

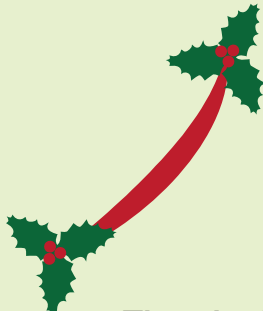


# THE COMMON

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATION OF CASTINE

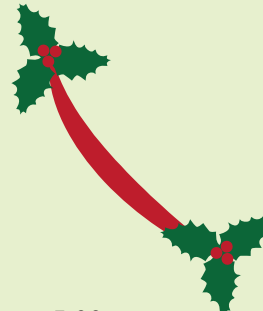
December 2020

## December Services – December's Theme is Stillness



**Sunday, December 6:** 2nd Sunday in Advent – Love.  
Sunday before the start of Chanukkah.  
Sermon: Love and Light – Rev. Margaret Beckman  
Musician: Colleen Fitzgerald

**Sunday, December 13:** 3rd Sunday in Advent – Joy.  
Worship leader: Rev. Margaret Beckman  
Musician: Colleen Fitzgerald



**Thursday, December 17:** A Special “Blue Christmas” Service on Zoom at 5:00 p.m.  
For those who are not feeling completely joyous as Christmas approaches  
For those who know someone who struggles with the holiday season  
Worship leaders: Rev. Julianne Bousquet, Rev. Margaret Beckman, and Intern Vanessa Williams  
A time of quiet music with candles of grief, sorrow, despair, & compassion (more info on page 5)

**Sunday, December 20:** 4th Sunday in Advent – Peace.  
Sunday before the Winter Solstice  
Collaborative Service with Belfast and Ellsworth  
Musicians from all three churches

**Thursday, December 24:** Our Christmas Eve Service on Zoom at 4:00 p.m.  
Carols and candles (more info on page 5)  
A special reading of A Christmas Carol (Charles Dickens) coordinated by Johanna Sweet and friends  
Worship leaders: Rev. Margaret Beckman and Intern Vanessa Williams  
Musician: Colleen Fitzgerald

**Sunday, December 27:** Last Sunday of 2020. Middle of Kwanzaa. Yuletide. New Year.  
Worship leader: Intern Vanessa Williams  
Musician: Ian Brenner-Simpson

### 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

P.O. Box 520, 86 Court Street, Castine, Maine 04421  
207-326-9083 • Office Email: [office@uucastine.org](mailto:office@uucastine.org)  
Website: [uucastine.org](http://uucastine.org) • “Like” us on Facebook  
For questions or comments about *The Common* or to submit items for this newsletter, please contact Jean Lamontanaro at [jean.lamontanaro@gmail.com](mailto:jean.lamontanaro@gmail.com).

## Lakeside Reflections, December 2020



**“Madonna of the Stars”  
by Heung  
Chong Kim,  
Korea**

This Madonna and child came to me from my family’s collection of my family’s company Christmas

cards produced for four decades beginning the 1950s. This is the 1960 card. It, like all the others, is porcelain enamel on steel with individual hand screen printing of each color. I think my grandfather put this small metal card in the wood frame and hung it on the wall for some time.

This image is striking in its simplicity and the depth of emotion between mother and infant. If you look closely (maybe, like me, you need to blow up the image or get out your magnifying glass!) you’ll see the face of a very young mother. There is a tenderness and an innocence in this mother. We cannot see the child’s face at all. He is fully snuggled in his mother’s arms. Her long jet-black braided hair, her eyes, her dress – all are characteristic of this artist’s world and interpretation of the birth of the Christ child. The picture contains a simple manger and the barnyard animals (bull and rooster) of the artist’s imagination. The cobalt blue sky contrasts sharply and beautifully with the brilliance of the one and many stars.

Art invites us to enter into an image and find there our own meaning. For me, this Madonna of the Stars is wonderfully different from the

many thousand Madonna and child images from European artists. Art tends to reflect its creator’s world. This artist is Korean; the mother and child are Korean. There is no blond hair or blue eyes here. There is no pretense to greatness beyond the light that surrounds the heads of our two figures. In my heart, the holy infant comes in simplicity and tenderness, without trumpets, kings, angels or even shepherds. This is the story of a mother too young to understand the life that awaits her, but already devoted to her baby, accompanied by the roosters and cattle that watched over her during labor and birthing.

