



unitarian universalist
CONGREGATION OF DANBURY

1822-2016

COMMENT

Welcoming all in a spirit of compassion, inquiry and service

FEBRUARY 2018

From the Interim Minister

As many of you can attest, congregational work can be all-consuming, especially during times of transition. In addition to conducting the usual business, many meetings focus on the future that awaits UU Danbury, and how to move toward your vision for it.

Those who have been part of this discernment process know that it isn't always easy to sustain a community that is safe and affirming. There is struggle involved; personalities to be encountered. Fear of growth and change often gets in the way of group process. Learning to speak from the heart takes patience and practice. Such conversations mirror what individuals – and the congregation – experience as they strive to grow their souls.

With no creed to unite us, it can be a challenge for Unitarian Universalists to form a faith community from a collection of individuals with very different beliefs. People come to this congregation seeking intimacy and spiritual growth, often at a time of need or crisis in their lives. They may want to know themselves in deeper, more meaningful ways. And they want to be known. They want to be heard, and they want to be known and accepted as they are. They hunger to be part of a genuine community. When that community is also in a time of transition, it may be more challenging to know where – or if – they belong.

The spiritual quest is not a solitary pursuit. Spirituality is relational. It connects us to something deep within ourselves that is greater than any individual. Many of us make that connection through our relationships with other people. For others, that relationship is with God or Goddess, a higher or deeper power, Nature, Science, or the world around us.

When our spiritual potential is awakened, we are filled with a new vitality. Growth comes from vitality – that energy, or force, that gives us the capacity to live and to grow. It enlivens our ministry to “beckon forth hidden possibilities.” (Gordon McKeeman) We learn to meet one another in the deepest places of our longing.

Unlike committee work, which will ever be a necessary part of congregational life, ministry encompasses the vitality of every heart beating as one. We can do some UU Danbury work without engaging the heart. But that is not ministry. Ministry summons us to be our best selves, from the wholeness of our being. Opening our hearts to receive each other is holy work. It is the work of congregations that is transforming in its power. It is what we are called to do in this ministry we share together.

Guided by conversations about the possibilities and hopes for UU Danbury, the search for a new settled minister is well underway. Now attention can turn toward realizing a community that welcomes and includes all who seek a spiritual home. Remember – everyone was unknown here at one time, so please reach out a hand to invite in another – someone waiting to be heard, known and accepted as part of a beloved community.

Yours in faith,

minister@uudanbury.org

Our Mission Statement:

The Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Danbury is an open religious community that welcomes a diversity of people, ideas and beliefs. We celebrate together that which is good in life, and offer comfort and care in times of need. With others, we work to create a just society and a sustainable Earth. We stand as a beacon for independent thought, and encourage lifelong spiritual and intellectual exploration.

- Adopted by this congregation May 16, 2008

The Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Danbury is a UUA designated “Welcoming Congregation.” Our congregation is welcoming to people who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender. The Welcoming Congregation program is consistent with our first UU principle in which we covenant to affirm and promote the inherent worth and dignity of every person. We welcome all – regardless of age, race, disability, ethnicity, immigration status, sexual orientation, religious background, or political affiliation – factors that can separate people in our larger culture.

UU Danbury Cancellation Policy

During very inclement weather, Sunday Services, Religious Education and any other meetings or events will be cancelled. To learn of a cancellation, please check one of the following:

1. Your email;
2. The outgoing message on the church office phone, 203-798-1994;
3. The UU Danbury website, www.uudanbury.org or Facebook Page, <https://www.facebook.com/UUDanbury>.

THANK YOU to everyone who welcomed Unitarian Universalist Service Committee “guests” Ursula, Aung, Rosemary, and Ali into their homes this past holiday season! We donated **\$619.92** to their important programs! Remember to save your Guest At Your Table boxes to reuse them at the end of this year.

Deadline for the March Comment –
Friday, February 16th.



February Services – One Service at 10:00 a.m.

Sunday, February 4th

Questions, Anyone?

Rev. Nancy O. Arnold

Are there things you've wanted to know that never seem to be addressed in a Sunday service? This is your opportunity! Today's "sermon" will be in response to questions composed by the congregation during the service. Service Coordinator: Michael Stengle

Newcomers' Circle – Sunday February 4th - 11:30 a.m. - 12:45 p.m. in the Minister's office. In this session, Rev. Nancy and members will talk about the history of UU Danbury and what it means to be a member here. The Membership Team sponsors this once-a-month conversation for anyone interested in learning more about Unitarian Universalism, UU Danbury, and what it means to belong to this congregation. Whether new to UU Danbury or a seasoned member -- you are welcome here. Childcare is provided.

