

# The COMMON

## An Invisible World...



One day not long ago Gil Tenney took a road less travelled on in Blue Hill and discovered a different world. In his article on page 4 he writes, "how can we make the realities of this world of poverty more visible to those who can help? How can we overcome the public myths of

poverty? How can we rebuild the trust that was lost so long ago by disappointment after disappointment? How can we build hope where there is no hope?

I would suggest that help starts at the grass-roots, with communities that care. *go to p 4*

**CALENDAR**

Dec. 7,  
Rev. Charles Stephens

Dec. 14,  
Rev. Charles Stephens

Dec. 21,  
Rev. Charles Stephens

Wednesday, Dec. 24  
Christmas Eve, service  
Carols & Candles, 5 pm

Dec. 28,  
Do-It-Yourself Sunday

Events  
Dec. 14, Annual Meeting, Pot Luck

Dec. 15, Castine Christmas, Trinitarian Parish

### ANNUAL MEETING, DECEMBER 14

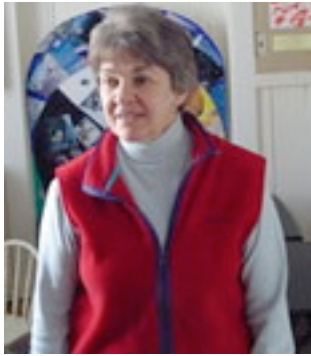
The ducks are lined up in a row, finally, and it's time to convene our annual meeting. The date is Sunday, December 14, and once again we are holding the meeting after Pot Luck. This schedule seems to work for most folks, as it avoids driving after dark and other obstacles offered up by Mother Nature.



If some other schedule would fit you better, let us know and we will try to accommodate you.

We will elect 7 members of the Governing Board, plus an alternate, approve a budget, and hear from committee chairs about all our programs.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION



Kay Hansen  
Religious Educator

As we approach the longest night of the year, we are drawn to the glow of candles and the warmth of fires. Since ancient times, this has been a season of lights and celebrations. During December, we will hear stories about the winter solstice and the ways different religions have used lights in their celebrations.

This is also a time of gift giving, and we will be making some gifts to give to friends and family. In addition, we will start off the month by launching the Guest at Your Table project in church. This is another way that we can give to others during this season of lights and celebrations.

### NIGHT

*Stars over snow,  
And in the west a planet  
Swinging below a star---  
Look for a lovely thing and you will find it,*

*It is not far--- It never will be far.*

Thanks to Anne Romans for helping Jane and me set up for potluck on November 16. We hope to have more helpers this month. We continue to look for an RE aide to help out for the first couple of weeks of December. Please contact Charles or me with your ideas. Also, please consider working with the Religious Education Committee to help provide programs for our children and youth.

## HALF ENOUGH?

### Think About It...

Throughout the 544 million or so years since hard-shelled animals first appeared, there has been a slow increase in the number of plants and animals on the planet, despite five mass extinction events. The high point of biodiversity likely coincided with the moment modern humans left Africa and spread out across the globe, 60,000 years ago. As people arrived, other species faltered and vanished, slowly at first and now with such acceleration that famed sociobiologist E.O. Wilson talks of a coming “biological holocaust,” the sixth mass extinction event, the only one caused not by some cataclysm but by a single species—us.

Wilson recently calculated that the only way humanity could stave off a mass extinction crisis, as devastating as the one that killed the dinosaurs 65 million years ago, would be to set aside half the planet as permanently protected areas for the ten million other species. Half for us, half for them. A version of this idea has been in circulation among conservationists for some time.



“It’s been in my mind for years,” Wilson told Smithsonian Magazine’s Tony Hiss, “that people haven’t been thinking big enough—even conservationists. Half Earth is the goal, but it’s how we get there, and whether we can come up with a system of wild landscapes we can hang onto. I see a chain of uninterrupted corridors forming, with twists and turns, some of them opening up to become wide enough to accommodate national biodiversity parks, a new kind of park that won’t let species vanish.”

