

**Unitarian Universalist Church of Canton**  
**NEWSLETTER**  
**January 2024 - THIS MONTH AND SUNDAYS**

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**Wednesday, January 3**

8:00 a.m., Building & Grounds Committee  
6:30 p.m., Church Council Meeting

**Sunday, January 7**

**TBA** *Doug Rubio, Pulpit Guest*  
Watch for an update in e-news or on our website to learn about what Doug will share from the pulpit.  
12:15 p.m., First Sunday Listening Circle

**Tuesday, January 9**

9:30 a.m., [Sacred Texts and Coffee](#)  
1:00 p.m., CommComm Meeting  
7:00 p.m., [Faith in Action Leadership Meeting](#)

**Wednesday, January 10**

7:00 p.m., Second Wednesday Listening Circle

**Friday, January 12**

6:30 p.m., Jazz Night & Coffee Bar

**Saturday, January 13**

4:00 p.m., Winter Campfire at the Wyckoff's

**Sunday, January 14**

9:00 a.m., History Circle Meeting  
***The Work of Reparations***  
*Rev. James Galasinski*

In celebration of MLK Day, we will take a look at King's stance on reparations and what can be done locally and nationally to make amends for historical wrongs.

**Monday, January 15**

7:00 p.m., Worship Committee Meeting

**Tuesday, January 16**

1:30 p.m., Membership and Outreach Meeting  
6:30 p.m., RE Committee Meeting

**Thursday, January 18**

6:00 p.m., Third Thursday Soup  
7:00 p.m., Science Book Club  
7:00 p.m., Enneagram Workshop (part 1 of 2)

**Sunday, January 21**

***Suffering and the Heart of Buddha***  
*The Rev. James Galasinski*

The first noble truth of Buddhism states that suffering is a characteristic of existence. If we are honest, we all suffer in spirit, body, and mind. Unease, unhappiness, and pain are all around us. But the path of enlightenment can transform suffering into happiness.

**Monday, January 22**

7:00 p.m., UU Men's Group

**Tuesday, January 23**

9:30 a.m., [Sacred Texts and Coffee](#)

**Thursday, January 25**

5:00 p.m., Game Night

**Sunday, January 28**

***Mystics and Contemplatives***  
*The Rev. James Galasinski*

Every religious tradition has a mystical or contemplative side. Beyond the rules and regulations of religion, mystics extend out into the very presence of spirit. What would a contemporary UU mystic look like?

**HAPPY NEW YEAR!**



## **JAMES' JOURNAL**

### **It's Got to be About Spirituality**

Carol Zimmerman, our Director of Religious Education, and I recently had a good conversation about religious education (RE). We discussed attendance and how it has gotten better but nothing quite like pre-pandemic times. We talked about how our congregation is not getting younger. Families are not walking in the door like they used to. There are many faithful RE volunteers, which we are grateful for. But the number of dedicated RE volunteers has diminished. Our current model of RE might become unsustainable because of the high number of volunteer hours needed each week. RE is muddling through more so than thriving. We are not an outlier by any means. Many UU Congregations are also going through similar struggles.

But Carol and I thought deeper and broader to get to the heart of RE. The purpose of RE is to pass on our faith to the next generation. Or is it? At its core RE is a ministry and at the center of ministry is service. Then the question is how do we serve families in Canton, Potsdam, and in the North Country? What are we offering that folks can't get anywhere else? We have excellent programs like Our Whole Lives (OWL) and Coming of Age. Is it the intergenerational inclusive religious space? We think it has got to be about spirituality.

So instead of trying to figure out how to serve more families with our current model, which could be like trying to fit square poles in a round hole, we must ask what the spiritual needs of today's families are and how can we serve them better. We have to adapt and change. We would like to gather information while building authentic relationships. We would like to start a focus group of current UU families and then develop a questionnaire or survey that would be administered one to one in the broader community.

