



Unitarian Universalist Church of Canton **NEWSLETTER**

February 2026

February 1, 10:30 am - Experiential Faith Development

Carol Zimmerman, DRE

As UU's we are always learning and growing on our faith journey. Through shared experiences and embodiment of faith practices, we find a deeper connection to each other and grow in our own faith. Come with an open mind and heart and be ready for some meaningful experiential faith development.

February 8, 10:30 am - What's It All About

Rev. Barb Sajna

Most of us, maybe all of us, have a world view or philosophy that helps us answer life's deepest questions. But often these world views are unarticulated and unexamined. Socrates thought the unexamined life wasn't worth living. So let's take a look at some world views, including our own, to be sure that it's supporting a living and thriving life.

The Rev. Barb Sajna is a retired Episcopal priest who recently moved to the North Country. She is a Wisconsin native and has a law degree from the University of Wisconsin, where she practiced before becoming ordained and serving in Episcopal churches.

February 15, 10:30 am - Love Through the Ages

Kim Bouchard & Katelyn Jessmer

Long term church member Kim Bouchard and newcomer Katelyn Jessmer will share their perspectives on Love. How do life experiences change your perspective, or what is universal? Kim is recently retired from SUNY Potsdam Theater and Dance department. Katelyn is a licensed mental health counselor, CASAC, and certified intimacy and sex professional for St. Lawrence Health.

February 22, 10:30 am - Meeting Yourself

Rev. Doug McCusker

If you met yourself on the side of the road, would you recognize that person? Where is that road taking you? So much of our lives are about pleasing others; molding ourselves into the shapes that others have designed for us; or seeking fulfillment in temporary pleasure. This is the false self that can leave us afraid and weary. But deep inside all of

us is our true self that is connected to the eternal flow of life. Join Rev. Doug McCusker as we explore the siren song of our genuine presence at the intersection of our passion and the needs of the world.

The Rev. Douglas McCusker (he/him) is a retired Unitarian Universalist minister living in North Adams, MA with his spouse, Marie. He served two congregations as their minister: UU Congregation of Rockville, MD and the UU Fellowship of Fredericksburg, VA. He is on the Nature staff and Healthy Relations team of the Southeast UU Summer Institute - SUUSI. As a certified Mindful Outdoor Guide, he leads groups in an outdoor sensory immersion practice known as Forest Bathing.

Everybody's Birthday Celebration Sunday, March 1, 2026

We will be celebrating Everybody's Birthday on Sunday, March 1, immediately after worship. Every year, we gather in different groups by a specific category. In years past, we have done month of birth, Celtic Calendar, Chinese Horoscope. This year we will be gathering in groups by day we are born. We are looking for cake bakers too. Look for a sign-up table during Social Hour on February 9 and 15.



James's Journal Sabbatical & Bearing Witness



The root of the word sabbatical means "rest." One purpose is to cease regular ministry and engage in study, education, writing, meditation, and other forms of professional and religious growth. I will be taking a sabbatical in January and February of 2026. Part of it will be used to further explore the life of the Rev. Jeffrey Campbell, one of the first UU ministers of color who lived in Canton in the 1920s and 30s. I will continue to collaborate with a group of St. Lawrence University alumni and faculty on a book and I hope to contribute two chapters. I will also be attending Institute for Learning Ministry 2026, a weeklong conference for UU ministers in New Mexico. I have chosen a track that will focus on preaching.

I will also be going to the pastoral respite program with my family at the Silver Bay YMCA at Lake George. As you may know, I am on the board of the New York Unitarian Universalist Justice (NYUUJ), a statewide legislative network. I will continue to work with them by celebrating the Medical Aid in Dying bill which the governor said she would sign, writing grants, choosing new topics, and working with the organization to make it more self-sustaining.

If there are any pastoral care concerns while I am away please reach out to the Pastoral Care Team lead for that week.

Pastoral Care Team Lead Schedule January - February 2026

January 1-10 - Sara Hutcheson
January 11-17 - Leo Burger
January 18-26 - Dave Nelson
January 25 - 31 - Albert Glover
February 1-7 - Sara Hutcheson
February 8-14 - Leo Burger
February 15-21 - Dave Nelson
February 22 - 28 - Pete Wyckoff

Thank you for the privilege to be able to take a sabbatical.

May we all find rest in the new year.

In peace,

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

The Rev. James Galasinski

Bearing Witness “We Are All Related”

While on sabbatical, Rev. James answered the call to bear witness in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and be present as our country experiences unprecedented treatment of human lives in the name of immigration enforcement.

