



THE COMMON

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATION OF CASTINE

March 2026

It is 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 and friends while serving our broader communities.

A Month of Sundays in

- | | |
|--------|--|
| Mar 1 | Worship Leader: Rev Amy DeBeck
Musician: Colleen Fitzgerald |
| Mar 8 | Worship Leader: Rev Amy DeBeck
Musician: Karen Froehly |
| Mar 15 | Worship Leader: Rev Amy DeBeck
Musician: Karen Froehly
Special Congregational Meeting
Potluck |
| Mar 22 | Worship Leader: Guest Speaker
Musician: Colleen Fitzgerald |
| Mar 29 | Worship Leader: Rev Amy DeBeck
Musician: Karen Froehly and
Marion Feldman |

Contact Us

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207-326-9083 • Email: office@uucastine.org
Website: uucastine.org • “Like” us on Facebook

For questions or comments about The Common or to submit items for this newsletter, please contact Victoria Bujan office@uucastine.org.



Ministerial Meanderings

Do you remember the old saying that March comes in like a lion and goes out like a lamb? Climate change notwithstanding, it still mostly works to describe what we see in the weather of March. The end of Winter happens and we welcome Spring on March 20.

Let's take a little stroll through our memories, and look ahead on the calendar to see what we could pay attention to in March. It has 5 Sundays—you get more church than usual! March is Women's History Month so pay attention to whatever you do through that lens.

March 8 we enter into Daylight Savings Time. We all definitely want to pay attention to the time change!

March 11, 2020 is regarded widely as the first day that the US began Covid quarantine measures.

March 11, 2021, I got my first Covid vaccine. It's on my card! Do you have your card? Pay attention to your medical records.

Lent continues all through March, calling its observers to pay attention to their spiritual life. Ramadan also asks its observers to focus on their spiritual life, while fasting during daylight hours. Ramadan ends on Wednesday evening March 18, with the feast of Eid. If you get

invited by a Muslim friend to attend an Eid celebration, go!

March 17 is St. Patrick's day. Pay attention by reading up on the actual origins of the day, as well as celebrating by dyeing a beverage green.

March 20 is Vernal Equinox, or first day of Spring.

March 26 the Red Sox open their season with an away game against the Cincinnati Reds.

March 28, all around the world, people will participate in the largest public demonstration in US history when No Kings 3 happens. Castine will hold one, too.

March 29 is Palm Sunday, celebrated globally in Christian churches. As Christians are asked to examine and re-dedicate the central place of Jesus in their lives, we, too, can pay attention to his message of love. Love thy neighbor is a great way to pay attention.

We might come in like lions, blustering from the cold, shaking off our snow gear, but we can let March be a time for reflection and detail, so that we are lambs by the end, paying attention to what matters.

In peace,
Rev Amy



President's Letter

This is the snowiest late winter/early spring I've experienced in Castine.

The days are filled with sunshine and longer daylight hours, but Castine remains covered in snow. The song birds, squirrels, deer and even the Canada geese are working overtime to find food!

We had a minor emergency on Sunday, February 8th when our new heating system failed because the system's air intake-outlet pipe was blocked by ice. Everyone pitched in to quickly set up for a Sunday service in the Parish House, which was much warmer than the Sanctuary. Since the Parish House lacks a piano, Colleen Fitzgerald skillfully organized an acapella program for the music. Happily, heating was restored after the ice blockage was removed, but the system clearly requires modification so that this does not recur every bitterly cold Sunday morning.

On Sunday, 22 February, we were greeted with bright sunshine and seasonal temperatures when we suddenly lost power just as Rev. Amy was beginning the service. She continued without a microphone, but used her cell phone to stay connected to our Zoomers. Central Maine Power indicated that the outage covered the



entire town of Castine and power was restored within a few hours.

Our February 2026 Sunday services seem to be full of surprises but with everybody's help we've kept things going.

I gladly turn the calendar to welcome March!