Sunday, February 11th

What a Wonderful World!

Rev. Nancy O. Arnold and DRE Darlene Anderson-Alexander

How **do** we go about being the change we wish to see in the world as Indian activist Mahatma Gandhi taught us to do? Are we all able to participate in such work? Join us for today's multigenerational service where our children and youth will share some actions that they are taking to heed this call. Reverend Nancy will reflect on how we can all work toward that elusive "fair and peaceful world". Music and sharing will abound - Come!
Service Coordinator: Inge Hill

Sunday, February 18th

Abraham Lincoln's Compassion and Spirituality

Paula Hopewell

Abraham Lincoln is widely regarded as one of our best Presidents, a "secular saint" to some of his admirers and a hero to many others. While Lincoln kept his distance from organized religion, the Bible was one of his favorite books and he grappled with religious and spiritual matters throughout his life. His deep compassion and spirituality were foundations of his character that allowed him to steer the country through our horrific Civil War. Service Coordinator: Michael Stengle

Sunday, February 25th

But the Words Get in the Way

Rev. Nancy O. Arnold

Each of us has a religious past that we bring with us into the present. Often we speak different faith "languages" that may interfere with our desire to be open and accepting of each other's spiritual growth. How can we learn to understand another's language in order to be a congregation that truly accepts and encourages one another in our spiritual growth? This sermon topic was the top choice of bidders at the Auction.
Service Coordinator: Inge Hill

Our Caring Circle is Available

Our 'Care Coordinator' receives requests and answers questions for the Caring Circle.

Val Cochrane is the Coordinator for **February and March**. **Karen Gillotti** is the Assistant.

If you have a need, please contact **Val** at vcsew.what@gmail.com or 203-791-1378.

Please note that your call will be returned as quickly as possible but it may be at the end of the day.

Notes from the Board of Trustees

by Brad Greene, President

Burnout. Volunteer Fatigue. It was one of the most frequently raised topics in the Listening Circle discussions, and it is still something that is talked about regularly in our congregation.

There is a lot that needs doing here: New Minister Search; Lower Level Build-Out; Religious Education; Stewardship; Social Action and Sanctuary support; Repair work and maintenance; an Auction and other events; and countless other teams, committees, ministries and initiatives. We have our fingers in many worthwhile and exciting pies.

Every organization seems to struggle with having enough people to do all it wants to do. We're no different. Many organizations also seem to lean on a small group of "do-ers".

I believe in the adage "many hands make light work." In our case there are two benefits to involving more people in the life of our congregation and our activities. The obvious is that we can alleviate some of the burnout. But as important is our ability to connect more people to UU Danbury. I believe most people like to be asked to get involved. Once involved they are more likely to remain part of our community. When the next team, ministry, project or initiative comes around, asking someone other than "the usual suspects" may be the best thing we can do for our congregation.

One other important aspect which impacts burnout and volunteer fatigue is how we treat each other. We are almost exclusively a volunteer organization. No one takes on a role here for the fame or glory. They do it because they care about this place and are passionate about an activity. However, when tensions run high and people are stressed, sometimes we don't treat each other as well as we'd like. For some this causes them to question whether continuing to volunteer is "worth it."

There are two guidelines we've added to our Board covenant this year. The first is Assume Good Intent. The second is Treat Each Other Gently & Kindly. Perhaps it is well extended to the entire community as another way to encourage more volunteers.

Capital Project Update

by Alex Makai



Thanks to **Gary Mummert's** efforts we may finally have found a contractor able and willing to make the changes to the exhaust flue from the diesel powered stand-by water pump to create enough space for the planned access lift. That has been a hang-up in moving forward with the lower level build-out project.

We've also had meetings with both the candidate general contractors to clarify matters relating to their scope of their proposed work and the materials and fittings they plan to use. We've discussed points we'd like to see in their proposed contracts. Unless something unexpected comes up we should be in a position to select the general contractor in the next couple of weeks. And then the project can really get moving.

