



Unitarian Universalist Church of Canton

NEWSLETTER

May 2026

May 3, 10:30 am - Being Blessed

The Rev. James Galasinski

You sneeze and someone automatically, without thinking, says “bless you.” It is a ubiquitous phrase that comes out of people’s mouths as a reflex. So what does it really mean to be blessed and who is blessing us? Let’s explore the religious meaning of this word and try to understand our blessings.

May 10, 10:30 am - A Mother’s Day For All

The Rev. James Galasinski

Mothering is complex. So on this day we celebrate those who nurture and grow us while acknowledging the grief and challenging mother-child relationships.

May 17, 10:30 am - Being a Pluralistic Mystic

The Rev. James Galasinski

I was recently asked if I could sum up my theology in a few words. I responded by saying I am a pluralistic mystic. Pluralism embraces multiple perspectives, where a diversity of beliefs, ideas, or cultures coexist comfortably. A mystic is a person who seeks direct, personal experience of the divine, spiritual truth, or ultimate reality. Let’s explore what it means to be pluralistic mystic.

May 24, 10:30 am - Loving the Stranger and Other Ethical Imperatives of Jesus

The Rev. James Galasinski

Jesus taught a challenging ethic to love your enemies and turn the other cheek. We should care not just for our families and others we know but about people on the other side of the planet we will never meet. Jesus was probably not the first person to teach this ethic but the one that had a lasting impact on Western civilization.

May 31, 10:30 am - What Are Your Modern Scriptures?

Robin Collen and Doug Rubio

“Modern Scriptures” is a concept created by journalist Sam Sanders, that refers to movies, music, books, artworks, theatre/dance-works, and pop culture that individuals return to repeatedly for grounding, comfort, and wisdom. These works act as secular/sacred guideposts for navigating life, joy, and adversity. During this service we will explore some of our personal modern scriptures and the reasons behind their impact on our lives.

James's Journal - The Process of Transitioning



As the green buds appear on the maple trees I am reminded of my lush 10 days in Bethesda, MD meeting the River Road congregation. There were a lot of meetings. I led two worship services, 2 walks along the C & O Canal, and two morning meditation circles. I met the social justice folks, the BIPOC group, the LGBTQIA+ group, the Stewardship, the Building, and the Finance committees. I helped sort boxes of food that would then be taken to people who didn't have easy access to fresh food. I led my first staff meeting there. I met the youth group. I met the younger kids. We had potlucks. I met the choirs. I met a lot of people. This all culminated on Sunday April 26th when River Road UU Congregation had a special meeting. 99.1% voted to call me as their settled minister.

I also got the chance to do some biking, see the Lincoln Memorial, the Washington Monument, and the Capitol, ride the Metro, check out the National Building Museum and some great plant based restaurants. There was a lot of traffic and things were really expensive. The reality of being in transition is sinking in. I have so many people to say goodbye to. I also will miss the land and rivers. I have every intention of leaving well. Perhaps we too should have some potlucks and walks. We too should have multiple ways to say goodbye. It has been a great 10 years and I have loved being your minister.

Someone in Canton wisely said to me I am not overstaying my time here and I am leaving on good terms. I want nothing but the best for you and for this congregation to continue to thrive.

In gratitude,

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

The Rev. James Galasinski

Faith Development

In my past work and even in my time as DRE, I have often shared details about the [8 Dimensions of Wellness](#) as a framework to support folx in taking care of themselves and identify healthy behaviors they could incorporate into their lives. The dimensions are Physical, Spiritual, Social, Intellectual, Emotional/Mental, Occupational, Environmental, and Financial which are connected and overlap with each other. I believe our UU values align with these dimensions of wellness. In Spiritual Wellness, we are encouraged to search for meaning and purpose, nurture personal values, and engage in reflection. For Social & Emotional Wellness, we are all about community, relationship building, and expressing our ideas. Our commitment to lifelong learning and open-minded inquiry is a core UU value and thus matches intellectual well-being. Our value of interdependence and focus on environmental justice and sustainable living aligns with both Environmental & Physical Wellness. In Occupational Wellness, our UU theology encourages us to live in alignment with our personal values and pursue meaningful work. For Financial Wellness, through stewardship and weekly offerings, we are using our financial resources to support a cause we believe in.



As we prepare for upcoming changes in our church, we can lean into our shared values and the eight dimensions of wellness to support ourselves and each other to help us all thrive and be truly well. May it be so.