Respectfully Submitted,

Marcia Mason



Background on Steeple Repairs



acceptable to the Historic District as it does not change the appearance of the historic structure. The advantage is that these trim pieces should require no maintenance for a very long time, if ever. Shea also submitted an estimate of \$15,000-\$20,000 to remove the rotten finials before winter. Due to concern of more falling steeple parts, this was done in December with the lift operator noting that several seemed to be just a nudge away from falling. The cost was \$11,060, coming in

On April 20, 2025, Easter Sunday, a finial from atop the steeple was found in the Parsonage driveway –it had rotted and broken off the highest part of the steeple. During the course of the next several months, five contractors were contacted. All noted the height of the mantle (the highest level of the steeple) from where the finial had fallen and that a very tall lift would be needed to determine how extensive the damage was and to eventually make the repairs. E.L. Shea used a drone to initially view the steeple and found extensive rot, not only in the bases of the finials, but in the rail around both levels. Also noted was that one of the bell supports showed signs of rot, and so we were warned not to ring the bell until it was fixed.

In the end, E.L. Shea was the only contractor to submit an estimate. Their estimate submitted on September 22, 2025, came in at \$153,944, using poly/fiberglass replacement finials and rails. Upon inquiry we have found that the use of modern materials such as this is

under the estimate.

This winter the Board has investigated the possibility of seeking grants to help pay for the repairs needed to the steeple. Lisa Lutts, who has had experience writing grants, was invited to speak to the Board. She noted that The Maine Steeple Fund appears to be the best fit, as some granting agencies will not fund churches, and some will not fund historic preservation projects. Lisa enlightened the Board as to the multi-step process involved for The Maine

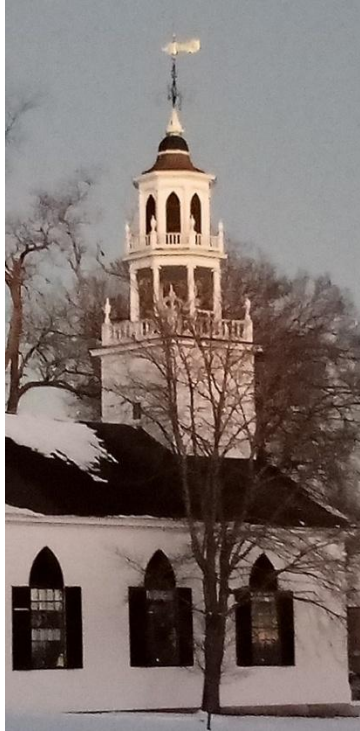


Steeple Fund. The first step is to fill out a basic form with information about our organization deemed a good candidate on paper, the next step would be a site visit. If these two steps meet with approval, we would be invited to apply for an assessment grant. If approved for an assessment grant, a preservation architect would assess the scope of the work and create a report at a cost of \$2,500-\$5,000; of this, the grant would cover 90%. The next step would be to apply for an implementation grant. If we should be granted the full amount, the fund would pay for a 50-50 split of the cost to repair the steeple, up to \$60,000. In our case, \$60,000 would only cover about 38% of the cost of the project, not including the cost of a grant writer for each step. And, there is no guarantee, after going through the process, that we would be awarded the full amount or any grant at all. The whole process from initial proposal to starting repair work could be two or more years. In the meantime, the steeple will continue to deteriorate, requiring more extensive and costlier repairs. It should be noted here that since the initial estimate received from E.L. Shea in September, their costs have increased over 3% and to implement repairs now will cost approximately 159,875. E.L. Shea indicated that a multi-year delay in implementation would increase costs by 10-15% each year.

Another consideration involves ethics. There are many congregations with old buildings who are not able to fund an entire

steeple project on their own. To them, a Maine Steeple Fund grant is a lifeline. To take funds away from an equally deserving but less financially fortunate church does not seem right.

We are blessed with an endowment worth \$9.2M as of 2-18-26. It has not only supplied us with operating funds each year, but has also grown well past the \$7.5M it was valued at just after purchasing the Parsonage. A major portion of the endowment was given by Deborah Pulliam, who not only had a strong interest in social justice, but a strong commitment to historic preservation as well. We have been entrusted with the care of this building and the funds with which to do so.



In light of the urgent need to stabilize the steeple, the length of time involved in a grant writing process with no guarantee of success, the ethical issues a grant presents, as well as the ever-rising costs for completing the repairs, the Board recommends self-funding this project. This project is too large to be absorbed by our annual budget and thus we will come to the members of the congregation at a special meeting to be held Sunday, March 15, following service, to seek approval of the Board's recommendation to expend \$160,000 to repair the steeple of our historic Meeting House. We hope this background information is helpful in your consideration of this request.

