



# *Unitarian Universalist Church of Canton* **NEWSLETTER**

**December 2025**

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**December 7, 10:30 am - Compassion and Resilience in a World of Trauma**  
Rev. James Galasinski

Our brains are pretty much the same but the environments we grew up in are sometimes very different. The question shouldn't be what is wrong with us but instead what happened to us?

**December 14, 10:30 am - Christmas Menorahs**  
Carol Zimmerman, Director of Religious Education

When a rock is thrown through a young Jewish child's bedroom window in Billings, Montana, the entire community unites, working together to take action. Our annual holiday pageant is inspired by this true story, the rescue of the Danish Jews during World War II, and the Hanukkah and Christmas stories which show how love and courage can conquer hate.

**December 21, 10:30 am - Here Comes The Sun**  
Rev. James Galasinski

This solar-centered service will honor the new light and warmth amidst the dark and cold.

**December 24, 7:00 pm - Candlelight Christmas Service**  
Rev. James Galasinski

Celebrate Christmas Eve and open yourself to the joy of the season with beloved music, story, and light.

**December 28, 10:30 am - Spiritual Practice and the New Year's Resolution**  
Rev. James Galasinski

If our new year's resolution is to become kinder, happier, more patient, and more loving, how do we actually do it? Engaging in consistent practices that restore our spirits and bring us depth is the way forward.

## James's Journal - 200 years of Gratitude!



Over the course of this year we have celebrated our bicentennial with special guests, workshops, worship, memories, and of course, cake!

Thank you to everyone on the history circle who collected historical nuggets and put them in our weekly e-news. Thank you to our special guests who led worship this year Bryan Thompson, the Revs. David Weissbard, Joel Miller, John Buerhens, Nicole Kirk, Doug McCusker, Anne Marsh and Wade Wheelock. To everyone who prepared and shared bicentennial moments, thank you! To those who helped and prepared for the New York State Convention of Universalists annual meeting, thank you! To Kathy Wyckoff and Louise Bixby and others who organized the special exhibit at the St. Lawrence County Center for History and Culture.

And wow, our final weekend bash was truly a celebration: starting out with the reception at the Best Western, worship, workshops, and tours throughout Friday and Saturday and culminating in our wonderful choir leading us in Life Calls Us On. Thank you Carol Zimmerman for leading a workshop and to Wil and Rebecca Rivers for leading the quarry tour. The Then and Now Concert on Friday evening featured a diversity of music performed by talented musicians interspersed with history. A special thanks goes to Paul Siskind for all the research, arranging, conducting and organizing of that concert, to Carol Strome for leading the choir, and to all the musicians, singers, and all composers, past and present. The dinner on Saturday was also a great success. The Social Room and Romer Room felt like a new space because of the great lighting and decorations. Thank you Pete, Barb, and Erika Beekman for that and thank you to everyone who moved tables, chairs, and couches! Thank you to Todd Moe, Jon Montan, Cathy Crosby, and Carol Pynchon for speaking at the dinner! Also, thank you to Cliff Westerling, Dan Burton, Cathy Crosby, Jenn Whittaker, and Carol Zimmerman for getting the word out to our congregation and the wider community of all these bicentennial events.

As you probably could guess there was a lot of planning over the past year and half. So I want to thank the Bicentennial Team: Sarah Bentley-Garfinkel, Kathy Wyckoff, Pete Beekman, Jenn Whitaker, and Kim Bouchard! I would like to remember Eileen Raymond and her for her vision of this bicentennial celebration.

In peace,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "James Galasinski".

**The Rev. James Galasinski**

## Faith Formation



In this holiday season when things can often feel out of control and stressful, I thought it might be helpful to offer some spiritual practices that can bring peace and calm to the hecticness. A spiritual practice is defined as any regular and intentional activity undertaken to cultivate spiritual growth, connect with one's inner self or a higher power, and foster a sense of peace and meaning. These practices are for all ages and are known to decrease stress and increase a sense of well-being.