~Carol Zimmerman, Director of Religious Education



President's Message – May 2026



Interim Minister Search Timeline and Information

This summer, our beloved minister, Rev. James, will be departing Canton to begin a ministry at the River Road UU in Bethesda, MD. He has served us well for the last 10 years, and he departs when our congregation is healthy and invigorated by our recent bicentennial celebration. Still, transitions can be unsettling and distressing. My hope is that knowing what happens next can help ease the transition. So, let me share with you how the process will unfold.

First, taking a step back and looking at the big picture... **Our goal is to hire an interim minister for the next two years.** We will use the first year as a period of discernment, as we reflect upon our past and consider our future goals and priorities for the church. The search for the settled minister will occur in the second year.

So, the task before us at this moment is searching for the interim minister.

The Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) follows a structured search process for interim ministers, which occurs during April and May; I have outlined that process below. Given the compressed timeline, the UUA encourages congregations to constitute the search team from primarily their board—i.e., Church Council. **The members of our interim minister search team are myself (chair), Robin Collen, Ed Gordon, and Jon Montan.**

Timeline for the interim minister search:

- April 2-22: Search team responds to questions from the UUA to create a lengthy profile of our church and congregation, with input from Church Council, our Personnel Committee, and the UUA.
- April 23-May 5: Interim minister candidates review congregational profiles and provide UUA with their rankings.
- May 6: UUA releases up to six candidate names to us for our consideration.
- May 6-17: Search team reviews applications, conducts interviews, and contacts references for those candidates.
- May 18: Search team provides the UUA with our rankings of the candidates.
- May 19-20: UUA matches candidates and congregations and releases the name of our match*.
- May 21: Church Council makes a verbal offer to the candidate with whom we were matched.
- After May 21: We negotiate the contract and prepare for the arrival of our new minister.
- August 1: Interim minister begins their ministry.

*Because more congregations are searching for interim ministers than are available, we might not match. We will cross that bridge, if we come to it, on May 21st. If you have any questions or concerns about the search, please feel free to reach out to me (president@uucantonny.org).

--Cathy, 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.



May 1: Lena Frank, Sally Vrooman

May 3: Doug Rubio

May 5: Karen Wells

May 8: Crosby Terrell, Harper Terrell

May 9: Geetika Narula

May 10: Ed Gordon, Phil LaMarche

May 11: Todd Moe, David Nelson

May 12: Cathy Crosby

May 16: Miriam Graham

May 17: Eric Williams-Bergen

May 18: Elias Nelson

May 19: Wyatt LaMarche, Kevin Ball, Nelly Case

May 23: Rob Carr

May 26: Maggie McKenna

May 27: Dave Nelson

May 28: Dwight Stevenson

May 29: Zoya Kocho-Williams, Milner Grimsled

UU Canton History and Bicentennial Featured in the UU World Wayfinder

In the nineteenth century, some thirty Universalist groups called St Lawrence county home. Today, only one remains: the [Unitarian Universalist Church of Canton](#), which was founded in 1825 as the First Universalist Society. In 2025, the church celebrated its bicentennial - read below the article that brought to print 200 years of UU of Canton celebration and joy.

As quoted in the article, Rev James said, "We don't want to get stuck in the past. This is a time and moment when we can look back, but it's also a time to recognize what's unfolding in front of us."

<https://viewstripo.email/template/8819c21e-4a03-4752-a486-202fff59d602>

Unitarian Universalism Thrives in Canton, New York



Unitarian Universalist church in Canton, New York, was built in 1897 and has many historic features, including a bell tower and stained glass. (© C A Hill Photo/UUA)

Help us plan our next Social Justice Initiative!

Our next SJI will focus on the topic of ***Overcoming Isolation***, and will begin in Fall of 2026 and continue into Spring of 2027. We invite members of the congregation to be part of the planning team for this important event. Over the next few months, we will be selecting movies to screen during the SJI, as well as selecting speakers and organizing other events. If you're interested in being part of the planning team, please speak with or e-mail our SJI Coordinator, Alyse Millikan: sjcoordinator@uucantonny.org. The SJI planning team meets independently from the Social Action Team, to give flexibility for people with different schedules to participate.

The Spring Envelope Challenge 2026, All May Days - Starting May 3rd - Social Room

Envelopes will be available in the Social Room starting Sunday, May 3rd. Visit the Social Room to find a display of 100 envelopes. Each envelope corresponds to a donation amount (e.g., envelope #1 is for a \$1 donation, #33 is for \$33, and #99 is for \$99). If every envelope is filled, we will raise over \$5,000!

