

# The COMMON

## A Different Kind of Presidency



Few congregations can boast of a historian of the caliber of Lynn Parsons, whose graceful remembrance of the Kennedy presidency was featured recently in the *Bangor Daily News*. We are honored on pages 6 & 7 to publish a version of that article.

Why so much fuss about JFK? In the words of Peter Gabel, of *Tikkun Magazine*, "Kennedy was able to evoke a feeling of humor, romance, idealism, and youthful energy, and a sense of hope that touched virtually every American alive during that time." See 6&7

### CALENDAR

#### Sunday Pulpit

December 1  
Robert Shetterly

December 8, 15, 22  
Rev. Charles J. Stephens

December 29  
"Do It Yourself"

#### Events

7 pm, Tuesday, Dec. 10  
A Castine Christmas

Board Meeting, Dec. 12

Pot Luck Lunch, Dec. 15

Christmas Eve Service  
5 pm, Tuesday, Dec. 24

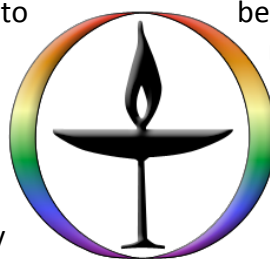
Choir rehearsal,  
Thursdays, 4:30 pm

### FROM THE BOARD

Most of this month's column is devoted to informing those not present at the annual meeting the salient points of that session. But first,

Several members and friends already have responded to Charles' excellent stewardship sermon on November 17 by returning 2014 pledge forms. Letters will

### DELACROIX DAVIS III, PRESIDENT



be forthcoming soon asking others to make their pledges. As Charles stated so well, the less we rely on the endowment for operations, the more is available for social justice and outreach activities.

*continues on pages 4&5*

## CHARLES' COGITATIONS

During this holiday season, stretching from Thanksgiving all the way through New Year's Day, people in our country make great efforts to be with family and friends. The days from Hanukkah, Thanksgiving, Winter Solstice, and Christmas through New Years are clearly the busiest travel days of the year for Americans. There is something about this winter season that makes us long to spend time with friends and family, even if they live in other towns or states.

We may travel short distances to feel at home, or your travels may be a major undertaking. This can be so among people who have created a family of choice as well as among those who are related to one another and return to Grandmother's or the house where they grew up. We may be thinking, "Over the Hill and Through the Woods to Grandmother's House We Go."

As I write this, Alison and I are preparing to join her sisters, their families, and several of our children for a traditional celebration in the Berkshires at an ancient family farm house. At this stage in our lives, our parents are gone and our children and their partners try to share themselves as equally as possible with their mutual families or work schedules. You know, those years when young couples have to work out "whose turn is it this year." We feel fortunate that we will have at least two of our children with us over Christmas.

You may not believe in the legends that go along with the various holidays. But once again as winter approaches we are drawn by the sentiment of the songs, stories, meals, and family traditions. The stories of shepherds with their flocks, the oil of the temple lamp, the birth of a child, the earth-based traditions of adorning our homes with evergreen trees and wreaths and the special foods that parents and grandparents prepared in the past, call to us.

What we are seeking is not the validation of old myths and legends but rather a quest for a deeper sense of connection not only with others, but also to a deeper sense of connection to that which is larger than our individual lives. We may call it the Spirit of Life, God, the Universe or something else, but this time of year many of us sense a tug at our hearts that opens us up to live more deeply, to love more gently, and to have the courage to hope more generously.

I invite you to be good to yourself and join in the life and activities of our liberal religious community during the dark days of December and on into January. Come and help keep the light of truth, the warmth of our community, and the fire of our commitment burning here at UUC.

With Love, Light, and Warmth,  
Charles, your minister

### Note of Thanks

I want to express how pleased I am to have this Congregation in my life. It has been a great joy to be serving as your minister during the past six months. Working with the Board members and other congregational leaders has been a joy. And I especially give an end of year word of thanks to each of the staff for all they bring to our ministry: Gena Churchill, Charles Deans, Kay Hansen, and Becky St. John make serving UUC a pleasure.