Along the way, we want to remain curious. Maybe Sunday mornings should have more all-ages worship services. Maybe Sunday morning is not that space and time anymore for families. Maybe a late August day camp, or weekly meditation for children and youth, or Children's Chapel that is not on Sunday. We don't know what is next. This is not only a chance to learn and grow the ministry of congregation but an opportunity to creatively live out our mission.

In peace,

*The Rev. James Galasinski*

Monday – Thursday: In the office and available by appointment

Friday: Writing Day (not accepting appointments and slow to response to messages)

## **FROM OUR PRESIDENT**

### **Covid: Not Gone and Not Forgotten**

Our Church, like so many organizations, has navigated the shifting Covid pandemic since it burst upon the scene in early 2020. We have tried our best to reduce the likelihood of viral transmission while continuing to function as a church. This resulted in a sequence of policy modifications as the

rates of infection, evolution of viral variants, and availability of vaccines changed. Now that Covid has ebbed, but not disappeared, you may be wondering “*What is our current safety policy?*”

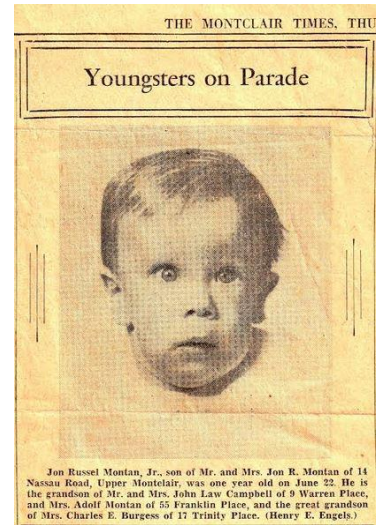
At the November meeting of Church Council, we passed the following resolution:

Whereas, the current Covid-19 Safety Plan, effective February 1, 2023, is not implementable, therefore;  
Be it resolved, that said policy is suspended pending further amendment or replacement as determined by Church Council.

Thus, we currently have no formal Covid Safety Policy but we do encourage everyone to take the now-familiar steps to reduce their own risk and the risk to others from infection.

See you in Church.

*Jon Montan, Church Council President*



## FAITH ENGAGEMENT



I am thinking about darkness. With the winter fully upon us, there is so much darkness. With the loss of my father, I feel a darkness. With the continued decline of my mother, there is more darkness. I am reminded of Mary Oliver’s Poem “The Uses of Sorrow”:

*Someone I loved once gave me  
a box full of darkness.  
It took me years to understand  
that this, too, was a gift.*

I am wondering what gifts I can find during these dark days. Darkness offers a time for rest. Time and space to reflect on how my parents have shaped who I am. A moment here and there to connect with my own inner light and where I find meaning. Connecting with my family through grief and reminiscing. These are truly gifts.

This church community is a light spark in this darkness too, offering love and solace. Knowing I have such a place is a gift. My hope is that you see our church community as a gift in your life too. Blessed be.

*Carol Zimmerman, Director of Religious Education*

## THANK YOU

- Thanks to Kim Bouchard for donating paper towel dispensers and the B&G committee for installing them. They work like a charm!
- Todd Moe, Sofiya Boczarski, Evelyn Boczarski, Kurt Terrell, Rev. James, Galasinski, Jenn Whittaker, Cathy Crosby, Crosby Terrell, Steve Coffin, Jessie Jean Coffin, Shep Coffin, Karen Wells, Louise Bixby, Walden Nelson, Nate Sturges, Toby Sturges, and Doug Rubio for being part of our holiday pageant.

- A deep gratitude for all the condolences sent to Carol Zimmerman after her father's death.
- A special thank you for Glenn Seymour for his gift in honor of Pat Gengo.

## JOYS & SORROWS

♥ We mourn the death of Eileen Raymond, a beloved member of our community.

## FROM THE WORSHIP TEAM

During a recent Sunday morning welcome, I reflected that it takes a village to put on a worship service. Therefore, I think it fitting, as I celebrate my one-year anniversary as the chair of the Worship Committee, to pause and thank all those people who worked hard this past year to make sure that the congregation – both in-person and online – enjoy a quality service on the Sunday mornings when our Rev. James is not in the pulpit.