"I'm becoming radicalized. I'm seeing our nation become more and more fascist before my eyes. . . . I never thought I would live in a country like this."
-- Rev. James Galasinski

[Read more at Religion News Service](#)

Clergy observe and document the actions of immigration enforcement agents, Jan. 22, 2026, in Minneapolis.
(RNS photo/Jack Jenkins)



Rev. James Interviewed on CNN

On January 26, 2026, Rev. James was interviewed about his experience as clergy in Minneapolis and outlook on the current situation for all people in our country. How does it make us feel to consider the premise that “we are all related”, when we think about what we want for our community, our personal lives, and how the laws of our nation impact us all? What does it look like to “center ourselves in love, compassion, and care”?

[Watch Here](#)



Faith Formation



Sometimes best laid plans get sidetracked. In my January article, I stated that we would have a Soul Work table available in the sanctuary by mid-January. With the holidays, organizing other church events and vacation time, we will be postponing this roll out until March. Keep your eyes out!

Sometimes we get sidetracked from our faith, too. It's okay. Life has a way of throwing us curve balls. And in these moments, it's an opportunity to press the pause button. A time to get back in touch with what really matters to you. An occasion to be accountable for our actions. A way to reevaluate your values and how you want to live those values.

Our Shared Values offer a foundation from which to bet back on track. Our church offers so many different ways to support you when you get sidetracked. From weekly worship to listening circles and from volunteering on committees to joining one of our social justice events, you can get reconnected to your faith and the values you hold dear. In this space, we are also offered the grace needed to reset and find our way.

What ways have you been sidetracked and found your way back or created a new pathway? Share this with someone you love and trust. It may help them find their path. Blessed be.

~ Carol Zimmerman, Director of Religious Education





President's Message – February 2026 ***Service Moments***

During the service on January 25, I introduced a new component of our order of service: the Service Moment. The idea began with a suggestion made during a covenant conversation, which intrigued Church Council and from which the Service Moment was born.

Service Moments will occur on the second and fourth Sunday of the month, prior to the children leaving for RE, and will involve a brief (2-3 minute) presentation by a member of a committee or team. They will describe the mission or purpose of the group, outline some recent activities, and share what they enjoy or how they benefit from being part of that committee or team. Click [here](#) for a page of information for those interested in presenting a Service Moment.

Service Moments are meant to fulfill three key purposes:

1. Make members and friends more aware of the different groups and, in some cases, resources, available at the church,
2. Highlight opportunities for people to get involved and the benefit that comes from that involvement, and
3. Recognize the many hours of service members and friends give to our congregation.

Members of Church Council will reach out to committees and teams about presenting a Service Moment. However, you can also reach out. If your group would like to present a Service Moment, please drop me an email at president@uucantonny.org. We would love to hear from you!

Take Care,



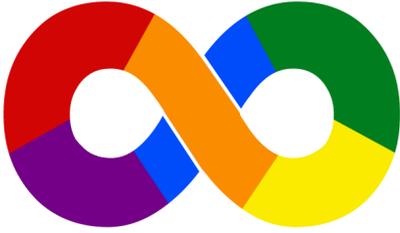
Cathy Crosby, Church Council President

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.

Maggie Hockett	Feb 1
David Bradford	Feb 4
Gary Berk, Oscar Sarmiento	Feb 5
Eileen Wheeler, Claire Thomas, Roger Hutchinson, Ellie Siegfried	Feb 6
Pat Alden	Feb 8
Will Siegfried	Feb 11
Jill Rubio	Feb 13
Jan Hutslar	Feb 15
Lois Cutter	Feb 18
Stevie Michaelson, Esther Oey	Feb 21
Jim Michaelson, Isaac Tavernier	Feb 23
Bonnie Danis	Feb 25
Mark Sturges	Feb 26
Betsy Kepes	Feb 29



Born to Belong: A Neurodivergent Awareness Workshop

Many congregations care deeply about inclusion but still find themselves stuck when it comes to welcoming neurodivergent kids. Drawing on the Born to Belong framework, this workshop on Sunday, March 8 from

12:30pm-1:30pm will explore how children's nervous systems, emotional needs, and ways of engaging with the world shape what their participation looks like—and how church environments can either support or work against it.

Participants will learn how to recognize common access needs, meet challenging moments with compassion and confidence, and make small, meaningful adjustments to physical spaces, programming resources, and classroom expectations so that all children can participate with dignity and joy. Plan to bring a bag lunch (refreshments and light snacks will be provided) and look for registration details in upcoming E-news or reach out to Carol Zimmerman, DRE.

Social Hour and Greeter Signups for 2026

[2026 Social Hour Host Schedule](#)

[2026 Greeter Schedule](#)

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. To learn more, please visit:



<https://www.uucantonny.org/get-involved/service-volunteer-instructions/>.

Thank you for helping to make this a warm and welcoming congregation!

