



THE COMMON

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATION OF CASTINE

December 2023

A Month of Sundays in December

3	Rev. Charles Stephens, Worship Leader Julian Gardner & Chris Poulin, Musicians
10	Johanna Sweet, Lay Leader Colleen Fitzgerald, Musician
17	TBD Karen Froehley, Musician Potluck Sunday
24	Rev. Mark Worth, Worship Leader Colleen Fitzgerald, Musician
31	We are invited to the Belfast Unitarian Church Rev. Amy Fiorilli, Worship Leader Service at 10 a.m. and on zoom



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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Website: uucastine.org • “Like” us on Facebook

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

From the President's Desk



At the Annual Meeting we elected a new member (Christian Walker) as the alternate and Debbie Morehouse as the Board Clerk. Both working budgets passed unanimously. Gil Tenney received a standing ovation for his many years of work for the church, especially serving as Chair of the Finance committee for 12 years. Gil also praised Stan Bourne, his predecessor, for setting an example for him to follow. A well-deserved tribute.

Soon wreaths will be hung on our doors to welcome all and recognizing our “yankee” traditions, a real Christmas tree will adorn the sanctuary. Christmas food packages will be delivered by the No Neighbor Left Behind group to those who need a little hand up.

Cards will be sent to friends and family, while some will visit those we love. Packages will be mailed in hopes that the USPS makes the deliveries on time. Phone calls will be made with everyone on “Speaker Phone” to wish each other a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. And yes, I still say Merry Christmas.

Prayers will be said for those in harm’s way, those ill, those whose hearts have been broken and silent prayers for all. Hopefulness for 2024 will be in our minds. So, as I write my last article for this year, I wish you all a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year, good health and happiness. Thank you for your guidance, support and friendship throughout 2023 this year.

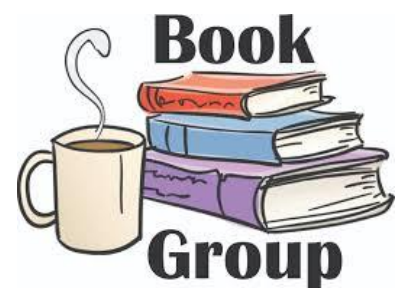
Blessings to All, Cindi

UUCC Reads Tuesdays at 3:30 p.m. on ZOOM.

Our next book will be *The Ride of Her Life* by Elizabeth Letts. This is the incredible true story of a woman who rode her horse across America in the 1950s, fulfilling her dying wish to see the Pacific Ocean, from the #1 New York Times bestselling author of *The Perfect Horse* and *The Eighty-Dollar Champion*.

In 1954, Annie Wilkins, a sixty-three-year-old farmer from Maine, embarked on an impossible journey. She had no relatives left, she'd lost her family farm to back taxes, and her doctor had just given her two years to live--but only if she lived restfully. He offered her a spot in the county's charity home. Instead, she decided she wanted to see the Pacific Ocean just once before she died. She bought a cast-off brown gelding named Tarzan, donned men's dungarees, loaded up her horse, and headed out from Maine in mid-November, hoping to beat the snow. She had no map, no GPS, no phone. But she had her ex-racehorse, her faithful mutt, and her own unflinching belief that Americans would treat a stranger with kindness.

Consider becoming part of the UU Reads book discussion. Drop an email to Debbie at office@uucastine.org and we will add you to the weekly reminder list.



No Neighbor Left Behind

As we head into this final month of 2023, recognizing the increasing food and fuel needs in our area has reinforced our mission statement, especially “serving our broader communities.” Prior to COVID, we created meals to serve approximately 84 individuals each quarter of the year. Today, our numbers fluctuate around 140 meals needed and is rising. Sobering.

The good news is that we have the capacity to meet these needs. Even when construction was taking place in our fellowship hall and kitchen, the Trinitarian Church and all of you who volunteer your time, baking skills, driving acumen, and packing prowess have made the fulfillment of our NNLB commitment possible.

We have served shepherd’s pie, meatloaf, seasoning-rubbed chicken, and ham with baked beans dinners during this past year. The dinners are always well-received, and the personal touches, such as making apple crisp, cookies, and home-made coleslaw, are appreciated.

Furthermore, the annual budget has continued to include NNLB and has increased its support from \$1200 to \$1500 for the year. That increase helps offset our ever-growing costs of food and packing goods. \$375 per quarter will enable us to meet these expenses.

So here we are, heading toward 2024 with our next NNLB meal scheduled for January 12th. We will be able to gather in our beautifully renovated space and fill the air with the smell of good food and the sounds of laughter and fellowship. Although I will not be in Castine on the 12th, Marcia Mason and Brooke Tenney will be at the helm, and the three of us will reach out to you for your always generous help.

We are thinking to repeat the meatloaf meal, as it is always popular. As the date draws closer, we’ll reach out to volunteers and look forward to working with you all.