Thank You Rev. Peggy Block

It is with great sadness that we are informing you that Rev. Peggy Block, our Endorsed UU Community Minister, has resigned. Here is an excerpt from her letter of resignation:

“It is with many fond memories since 2004 that I need to inform you of my intention to retire/resign as your Endorsed UU Community Minister.

Please accept my gratitude for these years of service and ceremonies together, and my special Best Wishes and Blessings as you travel the UUCD road ahead in the coming days and years.”

Rev. Peggy S. Block
Endorsed UU Danbury Community Minister
Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Danbury

Thank you Rev. Peggy for your steady and supportive presence. You provided much needed continuity to our congregation through four different ministries. We wish you well, Peggy, and we will miss you!

Notes from the Search Committee

by Carl Tichler

We are entering the final stages of our Search --- we now have candidates! We have received applications from candidates, and throughout January have identified those we wanted to interview. Our initial interviews have been video interviews, done using a video application over the internet. By the end of January, we will have identified the final candidates who we will meet in person.

As we mentioned previously, we cannot discuss any details of these candidates outside the Search Committee, in order to maintain their confidentiality. When we have identified the final candidate, you will then get the opportunity to meet the candidate over a week long period --- Candidating Week -- where the person will preach at our congregation for two successive Sundays, and also meet with our staff and Board of Trustees. After the second sermon, the congregation will vote to decide whether to “call” this candidate as our new settled minister. Candidating Week is scheduled for April 29th to May 6th, and the vote to call will be after the 2nd service on May 6th.

All of us on the Committee are working together to find the best possible candidate who will meet the needs of the congregation now and in the future. We are considering all of the feedback provided by the members and friends of the congregation, as well as our own individual perspectives. We appreciate your trust in us and in the process. Thank you from all of us on the Search Committee for your continued support in our work.

UU Danbury Search Committee: **Meredith Spector, Donna Lawrence, Bruni Edwards, Gale Alexander, Luchina Fisher, Ali Haffner, Carl Tichler**

Specific FOOD DRIVE for Comida Food Pantry

Please help fill the "refrigerator" created by members of the RED and YELLOW RE Groups with these specific items:

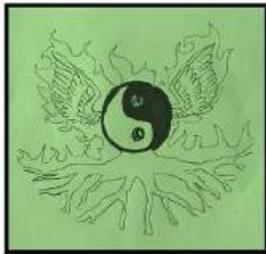


- * **pasta sauce**
- * **peanut butter**
- * **cereal** (hot/cold)
- * **soup** (NOT cream or tomato)



Food will be taken by the children to Comida on Sunday, February 11th.

Thank you!



Roots & Wings

... what's happening in Religious Education

by Darlene Anderson-Alexander, Director of Religious Education



It's hard to believe that we are half way through the congregational year! Programming in Religious Education is going strong and there is a palpable **sense of community** in all of the groups. Let's keep up that momentum throughout the Spring!

Remembering back to December, our **Christmas Eve Pageant** was lovely! Our young cast did an amazing job sharing this important story from the Christian tradition through story and song. Thank you to the adults who supported them as well: Madison Alexander, Val Cochrane, Tony DiFabbio, Carl Tichler, Carl Tramontana, and – of course – all of the parent "shepherds"!





We have just begun “**RE Intersession 2018: Kids Can Make a Difference**” for grades prek-8. We are targeting issues of food insecurity, connecting generations, inclusion, sharing, and music for all! Wow – lofty goal! Please join us for the **Multigenerational Service** on Sunday, February 11th when we will share some of our journey during the Intersession and Reverend Nancy will offer a reflection around our theme.

Please remember that there will be a prek-8th grade **trip to the Comida Food Pantry** following the Service on February 11th! Prek-2nd graders will learn about the Pantry and will stock the shelves with donations received during their food drive. 3rd-8th graders will go on the tour as well, but will also spend about an hour breaking down large donations of rice and beans into smaller packages for distribution. Hopefully many folks will come out for this **hands-on social action activity!**



Sadly, our Senior High Youth had to cancel “**PunxsuCONey Phil**” - a **24-hour Youth Conference** due to low registration. “Cons” are popular UU youth events that include workshops, food, great people, hugs, worship, and fun! Thank you to Jim Wruck and Heather Smith for supporting our youth in their planning efforts. Let’s keep working to connect our youth in the future!.