Thank you to all our pulpit guests who took the time to put their thoughts into words and share those words with us: Mark Berninghausen, Rev. Margaret Weis, Rev. Joe Cleveland, Jacob King, Kathy Montan, Carol Zimmerman, Dave Nelson, Pat Alden, Sarah Bentley-Garfinkel, Dave Bradford, Tom Porter, Larissa Fawkner, and Sam Joseph.

Thank you to the church groups who helped make our Summer Worship Services such a success: the First Sunday Listening Circle, the History Learning Circle, especially the late Eileen Raymond (we miss you, Eileen), and Sacred Texts.

Thank you to the musicians, whose music helped the worship team create experiences that filled our souls: Betsy Kepes (thank you for your continual patience and flexibility!), Paul Swartzel, Paul Siskind, Carol Strome, and the Members of the Choir, Mary Michalek, Caron Collins, Doug Rubio, and Jill Rubio.

Thank you to the tech operators, who gave the worship team one fewer thing to worry about on Sunday morning: Elio House, Billy McClosky, Elias Nelson, Issac Tavernier, and Braden Whittaker. Also, a special thank you to Maya Thomas and Maggie Hockett: our pinch-hitting online hosts!

Finally, I want to thank the individuals who served on the worship team this year for making my first year as chair such a blessing: Mark Berninghausen, Dave Bradford, Arthur Freeheart, Stevie Michaelson, Rajiv Narula, and Dave Nelson. This good-natured and flexible bunch make leadership easy. And now it's time to get back to planning for 2024!

*Cathy Crosby, Worship Committee Chair*



## You are Invited to Make a Difference!

Our Faith in Action Group is seeking involvement from our church community!

***What is our Faith in Action Group?***

We are a group of individuals coming together on the second Tuesday of each month via Zoom at 7:00 p.m. Here we discuss, share, and plan ways to make a positive difference for social and environmental justice. Ginger Storey-Welch states, *“To me the Faith in Action group carries the heart of what it means to be a UU...to care, to stand up, to take notice, and to take action.”*

### **What do we do?**

From Pat Alden: *“We try to follow where people in our congregation want to go. You bring your concerns about social justice and we try to support your ideas. That goes for Social Action Shared Offerings (SASOs), letter-writing campaigns, marches, and meetings that develop community support.”*

This spring, we continue our focus on Compassion and Choices and supporting legislation for Medical Aid in Dying, which has long been a cause of Eileen Raymond. We will also begin discussing our next Social Justice Initiative for 2025.

### **How can you help?**

From Reverend James: *“As a faith community we are committed to social justice...yet we recognize that justice issues wane and wax. We are always in need of fresh ideas and new passions. What social justice issues are on your heart? Please join us at our next Faith in Action meeting”:*

**Tuesday, January 9 at 7:00 p.m. [via Zoom](#).**



**JAZZ NIGHT & COFFEE BAR  
FRIDAY, JANUARY 12  
6:30 – 8:30 p.m. in the Social Room**

Come enjoy some live jazz by John Danis, Tim Savage, Steve Manders, and the Rev. James Galasinski.

Coffee bar will include cafe americano, espresso, decaf coffee, various teas, including herbal, and hot chocolate.

This event is open to the public so be sure to invite your friends!

Admission is free, but donations of non-perishable food items for the Church and Community Food Pantry are requested.

**Additional Jazz Nights have also been scheduled for Friday, February 16 & Friday, March 15**

### **WINTER CAMPFIRE**

We are hosting another campfire on **Saturday, January 13**, on our property at 884 Farnes Road, six miles southeast of Canton. You are invited to come anytime after 2:00 p.m. for skiing, sledding, and snowshoeing. The campfire gathering will begin at 4:00 p.m. and run until whenever folks are tired of eating burnt marshmallows.





Todd Moe has enthusiastically agreed to provide some combination of campfire stories, singing, and cha-cha lessons. We will provide popcorn, cocoa, marshmallows and bathrooms. You are encouraged to bring a snack, a beverage, or a song to share.

