

# The COMMON

## Coping with climate change *Embracing the challenge*



National Geographic photo of Lake Mendocino, near Ukiah CA. When Anne Price grew up in the area, the lake always was full.

Drought, flood, record heat and cold, melting glaciers, rising seas,

lobsters heading north: the many effects of climate change clearly comprise “the next big thing” we humans must face. Turn to page 4 for thoughts on what WE might do.

### CALENDAR

#### Pulpit

March 1

Johanna Sweet

March 8

Rev. Charles Stephens

March 15

Rev. Kate Braestrup

March 22

Rev. Arthur Vaeni

#### Events

March 15 is Potluck Sunday.

Sunday, March 8, is International Women’s Day

### MORE THAN WORDS

Why do we gather most Sundays? We come from several traditions, yet we share a sense of the ineffable, of wonder. Regardless of belief, however defined, “we covenant to support and sustain the spiritual, ethical, intellectual, and overall well-being of our members.” In short, we gather to

### EDITORIAL



nurture our spirit.

But we also aim to help heal our world--the central goal in an ambitious agenda being laid out by Board President Lynn Parsons. Read his plans on page 4 and give some thought to how we can make a real and lasting difference.

## WHO AM I?

“When I was 11, I began advocating for girls’ education. I started blogging about what it was like to live under Taliban rule in Pakistan. When I was 15, I was shot by the Taliban for speaking out for education. On my 16th birthday, I spoke to the United Nations about *“the right of education of every child.”* In 2014, at age 17, I was honored to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize! I share the prize with a human rights advocate from India. I will use the money I received to continue advocating for the education of all children. I have written a memoir titled, *I am Malala: How One Girl Stood Up for Education and Changed the World.*”

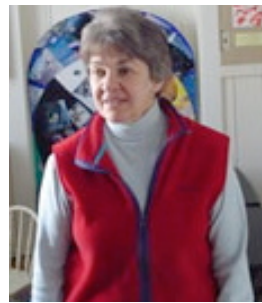
Malala Yousafzai is an astonishing example of several of our UU Principles: the inherent worth of all people, the freedom to learn and to express oneself, and the need for social justice in the world. In March, our older children will learn about Malala’s incredible story. We will also continue to explore ways we can model the Seven Principles in our church, our community, and our world.

The younger children will continue to explore their world of: animals, water, air, light, and darkness, through books and hands-on activities. On March 22, two days after the first day of spring, we will “celebrate,” even if we still have snow on the ground!

I would like to remind you about the **21<sup>st</sup> Century Faith Formation Workshop on Saturday, March 21 (10AM-3PM) at the Rockland UU Church.** This is an opportunity for adults in our church to take a look at what other congregations in our area are doing for “faith formation,” or religious education in the 21st century.

Remember, one of the goals of our congregation is to attract more families with children. A new minister cannot do this all on his or her own. Let’s get a head start by attending this

workshop to get lots of ideas! You don’t have to be on the RE Committee or have children in the RE program. Please join Charles and me as a Castine team to work on the future of “Faith Formation.” The registration deadline is March 11. Let Charles or me know that you would be happy to spend a day getting ideas for our church’s future.



Kay Hansen  
Religious Educator

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## Ushers and Coffee hour hosts for March Pam Person

First, thanks to those who served as ushers and prepared the coffee hours in February. With all the snow it was not easy even getting to the church!

### March ushers:

March 1, Phil and Pam Person  
March 8, Rodney Flora and Jill Shoof  
March 15, Lynn and Anne Parsons  
March 22, Virginia and Stan Bourne  
March 29, Kent Price and Pam Person

### March Coffee hour hosts:

March 1, Linda Trumbull and Fran Bos  
March 8, Gil Tenney and Lynn Parsons (for International Women's Day)  
March 15, Potluck - Anne Romans for the Board and Kay Hansen and kids for RE  
March 22, Joan Bothwell and Anne Romans  
March 29, Pam and Phil Person

## CHARLES' COGITATIONS

Rev. Charles J. Stephens



As I write this, it is cold outside and it is hard to believe that spring is on its way. I have heard a lot of negative talk about the snow and cold we have experienced and have gotten a bit tired of the cold myself. But I learned something important growing up in Northern Wisconsin and then later living in Grand Forks, ND: spring will arrive, even if later than expected.