### December Calendar of Services

1	Charles is OFF
8	Third in Socrates Sermon Series: "What is Piety?"
10	7 pm, Castine Community Christmas, at our Meeting House
15	Fourth Sunday in Advent
22	Winter Solstice Celebration
24	5 pm Christmas Eve Service
29	Charles is OFF

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION



Kay Hansen  
Religious Educator

Though we may be deceived by a few warm, sunny days, we are aware of the changing number of daylight hours. As we work to put our gardens and beds of flowers to rest, we ponder where the time as gone. After so intently focusing on the ground and plants, we look up and are surprised by the darkness that has closed in upon us. Yes, it is late fall and the shortest day of the year, winter solstice, will come quickly, on December 21.

Ever since people first noticed the shortening of days, long before history was recorded, the winter solstice has been a special time, filled with celebrations. Once, people believed that the ceremonies and rituals they performed on the shortest day would bring back the sun and the light and warmth of summer. For them it was a time of mystery and magic.

Today, we have a scientific understanding of the change of seasons, but many of the old rituals have remained. During December, our religious education class will learn more about traditional solstice beliefs and traditions from different cultures, some ancient and some modern. We will participate in a solstice ceremony and use things from nature to create decorations and gifts of the season.

In addition, we will start off the month of December by launching the UUSC's Guest at Your Table project that has become a yearly tradition. We will be presenting this in church on Sunday, December 8.



Winter Solstice Chant  
by Annie Finch

*Vines, leaves, roots of darkness, growing  
you are uncurled and cover our eyes  
with the edge of winter sky  
leaning over us in icy stars.*

*Vines, leaves, roots of darkness, growing,  
come with your seasons, your fullness, your end.*



If you believe that no Christmas tree is quite as nice as the one you stalk in the wild and fell yourself, then hustle over to Linda Trumbull's home on Mt Tuck, in Stockton Springs. Rural beauty, awesome views, and a absolutely stupendous selection of firs and pines, ready for the saw. And you can't beat the price (free). Please call Lin at 567-4221 to let her know you are coming. Ho, ho, ho...

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FROM THE BOARD, PAGE 1

## Annual Meeting Report

Charles and I have both been in contact with Olav Nieuwejarr, our UUA authorized Ministerial Settlement Representative. Olav will be in Castine one weekend in January or February to address a congregational meeting on the ministerial search process. He will meet earlier with the Board and then with the congregation, probably following a Sunday morning service. I encourage everyone to be present for this important session. There will be ample time allowed for all questions.

Progress is being made—albeit slowly—on the new church website. One new feature we hope to incorporate into the site is audio sermons. A new digital recorder has been acquired and should soon be functional. This may allow those with hearing difficulties to listen to sermons and will allow anyone to hear a sermon exactly as delivered. It will also provide seasonal members and friends a closer tie with the congregation.



The Nominating Committee's recommendation to ratify Tom Mason's service as a full voting Board member, move Leslie Fairbank from alternate to full voting member, and add Deborah Neve as the new alternate member was approved unanimously. The officers and other Board member are in the middle of their terms and no action was required for them.

Gil Tenney, chair of the Finance Committee, reported on the endowment. In January, two new financial managers were retained by the congregation to invest and increase the endowment. After all disbursements for church operations and fees were made, from November 1, 2012 through October 31, 2013, the endowment grew by \$220,439. At its November meeting, the Board approved the revised Finance Committee Investment Strategy providing that the draw on the endowment for the operating expenses of the church not exceed three percent. Operating expenses are defined as the total church budget not including the Pulliam Grants/Awards. The Strategy further provides that the Finance Committee may recommend up to one-half of one percent for Pulliam Grants/Awards.

Lynn Parsons, co-chair of the Social Justice Committee, spoke about the new direction planned for the Pulliam social justice funding. Rather than make grants, the new system envisions encouraging interested organizations to submit applications to be reviewed by the Social Justice Committee for review and possible funding. As Lynn noted, this new effort will require the participation of more congregational friends and members.

*continues on page 5*

FROM THE BOARD, FROM PAGE 4



*Del Davis*

Lynn also pointed out that the amount included for Pulliam Awards in the draft 2014 budget is \$15,000 (one-quarter of one percent), a significant increase.

WG Sayre, chair of the Buildings and Grounds Committee, presented the gathering with a serious problem and a wonderful opportunity. The problem: the northwest corner of the Parish House (the one by the ramp and redeemable containers) is severely damaged by carpenter ants and rot caused by water dripping from the roof. That corner has sunk measurably, and there are cracks in the plaster inside the Parish House.