A selection of wood benches and folding chairs will be available in limited supply, so please bring your own seating if convenient.

Hoping for snow,  
*Pete and Kathy Wyckoff*

## **LOBBY DAY IN ALBANY for MEDICAL AID IN DYING**

Faith in Action has been focusing on the work of Compassion and Choices for several years, in particular to inform ourselves about the important legislation on Medical Aid in Dying. This bill was before the New York State Legislature last year, but it did not get out of committee for a vote before the end of the 2023 session. This in spite of the fact that polling shows that New Yorkers support the bill by a 23-point margin (59% support vs. 36% oppose). Nationwide 79% of voters support such legislation. We believe that the legislation has a good chance of passage in the 2024 spring session, and we need YOUR HELP in making this a reality.

The NY bill, like those in New Jersey, Vermont and nine other states, is modeled closely on the first bill of its kind, passed in Oregon in 1994. The Unitarian Universalist Church played a key role there in crafting the language that led to the passage of Oregon's "Death with Dignity Act". All the citizens of those states have a right that New Yorkers do not: to choose near the end of their life, with a mortal illness, to have a doctor provide them with the means to end their suffering: to provide them with the option of "a good death." On December 10, our minister offered an important sermon on this topic, "[Good Deaths](#)," which you can listen to again on [our website](#).

Those who knew Eileen Raymond, who died of cancer on December 14, will miss her knowledge of and commitment to many social justice issues, but none more important to her than this one. Her last public act, in mid-November, was to meet with our Senator Dan Stec to advocate for the passage of this bill.

**We ask for your help in getting this bill passed this spring.** What is most needed is to convince wary legislators that this legislation has the strong support of a majority of New Yorkers. There are a number of ways in which you can participate. The simplest way is by writing or otherwise contacting key figures in the legislature several times over the spring. Writing letters to editors or opinion pieces in our local newspapers is also important and helps inform the wider public about this campaign.

Another valuable way is to travel with some fellow Canton UUs to Albany on the January 16th Lobby Day, to participate in a press conference and meetings with our own representatives at the Legislative Office Building. Compassion and Choices is organizing this event, which will likely start at 10 a.m. and run well into the afternoon. We plan to organize carpools with various options including traveling there and back in one day or staying overnight; more details will follow soon.

**Please stop by our table in the Social Room**, where you will find information about the legislation and learn why our support is so vital. There are two sign-up sheets – one for those interested in the January 16 Lobby Day, and one for those who want to participate in letter-writing and other actions based in Canton. For more information about the MAiD Bill and how to ensure its passage, please contact Reverend James, Paul Siskind, or Pat Alden.

## THIRD THURSDAY SOUP



Come enjoy dinner with fellow UUsers on **Thursday, January 18 at 6 p.m.** We have been sharing a simple meal of soup and bread on the Third Thursday of every month at 6 p.m. in the Social Room.

Email [outreach@uucantonny.org](mailto:outreach@uucantonny.org) with questions or to sign up to make soup for any of the meals.

## SCIENCE BOOK CLUB

The UU Science Book Club's December book is *Lessons in Chemistry* by Bonnie Garmus. The club will meet by Zoom on Thursday, January 18, at 7:00 pm. To participate, contact Brian Gardam via email at [Briangardam@gmail.com](mailto: Briangardam@gmail.com).

### **Nine Ways of Showing Up in the World: An introduction to understanding yourself and others through the Enneagram**

Facilitated by Peter Brouwer, Ph.D

The Enneagram is a system of personality typing that describes patterns in how people interpret and act in the world. The Enneagram describes nine personality types and maps each of these types on a nine-pointed diagram. Understanding your Enneagram type provides an opportunity for greater self-awareness, authentic presence, and personal growth.

