



Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Danbury

Monthly **COMMENT** Newsletter

Welcoming all in a spirit of compassion, inquiry, and service

MARCH 2018

We will be voting to call the new minister at a Congregational Meeting on May 6th.

To be eligible to vote at that meeting, you must have signed the Membership Book by March 6th.

Please attend the Newcomers gathering on March 4th, 11:30-12:45 in the minister's office, to learn more about what membership involves. Contact Nancy Tramontana or Rev. Nancy for more information.

From the Interim Minister

We are currently in the season that for some is marked with reflection and discernment. During Lent (the forty days between Ash Wednesday and Easter Sunday) Christians focus on their spiritual lives through prayer, penance, and charity. They might commit to giving up something important to them – like chocolate! One minister summed up the experience by saying “sometimes we have to let go of that which we love...”

Lent is also an opportunity to do something extra to benefit others – a form of charity and penitence (although I prefer to think the action comes from a place of gratitude). Forty days is the amount of time it takes to develop, or change, a habit or practice. The idea is to make a course correction to normal behavior to experience life anew.

In some ways, this transition time is a bit like Lent. Each is a time set apart from the norm. Some customary expectations of the ministry are suspended during this period of reflection and discernment.

In the many conversations at meetings and with individual congregants, consistent themes emerge, the most frequently mentioned being that you want to grow the membership. (Actually it is usually phrased as “we have to get more members”) and finances (“We don’t have the money for...”).

There are reasons congregations plateau and cease to grow. The recurring themes of membership growth and finances are related. Being told that something cannot happen because there is no money for it in the budget is a great way to halt growth in its many forms.

The persistent lament that “we don’t have the money for...” speaks of living in a culture of scarcity. This is when people tend to see limits, rather than possibilities because we are afraid of losing what we have.

Right now you are a small mid-size (“pastoral”) congregation in which everyone seems to know everyone else. The down-side to this is that such intimate familiarity can be perceived as a closed group to a newcomer. I suspect that one of your fears is of growing so large that you will lose that comfortable “family” feeling. Unconsciously, perhaps, you behave in ways that discourage growth.

People come to our congregations seeking a spiritual community to which they can belong. UUs tend to expect that individuals will manage to find their own way into the life of the congregation. And some people are certainly able to do that. But others may need more encouragement before they can determine where – and if – they fit.

When I first came to a UU congregation I was a young mother with a child in tow. I was very shy, and for the first few visits I sat in the “pew” nearest the entrance. The woman who was greeting on my first visit – her name was Andrea – sought me out every Sunday thereafter to say “hello” and to introduce me to others. I was very surprised that she even remembered my name after that first visit. But I credit Andrea with helping me to find my way into a congregation that was to become my first real spiritual home. Had Andrea not made repeated overtures to get to know me and make me feel welcome, I might not be a UU today.

The Membership Team is very intentional about welcoming newcomers. There is a clear process for follow-up, and a path to membership. But, the path to belonging involves the whole Congregation. The congregation may require a cultural shift before newcomers can feel that they belong here at UU Danbury.

For growth to occur means changing from a congregation that identifies as not having enough, to one that opens wide enough to accommodate all who want to belong.

Identifying areas in need of change is part of what we have been doing for the last year and a half. We're now in the home stretch as the search process moves into high gear.

So let me ask you – are you ready to change and be changed?

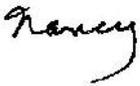
Will you let go of some old thinking to make room for possibility?

To foster a sense of belonging to those who are seeking a spiritual community?

Are you prepared to be transformed personally, and as a congregation, as such changes occur?

Let's use the remainder of our transition time – in forty day increments – to let go of some things in order to make room for transformation and growth. Be intentional about your participation. Cultivate new habits and practices to become the congregation you envision for the future. The future UU Danbury awaits your devoted attention.

Yours in faith,



Update about the upcoming Sustained Giving Campaign

(or the campaign formerly known as “Annual Giving”, “Annual Canvas”, or “Annual Pledge”)

It's Sunday, February 25, 2018 at 10:30 a.m. and I'm sitting at Sherry's desk in the UU Danbury office during the service. It's a real privilege to sit back and observe the goings on at UU Danbury. There is such a buzz and vitality that is present here today ... our parking lot is packed, our R.E. youth are laughing or deeply engaged with each instructor's lesson, Darlene is diligently project planning, and I'm reflecting on the pace of changes from the last three years; beautiful inter-connected paths that bracket our new parking lot, solar panels that make a powerful statement about our clean energy commitment, a stable and burgeoning membership, and the hard work of our ministerial search coming to its anticipated conclusion. It's an inspiring story and there are more aspirational efforts on the horizon.

Over the past few months, the Finance & Stewardship Team (comprised of John Miglietta, Marie Dupree, and me) has been meeting regularly with members of our Board of Trustees and Reverend Nancy about our long-term goals for UU Danbury. We have reached some conclusions that I want to share with you:

- **We need a sustained giving strategy that isn't contained in just one year** ... this means we will no longer conduct “annual” campaigns but *sustained-giving* campaigns with a long-term focus.
- **We will reduce on-going donation requests for operating-relating expenses** ... this means we will consolidate our upcoming canvass to focus on donations that affect our *one congregation* ... operating expenses, valuable investments to grow our membership, UUA dues, and R.E. fees. Our annual auction and other periodic fund-raiser events will still continue throughout the year.
- **We will give our members greater flexibility with how they donate to UU Danbury** ... this means that we will continue to promote SimpleGive as our preferred donation platform while recognizing that everyone should be comfortable with their method of giving (i.e. check, Bank eCheck, credit card, stock donations...).