FEBRUARY

Sunday, February 4th: Final session of the RE Intersession (prek-8th grades); Senior High (10-12) OWL meets

Sunday, February 11th: Multigenerational Service with the prek-8th grade trip to Comida Food Pantry immediately following

Sunday, February 18th: Return to regular RE Group schedules (remember, you can see your child’s schedule by visiting www.uudanbury.org, “Our Community”, “Religious Education”, 2nd page, choose age group)

In Memory of Peggy Daines

In December of 2017, Peggy passed away at the age of 86 in W. Yarmouth, MA, where she recently had gone to live with her daughter, Tenley and granddaughter, Kaitlin. Peggy was a long-time friend and member of UU Danbury, beginning in the early 1970's when the Congregation, then known as The Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Northern Fairfield County, was located on Pickett's Ridge Road in West Redding.

As I remember, Peggy and Peggy's long-time dear friend Annie were two of the first people who welcomed me with open arms to "The Barn" in 1978. As they did with many newcomers, they immediately took me "under their wing" and introduced me to other congregants and invited me to social events. (Annie passed away in January of 2009.)

There are many funny stories about Peggy who often "put her foot in her mouth". Her response to doing so was simply to say, "That's the way my father was, and I'm just like him." Or she would say, "I was just..." She had been brought up as a Mormon in Logan, Utah and did not want her family to know that she had "converted" to Unitarian Universalism. She used to tell about the situation when two young Mormon missionaries would appear at the door of the house in New Milford, asking to speak with her. She would hide in the back of the house while Annie would persuade them that Peggy was not there. She did not want any possible information about her to get back to those in Utah!

Peggy loved watching the Women Huskies basketball games. As I am also a fan, when I am watching them play, I think with fondness of Peggy rooting for them to win.

- Donna Lawrence

Ministry/Team News

Ministry of *Appreciation*

Thank you, **Gary Mummert** for quickly responding to our locked out renters and "defrosting" the lock box with the key in it and for all he does here at UU Danbury.

Thank you to Tim O'Donnell for spending countless hours prepping our "Buddy Bench To-Be" to be painted during the RE Intersession!
Tim is working tirelessly to make our "rustic, repurposed" bench safe and sound for our UU Danbury kids!

If you notice someone doing something nice at UU Danbury, let us know.
Email us at thankyou@uudanbury.org.

From the *Auction Team*



2018 AUCTION AT THE RIDGE!!!

SAVE the DATES:

Friday, October 19th at 7:00 p.m.

Preview with Refreshments

Saturday, October 20th

AUCTION with Silent Bids, Live Bids, Entertainment, Food, Drink, Door Prizes and much more.

Costumes are Optional, FUN is GUARANTEED !

Something for EVERYONE

From *Team Green*

Team Green reminds us all that the **composter** outside to the left of the double doors is hungry for your non-meat food scraps! Anyone cleaning up coffee, don't forget to add those biodegradable bags of coffee grounds to the composter. And, many thanks to those folks who are bringing their food scraps from home and feeding our composter. We use the compost in our veggie garden, which benefits the Comida Food Pantry.

Energy Savings: Team Green is proud of the continued results of its efforts to save energy in both the Fellowship Hall (FH) and Cottage House (CH):

UUCD Energy Costs 2013 - 2017			
	2013	2016	2017
FH Gas (cf)	1659	1234	640 *
FH Electric (kwh)	13773	8844	0 (net)**
CH Electric (kwh)	8616	3888	3194 ***
CH Oil (gal)	874	536	563 ****

* 2017 savings mostly due to taking out of skylight, and re-allocating furnace use

** Solar field produces excess, which Eversource buys back

*** Continued savings over 2016 due to ceiling insulation, LED installation

**** 2017 Billing cycle both January and December, so difficult to compare to 2016

From the *Social Action Council*

Soup Kitchen Corner



On Saturday, February 1st, Soup Kitchen Team #4 will serve up a hot, delicious meal at the Dorothy Day Soup Kitchen on Spring Street. Team Leader **Melody Levy** will be joined by **Joanne Davidson, Joni and Robert Lowe, Michael Stengle, David and Gia Parr, Bruni Edwards and Michele Cousens**. Please remember that if you are not able to help on your scheduled day, you must find a substitute from the alternates list which you can access from the member's page of our website – uudanbury.org. The show must go on!

