

Unitarian Universalist Church of Canton

NEWSLETTER

February 2024 - THIS MONTH AND SUNDAYS



Thursday, February 1

7:00 p.m., Enneagram Workshop (part 2 of 2)

Saturday, February 3

9:00 a.m., Carpool to Winterlude in Ottawa

Sunday, February 4

The Work of Reparations

The Rev. James Galasinski

As we start Black History month we will take a look at the case for reparations and what is being done locally and nationally to make amends for historical wrongdoings. The work of reparations involves wrestling honestly with the past and the cessation and assurances of non-repetition of those wrongdoings.

12:15 p.m., First Sunday Listening Circle

Wednesday, February 7

8:00 a.m., Building & Grounds Committee

6:30 p.m., Church Council Meeting

Sunday, February 11

Immersed in Wonder

Aileen O'Donoghue, Pulpit Guest

In my work as both a research astronomer and a teacher, I spend every day exploring the wonders of our universe. I will share some of my awe and invite everyone to soar with me.

12:30 p.m., Playing with Fire Chili Cookoff

Tuesday, February 13

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

1:00 p.m., CommComm Meeting

7:00 p.m., Last Flight Home Film Screening

Wednesday, February 14

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

Thursday, February 15

5:00 p.m., Game Night

6:00 p.m., Third Thursday Soup

7:00 p.m., Science Book Club

Friday, February 16

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

Sunday, February 18

9:00 a.m., History Circle Meeting

If God is Love, Then...

The Rev. James Galasinski

“God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them”—this has to be one of the most sublime passages in the New Testament. Love is changing Unitarian Universalism, our views of divinity, and calling us into more fullness. Love changes everything.

Monday, February 19

7:00 p.m., Worship Committee Meeting

Tuesday, February 20

1:30 p.m., Membership and Outreach Meeting

6:30 p.m., RE Committee Meeting

Friday, February 23

5:30 p.m., Future of Family Ministry Dinner and Conversation

Sunday, February 25

Blues Notes and Joy

The Rev. James Galasinski

Despite being stolen away into chattel slavery and forced into new languages and religions, Africans kept blue notes in their music.

The Blues is much more than a form of music. It is a way of being in the world that expresses the immediacy of pain and in that acknowledgement produces a catharsis and even joy.

11:45 a.m., Chat with Council

Monday, February 26

6:30 p.m., Storytelling Workshop (part 1 of 4)

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

Tuesday, February 27

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

JAMES' JOURNAL

What Love Will Make You Do



Tom Van de Water and I walked up to the Capitol complex on State Street in Albany as the snow began to fall. Fortunately, we carpooled with Paul Siskind the night before and stayed in a nearby hotel so we didn't have to drive in it. We learned recently about the displacement of poor people to build the Empire State Plaza and its massive costs, so, the elegant marble halls, to us, looked tainted.

Inside, after the security check, we met Paul near the tables set up for Compassion and Choice advocates, received our assignments and yellow shirts and then met Larissa Fawcner coming in from the parking garage. An unspoken camaraderie developed among all of us wearing the yellow shirts. People were there from all corners of our state.

When we explored the old Capitol building before the news conference, we were awed by the elaborate stonework, stairs, chambers for the Assembly and the Senate, and the beautiful woodwork, old elevators and windows.

On the "Million Dollar Staircase" we found the site for the news conference and began to chat with fellow yellow shirts. I had my clergy collar on which drew attention since some religious groups have opposed the Medical Aid in Dying bill. A recent co-sponsor of the bill, a member of the Assembly and a pastor from Harlem, Al Taylor, joined us. His energy and casual eloquence led to conversations about his father's death which had changed his mind about the bill. With Larissa, Paul, and Tom at my side I started my speech with "I am here because of a beloved congregant, Eileen Raymond" and ended it with, "may everyone in New York have the ability to let go with a sense of true dignity."

As the advocates and sponsors of the bill from the Assembly and Senate rose to speak, their eloquence, passion, poise and intelligence gave us hope for democracy. These were our people representing the people of New York State.

Later, in meetings around tables in legislator's offices, we listened and spoke of loved ones in their last days and the need for this bill. The letters we'd sent seemed to have been read. Though we spoke with chiefs of staff and legislative aids there was a sense that the message would reach the legislators. We began to feel that the bill had reached a critical threshold of support. Some of our enthusiasm was tempered by the reality of partisan politics: in Senate Minority Leader Ortt's office, the aide acknowledged he would likely not vote for it. In fact, we later learned he was likely to try to get all Republicans to oppose it. Still, our comments and stories were received with respect and attention, including at assemblyperson Scott Gray's office, the representative for many of the members of our Church. The staff members play a critical role in convincing their bosses.

In our meetings, we listened to long-time hospice doctors and nurses recall the agony of patients denied any option of a peaceful end when their death was imminent. Tom recalled his dad wondering about moving to a state with medical aid in dying when he was near the end of his terminal diagnosis.