The opportunity: one way to address the decaying corner could be to raise the entire Parish House and excavate the space underneath to accommodate another level. (If the Trinitarians could accomplish a similar feat in the 1860s, we should at least consider such a project nearly 150 years later.) The additional level could include space for at least two religious education rooms, a real office for the minister, and more. At its November meeting the Board authorized the B&G Committee to solicit a preliminary estimate for the cost of such work from E. L. Shea, the firm that managed the Witherle Library addition and is doing the work for the Historical Society. Much effort needs to go into the consideration of such a project, and we have only started to think about it.

As I stated at the meeting, if you think the past year was exciting, brace yourself: for many reasons, the next year could be even more so.

## Equality means, well, equal

Ten years ago, 7 of the 14 plaintiffs in the Massachusetts case that changed the future of marriage in the United States were Unitarian Universalists. The UA and UU Ministers Association of the Massachusetts Bay District filed amicus curiae briefs in the case. From the beginning UUs have led in this fight for social justice.



*Rev. Peter Morales*

Last month UUA President Peter Morales observed, Now “the governor of Hawaii signed a bill legalizing same-sex marriage. The governor of Illinois has pledged to sign their state’s marriage equality bill that the Illinois State Legislature recently passed. I applaud the great efforts of all who helped secure this victory. These wins for marriage equality did not come easily. Advocates, including many Unitarian Universalists, did not give up; instead they persevered in the long campaign against intolerance and inequality. There are now 16 states with marriage equality, but there are many others still struggling to change minds, laws, and culture. In some of these states, individuals are challenging anti-marriage equality laws through legal action. In others, advocates are working tirelessly to convince elected leaders to proactively vote for legalizing same-sex marriage. No matter the tactics in each of these states, we must continue to do all we can to bring marriage equality to every individual living in this country. As always, we stand on the side of love.

## A DIFFERENT KIND OF PRESIDENCY

Lynn H. Parsons



*President Kennedy with his daughter, Caroline, the new U.S. Ambassador to Japan*

I last saw John F. Kennedy a little more than fifty years ago, as he rode in triumph down Dublin's O'Connell Street in the spring of 1963. He was on the last leg of his tour of Europe, having stood just hours before at the Berlin Wall, hurling defiance at the Communists in East Germany. My wife and I stood at the bridge over the River Liffey, along with the tens of thousands of his fellow Irishmen who turned out to see him, the last great hero of their generation. Now, presidents no longer ride in open cars through the streets of big cities, and I am older by more than a quarter of a century than was Kennedy on that warm spring day in Ireland.

In 1963 I was at the beginning of my career as a college teacher of American history. Since then I have had to confront, as have most American historians in one way or another, Kennedy's impact on his times, and the legacy he left behind. How much of that legacy was style, and how much substance? How much was promise, and how much was achievement? How much legend, and how much myth? For more than a decade after his death, Kennedy's friends and admirers turned out book after book, burnishing the image of the gallant young leader of the free world, relishing the glorious spring that ended only with the bitter November harvest.

Today, the legend of the "one brief shining moment" that was the American Camelot has dimmed. As the Viet Nam tragedy unfolded in the late 1960s, it was impossible for any objective historian to ignore Kennedy's responsibility for some of the decisions that laid the groundwork for an unwinnable war. It was impossible to ignore his initial caution regarding the Civil Rights movement. And it was impossible to ignore the questionable aspects of his personal life, both before and during his presidency.

**Kennedy will remain a symbol, however flawed, of a different kind of presidency, unmatched by any of his successors.**

Kennedy was not the first president to break one of the Ten Commandments (Jefferson, Cleveland, Harding, Franklin Roosevelt). He was not the first president whose decisions brought on war and tragedy (Lincoln, Wilson, Franklin Roosevelt). He was not the first president to be accused of being mostly show and little substance (Theodore Roosevelt). Yet the images of three of those presidents may be found on Mount Rushmore.



*John & Jacqueline Kennedy*

So thousands of Americans each year still flock to the Kennedy library in Boston, and thousands more still visit the gravesite at Arlington. The anniversary of his death has generated yet another cascade of books and memories to accompany the thousands already published. Is this merely the result of media hype, seeking to reap a commercial profit from a fading memory? Perhaps.

KENNEDY, FROM PAGE 6

But for many of us who lived through those dark days in November 1963, Kennedy will remain a symbol, however flawed, of a different kind of presidency, unmatched by any of his successors. Why?