During the recent bicentennial workshop, Spiritual Journeys, led by Rev. James, participants brainstormed a list of practices that they found to be centering and meaningful. I hope you can find one or two that you can use to find calm and significance during this season. Blessed be and may it be so.

|                      |                                    |                                |
|----------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Active Listening     | Listening to Music                 | Reading Sacred Texts           |
| Being of Service     | Intentionally Doing Chores (e.g.,  | Sexual Connection              |
| Biting into Hot Food | washing dishes)                    | Silence                        |
| Caring for Others    | Lectio Divina (4-step sacred       | Sleeping with Intention        |
| Chanting             | reading practice: (a) reading, (b) | Tai Chi                        |
| Cooking              | reflecting, (c) responding, (d)    | Walking in Nature              |
| Deep Breathing       | resting)                           | Walking Meditation (“Every     |
| Exercising           | Mandala Coloring                   | breath brings happiness. Every |
| Fasting              | Meditation                         | step brings happiness.” Thich  |
| Gratitude List       | Monthly Meditation Group           | Nhat Hanh)                     |
| Handwork (e.g.,      | Planting                           | Walking a Labyrinth            |
| knitting, crafting)  | Prayer                             | Yoga                           |
|                      | Psychoactive Drugs used as         | Qi Gong                        |
|                      | Spiritual Practice                 |                                |

~ Carol Zimmerman, Director of Religious Education



## President's Message – December 2025

### *Giving Thanks through Our Service*

*"If our first response to the receipt of gifts is gratitude, then our second is reciprocity: to give a gift in return...keeping the gift in motion in a way that is diffuse, so that the gift does not accumulate and stagnate, but keeps moving."*

*From The Serviceberry by Robin Wall Kimmerer*

I noted in my remarks during the Bicentennial dinner that I said "yes" to serving as president of Church Council because of my gratitude for the joy this community brings me. As Robin Wall Kimmerer articulates, the gift we receive can be multiplied when we give in return. In the spirit of expressing gratitude through service, I want to lift up two opportunities to express your gratitude through service.

- The Communications Committee is seeking new members, including a co-chair. Comm Comm, as it is affectionately known, handles communications both internal and external to the church, from website content to press releases.
- The Caring Circle is "a group of church members and friends who respond when someone in our church community experiences needs and/or challenges due to illness, birth/adoption, death, or other life changes or special needs." They, too, are seeking a co-chair.

If you have interest in being part of either Comm Comm or the Caring Circle, or would like to express your gratitude through another form of service, please contact me at [president@uucantonny.org](mailto:president@uucantonny.org) or Vice President Sarah Bentley-Garfinkel at [vicepresident@uucantonny.org](mailto:vicepresident@uucantonny.org).

Take care,



*Cathy Crosby, Church Council President*



## UU BIRTHDAYS

If you're inclined to send a birthday card, addresses can be found in the [church directory online](#). If you'd like to support the [Caring Circle](#), or to add any birthday names that are missing, email [caringcircle@uucantonny.org](mailto:caringcircle@uucantonny.org).

|  |        |
|--|--------|
| Kim Bouchard, Jan<br>DeWaters, Jay Kepes   | Dec 2  |
| Julia Freeheart                            | Dec 3  |
| Irene Gardner, Peggy<br>Mooers             | Dec 4  |
| Andrea Smith                               | Dec 5  |
| Oscar Sarmiento, Anna<br>Monroe, Pat Perry | Dec 6  |
| Cameron Harbart                            | Dec 7  |
| Pat Alden, Richard Cook                    | Dec 8  |
| Bill Short                                 | Dec 9  |
| Jeff Weeks, Gaetan Foisy                   | Dec 10 |
| Carmen Stuart Fennessey                    | Dec 11 |
| Judy DeGraaff                              | Dec 12 |
| Stefan Grimberg                            | Dec 13 |
| Erik Whittaker                             | Dec 15 |
| Holly Barton                               | Dec 16 |
| Shepherd Coffin                            | Dec 20 |
| Bruce Smith                                | Dec 25 |
| Evelyn Barton                              | Dec 26 |
| Rhonda Rodriguez                           | Dec 27 |
| Sue Powers                                 | Dec 28 |
| Julie Duffy, John Danis                    | Dec 29 |
| Bob Gardner                                | Dec 30 |
| Maya Thomas                                | Dec 31 |



## Bicentennial Thank You

The worship committee would like to thank everyone who shared a bicentennial moment this year. The stories, memories, and historical nuggets deepened our understanding of how the church has impacted the lives of others and developed over the past 200 years. Here's to another 200 years of living our values!

