



THE COMMON

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATION OF CASTINE

January 2024

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 January

- Jan 7 Worship Leader:
 Rev. Elaine Peresluha
 Musician: Colleen Fitzgerald
- Jan 14 Worship Leader:
 Rev. Gabriel Burgord
 Musician: Karen Froehly
- Jan 21 Worship Leader:
 Vanessa Titang
 Musician: Karen Froehly
 Potluck
- Jan 28 Lay Leader: Bob Holmberg
 with Guest: Jessica Valdez from
 Community Compass
 Musicians:
 Juliane Gardner & Chris Poulin

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:

HAPPY NEW YEAR! I am writing this from Eastport having “kissed the sardine” again. For those of you who do not know about our tradition on New Year's Eve in Eastport I will tell you the story someday.

I ended the last year with “Imagine” as my guidance word. What I imagine for you and I in 2024. You, meaning our congregation. I imagine encouraging sermons, delicious potlucks, good decisions made, support given to many, welcoming a new minister, growing the congregation and a million other events.

What do you imagine? What part will you play? Let's begin the year off right with love, understanding and use our “imagination” to make it all work.

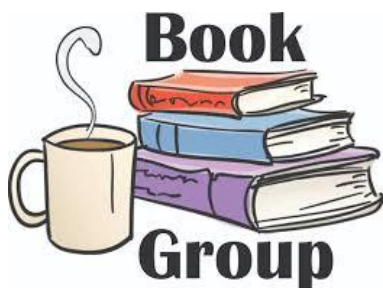
I will be joining the “Zoomers” while I am in Florida and then joining you who are in the



sanctuary at 10:30. I will be working on the Sunday worships and holding the Board meetings each month, so no worries, I will continue to do the best work for you all that I can.

Until May, Alvion and I are sending you our love and appreciation and best wishes for good health and happiness.

Cindi



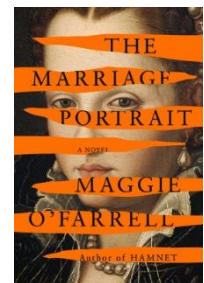
UUC READS Tuesdays at 3:30 p.m. on ZOOM.

UUC Reads has taken a break over the holidays, to give everyone a chance to catch up on their reading. Beginning again on January 9, 2024, we will discuss *The Thursday Morning Club*, by Richard Osman, and, as time allows, *The Unexpected Mrs. Pollifax*. by Dorothy Gilman.

In *The Thursday Murder Club* an unlikely group of amateur sleuths in a retirement village gather to investigate murders that the local police force has been too incompetent to prosecute, starting with a murder close to home. In *The Unexpected Mrs. Pollifax* by Dorothy Gilman, Mrs. Virgil (Emily) Pollifax of New Brunswick, New Jersey, is a widow with grown children. Tired of attending her Garden Club meetings, she wanted to do something good for her country. So, naturally, she became a CIA agent. Unfortunately, something goes awry, and Mrs. Pollifax finds herself embroiled in quite a hot Cold War—and her country's enemies find themselves entangled with one feisty lady.

The next book in January will be *The Marriage Portrait*, by Maggie O'Farrell. The author of award-winning *Hamnet* brings the world of Renaissance Italy to jewel-bright life in this unforgettable fictional portrait of the captivating young duchess Lucrezia de' Medici as she makes her way in a troubled court.

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



OPPORTUNITY FUND NEWS

The Opportunity Fund of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Castine (UUC) has recently made two major contributions to regional non-profits in pursuing our mission of social justice and poverty alleviation.

Lack of affordable housing and ongoing homelessness are at the top of regional social justice crises. The Opportunity Fund of UUC is making a commitment to the prevention of homelessness through a contribution of \$10,000 to Families First Community Center (FFCC) in Ellsworth, establishing their new "Opportunity Housing Fund."

Upon graduation from the 2-year FFCC residential support and education program armed with new skills and job opportunities, low-income young mothers with infants often face insurmountable initial down payment rental housing costs. The new Opportunity Housing Fund will provide a "loan" for initial costs not covered by other community donations with the opportunity to "pay it forward" to FFCC over the next several years of stabilized living. This will provide not only a



sense of individual ownership but also help to sustain the fund.

