... Pamela Brierley
Past President..... Dean Chan
Vice President..... Mitch Waldon
Treasurer..... David Deephouse
Secretary..... Keith Wiley
Trustees..... Kevin Fitzgerald
Janice Williamson
Terry Anderson

Other Roles

Adult Programs..... Linda Jennings
Campus Chaplain..... Rev. Audrey Brooks
Care and Connections..... Virginia Gillese
Chalice Circles..... Carl Ulrich
Children & Youth Programs. Kath Oltsher
Choir..... Rebecca Patterson
Guys' Group..... Bruce MacPherson
Library..... Margaret Harris
Membership..... Sara McEwan
Newsletter..... Suzanne Grant
Simplicity Circle..... Lindsay McWhirter
Social Justice..... Edda Loomes
Sunday Hospitality..... Manfred Kalk
Weddings and Ceremonies.. Deidra Helmig
Yahoo Group Administrator.. Doug Ridgway

Searching?

for just the place to hold your

Meeting	Memorial	Conference
Workshop	Wedding	Forum
Fundraiser	Naming Ceremony	Retreat
Concert	Celebration	Training Session

Westwood offers

- Space for up to 120 people
- A south central location on a park setting
- A 1222 sq foot meeting facility of bright space with stage
- Movable chairs and tables; hardwood floors
- Piano and sound system
- Street parking for vehicles
- A fully equipped kitchen
- Reasonable rates



To see the facilities or to inquire about rates please contact the office: 780-434-5819 or e-mail info@westwoodunitarian.ca