### **“Two Hundred Years of Progressive Faith” Bicentennial Exhibit**

Come see the UU Canton Bicentennial exhibit at the Silas Wright House & Museum. The St. Lawrence County Center for History and Culture is marking our bicentennial with the exhibit, which will run through December 24. Admission to the museum is \$5 for non-members. Donations are always accepted. Click [HERE](#) to read more on the website.



### **Social Hour and Greeter Signups**

***Thank you to everyone who has already started to sign up!***

Greeter and Social Hour Host Schedules Coming for 2026!

Welcoming all who come on Sunday mornings and hosting social hour are responsibilities we all share. Church members and regularly attending friends are asked to take their turns with this important work of our church community, and we thank those who have already signed up to host or greet this year! If you are still interested in selecting your date to host social hour or greet, the "self" sign-up deadline is Monday, December 15, 2025. Use the links ([social hour](#); [greeter](#)) here or add your name and preferred dates to the sign-up sheets located in the Social Room after Sunday services.

Beginning Jan. 1, 2026, we will return to assigning hosts and greeters to the remaining open Sundays. We will publish the final calendar assignments in the January newsletter and weekly E-news, and you will receive a reminder 1-week prior to your assigned date. If that date does not work for you, you will need to arrange for a replacement .

To learn more, please visit

<https://www.uucantonny.org/get-involved/service-volunteer-instructions/> or reach out to [vicepresident@uucantonny.org](mailto:vicepresident@uucantonny.org).



### Third Thursday Soup

Third Thursday Soup is on! Come enjoy dinner with fellow UUs on Thursday, December 18 at 6 p.m. We will share 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 or bread for the meals.

### Church and Community Food Donations / The Giving Tree



30 Court Street  
PO Box 55  
Canton, NY 13617

315-386-3534  
[director@ccpcanton.org](mailto:director@ccpcanton.org)

For those looking support families and friends in need, you can help the Canton Church and Community Program by placing non-perishable food in the blue bin in the social room at church, which will be delivered to the food pantry, by directly dropping off food donations at 30 Court Street M-F, 10 am to 4 pm, or by donating funds at the [Canton Church and Community Program website](#).

Please take an envelope from The Giving Tree in the Social Room and make a child's holiday brighter. With your help, more than 400 children from local families in need will have a happier holiday! You may use cash, check, credit card, or give online at [ccpcanton.org](http://ccpcanton.org). Take an envelope for all the information you need to donate and make a local child happy.

### Jazz and Coffee with The 5 Dots

On Friday, December 5 at 6:30 pm, join us for more smooth jazz and coffee with the 5 Dots in the Social Room.



### Holiday Pageant

Calling all actors and stage managers it time to sign up for the holiday pageant for this year. Please click on the following link to see the available speaking and non-speaking roles available. We will be rehearsing on Sunday, December 7 at noon and again on Sunday, December 14 at 9am before the service. Click here to sign up. Reach out to Carol, DRE via email if you have questions.



## Come Sing in the UU Choir for these Special Events!



Carol Strome and Paul Siskind invite new and returning singers to sing with our UU Church Choir for special themed services and events throughout the year. Along with being “in the choir” on a regular basis, we’re also inviting new singers to join for individual services/events/themes which particularly interest you. The Choir generally rehearses at 9:00-10:00 am on the Sunday the week before the performance service, as well as 9:00-10:00 am on the day of the performance service.

### **Holiday Pageant Solstice Celebration Service**

#### Schedule:

- Sunday 12/14 Rehearsal 9:00-10:10; perform Ocho Kandelikas with RE students during the Holiday Pageant, 10:30-11:30
- Sunday 12/21 Rehearsal 9:00-10:10; perform during the Solstice Celebration Service, 10:30-11:00

For the Holiday Pageant, we will join the RE students to sing Ocho Kandelikas, a song about Hanukkah sung in Ladino (the traditional language of Sephardic Jews). For the Solstice Celebration Service, we will sing an anthem and hymns to celebrate the Winter Solstice.

## **News from the Social Action Team - Get involved!**

### ***Soliciting nominations for upcoming SASOs (Social Action Shared Offerings)***

About once a month, our congregation donates our Sunday collection plate offerings to an organization outside of our Church, to support their social justice and humanitarian work. Our SASOs not only raise money for these organizations, they also raise awareness in our congregation about the issues that these groups are working on. SASOs can go to local, regional, national, or international organizations.