Second, Hancock County's LGBTQ+ youth are at high risk due to lack of support from

family and peers, depression, low self-esteem, and stressful life events related to coming out. According to the Maine Integrated Youth Survey 2021, 26% of about 466 high school students in Hancock County identified as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, or questioning their sexual orientation. The UUC Opportunity Fund has recently contributed \$15,000 to Out Maine to initiate their new proposal: "Building Welcoming and Inclusive Communities in Hancock County." This proposal is similar to successful school support and community awareness education programs developed by Out Maine in Waldo and Cumberland counties. This grant will allow Out Maine to expand existing and new partnerships with all regional schools, to support and further educate staff, to counsel on school policy, in addition to supporting LGBTQ+ students.

Bob Holmberg

Giving Warmth Warms Hearts

Less than two weeks before Christmas, my phone rang. A tearful voice introduced herself and reason for calling. In October, she applied for help from our local Low Income Heating Assistance Program. She later learned her application had been lost. Then her furnace died. The LIHEAP advisor suggested she apply for help to purchase wood for her wood stove. She then learned the wood source recommended was out of wood.

I asked if we could deliver a half cord within a week, would that help. She was overjoyed. Before I hung up, I asked if she would like a Christmas Meal Box. I received a heart-warming response.

Another example of what keeps volunteers engaged. Happy New Year.

Gil Tenney





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 - 5:30 - 7:30 p.m.

Jan 10, Feb 14, Mar 13, Apr 10, May 8, Jun 12

Also offered at Bucksport Memorial Library

Second Thursday of the month - 8:30 - 10 a.m.

For more information www.HeartfulLiving and Dying.com



Eve Maria Stwertka
Oct. 21, 1924 – Dec. 13, 2023

We are sad to report the death of Eve Maria Stwertka on December 13, 2023, at the age of 99. A regular attendee of UUCC via Zoom from Great Neck, NY as well as in person during the summer, Eve will be missed by the UUCC Reads book group among so many others. Our thoughts and love go out to her husband Albert and her family.

The photo at left is from the New York State Writers Hall of Fame induction ceremony in which Eve gave a remembrance of Mary McCarthy. It notes that Eve was Professor Emerita at SUNY Farmingdale, and was the co-trustee for the Mary McCarthy Literary Trust. A full obituary was not available at press time for The Common, but we know that Eve led an amazing and full life.



No Neighbor Left Behind 2023

During this past year, we were able to provide more than 500 meals to our neighbors. Considering we were without our own kitchen and fellowship hall for two of the four meal preparation and distribution days, I'd say things went remarkably well thanks to the efforts of so many of you who have volunteered your time, your ovens, your ingredients, your vehicles—and, most of all, your generous spirits!



Our next NNLB date is January 12, at which time Marcia Mason is at the helm for a meatloaf dinner. There is a sign-up sheet at the UUCU on which cookie makers and meatloaf bakers are currently needed. Contact Marcia or Debbie at the UUCU office to be added to either of these categories.

Wishing you all a Happy New Year with gratitude to you for your generous participation in NNLB during 2023.

Sincerely, Johanna Sweet

First Comes the Waiting

By Rev. Erika Hewitt

This is the season of endings and beginnings,
when the small signs of dawn pierce through the night and
something new is born.

But first comes the waiting.
First come the lessons of endings and beginnings.

The Presence of Life, the sheltering Spirit of Love,
grieves with those sweeping up the debris of loss;
waits with those who restlessly reach out for change;
grants us courage in the night to guard each other's dreams
for this holy, wondrous universe.

Grant us, oh Universe unfolding in mystery, a sense of your
timing.

May we loosen our grip on that which doesn't serve us,
leaving behind that which we have outworn and outgrown.

Teach us the lessons of beginnings.
Remind us that such waitings and endings may be a starting place,
a planting of seeds which bring to birth what is ready to be born –
something right and just and different;
a new song, a deeper relationship, a fuller love –
in the fullness of time.