We've begun to realize that building momentum for a cause with letters, calls, and conversations can change minds. Our democracy can work. It may be too slow at times, but persistence and patience can lead to wins. Whether we'll begin to welcome death as part of life and vice versa, is for future discussion. It's important to have the option to end our lives given a terminal diagnosis and still have joy for our time here, accepting the uncertainties and mystery of it all. The Medical Aid in Dying bill is a minimal step. Thanks to your calls and letters to legislators, this bill may actually pass this year.

In peace,



The Rev. James Galasinski & Tom Van de Water

FROM OUR PRESIDENT Green Sanctuary

As I enter the second half of my two-year term as President of Church Council, I feel good about the energy and commitment of our members as we pursue our mission. I feel we all can bring some light to the world by meeting people where they are, listening, practicing compassionate inquiry, and sharing our principles. At times, we must also deliberately put ourselves out in the public eye in pursuit of equity and justice. Our actions take many forms, but each expresses our values.



One theme that has warranted a re-examination is our Green Sanctuary status. A short history is that The Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) established a Green Sanctuary Program in which our Church participated and was given Green Sanctuary Status. Critical to this designation was our congregation affirming this covenant which was adopted unanimously on January 19, 2014: “As members of this congregation and participants in the Green Sanctuary program, we pledge our encouragement to one another in a personal and congregational commitment to our Unitarian Universalist Principles, including the Seventh Principle – *respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part*. We commit to transforming our church into a beacon of environmental sustainability and justice and educating and inspiring our members to lead more environmentally sustainable, just, and spirit-filled lives.”

Since 2014 our Church has taken many steps to fulfill this covenant. Now the UUA has a new incarnation of the Green Sanctuary Program, called Green Sanctuary 2030 (GS2030). It is described at: <https://www.uua.org/environment/green-sanctuary>

GS2030 provides a process for systematically analyzing a church's opportunities, actions, and developing metrics for meeting appropriate goals. This could be valuable to a church that has never attempted to seek Green Sanctuary status. I question how valuable it would be for our Church, which continues as a Green Sanctuary, but I would welcome your thoughts on the matter.

In faith,

Jon Montan, Church Council President

FAITH ENGAGEMENT



As Unitarian Universalists, asking questions is a foundation of our faith. We are a curious lot. *Open to wonder* is part of our church [mission statement](#). Pluralism and Transformation, two of six new [UUA Article 2 values](#), expresses this idea as well. Questions also help us understand.

I have recently been asking our youth group questions about how they would like to be together for the remainder of this year. Do we need to change the meeting time? What is the best way to communicate? Working with the youth advisors, we are truly seeking to understand their needs and to create a vibrant meaningful youth program.

Asking questions is an act of bravery and opens us up to vulnerability too. We need to risk asking the tough questions, then listen with an open heart so we can fully understand. This is true in our personal spiritual journeys and for group settings. This opens us to be vulnerable.

Reverend James and I will be hosting **Future of Family Ministry Dinner and Conversation on Friday, February 23 at 5:30 p.m.** to hear your thoughts of how our religious education ministry can better support you and your family. It will be catered so just show up with your ideas and questions too. Childcare will also be provided.

Help us answer some big questions and in the process maybe grow in your faith.

In grateful service,

Carol Zimmerman, Director of Religious Education

THANK YOU

- Thank you Mark Berninghausen for changing the doorknob on the sanctuary door and Gary Hoose for facilitating oven repairs.
- Thank you to Kurt Terrell years of chairing Budget and Finance and to Erik Whittaker for agreeing to be our next committee chair.
- Thank you to everyone who pledged for the 2024 Budget!
- Thank you to the Stewardship Committee for leading our canvass.
- Thank you to Church Council, especially, our treasurer, Stefan Grimberg for preparing the 2024 Budget.

FEBRUARY SOCIAL ACTION SHARED OFFERING

Last year during the Social Justice Initiative we screened the film *The Ants and the Grasshopper* and learned about the important work Soils, Food and Health Communities (SFHC) is doing from St. Lawrence University Professor Aaron Iverson. The entire offering on **Sunday, February 25** will go to benefit this organization.



SFHC started in 2000 in Malawi with just thirty farmers. They now work with over 6,000 farmers in more than 200 villages in Northern and Central Malawi. It is a participatory project, in which farmers work together and exchange knowledge to improve soil fertility, food security and nutrition.

The project began with a focus on promoting the use of grain or perennial legumes. The legumes fix nitrogen from the atmosphere, and when the leaves and roots are incorporated directly into the soil after the harvest, they naturally add nitrogen, other nutrients and organic matter. Farmers can then grow another crop in the improved soil the following year (e.g. maize) and eat the edible grain legume. This leads to increased food productivity, which in turn enhances food availability within households of resource-poor farmers.