<https://www.uucantonny.org/social-justice/shared-offering/>

The SA Team is soliciting nominations from all congregants for our upcoming SASOs. The nomination process is informal; please fill out this form:

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSc9vrpVbwRwTCX-rFrM2-Q5937m\\_CAwtSRlw\\_8YkNk3ZVmwvA/viewform](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSc9vrpVbwRwTCX-rFrM2-Q5937m_CAwtSRlw_8YkNk3ZVmwvA/viewform)

If you would like to discuss your ideas for upcoming SASOs with us, please e-mail: [socialaction@uucantonny.org](mailto:socialaction@uucantonny.org)



*Unitarian Universalist Church of Canton*

## **Social Justice Initiative**

*Promoting justice, equity, and compassion in human relations*

### ***Our next SJI (Social Justice Initiative)***

The Social Action Team is pleased to announce that the next SJI will focus on the topic of ***Overcoming Isolation***, and will take place in Fall of 2026. We invite members of the congregation to be part of the planning team for this important event. If you're interested in being part of the planning team, please e-mail:

[sjcoordinator@uucantonny.org](mailto:sjcoordinator@uucantonny.org)

### ***Medical Aid in Dying: Write to Governor Hochul!***

The NYS Legislature passed the *Medical Aid in Dying Bill* in June; so now we need to encourage Governor Hochul to sign the bill. As the clock ticks toward the end-of-year deadline, Compassion & Choices is asking all of us to please call/e-mail/write to the Governor to encourage her to sign the bill. Even if you've called/e-mailed/written to her before, please do so again; and it's fine for individual members within families to each call/write individually. When you call/write, it's important that you be respectful and not berate/attack her (e.g. don't say "Why haven't you signed the bill yet."). Simply encourage her to sign the bill, and tell her a few reasons why you support the bill. And you can remind her that nearly 75% of New Yorkers support the bill. Please call/e-mail/write her early this week:

- 1-518-474-8390, 9:00am to 5:00pm
- e-mail: <https://www.governor.ny.gov/content/governor-contact-form>
- Letter:

*The Honorable Kathy Hochul  
Governor of New York State  
NYS State Capitol Building  
Albany, NY 12224*

### ***Supporting Food Pantries***

Given the ongoing uncertainty about federal funding for SNAP (food stamps), it's more important than ever that we consider supporting local food pantries. You can support food pantries by donating dry/canned food items and/or through monetary donations; check with each organization. In St. Lawrence County, there are a number of different food pantries; some of these are independent, while others are connected to various organizations/networks. Our congregation has a long-standing partnership with the Canton Church and Community Program:

<https://ccpcanton.org/>

There are also other food pantries which serve smaller, more isolated communities; here's a list of them:

[https://gardenshare.org/food-guide/?\\_type=food-pantry](https://gardenshare.org/food-guide/?_type=food-pantry)

Or, you can donate dry/canned goods simply by bringing them to the Church and placing them in the *Big Blue (Wooden) Box* that's located in the Social Room.



### ***The Gathering (Side With Love)***

The Gathering is a monthly virtual event from the UUA's Side With Love, designed to offer:

- Spiritual Grounding – Strengthen your heart and spirit for the work ahead.
- Political Analysis – Understand the threats to democracy and justice.
- Collective Action – Organize with others to block anti-democratic forces and build a just and loving world.

<https://sidewithlove.org/the-gathering>

[Download Promo kit](#)

Join them every Second Monday of the month at 8pm ET. Register by clicking:

[December 8](#)

### ***Upcoming Social Action Team meetings:***

The Social Action Team invites all congregants to bring us your ideas for social justice issues, events, and projects that you think our congregation might be interested in engaging with. We will work with you to develop and implement your ideas. Please bring your ideas to the SA Team by e-mailing [socialaction@uucantonny.org](mailto:socialaction@uucantonny.org), or by attending our upcoming meeting (please let us know ahead of time if you want to add an item onto our agenda). The SA Team generally meets on the second Tuesday of each month (but check the Church Calendar and newsletters to confirm). We meet in person (in the Romer Room), with a hybrid/Zoom option available:

#### **Social Action Meeting**

**Tuesday December 9, 7:00-8:30 pm**

In the Romer Room, with Zoom option:

<https://zoom.us/j/91742806459?pwd=dHRhRmFCMnZHRDhRbVB3cktTZzZiUT09>

Meeting ID: 917 4280 6459

Passcode: 744583

## UU Frame Drumming Group

### **Celebrate the Holidays with Drumming!**

Join the UU Frame Drumming Group with drumming to our favorite music on Tuesday, December 30 from 6:30 to 8:00 pm. Frame drumming has been enjoyed at community celebrations throughout history, including ceremonies, holidays, and other joyous occasions. Drumming and dancing to songs, chants, and meditations can refresh the soul and uplift one's spirit. Come join us for an evening of drumming to YouTube videos in the Romer Room, Musicians Without Borders peace-building games, and enjoy appetizers in the Social Room. Drums provided or bring your own. Please bring an appetizer to share. All ages and abilities welcome! For more information, contact Caron Collins at [bandtchr1@hotmail.com](mailto:bandtchr1@hotmail.com).



### **Facing The Present With Heart**

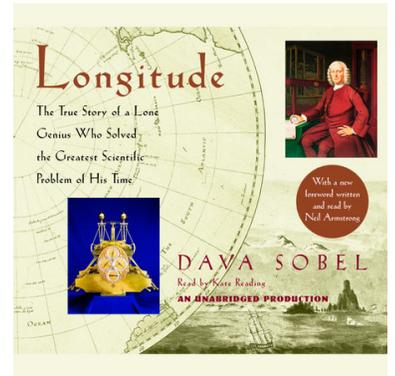


In these troubled times, full of anger, fear, and uncertainty, we are not alone. Please join us in Facing the Present with Heart, a listening meditation circle, in the tradition of Thich Nhat Hanh. We will practice breathing meditation to reduce stress and facilitate understanding and compassion. And we will listen deeply and mindfully to each other as we share how we're feeling, our struggles, joys and sorrows, hopes and fears.

Facilitated by Jenna Joya Blondel, PhD, Minister of Walking Prayer, we will meet on the first Sunday of the month, December 2, from 2 to 3:30 pm in Canton at the Unitarian Universalist Church; and on the third Thursday of the month, December 18, from 6 to 7:30 pm in Potsdam at Trillium at the Presbyterian Church. There is no charge, and all are welcome.

## Science Book Club

On December 18, the UU Science Book Club will be discussing Dava Sobel's book *Longitude*, the story of the genius who loved the greatest scientific problem of his time. Seafaring nations had been seeking for years ways for mariners to precisely locate their ships at sea, but were reluctant to accept the solution of a humble watchmaker. The group meets by Zoom at 7:00. For more information, contact [briangardam@gmail.com](mailto:briangardam@gmail.com).



## UUs and D&D

Dungeons & Dragons (D&D) has seen a resurgence in recent years due to appearances in pop culture and the pandemic. But is it possible that Dungeons & Dragons can be more than just a game? Join us Saturdays at 4 pm in the Social Room for an afternoon of D&D.

All ages are welcome, though younger brave hearts should bring an adult mentor. Let us know if you'll join us by emailing [toddamoe@gmail.com](mailto:toddamoe@gmail.com).



## GAME NIGHT

Join us on Thursday, December 11 at 5 pm! Bring your favorite game and friends or just come to join in! We try to meet monthly in the social room and enjoy a relaxing evening of fun and fellowship. Want to stay up to date on all the game nights? Join the [private facebook group!](#) Contact [Carlene Bermann](#) if you have any questions.

## Staff Schedules for the Church Year:

### **The Rev. James Galasinski:**

Available [by email](#) and by appointment **Monday – Thursday**

### **Carol Zimmerman, DRE:**

Available [by email](#) **Sunday–Thursday** and by appointment on **Tuesday & Wednesday**.

### **Dan Burton, Congregational Administrator:**

Available [by email](#), office hours **Tuesday & Thursday 9 am - 2 pm**, by appointment on **Monday & Wednesday**, and at **(315) 386-2498**.

You can always check [the calendar on our website](#) for details.

## **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

For online giving, please click [HERE](#) or scan the QR code below:



**The Unitarian Universalist Church of Canton**  
3½ East Main Street Canton, New York 13617  
The Reverend James Galasinski, Minister  
Carol Zimmerman, Director of Religious Education  
Dan Burton, Congregational Administrator  
Betsy Kepes, Music Coordinator  
Open Church Office Hours: Tuesday & Thursday 9am-2pm  
[www.uucantonny.org](http://www.uucantonny.org) [office@uucantonny.org](mailto:office@uucantonny.org) 315-386-2498