My Christmas story tells me of the birth of the child that is the incarnation of divine love that lives within each and every one of us. This child, born to Mary and Joseph among the livestock without the aid of even a midwife, was able to grow into his calling to love the world. Love comes to us in so many guises. This is one of them. How does Love, Christmas Love, come to you? Each of us will find meaning and comfort in the story of our own heart if we let that story emerge from deep within. The Madonna of the Stars may help you find your holy story and bring it to life.

This Christmas we will not be surrounded by lots of family and friends; we will not gather in our Parish House and our Meeting House. We will have a quieter Christmas than most. Perhaps this year, Love will come to you and your loved ones in simple, unadorned, ways that will surprise and delight you. May you take time to find the special joy and hope in this unusual year. May we also look forward to future Christmases when we will again gather and sing together.

Namaste, *Margaret*

## From Your Collaborative Ministry Team Intern

### A Spirit of Anticipation

In my childhood, Christmas began on the first Sunday of Advent, when my mother hung the silver-and-gold-foil angel on the brick fireplace. Each week she brought out more decorations, until the house was full of Christmas, culminating with the decorated tree we did not see until Christmas Eve.

My father took us out on long errands on the 24th — all the way to Sheffield to buy the Christmas hare, or visiting with godparents, or caroling under the brightly lit tree outside the town library. Then we went home, where we ate a simple supper and waited impatiently for the magic of Christmas to begin.

Our living room, when we were finally allowed into it, had been transformed. The tree sparkled with glass bulbs, colored lights, and *lametta* (tinsel). Presents were heaped underneath. The *Christkind* (Christ child) brought the tree and the gifts, we were told. We didn't know about Santa Claus until we went to school.

We weren't allowed to open our presents right away. First we had to light the final candle of our Advent wreath. We had to sit on the couch and sing carols, both in English and in German. My father's rasping voice contrasted with my mother's clear soprano. The candlelight shimmered in her hazel eyes. We had to eat another round of cookies, baked in batches throughout the month — *nussemausen* and *lebkuchen* and raisin-studded *stollen* — as my parents sipped eggnog from tiny glasses.

Christmas Eve was all the more special because we had built toward it all month long. Each Sunday we lit another candle of our evergreen wreath, gathering around the table for hot chocolate and cookies and songs. We ended each session with a German song that counted down the days until December 24 (the proper date of Christmas, by the way).

The most fun of all was when we sang it on the 23rd, and heard my mother say "*morgen*" — "tomorrow" — Christmas would come.

The season of Advent mirrors that sense of

anticipation. It's a time of waiting. A period of gestation, as the earth turns cold and people turn inward. In the Christian tradition, Advent is similar to Lent. A time to ponder our human frailty and look ahead to the promise of new life.

"How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of the messenger who brings good news, the good news of peace and salvation, the news that the God of Israel reigns!" wrote the prophet Isaiah in the sixth century BCE.

Isaiah (or one of them; the prophecies were likely written by different people in different time periods) also spoke about making straight in the wilderness a highway for God; hammering swords into ploughshares and spears into pruning hooks; and the wolf and the lamb living as one.

This is the dream at the heart of the Jewish and Christian traditions — a world united in peace and good will. It's the sentiment we read on Christmas cards and sing in carols. It's a dream we Unitarian Universalists share, as well.

This Christmas season will be different for most of us. Family gatherings will be small. Some of us will be alone on Christmas Day, or in the same couples or family groups as any other day of the year. There is much to mourn.

Yet the enforced isolation also holds a gift: a time to sink more deeply into the heart of the holiday. With beloved traditions on hold — Christmas parties, Christmas pageants, Christmas caroling — we have time to reflect on what it's all about.

The dream of world peace. The birth of hope, in all its many forms. The reminder that there is always new life and that it can come in the most unlikely of ways.

May this Advent season offer you moments of peace and of joy. May you be blessed by a spirit of anticipation, preparing yourself for new life ahead.

Bettina



## From Your Ministerial Intern

### Deconstructing “Happy Holidays”

As the winter holidays arrive this season, it is fitting that my task as of right now for my Constructive Theology class is to discern my personal theology. I have often struggled with articulating my faith, which is not exactly what I was raised as, (loosely Lutheran). Coming into the holiday season, as *Happy Holidays* prevail, I wonder, what exactly I am personally subscribing to when I receive such a greeting?