From its origins in legume intensification, SFHC has incorporated the principles of agroecology in its research and training, focusing on how farmers can leverage nature-based solutions to soil fertility, pest control, pollination, and climate resilience. They are dedicated to ensuring equitable participation and distribution of resources, facilitating farmer leadership, and working to support sustainable, healthy, and resilient communities.



TAROT FOR A NEW YEAR OF INTENTION AND GROWTH **Tuesday, January 30 at 5:30 p.m. in the Social Room**

Kat Wilcox, a multi-modal holistic healing professional with 20 years expertise as an aromatherapist, Reiki practitioner, Yin and Hatha Yoga teacher, and Tarot and Oracle Reader, will host a workshop on how Tarot and Oracle can be used as a tool for personal growth and inner exploration. [The workshop](#) will empower participants to make lifestyle changes that align with the goal of living our true potential and best lives. If you have your own Tarot card deck, bring it. If you don't, card decks will be available during the workshop.

CHAT WITH CHURCH COUNCIL

Throughout February, Church Council will address some of the questions that came up during Canvass Conversations. We'll post them in the weekly e-news and on the website. On Sunday, February 25, a Chat with Council will be held at 11:45 a.m. in the Romer Room and on Zoom. This will be an informal conversation about any of the topics we addressed along with anything else you wish to discuss. Please join us!

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 9:00 a.m. and divide up into vehicles. Bring your passport. Need a ride? Would you be willing to drive? Email Todd Moe at toddamoe@gmail.com.

PLAYIN' WITH FIRE!



PLAYIN' 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.

WINTER POTLUCKS

It's Winter Potlucks time! There are dates for January, February, and March. [Click here](#) to sign-up for individual potlucks. Hosts supply the main course and guests are asked to bring accompaniments. It's a great chance to get to know new friends and re-acquaint with old friends in a small-group social setting. Please check the meal notes for more specific information about each potluck. Since they are in people's homes, there will be a limit to the number of guests they can accommodate. Please let your host know if you have special dietary requirements.



You can sign up in the social room after church on Sundays, [online](#), or by emailing the [church office](#). Want to host a potluck? [Fill out this form](#) and we'll add you to the list!

FILM SCREENING: LAST FLIGHT HOME

Faith in Action will be showing an important film on Tuesday, February 13 at 7p.m. in the Romer Room. ***Last Flight Home*** is about having choices in dying; it is a film made by the daughter of Eli Timoner who chose Medical Aid in Dying (MAiD). This showing is in collaboration with Compassion and Choices and is the next step in our effort to build support within our church for the MAiD legislation. The film (1 hour, 40 minutes) will be followed by a letter-writing workshop. Participants will have models of short letters, pre-addressed envelopes and stamps. We are going to crank these out!

Later in the spring we will offer a second viewing of this film, inviting the general public to see the film and for post-film discussions of love, compassion, death and dignity. An interview with the film maker can be found [here](#).

GAME NIGHT

Join us on **Thursday, February 15 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.



THIRD THURSDAY SOUP



Come enjoy dinner with fellow UUsers on **Thursday, February 15 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 with questions or to sign up to make soup for any of the meals.

SCIENCE BOOK CLUB

On **Thursday, February 15**, the Science Book Club will be discussing *Existential Physics* by Sabine Hossenfelder. She asks some of life's biggest questions, such as: Does the past still exist? Was the universe made for us? Does the universe think? The group meets at 7:00p.m. by Zoom. To sign up or for more information, email Brian Gardam at briangardam@gmail.com.



JAZZ NIGHT & COFFEE BAR

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 16
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! We will also stream the event live on [our facebook page](#) if you can't make it in person.

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

The next Jazz Night is scheduled for Friday, March 15



STORYTELLING WORKSHOP

Kim Bouchard will lead a storytelling workshop at the UU Church of Canton on consecutive Monday evenings, February 26, March 4, 11, and 18 at 6:30 p.m. The workshop will lead people through the process of creating original stories inspired from historical and/or personal events. Please plan to attend all 4 sessions. No prior experience is necessary. Sign up in advance by [emailing the office](#).

Kim Bouchard performed and taught theatre arts, including storytelling and spoken word courses, for 40 years. She is excited to introduce storytelling methods and techniques that people will be able to use as our congregation moves toward the 200-year anniversary of our founding in 2025. We have a lot of stories that need to be told!

I JUST READ...

What's it like to be a kid who is not sure about their gender identity?

Two new Middle Grade books by Kyle Lukoff take on the topic. *Too Bright to See* won a Newbery Honor and was a National Book Award Finalist. It features a ghost story set in an old Vermont farmhouse and an eleven-year-old trying to figure out what it means to be male or female, or somewhere in between.

Different Kinds of Fruit has sweet cover art but Lukoff has written a Middle Grade novel that will surely be banned in schools in Texas and other conservative states. Anabelle has always known her family is different, but she hadn't known her father is trans. The plot thickens when Anabelle discovers her father is actually her mother. Though the topic may seem scandalous, Lukoff writes a story appropriate for Middle Schoolers.

Both books are now in our church library.

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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