*Brothers Jack, Bobby, and Ted Kennedy*

First of all, this was a president who encouraged public service. The words of his first and only Inaugural Address: “Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country,” spoke not only for the youthful ideals of his generation, but for the old and once-valued tradition of “civic virtue” that goes back to the founders of the Republic, who believed that with citizenship came the obligation to serve the greater good. This was a president who enjoyed and welcomed the give-and-take of open political discussion. His willingness to go before an audience of conservative Protestant ministers to explain why no one should be denied the presidency on religious grounds; his ground-breaking challenge to Vice President Richard Nixon to debate on television; his willingness to hold televised press conferences on an average of every sixteen days during his presidency, all show confidence and enthusiasm about public discourse. Kennedy needed no handlers, no “spin control” experts, to explain what he said or meant to have said. And he needed no teleprompter.

This was a president, who in both his formal and informal speeches demonstrated a level of eloquence that has been all but abandoned by his successors; who could quote from the poetry of Robert Frost as well as the words of the Old Testament. This was a president who, having looked into the abyss of a potential nuclear holocaust during the Cuban missile crisis of 1962, could remind his fellow citizens only a few months before his own violent death, that “if we cannot end now our differences, we can at least help make the world safe for diversity. For in the final analysis our most common link is that we all inhabit this small planet. We all breathe the same air. We all cherish our children’s futures. And we are all mortal.”

So, yes, much of this was indeed symbol over substance. But symbols are nonetheless important. As for substance, we shall never know what the future might have held.

We were in Dublin that November 22. It was early evening, and, like many Americans in those days, we relied on the U. S. Armed Forces Radio for news from home. We were preparing dinner for which we suddenly had no appetite. An Irish friend soon joined us, while we listened in silence as a soft rain fell outside.

There were many Americans who later said that Kennedy’s death affected them more than the death of their parents. The late Theodore Sorensen, who was closer to Kennedy than most, thought he knew why. With the death of a parent, he wrote, people mourn the irrecoverable past. With the death of John F. Kennedy, many of his generation mourned their lost future.

## KNIT GOOD KARMA

Knitting is connected to life, because knitting is part of our lives. In author, UU minister, and Maine Warden Service chaplain Kate Braestrup's words:

Knitting possesses many of the attributes evocative of the human sacred, though not, of course, uniquely. One of the largest errors of religion is our dogged insistence that the window through which one has glimpsed the holy is (must be!) the only window, or at least the best and clearest one.

Though tempted to do so, I will make no such claims for knitting. A patchwork quilt or a bowl hand-thrown from clay or turned from maple would share many of the knitted blanket's high-falutin' attributes.

Like other crafts, knitting has history (ancient, familial, personal). It is a time-honored example of a sustainable, non-violent, creative interaction between human hands and the materials provided to us by the natural world.

Its essential tools are very simple -- sticks and string -- and its essential process equally so (knit and purl), yet generative of apparently inexhaustible creative complexity. The end result of our labors can be as humble as a dish cloth or exalted as a queen's raiment.

Sticks and strings, simplicity and complexity, and the material metaphor that plays itself out as this stitch, taken in this moment, links itself both to the previous stitch and to the subsequent stitch, stitch after stitch linking moment to moment, past to present to future.

And knitting is rhythmic (once you've learned to do it), meditative and deeply calming. Since we are so often knitting for someone we love, it is almost unnecessary to add words in order to make the activity into a prayer. Still, if you're inclined to

pray then, like passing beads through your fingers, the rhythm of knitting lends itself nicely to the kinds of prayers which, repeated often enough, can then become embedded in the action of the fingers and will continue even after the voice is silent.



Rev. Kate Braestrup

So today, you are invited to say a simple prayer as you knit; not the whole time, mind you (it's expected that you will chat, or listen to the radio or watch TV), but just long enough to teach it to your hands, so that your hands can continue to knit the prayer into your portion of the whole: a soft blanket destined to warm a new baby boy.

Like the best expressions of love, it will be both itself absolutely -- a blanket, nothing more, nothing less -- and a metaphor for all the warmth and comfort a community can provide a growing child. This baby shall be wrapped in both.

FYI: This is my knitting prayer:

Loving. Beloved. Loving. Beloved ... Loving. Beloved.

But feel free to knit your own.

*Thanks to Heavenly Socks Yarns Newsletter for this inspirational piece from our favorite warden. The Heavenly Socks Yarns shop is located on Main Street in Belfast*  
Ed.