As we wait for spring, there are some places we can find surprising amounts of warmth and enjoyment. First on my list is to seek out the warmth of community. This community might be the town or village in which you live. You also may find the warmth of community in an organization you belong to or frequent. If you are fortunate enough to live near or with another person you can create the warmth of community between yourself and that or those other people. And if you are reading this issue of *The Common* you probably belong to or are associated with the UU Congregation in Castine and you certainly can enjoy and help create warmth within this community.

Years ago, early in my Unitarian Universalist ministry, I created a ritual that I called a Maple Syrup Communion. I will offer this ritual during the March 29 Sunday Service. This is a Service that observes the slow turning of the year toward warmer days when the sap of trees begins to flow and the flowers of the Pussy Willow burst forth. Both these natural activities take place on what looks like cold unfeeling wood. Yet

something primordial is happening. There does seem to be a very natural resurrection of life and activity within our brother and sister trees and bushes.

Normally, when we hear the word communion, we think of the Christian ritual using water and wine. But think of all the words like community, communicate, communion, and commune. These words, at their best, indicate a heightened sensitivity and receptivity with one's surroundings, whether this includes other people, sentient beings or the earthly elements of nature which we have given some spiritual significance.

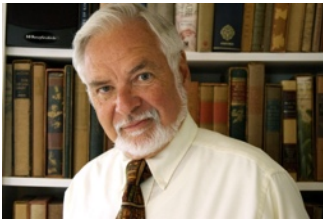
Many of us commune with nature. We try with varying degrees of success to communicate with one another. We live in a variety of communities. And I would say that when we gather on Sunday mornings here at 86 Court Street that we celebrate a form of communion – even if we don't call it that. After all, we are the congregation on the Common, where we exchange thoughts, hold certain things in common, and have intimate conversation about things that matter.

Whenever the warmth of spring may arrive, we needn't wait to find warmth and support in the relationships that are important to us. Don't let the important moments flitter away out of our grasp and away from our minds. Note the special or holy times with small personal or larger communal rituals.

Doing so can help diminish the harsh and cold impact that come from outside. Doing so can help us take joy in the meaning and importance of every day moments. Let us remember that one way to keep the light shining in our hearts and spirits is to return regularly to the warmth of our community of faith, hope, love, and action.

With Love and Warmth,  
Charles

## THE NEXT BIG THING



Lynn Parsons

*Man has kicked away his birthright  
Now we find to our despair  
We have fouled our lakes and rivers  
We have fouled our very air.  
It is time to face the music.  
It is time to be aware.*

Those words were written in 1971 by Frank Hatch, Sr., a member of this congregation. I ran across them a few years ago while working on my Castine church history project, but I knew, somehow, that they would prove to be relevant at some point in the future. And so they have.

In my remarks on Sunday, February 8, I tried to make the case for “being aware” of Climate Change, not only for the obvious reasons, but for its possibility as a theme for our Congregation in the coming year. I called it “The Next Big Thing.” This is not to preclude other matters of concern, such as poverty in our area, or the quest for Peace and Justice, or the need for early childhood education in our community and elsewhere. I am certain that our Social Justice Committee will be addressing these issues thorough our Pulliam Grants in the coming year.

But Climate Change has the potential for transcending these and other issues. I believe that there is a consensus among us that as we seek new and younger leadership in the years ahead, we should take advantage of this crisis to establish the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Castine as a leader in confronting an issue that touches upon the lives of everyone. Our UUA Principles proclaim our faith, but in broad generalities. It is

for us to implement them through concrete action.

Not only is it the right cause to embrace; it carries with it a chance to establish ourselves as a Congregation that is serious about not only raising the issue but also in doing something about it. Thus we bear witness not only to our faith, we apply it to the real world.

Only last spring the UUA General Assembly passed a resolution that called upon all UU congregations to adopt policies consistent with preserving the environment. Specifically, it called upon UU Congregations such as ours to either eliminate entirely all investment in the so-called CT200 list, or reduce such investments. “CT 200” stands for the 200 firms most involved atmospheric pollution. Our Congregation has investments on more than one firm on the list.