Respectfully submitted,
UUCU Governing Board



Clerk's Summary

The Governing Board held its monthly meeting on February 19th. It always amazes me how one topic often leads logically into another regardless of how the agenda is ordered.

The Treasurer's research into several small bequests, received prior to 1965, highlighted the need for some legal advice regarding their age and availability. This dovetailed with the Board's interest in understanding more about Deborah Pulliam's bequest, as reported last month. An estate attorney, recommended by Ellen Best who has retired, will be contacted so that we may learn more about all of these bequests in one consultation.

The Board voted to engage Andrea White, a CPA from Bangor, to do a Review of UUCC's finances (more about the specifics of that in the Bean Counter's Report).

And then came the projects.

The steeple repair project had considerable discussion regarding whether to self-fund or seek outside grants. The urgency to get this project underway before more steeple parts fall, along with the long timeframe involved in the grant-writing process, pushed the Board toward bringing the facts and figures to you, our Congregation, for a vote. Please stay tuned for the Congregational Meeting announcement and background information coming soon.

Regarding the Parsonage bathroom project, the Building and Grounds Committee continues to meet with contractors and plumbers. Based upon these consultations, they feel that it would make sense to think of the bathroom renovations as three separate projects: 1) the upstairs bathroom – replacing the bathtub and the surround. 2) the downstairs bathroom – a total renovation, and 3) an additional bathroom added in the ell. The Committee will continue to gather information and bring a recommendation for discussion to the next Board meeting.

New to the Board's discussion this month, was Rev. Amy's suggestion that UUCC become a Sanctuary Church which would entail specifically worded signage. She will supply some wording options and more discussion will ensue next month.

The Governing Board's next meeting will be March 19th at 10 a.m.

Debbie Morehouse, Clerk

President: Marcia Mason

Vice President: Tom Mason

Treasurer/Clerk: Debbie Morehouse

Members:

Peter Fairbank

Keith Hagel

David Jarrett

Alvion Kimball

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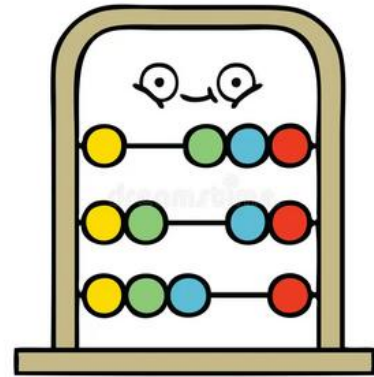
b.or_lesliefairbank@icloud.com



Bean Counter's Tally

through February 2026

Regarding our investments, those who watch these things on a daily basis can obsess about the fluctuations up and down from day to day, feeling uneasy when there appears to be a downturn and elated when the numbers go up. By taking a step back, we can see that, overall, our investments are holding their own through the first month and a half of 2026. The balance, mid-month, stood at \$9.2M.



As reported last month, we have been looking into having our books audited. We have been in touch with a CPA recommended to us and have learned that there are three different types of engagement.

- 1) Compilation - the least in depth and least expensive, uses figures we provide to compile a financial statement with very little investigation unless obvious discrepancies are observed.
- 2) Review – is more in-depth, focusing on accounting practices and procedures so that a financial statement can be compiled with more assurance of accuracy.
- 3) Audit – the most in-depth and most expensive, it includes all of the elements of a Review, but goes beyond a Review to verify bank balances, supporting documents, etc. The resulting financial statement has the highest (though not absolute) assurance of accuracy and adherence to generally accepted accounting principles.

Since we have had 2 Bookkeepers, 2 Treasurers, 2 Finance Chairs, 2 Ministers, and 3 Church Administrators since our last audit in 2019, the Governing Board has decided that it would be most useful at this time to have a Review conducted. It seems prudent to make sure our practices and procedures, which can erode over time with changes in personnel, are in good order. The next step is to set up an appointment, sometime after the busy tax season for CPAs is over.

Please feel free to reach out to me with any questions you may have on UUCC's financial circumstances.

