



# THE COMMON

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATION OF CASTINE

August 2022

## A Month of Sundays in August

Guest minister in August is Rev. Maya Massar who will lead our service on August 14<sup>th</sup>.

Rev. Margaret Beckman will offer a series of talks on people who inspire her during these difficult and trying times.

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|-------------------------|---|
| August 7 <sup>th</sup>  | Rev. Margaret Beckman, Worship Leader<br>Inspiration: Eboo Patel, We Need to Build, Field Notes for Diverse Democracy<br>Morgan Davis, Musician                                     |
| August 14 <sup>th</sup> | Rev. Maya Massar, Worship Leader<br>Colleen Fitzgerald, Musician  |
| August 21 <sup>st</sup> | Rev. Margaret Beckman, Worship Leader<br>Inspiration: Margaret Wheatley, Who Do We Choose To Be?, Facing Reality,<br>Claiming Leadership, Restoring Sanity<br>Rissa Moore, Musician |
| August 28 <sup>th</sup> | Rev. Margaret Beckman, Worship Leader<br>Inspiration: Rev. John Pavlovitz, If God Is Love, Don't Be a Jerk<br>Colleen Fitzgerald, Musician  |

*All of who you are is sacred. All of who you are is welcome.*



Unitarian Universalism

## Our Mission

To establish and promote an open and welcoming congregation that supports and sustains the spiritual, ethical, intellectual and overall well-being of our members while serving our broader communities.

## Contact Us

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For questions or comments about The Common or to submit items for this newsletter, please contact Debbie Morehouse [office@uucastine.org](mailto:office@uucastine.org).

## Lakeside Reflections August 2022



Watercolor by Rod McIver

We have lived through some really hot days this summer. It's not over yet and there may be more record hot days this month. I once thought the "dog days of summer" referred to the oppressive heat and

humidity of August in our part of the world. You know, *those* days when your dog is so hot that she finds the coolest spot in the house and collapses into full nap mode. People complain that it is just too hot to think, let alone get any work done. After all, Washington, D.C. nearly shuts down in August.

The dog days are hot but they don't get their name from our canine best friends. It's all about the stars. "Here at the Old Farmer's Almanac, we consider the Dog Days to be the 40 days beginning July 3 and ending August 11. This is soon after the Summer Solstice in late June, which also tends to be the beginning of the worst of summer's heat. Sirius is the brightest star in the sky, if you don't count our own Sun.



Under the right conditions, it can even be seen with the naked eye during the day. Sirius is one star in a group of stars that form the constellation Canis Major, meaning "Greater Dog." It's no surprise, then, that the nickname of this big, bold star became "the Dog Star."

So, look for Sirius in the night sky. Stay as cool as you can during the day. Drink iced tea with a sprig of fresh mint on the porch. Feel virtuous not guilty about cooling off with your favorite ice cream. Remember to check on people who struggle with heat. Wade in the water as often as possible. Be happy while you create new ways to be cool. Read fiction... It helps.

As we do whatever we can to get through these dog days and hot August, may we remain grateful for the advantages of living in a rich country with enough resources to care for most people in heat and in cold. As we commiserate with each other and crack jokes about 'how hot is it?' may we also be mindful of the devastating effects of climate change on all of earth and earth's creatures. Our work lies in front of us to be advocates for life on earth and for future generations.

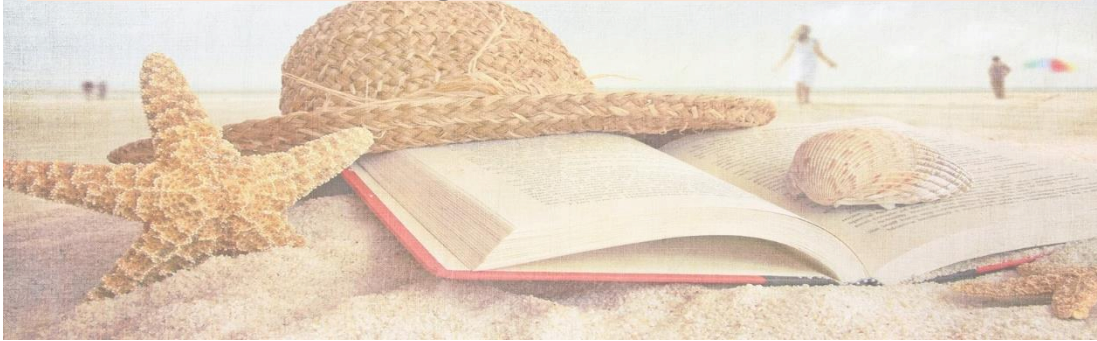
Namaste, Margaret

### Back in Church and Back in the Swing

With church services back in the church, please consider signing up to help make Sunday a simply enjoyable time of gathering together. We have sign-up sheets in the Parish House for flowers for the sanctuary or refreshments for coffee hour. In the interest of safety and ease, let's keep the coffee hour refreshments simple. We can create a feast for potluck!