It has been pointed out to me that such divestment will not be easy, and may not be possible in all instances. But I believe the recommendations of last year’s GA need to be taken seriously and discussed nonetheless. And there are other things we can do. We can consider holding winter services in the Parish House, to conserve fuel. We can consider adopting the principles of the “Green Sanctuary” advocated by Charles a few weeks ago. We can examine ways to reduce further our dependence on fossil fuels, such as solar panels or heat pumps. And we can develop awareness in the broader community by promoting events such as “Earth Day” (April 22).

But “considering” or “examining” is not the same as “doing.”

## REFUGEE CRISIS: SYRIA

from the UU Peace Ministry Network

The UU Peace Ministry Network is alerting all UU congregations to the greatest wartime refugee crisis since World War II: Syria. USAID reports that 12.2 million people have been driven from their homes--more than half the population of Syria. The International Red Cross calls it "the greatest health crisis on earth."

Worse yet, it has been met with apathy. "The world's wealthiest nations," writes Amnesty International, "are dragging their feet when it comes to offering financial support and resettlement." UUSC is helping refugees with the Trauma Resiliency Center in Istanbul, but too many Syrians are starving. The World Food Program, an independently funded UN agency, is currently feeding 6.8 million Syrians by providing a \$27 weekly food voucher. This gives dignity to recipients by allowing them to choose foods for their family. It also provides a living for the local grocers in host countries -- Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey. But it costs \$64 million a month to operate.

The UU Peace Ministry Network is painfully aware that our contributions will not make a large dent in the privation caused by the Syrian war, but it will keep people alive with hope to face another day. We can make a difference.

Are you boggled by big numbers, like 12.2 million refugees? Consider this single individual, defeated by misery, hunger, and hopelessness.

"Mariam al-Khawli, a mother of four, fled the violence of Syria with her family and sought refuge in Lebanon. But the relief of escaping Syria's horrors turned, eventually, to despair. Unable to feed her children because their family no longer met the UN refugee agency's conditions, Mariam stood outside the agency office in Tripoli on March 25 and set herself on fire, according to her husband."

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The parent UN World Food Programme does not face a shortage of funding, but that specifically for Syria is needed urgently. Funding is not fungible, as monies for one country cannot be reallocated to another.

To assure your tax deductible donation goes to homeless Syrians, please write "for Syria" in the memo of any check. Please make checks payable to:

World Food Program USA  
Attn: Development Department  
1725 I Street NW, Suite 510  
Washington, DC 20006

Information? [www.wfpusa.org](http://www.wfpusa.org)



7-year old Ahmed is a Syrian refugee in Turkey

## ON CLIMATE DEBT

Nancy Holmstrom

Professor Emerita of Philosophy  
Rutgers University.

Excerpted from *Tikkun*, Winter 2015

*In The Common for February, we explored the biblical notion of eliminating all debt every seven years (a Sabbatical Year) and the equal distribution of wealth (agricultural land) every fifty years (a Jubilee Year.) But money and property debts do not begin to delimit the possibilities. Professor Holmstrom asks us to consider Climate Debt. Ed*

All humans are morally equal and should share whatever is shareable, starting with the basic resources of the planet. Establishing universal access to planetary resources as a moral norm leads to a very different understanding of debt. Individuals' debts pale, exposed as invalid, and instead we begin to countenance a colossal unpaid, and morally valid debt: climate debt. By this I mean the debt owed by the richest countries (which have stoked climate change with their carbon emissions) to some of the poorest countries in the world, which are suffering the most from global warming, even though they did nothing to cause it. This debt ought to be paid but is rarely even acknowledged by those who owe it.

As Evo Morales and others in the developing world have said, we have enough resources to live a good life, but not for everyone to lead the rich life of the well-to-do in the developed world.

From desertification in Africa, to flooding in Bangladesh, to the loss of fresh water in Bolivia due to glacial melt, the damage is staggering. Ecological refugees now outnumber refugees from

war and violence. And if countries in Africa, Latin America, and Asia must restrict their development for the sake of the planet, they should be compensated by those who have benefited from the unsustainable economic system that has caused the crisis. Ironically, many of the countries that are owed compensation for ecological damage are "debtor nations," in thrall to global capitalist institutions. But who really owes whom?