As always, thank you, Johanna Sweet



December 17th - Potluck Sunday

It’s time to celebrate the Solstice, Christmas, Hannukah, Kwanza and just being together as a community of family and friends. In this season of over-consumption, let’s consider lighter dishes of basic body and soul satisfying food to share (and don’t forget your veggies!). Family and friends are always welcome! See you Dec. 17 following service.



Annual Castine Holiday Celebration

Sponsored by the Castine Arts Association

**Monday, December 11th
7 - 8 p.m.**

Trinitarian Congregational Parish of Castine
68 Main St., Castine

A Castine Holiday Celebration is our annual music festival to showcase the spirit of the season. We invite the community to gather again to enjoy this festive time together. We anticipate that the evening will likely include:

- * "The Night before Christmas" read by Ray Nualla, and perhaps a visit from the old fellow himself.....
- * A children's story read and/or told by Johanna Sweet
- * Some excellent brass Quintet music led by Si Yates
- * Beautiful selections sung by the Castine Community Choir
- * A community sing-along to Christmas carols

And perhaps additional music or entertainment to make this season the jolliest ever!



Holiday Meal Boxes

We are so pleased to report that our Thanksgiving Food Box drive was a success with some funds left over. These will be used for our Holiday Food Boxes. If you would like to participate in this important and needed program to bring holiday food and cheer to the food-insecure in our area, please send a check with meal boxes in the memo to UUCG, P.O. Box 520, Castine, Maine, or donate on-line at uucastine.org.



Memento Mori Conversations

The Memento Mori Conversations are gentle and informative discussions on subjects about and around the many topics related to Death and Dying. Maya Massar is offering a welcoming space in which to explore this universally relevant, yet often taboo subject.



Come to listen, come to share. We truly hope to see you there!

Witherle Memorial Library
 Second Wednesdays of the month:
 Dec 13, Jan 10, Feb 14, Mar 13,
 Apr 10, May 8, Jun 12
 5:30 - 7:30 p.m.

Also offered at Bucksport Memorial Library
 Second Thursday of the month - 8:30 - 10 a.m.

For more information
www.HeartfulLivingandDying.com



Wednesday, December 20 at 4 pm PT/ 5 pm MT/ 6 pm CT/ 7 pm ET

The Winter Solstice occurs when Earth's axis tilts away from the sun, making it the shortest day and longest night of the year for those living in the Northern Hemisphere. Join UUMFE the evening BEFORE the Winter Solstice for music, reflection, meditation, and spiritual grounding.

On this longest night, we will be featuring the work of the Energy Democracy Project and sharing a portion of our offering with them. Let's work for light for all on the longest night of the year. Our service is part of the larger arc of Clean Energy as a Human Right being led by Side with Love.

Full information on speakers and music here:

<https://www.uumfe.org/support-for-activists/light-for-all/>

Register to attend and receive the zoom link here:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZ0vcumurzgvGNfGw4lsyIL9eG3tGfc3ZGaL#/registration>



Too Much of Everything

By Misha Sanders
December 19, 2018

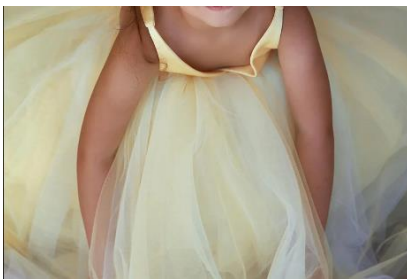
Each of us needs to withdraw from the cares which will not withdraw from us.

—Maya Angelou



There they were, ten preschoolers in suits and fancy dresses, each holding one letter of MERRY CHRISTMAS. I know that they must have started out the morning with at least fourteen kids, because their long-suffering choir director would not knowingly drag them onto the chancel to spell out ERRY CHIM SA in front of the whole caroling congregation.

I had gone to church that morning specifically to see Mel, my friend's daughter. She had campaigned for—and won—the coveted role of the first M (for Mel), the one that starts out the whole production, and she was ecstatic about her stage debut.



ERRY CHIM SA, the letters proclaimed. If you looked carefully, you would see that Mel and her M were not actually missing. She was indeed up there at her rehearsed mark, far on stage left, lying prostrate on the floor, gold tulle dress flipped upside down over her face, both fists flung out ahead, the carefully glittered, crumpled M unceremoniously smooshed into the carpet under her body.

Later she clearly explained, “It was a little bit too much of everything. I just needed it to stop for a minute. Next time I will take calm breaths.” And I wondered if Mel had just solved the holidays once and for all.

There is so much anticipatory joy and more than a little gumption in having the grandiosity to show up for the party in gold tulle in the first place. And such self-possessed wisdom in lying down and pulling it over your face when everything is too much.

And it is too much, isn't it? Sometimes the final days of the unexpected pregnancy find you in a strange place where they tell you there's no room in the inn. In real life, sometimes grief looms largest in December. Sometimes there's one too many dress-ups and the gold tulle makes your legs itch.

“I just needed it to stop for a minute. Next time I will take calm breaths.”

Prayer

Divine Love, help us to remember that we are Your precious children and that You delight in us when we have the audacity to stop and take care of ourselves when it's all just a bit too much.

