

Rev. Linda Thomson celebrated for her 23 years on Canadian Unitarian Council staff
By Bill Johnston
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Rev. Linda Thomson, a longtime member of our congregation, was celebrated last Saturday as she retires from the staff of the Canadian Unitarian Council. Linda was one of the first staff hired in 2002 when the CUC became largely independent of the formerly continental Unitarian Universalist Association and for most of that time, served as the Congregational Life lead for central and eastern Canada.



In her 23 years, Linda has served under four executive directors and 16 board presidents. She was, as Margaret Wanlin of the Lakehead congregation said during the live and Zoom event, “our collective memory and conscience.” Rev. Debra Faulk, co-president of the CUC board, praised Linda for her agility and innovative spirit, wisdom, ingenuity, steadfastness and commitment. Rev. Anne Barker praised Linda’s quiet wisdom and for knowing how to ask the question to get at what lies underneath an issue—“what do you think they mean?” She called working with Linda at the CUC—for two years, one month and seven days—“the best time of my working life.” Casey Stainsby, who served for six years on the CUC staff, praised Linda’s capacity to help us see a different perspective without making us feel badly for not seeing it before.

Tim Versteeg, a former president and former religious education professional with our congregation, now serving in that role in San Antonio, Texas, noted that a reference letter from Linda helped him land the San Antonio job. He said Linda and her husband Gary were among the first couples he got to know when he first came to our church. She was a stalwart force in the Hamilton church and the CUC for so many years. He and Lyla Miklos, lay chaplains at our church, served on the national lay chaplains committee with Linda. Lyla remembered Linda’s empathy in the aftermath of 9/11.

Linda and Gary first came to the Hamilton church in the mid-1980s. She was president in 1994 and 1995 and a lay chaplain from 1998 until 2002 when she left that role for her CUC position. For five years before joining the CUC staff, Linda had also been the Unitarian Universalist Association’s Canadian Consultant for the St. Lawrence District.

In thanking those present, and staff and boards she served with for their unfailing support, Linda said that in her work with congregations, she’d had a front row seat to the care people show to build and sustain their church communities. She noted that when she and the CUC were beginning in 2002, there were plans on paper and the new staff had to work to make it happen. She suggested that today might be another time to make things up again. She concluded by saying that every connection she made through her work enriched her life.

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