How to participate:

1. Select an envelope: Please write your name and phone number on the back so we can track returns and enter you into a drawing for prizes at the end of the challenge.

2. Return your donation:

- **In person:** Insert your donation, sign the back, and drop it in the designated container after Sunday service.

- **Drop-off:** Take an envelope home and return it the following Sunday or drop it off at the church office (Monday - Thursday, 9:00 am – 3:00 pm).

- **By mail:** Mail your donation in a separate envelope to: UU Church of Canton, 3½ East Main St, Canton, NY 13617. Please ensure the inner donation envelope is signed to remain eligible for prizes.

Remote Participation:

If you cannot make it to church but would like to participate, you can mail a check for any amount. We will match your contribution to the corresponding envelope for you.

The 2026 Spring Envelope Challenge will wrap up during our Church Picnic on Sunday, June 7th when we'll award some prizes!



News from the Social Action Team - *Get Involved!*

Our Social Action Team is cosponsoring **May Day Strong**, a mutual aid event organized by *Indivisible St. Lawrence County*. The theme of May Day Strong 2026 is “Workers Over Billionaires.” This theme reflects growing concern that the billionaire class continues to benefit from the current economy while many working people face rising costs for healthcare, food, utilities, and other essentials, along with reduced support for critical social safety net programs.

On Friday 5/1, we are asking community members to:



1) **Forgo** all online and corporate/big box shopping; and

2) **Donate** the money to a local organization that helps vulnerable people in our community.

3) We also encourage people to **commit to volunteering** for one of these organizations.

If you would like a list of organizations that Indivisible suggests to support, contact socialaction@uucantonny.org.

Other organizations are expanding *May Day Strong* events to include striking from work, rallies, and sit-ins, etc.

<https://maydaystrong.org/>



In Potsdam, *General Strike US Northern New York Chapter* is organizing a sit-in/strike along Market Street: <https://www.facebook.com/gsusnny#>



Free Legal Help, May 4, 5:30 pm - 7:00 pm and May 5 11:00 am - 1:00 pm



Questions about leases?
Problems with a landlord?
Concerns about maintenance?

GET FREE LEGAL HELP!

Rental Housing Legal Information Session:

Unitarian Universalist Church, Canton (Romer Room)

3 ½ East Main St, Canton, NY 13617

Monday, May 4 | 5:30 PM - 7:00 PM

Free In-Person Legal Clinic:

Unitarian Universalist Church, Canton (Romer Room)

3 ½ East Main St, Canton, NY 13617

Tuesday, May 5 | 11:00 AM - 1:00 PM

For tenants seeking help with housing issues (eviction, maintenance, leases, etc.). **Please bring any relevant paperwork.**

Social Action Team Meeting, May 12 at 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm - Romer & Zoom

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 May 12, 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



Game Night in the Social Room, May 14 5:00 pm - 7:00 pm

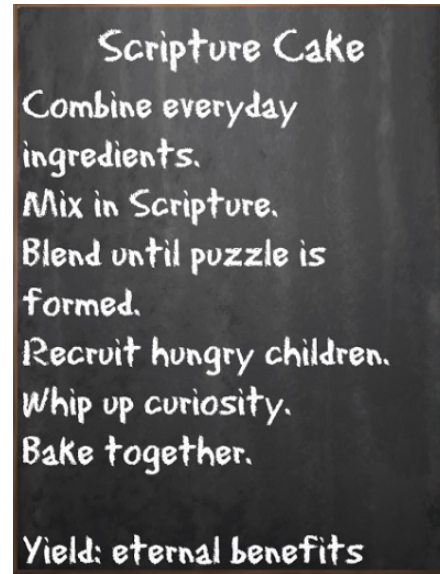
A selection of board and card games will be available for all ages to play, or bring a game you'd like to play.

The History Circle, May 17 at 9:00 am - Coots Library

Scripture Cake, Submitted by Mrs. Ada Fry

From "The Economist a practical common sense cook book published for the benefit of the New Universalist Church Canton NY 1896" p 51

1 c. Butter	Judges v, 25
4 c. Flour	I Kings iv, 22
3 c. Sugar	Jeremiah vi, 2020
2 c. Raisins	I Samuel xxx:12
2 c. Figs	I Samuel xxx: 12
1 c. Water	Genesis xxiv. 17
1 c. Almonds	Jeremiah i, 11
6 Eggs	Isaiah x, 14
1 T. Honey	Exodus xii, 21
1 t. Cream	Exodus xii, 19 (baking powder)
Pinch, salt	Job vi,6
Spices to taste	I Kings x, 10



Follow Solomon's advice for making good boys and you will have a good cake. Proverbs xxii, 13

(This recipe was popular in the late 1800's to teach young girls cooking and scripture. It did not include step by step instructions, which may be typical of that era).