## ETHICAL EATING

### Food Security

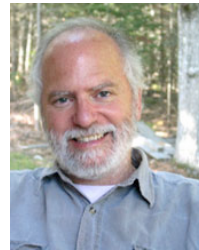
*Third in a series compiled  
by Rev. Gary Kowalski*

Of the total of some 83 million tons of fish produced annually from the marine environment, about 29 million tons are ground up into fishmeal and fed to farmed animals like pigs and chickens and even other kinds of fish, e.g. farmed salmon and shrimp. Still more is converted to fertilizers and fish oil (used in a variety of consumer products, such as margarine). Indeed, over half the volume of fish caught in the North Sea today is reduced into fish meal. The inefficiency in nutritional terms is striking. Translated into a kilo of beef or chicken on dinner plates in Europe or America--it may take as much as 45 kilos (100 pounds) of ground-up live fish to make enough animal feed to produce half a kilo (1 pound) of intensively farmed chicken or beef.

On average it takes 3 kg of grain to produce one kg of meat. Thus, 33 percent of the cropland area is used for livestock. In addition, about 16,000 litres of virtual water are needed to produce one kg of meat. Hence, an increased demand for meat results in an accelerated demand for water, crop, and range land areas... Stabilizing the current meat production per capita by reducing meat consumption in the industrialized world and restraining it worldwide to the 2000 level of 37.4 kg per capita in 2050 would free an estimated 400 million tons of cereal per year for human consumption--enough to cover the annual calorie need for 1.2 billion people in 2050.

1,000 gallons of water are required to produce one gallon of milk. Roughly 634 gallons of water go into producing one hamburger.

## TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION



Rob Shetterly

On Sunday, December 1, friend Robert Shetterly will be our guest in the pulpit. He will speak on a remarkable process newly underway in Maine: the Maine Wabanaki--State Child Welfare Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Modeled in part on the process that helped knit the raveled fabric of post-apartheid South Africa, Maine's commission will explore, among other wrongs, the practice of removing native children from their families and placing them with white families "for their own good."

Esther Attean, a member of the Passamaquoddy tribe, is working with the commission process and is among the newest "Americans Who Tell The Truth" captured indelibly by Rob for his historic series of portraits. Don't miss this one.



## GLITCHES THAT WOULD MAKE A PREACHER SWEAR

Rev. Charles J. Stephens



If you listen to Fox “News” and some elected leaders you might think I am writing about ObamaCare or its real name, the Affordable Care Act.

No, I am not.

Elected politicians against the Affordable Care Act are living in a fantasy-land. They apparently think the present health care system is perfect as is. Now, I am fortunate enough to have health insurance, but it is anything but free of glitches.

Talk about glitches! In October I made a change within my health insurance policy, a change that had nothing to do with the Affordable Care Act. When I went to a doctor’s appointment, there was a glitch when I came to pay my deductible. I called and I waited and waded through

the automated phone system before (I thought) all was fixed.

Later, when Alison went to a doctor’s appointment, she was told that she wasn’t covered--another colossal glitch. Now we have two claims to file with our insurance company. How long do you think that will take?

Back when real negotiations were taking place between the Republicans and the Democrats--talks that produced the Affordable Care Act--we could have gotten a single-payer plan like Canada and many other countries, but that was negotiated away to save the health insurance companies.

There are enough glitches in our modern society to make a preacher swear, and I haven’t even mentioned dealing with cell phone and cable companies. And does anyone remember the roll-out of Windows 8? Talk about glitches!

So, as for the opinions of Fox and their loyal audience, elected and otherwise, they can continue to live in their fantasy world where down means up, shutting down the government means progress, and taking away health coverage is a good thing. Those are glitches that really would make a preacher swear!

*A version of this letter to the editor was published in the Blue Hill Weekly Packet. Ed.*

## MEMBERS OF THE BOARD

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The Governing Board meets in the Parish House at 8:30 am on the second Thursday of each month. Observers always 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.

## CONTACT US

The Rev. Charles J. Stephens  
[minister@uucastine.org](mailto:minister@uucastine.org)  
326-9083 (Meeting House)

Del Davis, President  
[chadbourne.davis@roadrunner.com](mailto:chadbourne.davis@roadrunner.com)  
326-0828

Kay Hansen, Rel. Education  
[hansen85@myfairpoint.net](mailto:hansen85@myfairpoint.net)  
667-9421

Becky St. John, Office Administrator  
[office@uucastine.org](mailto:office@uucastine.org)