Yes, I am Unitarian Universalist, but what do I believe? In contemplating this, I learned the following of myself: I believe in the 7 (and 8th) principles set forth in Unitarian Universalism, but even before that, I believe in an entity that is greater than I, greater than the universe, greater than anything that can be imagined. But I believe that we, as beings, as creations of existence are a part of this entity. Some might be settled to just say “God,” but I am a philosopher at heart and delve deep into what exactly is meant by such a term. To me God, Spirit, is greater than we can completely comprehend, with names being inadequate for this entity. But it is not without merit to attempt to grasp at this greatness, in reverence of its entirety.

Perhaps this is why so many different faiths have different means of understanding this entity—be it God, Goddess, a combination of deities, or otherwise. Contemplating different faiths, I can see the merits in many, and yet have struggled to find which is mine. From this search I have come to find that my faith is eclectic. When one wishes me ‘Happy Holidays’ I think of a flame that withstands the dark nights longer than possible,

I think of a newborn babe that brings hope to the world for holiness, I think of the divinity of a goddess spirit that births the sun into being, I think of people reunited after centuries torn asunder from homeland and each other.

My belief in a panentheistic entity that is and creates and holds the entirety in its being has room for all of these faith traditions. I may not attend each of the separate houses of worship that these faiths deem holy, but I have reverence for them. In this way, I can appreciate the holiday greetings specific to the individual holidays that pass through these months, as well as the all-encompassing “Happy Holidays.” At this time, even in our separate quarters may we see ourselves and feel the holiness of spirit in the warm-hearted greetings of many faiths that still surround us,

Happy Hanukkah,

Merry Solstice,

Blessed Yule,

Happy Kwanzaa,

Merry Christmas,

Happy New Year,

Happy Holidays!

Vanessa

Vanessa Williams  
11/27/2020

## December Special Services

### Blue Christmas Service

A Blue Christmas Service is offered especially for those hurting during the holidays. It's often offered on or near the Winter Solstice, the longest night of the year. Some come because they are mourning the death of a loved one. Some are far from home. Some suffer from illness, addiction, or estrangement. Some are lonely, struggling financially, or in conflict with another. Some hurt because of the great pain, need, and violence in our nation and world. This year, all of us are feeling a bit blue about the family and religious traditions we won't be sharing as we maintain a safe and respectful Covid-19-advised distance from each other. The reasons for coming are many. We gather, via Zoom, in the midst of sadness to remember that there is goodness in life and each other. We are not alone; Love surrounds and holds us.

Our worship leaders for this special service are Rev. Margaret Beckman, Ministerial Intern Vanessa Williams and special guest Rev. Julianne Bousquet (affiliated Community Minister of the Unitarian Universalist Meeting House of Pittsfield, Maine).

Time: Dec 17, 2020 05:00 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84063701085?pwd=VXdIQkUxTzYxOVZoc29lSCtLWlJZdz09>

Meeting ID: 840 6370 1085

Passcode: 827004

One tap mobile +16465588656,,89101192556#,,,,,0#,,143144# US (New York)

Dial by your location +1 646 558 8656 US (New York)



### Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

Charles Dickens was described by a contemporary as “an enlightened Unitarian” due to his sympathy with the Unitarian commitment to social justice. A *Christmas Carol* is perhaps the most well-known of all Dickens’ writing and the message of Christmas kindness and generosity is a clear reflection of his spirituality and worldview. This Christmas Eve, Johanna Sweet will be our master story-teller and she and a small team of players will bring this age-old Christmas story to life. Like England in 1843, our world could benefit from a stronger commitment to justice for all.

Our Christmas Eve Service of story, song and candlelighting (remember to have your own candle close at hand for the community singing of Silent Night) is a time of music, celebration, and fellowship. Everyone near and far, familiar and visiting is most welcome. We are live on Zoom for this service that begins at 4:00 p.m. A short time of sharing and greeting each other begins at 3:30 p.m.