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In struggle for the recognition of climate debt, the first step to building a movement is to nurture--on the most profound level-- an appreciation of what we are losing and what needs to be done to save ourselves. As Evo Morales and others in the developing world have said, we have enough resources to live a good life, but not for everyone to lead the rich life of the well-to-do in the developed world.

Religion has a vital role to play in this struggle as well. Although indigenous and Eastern religious traditions have the most ecological understanding of humankind's relationship to the rest of the natural world, adherents of all religious traditions should be outraged by our ecological crisis. To see this beautiful planet of ours as God's creation, given to humankind, and then to see it trashed should feel sacrilegious as well as self-destructive.

## PULPIT PREVIEW

March 1

Johanna Sweet in the pulpit with a tribute to English Unitarian author Beatrix Potter, beloved creator of Peter Rabbit.

March 8

On this International Women's Day, Rev. Stephens will recognize "Coretta Scott King's Legacy of Love."

March 15

The NY Times best-selling author, the Rev. Kate Braestrup, is our guest in the pulpit. Kate brings a unique blend of warmth and insight. Not to be missed!

March 22

The Rev. Arthur Vaeni, Interim Minister at the Bangor UU Church, will lead us in "Discovering Life's Sacredness with Rumi," Mary Oliver's favorite poet. In a pulpit exchange, Rev. Stephens will preach in Bangor the same day.



March 29

Rev. Stephens will lead us in a ritual he created in the 1980s--"A Maple Syrup Communion." Come and celebrate the natural resurrection taking place all around us.

## BUILD IT & THEY WILL COME

Lee Boeke Burke  
with Kent Price  
Partner Church Council

For many years, the UU Church of the Philippines has dreamed of creating a dormitory in Dumaguete that would offer safe and affordable housing for young women attending universities in the city. The project also was seen as a source of income to support the health and growth of Unitarian Universalism in the Philippines.



*Original design*

Alas, after nearly eight years of fundraising, punctuated by horrific typhoons and earthquakes in the Philippines and economic upheaval in the U.S., the decision was made to build what was possible--Plan B, if you will. The dream of a 180-bed facility gave way to a more modest goal, but one that would fully embrace the vision of the initial plan and honor its spirit. On January 15, a ceremony was conducted for a new, 40-bed dormitory. Construction is under way, with completion expected by April.

Although the scope had to be altered, the vision remains. UUCP President, the Rev. Rebecca Sienes, who visited us here in Castine, and all the UU staff and clergy in the Philippines, are most grateful to all the donors to the dorm project, including UU Castine.

## ON MEMBERSHIP

Rev. Charles J. Stephens

What does it mean to become a member of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Castine? If you have been attending our congregation and are thinking signing our membership book, I invite you to talk with me at church or give me a call or email me at [minister@uucastine.org](mailto:minister@uucastine.org).

The normal process of formally joining our congregation is for a person to contact me indicating interest. Then we make an appointment to we can talk about membership and I can address any questions you might have. Know that UU Castine welcomes all those who identify with our principles and purposes. Please join us in our quest to create a caring, welcoming liberal religious congregation.

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*You shall have no other Gods before me*

Rev. Ana Levy-Lyons  
First Unitarian Congregational Society  
(excerpted from Tikkun, Winter 2015)

Someone wrote me on Facebook, "My least favorite Commandment is #1. God sounds a bit insecure. Is he[sic] intimidated when it comes to competition? Why?"

For many of us, the Ten Commandments, particularly the first few, smack of oppression, misogyny, and tribalism. They smell musty and old. They sound cranky and inflexible. Some of them make sense to us; some seem arbitrary. But to the extent that we engage with them at all, we tend to see them as self-evident ethical guidelines that require no religious imprimatur. We reject their authority and, frankly, we dislike commandments in general.

## MEMBERS OF THE BOARD

Lynn Parsons, President  
Gil Tenney, Vice President  
Diana Bernard, Treasurer  
Anne Romans, Clerk  
Tom Mason  
Leslie Fairbank  
Colin Powell, Alternate  
The Governing Board meets in the Parish House at 8:30 am on the third Thursday of each month. Observers always are welcome.

## 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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