## UUCC Reads in August - New Readers Welcome!



Remember those summer reading programs at the library when you were a kid? Now is a great time to join **UUCC Reads** as we begin new books for August. Drop in for great discussion – often about the book, but sometimes just about our lives. Two books have been selected for August:

***Wesley the Owl: The Remarkable Love Story of an Owl and his Girl***, by Stacey O’Brien.

Enhanced by wonderful photographs, *Wesley the Owl* is a thoroughly engaging, heart-warming, often funny story of a complex, emotional, non-human being capable of reason, play, and, most important, love and loyalty. Translated into eight languages and named an Audubon Magazine Editor’s Choice, *Wesley the Owl* is sure to be cherished by animal lovers everywhere.

***Night of the Living Rez***, by Morgan Talty. Set in a Native community in Maine, *Night of the Living Rez* is a riveting debut collection about what it means to be Penobscot in the twenty-first century and what it means to live,

to survive, and to persevere after tragedy. In twelve striking, luminescent stories, author Morgan Talty—with searing humor, abiding compassion, and deep insight—breathes life into tales of family and a community as they struggle with a painful past and an uncertain future. A boy unearths a jar that holds an old curse, which sets into motion his family’s unraveling; a man, while trying to swindle some pot from a dealer, discovers a friend passed out in the woods, his hair frozen into the snow; a grandmother suffering from Alzheimer’s projects the past onto her grandson; and two friends, inspired by Antiques Roadshow, attempt to rob the tribal museum for valuable root clubs.

*Night of the Living Rez* is an unforgettable portrayal of an Indigenous community and marks the arrival of a standout talent in contemporary fiction.

**Join zoom meeting beginning August 2  
Tuesdays at 3:30 p.m.**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82795244581?pwd=TotfTDUoOStmbnJSdFdLeXZkRjRUZz09>

### Collaborative Ministry Book Discussion Groups and Anti-Racism Discussions

As many of you hopefully know, the anti-racism team at the UU of Belfast is hoping to have some fall book discussion groups including all three congregations. We are encouraging people to read the books or a book over the summer to get prepared for some interesting discussions. There are three books to choose from: *White Rage* by Carol Anderson, *Water Dancer* by Ta Nehisi Coates, and *Waking Up White, and Finding Myself in the Story of Race* by Debby Irving. Questions? - contact Muzz at [isabmuzzy@gmail.com](mailto:isabmuzzy@gmail.com) or Ridgely at [ridgelyfuller@gmail.com](mailto:ridgelyfuller@gmail.com).





## Something for the Eye

In a recent email from Eve Stwertka, she noted that, *“during Sunday services in our lovely, freshly-painted sanctuary. Perhaps, having grown up in my artist father’s studio, I tend to place inordinate emphasis on the visual sense. But while I listen to words of wisdom, comfort, information, or music coming from the pulpit, my eyes also roam the wall behind it...”*

She has voiced the thoughts of many others who have missed “something for the eye” during services. One suggestion has been a fabric wall hanging depicting symbols representing some of the

many wisdom traditions that bring Unitarian Universalists together as a community. We invite others to join in the conversation.

## And for the Ear - Piano, Anyone?

Earlier this year, the congregation voted funds for planning a renovation of the Parish House. The goal is to provide space for a minister and staff while maintaining our ability to have potlucks and larger gatherings. As with any renovations, the building project team is looking at the furnishings and artifacts currently in the Parish House. What is important to keep, what should be carefully stored and what should leave the Parish House for a new home?



That leads us to the piano in the corner, the piano which is used more as a table than as a musical instrument. The piano has not been played for over two years although it has been tuned yearly. As the photos demonstrate, it is a small baby grand. One of you may have the talent to play and the room to house this item. Perhaps you have a family member who would love to have the piano. Perhaps you know of a local school or other organization actually looking for a baby grand.

If the piano is just the right gift for yourself or someone you know, contact the church at 207-326-9083 or [office@uucastine.com](mailto:office@uucastine.com)



## Potluck Redux

I think we didn't know how much we missed gathering for our monthly potluck until July 17 when we once again were able to enjoy delicious food and conversation with many of you.

Approximately thirty of us gathered around a bountiful table, selecting delicacies from deviled eggs to shrimp to soft chewy brownies and much more. We also welcomed guests from the community.

When I asked the governing board if they thought it would be a good idea to have an August potluck the answer was a resounding YES.

So, mark your calendars for Sunday August 21, bring your favorite potluck dish, a friend and enjoy the conversation. *-Brooke*



## Coming Up – A Compass Rose Books Event

A Reading & Book Signing with Jeff Lewis  
and Lee Smith

**Land of Cockaigne**

Friday, August 12th at 7 pm  
Unitarian Universalist Church  
88 Court St., Castine

COMPASS ROSE BOOKS

 The event poster features a background of abstract, swirling brushstrokes in shades of blue, green, and white. At the bottom right, there is a logo for "COMPASS ROSE BOOKS" which includes a compass rose and the text "CASTINE, ME" below it.