You can also help us feed our neighbors with a gift card in any amount from any local supermarket. In addition, please continue to bring in your weekly food offering so that we can stock the food pantry at ARC. We need you to include size 4 and 5 disposable diapers in the food offering if possible. We can all be an important part of the fight to end hunger in our community!

From the Women's Retreat Planning Team



April 21st – 22nd at the Guest House in Chester, CT

After this bone-chilling cold spell, our thoughts naturally turn to Spring and warmer weather, more sunshine and, of course, our annual Women's Retreat. The Planning Committee is busy working to ensure a feast for both the mind and the soul. We have several workshops planned.

Additionally, we'd like to hear from you. Do you have an idea for a workshop or activity, or, perhaps a favorite one that you hope makes a return? Are you interested in leading a workshop? We know you are fabulous, unstoppable and tired of waiting in the wings. Come, "strut your stuff". Please contact Melody with your ideas and suggestions.

Registration has begun and by now you have received more than one email with the retreat information and registration form attached. If you have not received (possibly multiple) emails, please contact Sharon and let her know. She will send you the information and a form asap.

Kindly register by returning your form to Barb as soon as you can. Partial payment to serve as a deposit or payment in full can be sent by snail mail to Sherry or put in the donation plate that is passed from hand to hand every Sunday.

Conversations

Conversations meets on the second Thursday of each month from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. in the Conference Room. All are welcome. If you wish to receive our announcements and questions, please email **Bruce Buzby**. Reading the book is not mandatory in order to participate and enjoy the gathering.

February 12, 2018: Topic: **At the Existentialist Café:** Facilitator: Not Assigned. Source: “**At the Existentialist Café: Freedom, Being, and Apricot Cocktails with Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Albert Camus, Martin Heidegger, Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Others**” by Sarah Bakewell, 2017, 464 pages, \$9.99. “The apricot cocktails in her subtitle and her sometimes breezy tone— ‘I like to imagine them in a big, busy café of the mind, probably a Parisian one’— seem to promise an undemanding, gossipy romp. Instead, [Bakewell] judges and explains the ways in which each writer responded to the moral and political crises of the 1930s and after, and her book asks demanding questions about the ways in which people think about themselves and their relations with others. She shapes her answers in the form of biographical narratives, because her central theme is that the large impersonal ideas pursued by much modern philosophy are less profound and illuminating than the varied and conflicting truths found in stories of individual lives.



Tell me what you pay attention to and I will tell you who you are. - Jose Ortega y Gasset (1883 – 1955)

Our February showing marks the 132nd month of our film series at UU Danbury, the completion of 11 years of *Movies with a Message*. Over that time, many issues and messages have come to our attention.

Once again we are privileged to bring you a “Short Night”, an evening devoted to a series of short films. Short films offer both students and masters an opportunity to focus on a message and to demonstrate creativity.

- 7:00 p.m. – *Birthday* – *Birthday* is a love story of a soldier and his wife and carries a message that life is a precious gift for which it is worth fighting.
- 7:15 p.m. – *The Thingmaker* – A short documentary of injury, recovery, and art!
- 7:20 p.m. – *Killing Thyme* – A charming story of an environmentally conscious 8-year-old boy and his grouchy neighbor, played by character actor Brian Cox.
- 7:50 p.m. – *Deep Storage* – A stuttering loner lives with his mum. When she dies, he is without a home.
- 8:10 p.m. – *The Bus Ride* – A young man with an uncertain future meets an older woman who is very certain of hers.
- 8:30 p.m. – *Your Old Man* – Maggie and her dad already have a tense and strained relationship. But on the day of her grandfather’s funeral, 18-year-old Maggie learns that her father was adopted, that he does not know, and that she must tell him.
- 8:55 – 9:20 p.m. – Time for wrap-up and discussion

We believe that good experiences are even more fulfilling when shared with others. To this end, our objective each month is to present films of substance in a living room setting and to provide an opportunity to discuss with friends. Please join us on **Friday, February 9th, at 7:00 p.m.** in the UU Danbury Conference Room. As usual, all are welcome. Pizza will be provided. Popcorn optional! Contributions will be gratefully accepted, all of which will go to UU Danbury.

(For more information on these films and on the service from which we make our selections, please check the website at www.SpiritualCinemaCircle.com.)