Come Sing in the UU Choir for these Special Events!, May 10 & 17 at 9:00 am



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.

Choir performance on May 17

Theme TBA

Schedule:

- Sunday 5/10 Rehearsal 9:00-10:10
- Sunday 5/17 Rehearsal 9:00-10:10; *perform during the Service, 10:30-11:30*

Charitable Gift Annuities and our UU Church, May 21 7:00 pm - Romer Room

The Stewardship Committee will be holding an information session on Thursday, May 21st at 7:00pm in the Romer Room for those church members interested in learning about another way to support the church through a Charitable Gift Annuity (CGA). Max DeSignore, assistant director of the Northern New York Community Foundation, will join us that night to explain the ins and outs of gift annuities and answer questions.

Kathy Wyckoff writes: *"Pete and I established a CGA through the Unitarian Universalist Association in 2008, with the help of our Stewardship Committee. We received a tax deduction in the year the gift was made and we continue to receive interest, at a very favorable rate, for the rest of our lives. When we are both deceased the remainder will go to the Church and the UUA as we have designated. Ed Gordon introduced this idea because he would like to establish a gift annuity for the church. He previously set-up a CGA for United Helpers through the Northern New York Community Foundation. He has been pleased with the terms of the annuity and his interaction with the NNYCF. Ed wondered if others in the church community might be interested in doing this as well. He calls it a "win-win". We hope you will consider coming to this information session to see if a Charitable Gift Annuity might be a good investment for you as well as a way to continue your support for our church in the future."*

Rachel Somers Grant Social Action Award, May 24 - at Service

We are pleased to announce that the Social team has selected **Valerie White** as this year's recipient of our *Rachel Somers Grant Social Action Award*. The RSG Award honors people who make a difference in our communities by advocating on behalf of social justice and providing leadership in organizing to promote social change. Many people know Valerie from her work as the Director of Children's Programming at the Canton Free Library, but her work in the community has also branched out in many other directions. Valerie has facilitated support groups and fundraising for the Alzheimer's Association; organized clothing swaps for women and clothing donations for local churches; served on the Board of Traditional Arts in Upstate New York; and has advocated for inclusion of LGBT+ and other marginalized communities in library materials. She was also instrumental in the creation of the Tool Library, as well as the StoryWalk along the Remington Trail. Valerie will receive her award at our service on Sunday, May 24; please join us in honoring Valerie for her work!

Labyrinth Walking and Drumming Meditation, May 26 6:30 to 8:00 pm - Social Room

Come join us in experiencing the ancient spiritual practice of meditative walking on our new 7-circuit classical labyrinth. Labyrinths are 4,000-year-old symbolic, single-path tools for meditation and ritual, dating back to ancient Europe and North Africa. Evolving from prehistoric carvings to Roman mosaics and Medieval cathedral floors, they represent a spiritual journey to a center point. Caron Collins will introduce you to the history and applications of labyrinth walking on our portable cloth labyrinth designed after the Chartres Cathedral labyrinth, in France. Choose to walk the labyrinth with OR without drumming, sit and drum, or merely enjoy seated meditation to calm music. Take home a complimentary meditation stone to remember the experience. Drums provided or bring your own. All ages and abilities welcome!



Science Book Club, May 28 at 7:00 pm - Zoom

While we may not talk much about sin in the UU Church, our Science Book Club will be focused on it this month. On May 28 at 7:00 PM, we will meet by Zoom to discuss Guy Leschziner's book, *Seven Deadly Sins - the biology of being human*.

For information, contact briangardam@gmail.com.



BACK (IN)TO THE FUTURE
SAVE THE DATE! ANNUAL CHURCH PICNIC

June 7 - Bend in the River Park

Our Annual Church Picnic will be held on Sunday, June 7, 2026 at Bend in the River Park in Canton. If you can help with the planning, please email

outreach@uucantonny.org.

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**.

Paula Sturge, Congregational Administrator:

Available [by email](#), office hours **Monday - Thursday 9 am - 3 pm**

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

The 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

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