Debbie Morehouse,
Chief Bean Counter (aka Treasurer)





Potluck on March 15th!

When: March 15th,

our traditional 3rd. Sunday potluck day,

Where: *86 Court Street in the Parish House*

All are welcome!

11:30 to 2pm ;

in the spirit of Potluck, you may bring a dish to share



Be Empty of Worrying

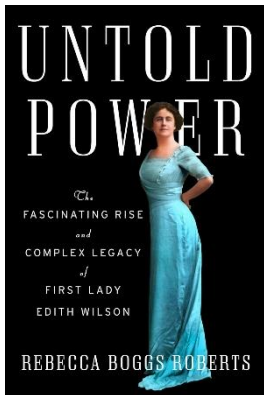
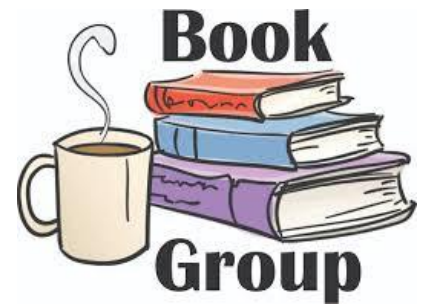
by Rumi

Be empty of worrying
Think of who created thought
Why do you stay in prison
When the door is so wide open
Move outside the tangle of fear thinking
Live in silence
Flow down and down
Into always widening
Rings of being



UCC READS

This week, UCC Reads will begin discussing *Untold Power* by Rebecca Roberts



While this nation has yet to elect its first woman president—and though history has downplayed her role—just over a century ago a woman became the nation’s first acting president. In fact, she was born in 1872, and her name was Edith Bolling Galt Wilson. She climbed her way out of Appalachian poverty and into the highest echelons of American power and in 1919 effectively acted as the first woman president of the U.S. (before women could even vote nationwide) when her husband, Woodrow Wilson, was incapacitated. Beautiful, brilliant, charismatic, catty, and calculating, she was a complicated figure whose personal quest for influence reshaped the position of First Lady into one of political prominence forever. And still nobody truly understands who she was.

Consider becoming part of the UCC Reads book discussion. Email office@uucastine.org and we will add you to the weekly reminder list.



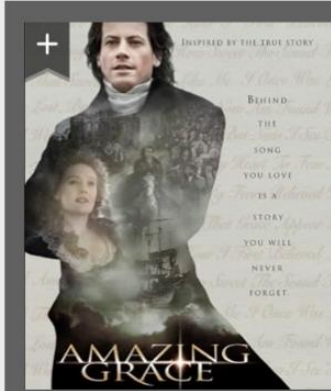
First Sunday Day of Giving for The Little Free Pantry



Please bring non-perishable items to the Parish House to help restock the Little Free Pantry behind the Clinic. This resource is being used and appreciated by our community. Help us keep it filled with nutritious food. Thank you for giving!



The Castine Arts Association invites you to **Potluck and a Movie Night**



January 22

AMAZING GRACE

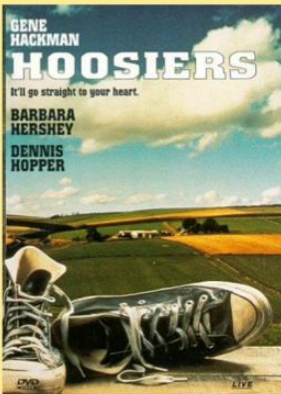
Host - Joel Deckler



March 5

KING OF THE HILL

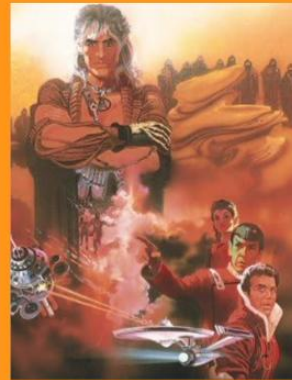
Host - Riva Berleant



February 5

HOOSIERS

Host - Kevin DeBeck



March 19

STAR TREK II THE WRATH OF KAHN

Host - Kevin DeBeck



February 19

DAVE

Host - Don Tenney



April 2

The Turning Point

Host - Pat Winter

Thursdays 5:30 Potluck Supper at Emerson Hall 6:30 -Movie



www.castinearts.org