## A note from your minister

For those who attended our Sunday service on July 31<sup>st</sup>, “Finding Our Prophetic Voices,” I mentioned that The Rev. Sean Parker Dennison is, for me, a contemporary prophetic voice – in the guise of a preaching poet.

Here are the two companion poems that speak in the voice of the prophet.

Ashay, *Margaret*



## A Letter to Our Better Angels

By Sean Parker Dennison

Dear Angels,

It seems important to begin  
by making it clear  
that we are not talking  
about celestial winged beings.  
This letter is addressed instead  
to our better selves,  
the people we hope we will be  
when necessary.

We might also note  
that we more often excel  
at our self-appointed role  
as advocate for the devil,  
a requisite position that  
is also, if you ask us,  
not literal but theoretical,  
and therefore,  
without consequence.

We are writing to let you know  
that we feel your presence

insufficient and unpredictable  
and when we inquire  
about how to make you  
more dependable,  
we are offended by and  
opposed to the level of  
accountability required.

We are hoping to make arrangements  
for an increase in the percentage  
of goodness and presence of  
admirable qualities in ourselves  
and in others (especially in others).  
We respectfully request that this  
come easily, and with immediate  
delivery, a dependable warranty  
and at no extra cost.

We would be even more pleased  
if it could be arranged  
for us to become better people  
without needing to change  
or to consider any needs but our own.  
It would also please us if our status  
as increasingly good could be noted  
in some way. Perhaps a cookie? A badge?  
A halo, so long as it's comfortable.

We hope you will consider our request  
as soon as humanly possible,  
not in Angel Time.  
We have already waited a long time,  
unaware of the seriousness of the situation,  
the disrepair to our reputation.  
Please expedite our request. We have  
only just noticed the world is ending.

Sincerely,



## Letter from Our Better Angels

By Sean Parker Dennison

Dear One,

We have received your letter  
and we hate to tell you—  
not hate so much, but are a bit afraid to say—  
we cannot grant your requests as stated,  
but can only remind you of familiar things:

First, faith.

Faith in yourself and trust in others.  
We know it can be terrifying to be  
vulnerable, but only when you  
share your softest side will we be able  
to break through.

Next, hope.

Hope is not an empty fairy tale.  
It is the true story of all the times  
human beings like you have  
found a way to create the future,  
though you didn't know how.

And of course, Love.

Love that demands you cherish

all people, not just your self and safety.  
Love that is not satisfied until every  
argument ends abruptly when one  
child says, "That hurts."

There is so much to learn and relearn.  
The world teaches you to be hard,  
to negotiate and defend,  
to avoid giving too much and to the wrong  
people.  
There are no wrong people.

You also are not wrong, and when you  
encounter  
the poor, the broken, the unhoused and  
unwelcome,  
you are looking, if you pay attention,  
at us, calling to you, calling you to  
answer your own prayers.

If you want to change the world,  
first, be sure you are changing yourself.  
Be tender. Be kind. Be at peace.  
Be all the things you wish for.  
Be your own better self.  
It isn't without cost  
But it will be free.

Source: "[Breaking and Blessing](#)" Meditations by Sean Parker Dennison. Boston: Skinner House Books, 2020.



The Rev. Sean Parker Dennison is a graduate of Starr King School for the Ministry and was ordained in 2000. He has served congregations in Stockton, California; Salt Lake City, Utah; San Luis Obispo, California; McHenry, Illinois. He also considers his active social media presence a part of his ministry, including posting daily prayers on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) since 2011. Sean has served the Unitarian Universalist Association in a number of ways over the years: serving on the Accountability Group for the Justice General Assembly 2012 held in Phoenix, Arizona; chairing the Journey Toward Wholeness Transformation Committee; serving on the UU Minister's Association nominating committee; serving on the Starr King School for the Ministry Board of Trustees and chairing its Admissions Committee; and helping found TrUUst—an organization for transgender ministers and religious professionals in the UUA. Sean is also a father, grandfather, photographer, painter, and poet.



The sun setting one last time in July, 2022. Green Lake, Maine

### Mary Oliver: *The Sun*

Have you ever seen  
 anything  
 in your life  
 more wonderful  
 than the way the sun,  
 every evening,  
 relaxed and easy,  
 floats toward the horizon  
 and into the clouds or the hills,  
 or the ruffled sea,  
 and is gone—  
 and how it slides again  
 out of the blackness,  
 every morning,  
 on the other side of the world,  
 like a red flower  
 streaming upward on its heavenly oils,  
 say, on a morning in early summer,

at its perfect imperial distance—  
 and have you ever felt for anything  
 such wild love—  
 do you think there is anywhere, in any language,  
 a word billowing enough  
 for the pleasure  
 that fills you,  
 as the sun  
 reaches out,  
 as it warms you  
 as you stand there,  
 empty-handed—  
 or have you too  
 turned from this world—  
 or have you too  
 gone crazy  
 for power,  
 for things?

"The Sun" by [Mary Oliver](#), from *New and Selected Poems: Volume One*. © Beacon Press, 2004.