Time: Dec 24, 2020 03:30 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89101192556?pwd=OUV0SIA0SW5QZFRETjZ3MFQ4dTIWQT09>

Meeting ID: 891 0119 2556

Passcode: 143144

One tap mobile +16465588656,,89101192556#,,,,,0#,,143144# US (New York)

Dial by your location +1 646 558 8656 US (New York)



## Opportunity Fund Update

### Not the time to lose a homeless shelter

Submitted by Gil Tenney  
for the UUCO Opportunity Fund

**On November 10th the Maine Community Foundation (MCF) forwarded to me an emergency request from Tracey Hair, director of H.O.M.E. The following are excerpts from Tracey's email to MCF.**

"The Sister Barbara Hance House is a Transitional House for nine individuals transitioning from jail or homelessness. The septic system at that location has failed and the anticipated repair cost is between \$16,000 - \$20,000 - so far."

"If things couldn't get worse during a pandemic, we have also discovered during a major repair we are currently undertaking at the Emmaus Homeless Shelter, that we have a significant mold problem in the original ceiling. As a result we have

closed the three family rooms. We have received an estimate for \$23,000...."

**Tracey went on to comment** "this is a crucial time for our County to lose more shelter beds...."

**Without hesitation the UUCO Opportunity Fund joined several MCF donors to provide emergency funding for both sites.**

**Here is Tracey's November 16th response.**

"I am grateful for your support. I am also humbled to learn that we have raised almost the entire amount to complete both jobs. Which in our area translates to reopening the three large family rooms at Emmaus Homeless Shelter by December as well as ensuring that the 9 individuals in transition at the Sister Barbara Hance House remain housed. Thank you for your support!"

## Holiday Program for Those Who are Grieving

For those who are grieving, the holiday season can be particularly challenging, and this is especially true during this unusual time. Hospice Volunteers of Hancock County is offering a special program of support for those who are grieving during this season.

**Saturday, December 12, from 9:45 - 12:00, online via Zoom, and free of charge.**

The program will include a remembrance service, focused group support, and the gifts of community and connection during these isolating times.

Pre-registration is required, by December 4. Call 207-667-2531 or email [info@hospiceofhancock.org](mailto:info@hospiceofhancock.org).



Photo by Pixabay at pexels.com

## Holiday Tree Trail in Witherle Woods

Take a stroll along the Holiday Tree Trail this season. In cooperation with the Maine Coast Heritage Trust, the Castine Arts Association is sponsoring a tree decorating project that invites individuals and families to choose a tree along a designated trail in Witherle Woods and adorn that tree with nature-friendly decorations.

Decorators are invited to begin this project the Friday after Thanksgiving (Nov. 27). Decorating may take place anytime during the season with

a decoration removal date occurring during the first week in January.

Downloadable map and more information, including guidelines for nature-friendly decorations at:

<https://www.castinearts.org/>

Contact Information

[info@castinearts.org](mailto:info@castinearts.org)

Johanna Sweet – 326-4924



Photos courtesy of Brooke Tenney





## A Holiday Message from the UUA President

The following is from an email message from Unitarian Universalist Association President Rev. Dr. Susan Frederick-Gray

*As we embark on this season of holidays and holy days, I hold you and our faith community in deep care. This season will be different than any we can remember. We cannot gather in our sanctuaries and sacred spaces, bedecked with greenery and poinsettias. We cannot gather close together in candlelight and song. Our dearly held traditions that bring so much joy to this season of magic and beautiful darkness will be pared down, virtual, even canceled altogether.*

*It's heartbreaking to think of going through this season without the company of extended family and friends. And for so many of us who have lost loved ones, our grief will be heavier during the holidays—especially in a year such as this.*

*It reminds me that it is more important than ever that we let the people in our lives know how much we care about them. We need each other now more than ever. I am grateful for the ways technology allows family and community and colleagues to gather and support each other across great distances. In this spirit, I offer this [holiday video message](#) to you and your congregation.*

Susan's holiday video message can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VIMhI7TXMQI&feature=youtu.be>

## “The Shortest Day” Susan Cooper

And so the Shortest Day came and the year died  
And everywhere down the centuries of the snow-  
white world  
Came people singing, dancing,  
To drive the dark away.  
They lighted candles in the winter trees;  
They hung their homes with evergreen;  
They burned beseeching fires all night long  
To keep the year alive.  
All the long echoes, sing the same delight,  
This Shortest Day,  
As promise wakens in the sleeping land:  
They carol, feast, give thanks,  
And dearly love their friends,  
And hope for peace.



Photo by Arvind shakya at pexels.com