## CHARLES' COGITATIONS



We have entered the darkest season of the year. As the longest night approaches, we instinctively gravitate toward good tidings of hope and great joy, especially when conveyed in music. This is true now even as it was for the people of countless generations throughout time and around the world.

This is the time of year when people need to hear strong and vital messages reminding us to lift up our voices in glad tidings, the time when we need messages telling us: be not afraid. It is exactly at this time of year when we need the assurance that there are reasons why we can maintain hope and have faith that light will penetrate our darkest times. As with past generations, we need messages of hope that we might have confidence not only in the future, but also here and now.

This is the meaning and message behind the beautiful seasons of Solstice, Hanukkah, and Christmas. We celebrate the emergence of hope, symbolized in a celebration of sunlight being reborn, the oil of Hanukkah providing more light than expected and the hope provided in the birth of a child to a poor couple centuries ago and today. We needn't reject reason to find meaning and beauty in the poetry of ancient stories that have reinforced hope and built confidence for millions upon millions of people down through the eons of time.

Stories of birth and rebirth found in many cultures and religions remind us that every year children are born and the government shall be placed upon their shoulders and we pray that they will be wonderful and inspired leaders, true people of peace and good will.

Your Minister, Charles Stephens



Dec. 7, "Compassion and Concern for Everyone," the fifth in my sermon series on "Living A Compassionate Life," based on Karen Armstrong's book, "12 Steps to a Compassionate Life."

Dec. 14, "Hanukkah – The Light of Freedom" Hanukkah celebrates religious freedom, survival amidst persecution, and a rebirth of light at the darkest time of the year.

Dec. 21, "Winter Solstice Celebration" Earth-based religious traditions have marked the Winter Solstice as a time of renewed hope and light. Today sees a slight but steady movement from darkness to light.

Wednesday, Dec. 24, 5 pm "The Truly Important Gifts of the Season", a Christmas Eve Service of carols and candlelight. The season has become one of gift giving and receiving. What are the best gifts you have ever given or received?

Dec. 28 Rev. Stephens is off today--Do-It-Yourself Sunday. Share your favorite hymns, poetry, and readings.

## AN INVISIBLE WORLD

Gil Tenney

Drive to Blue Hill and you might get a glimpse of what I call “an invisible world.” Most often, however, one’s eyes and mind take in what is ahead or to the right – sparkling Northern Bay, a lovely old farm house, freshly mown fields, clam flats, fall colors . Where else in the world can we find such a concentration of peace and beauty? It’s everywhere and certainly not invisible.

Slow down, look to your left or, better yet, turn off onto that dirt road you have driven by hundreds of times. You may encounter another striking vista but more likely catch a glimpse of that other world, the invisible world – a rusting camper trailer, a house long since deserted (or is it deserted?), a snow plow that has served its time. And then there is that stuff; stuff everywhere. Stuff on top of stuff, serving what purpose? You’re now beginning to get a glimpse, but just a glimpse.



The invisible world will likely never be totally in focus for me, but my vision was greatly enhanced one day when I sat in what I had thought was a deserted house. I was listening to a mother of six (ages 4 to late 20’s, two still at home). She never married. Her two youngest sons, ages 4 and 11, watched us from a safe distance.

I learned there was no running water and no heating system other than two small electric space heaters that were moved to the most sheltered room of the house during those subzero days. The plastic covering on the windows offered some, but barely enough, shelter during bitter, wind-swept storms. Behind the house was a small camper-trailer, where the mother and two children live when grandmother comes to visit in the summer.

And then there was the stuff in the yard and in the house. Stuff that had been gathered up along the road with hopes that some of it may be useful in the future. I began to realize that this “stuff”, these belongings, had a purpose.

What else came into focus that day was an amazing spirit; making do with what was available, living off the land when possible, a deep love for her family and willingness to help others struggling as she has struggled for so many years. A counterbalance to this spirit, however, is a toxic distrust of “the system”, any organization that even sniffed of being bureaucratic--schools, hospitals, community action agencies. With such distrust, how can there be hope for the future? Could the future ever include a good education for the children?