Third Thursday Soup

Third Thursday Soup is on! Come enjoy dinner with fellow UUs on Thursday, February 19 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 with questions or to sign up to make soup or bread for the meals.

GAME NIGHT



Join us on Thursday, February 12, 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.

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.

Pulpit Guest, Rev. Douglas McCusker

We will be performing the world premiere of Paul’s new arrangement of the Beatles’ song *Tomorrow Never Knows*. (Aren’t you curious about how Paul could transform one of the seminal songs of psychedelic rock style into a piece for church choir?)

Schedule:

- Sunday 2/15 Rehearsal 9:00-10:10
- Sunday 2/22 Rehearsal 9:00-10:10; *perform during service, 10:30-11:00*

Love Through the Ages; Kim Bouchard and Katelyn Jessmer, Pulpit Guests

Music: TBA

Schedule:

- Sunday 2/15 Rehearsal 9:00-10:10
- Sunday 2/22 Rehearsal 9:00-10:10; *perform during service, 10:30-11:00*

News from the Social Action Team - Get involved!

Upcoming SASO for the Bittersweet-Milkweed Collaborative Farm on 2/15

On 2/15, our congregation's Shared Social Action Offering (SASO) will be collected for a donation to the Bittersweet-Milkweed Collaborative Farm. BMC is the next generation of the former Bittersweet Farm, which was established in Heuvelton, NY in 1999 by Brian and Ann Bennett. Over the years, the Bennetts, their child KiaBeth, and their farm have been significant friends and supporters of our community, our Church, and SLU. Not only were they among the pioneers of the CSA movement in our county, they also hosted educational programs and internships at their farm, and provided materials for our Church's UShare Garden Program. KiaBeth was also a presenter at our last SJI.

The Bennett's farm is now transitioning to new, innovative agro-economic models under the leadership of KiaBeth, and is now named the Bittersweet-Milkweed Collaborative. KiaBeth recently took in two farmers who escaped an ICE raid in Mississippi, who will help with running the farm.

Unfortunately, a few weeks ago KiaBeth suffered some injuries when her car was hit by a truck and totaled. Soon after that, they had several electrical and mechanical problems at the farm, which require major repairs and replacements. In short, their farm is facing a financial crisis during a time of transition.

While SASOs are generally not intended to be used as "emergency funds" for local families facing emergencies, numerous SASOs over the years have gone to agencies which then channel the money into direct aid to families. Given the Bennett's long-standing support of many aspects of our community and our Church, the Social Action Team feels that it's appropriate for us to collect a SASO to help the farm survive its crisis and transition.

Our discussions about this SASO also raised our SA Team's awareness that emergency funding for local families is a distinct need. We plan to keep this on our radar, and will continue discussing how our Church might be able to address similar needs in the future.

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



30 Court Street
PO Box 55
Canton, NY 13617

315-386-3534
director@ccpcanton.org

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

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.



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, 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 February 10, 7:00-8:30 pm

In the Romer Room, with Zoom option:

<https://zoom.us/j/99736094441?pwd=3bpHAb6Rv1fCLVskAta2t5jxb5BtLJ.1>

Meeting ID: 997 3609 4441

Passcode: 450380

History Circle

History group meets Sunday, February 15 at 9:00 am in the Coots Library.

Science Book Club

The UU Science Book Club will meet on Thursday, February 19 at 7:00 PM by Zoom. For more information, contact bdgardam@icloud.com.

Shamanic Circle Will Meet Bi-Weekly on Mondays at 9:30 am in 2026

The next meetings will be February 2 and 16 with Debra Mitchell leading. Please bring a rattle, eye covering, drum (if you have one) and journal for writing. You are invited to bring a sacred or special object for the altar, too. For more information, email Debra: dmitchell317@twcny.rr.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.



Drumming for Wellness!

Come experience the health benefits of drumming at our monthly UU Frame Drum Group on Tuesday, February 24, from 6:30 to 8:00 pm in the church Social Room. Dr. Christiane Northrup states, “drumming can induce a natural ‘high’ by increasing Alpha brain waves.



When the brain changes from Beta waves (concentration) to Alpha waves, you feel calm and relaxed. As such, Alpha waves can also produce feelings of well-being and even euphoria, which may help people who suffer from mental illness, such as depression and anxiety.

Studies show that drumming boosts the immune system. Barry Bittman, MD, neurologist has shown that group drumming actually increases natural T-cells, which help the body combat cancer as well as other viruses.” All are welcome, no experience necessary! Drums provided or bring your own. For more information contact Dr. Caron Collins at bandtchr1@hotmail.com.

Staff Schedules for the Church Year:

The Rev. James Galasinski:

On sabbatical January and February 2026

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
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