**Thursdays, January 18 and February 1 at 7 p.m. in the Romer Room**

## JANUARY SOCIAL ACTION SHARED OFFERING (SASO)

Our January SASO will recognize two important facilities which have benefited many in the North Country and specifically in our faith community. Hope Lodge (in Burlington, Vt) and Sarah's Guest House (in Syracuse) provide housing and other essential services to people diagnosed with cancer: people who have to travel far from home to receive treatment, people facing long stays in unfamiliar cities, people already dealing with high medical expenses. Hope Lodge in Burlington is one of many such places supported by the American Cancer Society. Sarah's Guest House similarly offers comfortable rooms, supportive surroundings and meals for a modest cost to those with cancer or with other medical illnesses. Those who have needed to travel to Upstate Medical or Vermont Medical Center and have used these places will vouch for how important they are.

In conjunction with this SASO, Faith in Action is doing an informal poll; if you yourself or if someone you know has stayed at either place, recently or in the past, please [email](#) or speak to Pat Alden with that information. We'll see how many in our community have been helped by these facilities; feel free to add a comment, if you wish. The SASO will be collected on **Sunday, January 21**, so please reply quickly.

## GAME NIGHT

Join us on **Thursday, January 25 at 5 p.m.** for an evening of board games! Bring your favorite game and friends or just come to join in! We'll meet in the social room and enjoy a relaxing evening of fun and fellowship.

Contact [Carlene Bermann](#) if you have any questions.



## WINTER POTLUCKS ARE COMING SOON!



These are casual potluck gatherings during the months of January, February, and March.

Here's how they work: A host family sets a date and time to host a meal at their home. They can be held after church, on a weekend evening or other time. Sometimes there might be a theme, like a book discussion or sledding activity. Sometimes the gathering is for adults only and others are for families. Guests sign up to attend, and then communicate with

the host to choose what to bring.

If you are interested in HOSTING, please contact [Jenn Whittaker](#), sign up on this [Google form](#), or look for a Host Sign-up in the Social Room.

If you are interested in being a GUEST, look for Potluck sign-ups in the Social Room very soon. Please consider hosting AND being a guest. This is a wonderful way to get through the winter months together.

## CARPOOL TO WINTERLUDE

Join us on **Saturday, February 3, 2024** as we brave the cold and head north to celebrate winter in Ottawa. Bring your skates, or plan to spend the afternoon strolling along the Rideau Canal and Byward Market area. The 46th annual Winterlude includes outdoor and indoor activities: ice sculptures, street artists, exhibits and great food! We'll gather in the church parking lot at 9:00am and divide up into vehicles. Bring your passport. Need a ride? Would you be willing to drive? Email Todd Moe at [toddmoe@gmail.com](mailto:toddmoe@gmail.com).

## PLAYING WITH FIRE AT THE UU CANTON CHILI COOKOFF!

Join us after church on **Sunday, February 11, 2024** for warm bowls of chili, and a chance to be crowned Best Chili Cook(s)! Vote with your dollar bills for the best chili recipe. Chili cooks should register in advance by [email](#). Entries will be accepted from individuals, teams and families.



## Staff Schedules for the 2023-2024 Church Year:

**THE CHURCH OFFICE IS OPEN on TUESDAY and THURSDAY from 9 a.m. – 2 p.m.**

**The Rev. James Galasinski:** Available [by email](#) and by appointment **Monday – Thursday**

**Carol Zimmerman, DRE:** Available [by email](#) **Sunday–Thursday** and by appointment on **Tuesdays & Wednesdays**.

**Sara Trimm, Administrator:** Available [by email](#) **Monday – Thursday** & in the office **Tuesday & Thursday**

### Unitarian Universalist Church of Canton

Creating a welcoming, compassionate faith community,  
committed to social justice and open to wonder.

Together we strive to:

- Foster a spirit of inclusion and connection
- Encourage exploration of truth and meaning
- Nurture respect for all life and the environment
- Live our values in the North Country and in the wider world

### The Unitarian Universalist Church of Canton

The Rev. James Galasinski, Minister

Carol Zimmerman, Director of Religious Education

Sara Trimm, Congregational Administrator

Betsy Kepes, Music Coordinator

The Revs. Anne Marsh and Wade Wheelock, Ministers Emeriti

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