What I took away from this meeting were some other burning questions: how can we make the realities of this world of poverty more visible to those who can help? How can we overcome the public myths of poverty? How can we rebuild the trust that was lost so long ago by disappointment after disappointment? How can we build hope where there is no hope?

I would suggest that help starts at the grass-roots, with communities that care. Put your toe in the water. Help at the Food Pantry and meet some good people, people who have struggled with poverty for generations or the once successful business executive who might turn to you and say “I never thought I’d have to live like this”. At times it is hard to restrain the tears. *continues on p 5*



## INVISIBLE, FROM PAGE

As I left my meeting, I noticed a rusted bicycle in the yard. Knowing a bike swap was being formed in Castine, I asked the mother if her 11 year old would like a new bike. She nodded a yes. Several weeks later, I returned with a like-new bicycle. Suddenly, it felt I had found a long-lost friend with the 11 year old boy. Then the four year old placed his tiny hand in mine and asked "can I show you my bike?" and escorted me, his hand in mine, to the front of the house where I viewed with great admiration his bike, flat tires and all. I'm looking for a suitable bike for this now five year old.



For those who wish to help in some way, here are some points to ponder.

- Doors at the Tree of Life Food Pantry open around 9 am every Thursday. I was helping on one occasion when 187 people went through the food line in just the first hour. And yet, there are others who cannot get to the Pantry. They either do not have transportation or they may have a car but no money for gas.
- Dr. Don Buckingham, Sedgwick Elementary School Principal, has shared with me that now 70 percent of his roughly 100 students live in poverty, up sharply from recent years. Many come to school hungry, unable to concentrate and learn. A volunteer who knows poverty personally is asking for donations of Christmas toys for children while also pulling together a parent resource center at the school. She is looking for books on parenting, information on community resources, and children's books.



- In North Sedgwick there is a small Baptist Church. On any given Sunday when the church is open there may be around 15 in attendance. Unfortunately, there is little money for fuel so the church closes in the winter. What makes it particularly unfortunate is that there is a working kitchen and space in which free meals could be prepared and served, much like Blue Hill's Simmering Pot. How might we raise money to allow the church to stay open, providing a warm shelter for community members to gather, enjoy the holidays and some healthy free meals?

I am pleased to be able to share some of my personal experiences and observations. Discussions of poverty can be difficult. For many, this is an invisible world but the more we observe, the more we listen and the more we converse, the greater our chances of finding community-based actions that can make a difference.

Gil Tenney  
326-4372





Gena's Area Musical Selections for the season: Thanks!

### **Musica Sacra Advent 2014**

Veni, Redemptor Gentium  
Chants, Motets & Organ Works for Advent  
Music of H. Andriessen, J. Beicht, N. Bruhns, W. Byrd, H. Strategier

The Chamber Choir at St. John's Catholic Church,  
Kevin Birch - Director & Organist  
Saturday, December 6  
7:30pm  
207 York Street - Bangor

A Service of Advent Lessons and Carols  
Sunday, December 14, 4 pm  
St. Saviour's Episcopal Church  
41 Mt. Desert St. Bar Harbor  
[www.stsaviours.me](http://www.stsaviours.me)  
288-4215

"A Castine Christmas" community celebration  
will be on Monday, December 15, at 6:30 pm. at  
the Main Street Church this year.

### **MEMBERS OF THE BOARD**

Del Davis, President  
Gil Tenney, Vice President  
Diana Bernard, Treasurer  
Anne Romans, Clerk  
Nancy Guy  
Tom Mason  
Leslie Fairbank  
Kent Price, Alternate

A new Governing Board will be elected at the Annual Meeting on December 14 and a time for regular monthly meetings has not been set.

### **THE COMMON**

*The Common* is published monthly and distributed in both electronic and photocopy forms. All members and friends are invited to submit items for consideration. Send submissions or comments to editor Kent Price at [kapricorn75@gmail.com](mailto:kapricorn75@gmail.com). Deadline is the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month preceding publication.

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