The formal Sustained Giving Campaign will kick off at the Sunday service on March 18th and we will directly engage you to participate in the Campaign through April. Expect to see more information about our efforts in the coming weeks.

Warm regards,
Matt McPartlin

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. Your cell phone for a text;
2. The UU Danbury website, www.uudanbury.org or Facebook Page, <https://www.facebook.com/UUDanbury>.

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

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

Sunday, March 4th

The Wellsprings of Our Faith

Rev. Nancy O. Arnold

Unitarian Universalists often have difficulty with the traditional understanding of words like faith. With no creed to bind us as a community, we must rely on something else to keep us true to our liberal religious tradition, and to each other. What is it that keeps us faithful?

Service Coordinator: Michael Stengle

Newcomers' Circle – Sunday March 4th, 11:30 a.m.-12:45 p.m. in the Minister's office. In this session, Rev. Nancy will offer an introduction to our UU history and an exploration of your own religious past. 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, March 11th

The Fear that Binds Us

Rev. Nancy O. Arnold

A friend once pointed out to me that there are only two real motivations in life: we can choose to live out of fear, or we can choose to live with love. I have come to believe this is true. I'll share with you my thoughts about how fear and love affect our personal, as well as our congregational life.

Service Coordinator: Inge Hill

Sunday, March 18th

Sustaining us Today... Tomorrow... and Tomorrow...

Stewardship Team

Today we will reflect on where we've been, dream about where we aspire to be, and imagine how we will sustain the Congregation our children will inherit.

Service Coordinator: Michael Stengle

Sunday, March 25th

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: Inge Hill



YOU can lead the Children's Focus on Sunday morning! Share a story, facilitate a conversation, or put something in the "sparkle box" to be discovered! It takes five minutes and means so much to our youngest children! Support and ideas are always available. Please contact Michael Stengle TODAY for more information or to pick your date!

Our Caring Circle is Available

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

Val Cochrane is the Coordinator for **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

Hopes, Dreams, and the Subject Which Shall Not Be Named

I know, I know, I know. We all hate talking about it. Money. We've tried to be sensitive to everyone's weariness with all things financial, but this is the time of year that we have to start building budgets and asking for the means to pay for them. Look for a couple of new twists in this year's Campaign.

First, we are in the process of building high-level, **aspirational budgets** for communication during the campaign. What does this mean? We're going to take this year's budget, add the expense increases we know we're going to have (e.g. new minister's salary), and then add all those things on our list of hopes and dreams (e.g. a paid accompanist). We'll then compare it to our current revenues. This will allow for full transparency on where we are trying to get to, and hopefully a healthy dialogue on what is important to us as a community and what we want to work to fund.

The second item is the nature of our Campaign for financial support. Our history is to have an **Annual** Canvass. We communicate, have a service, a team is assembled, we distribute pledge cards, and we make a commitment for the coming year. After 12-months everything resets to zero and we do it all again.

I listen to NPR and recently they completed one of their on-air pledge drives. However, I don't listen to the pledge drive anymore because a few years ago I decided to become a sustained giver. A monthly amount comes out of my account and it just rolls over from year to year. We'd like to transform our campaign at UU Danbury from an annual event to sustained stewardship. If we can do that and develop a consistent and reliable income stream, then you wouldn't have to listen to our "on-air pledge drive" again either.

I look forward to the dialogue.

Capital Project Update

by Alex Makai



We have chosen the general contractor for the work to complete the lower level of the Fellowship Hall and signed the contracts. Work can now begin as soon as the various contractors obtain their permits from the City of Danbury.

The project will include four large rooms for use by RE classes and other UU Danbury groups, far more spacious and well equipped than the rooms currently used in the cottage. There will also be a bathroom, storage spaces, internal stairs between the two levels and an access lift for use by people with mobility limitations. We'll have a new, energy efficient heat pump system for heating and cooling the new spaces, taking advantage of the electricity generated by our solar panels.



Roots & Wings

... what's happening in Religious Education

by Darlene Anderson-Alexander, Director of Religious Education



THANK YOU to all who participated in the February 11th **Multigenerational Service**: Alison, Anja, Aspen, Carl Ti., Carl Tr., Colin, Edie, Elisabeth, Emma, Ethan, Gabi, Gerry, Inge, Josh, Kate, Lynn, Marjorie, Mateo, Max, Nancy H., Nellie, Noah, Paige, Pike, Raphael, Ro, Sam, Samantha, Val, and Zack! Additionally, these folks helped with our **RE Intersession** leading up to the service: Bryce, David, Dean, Gerrit, John, Kathleen, Kristie, Lisa, Marcia, Melody, Michele, Neil, Nick, Nicole, Sean, Serena, Tim, and Walt! And, of course, there were all of the children and youth (prek-8th) who participated in the Intersession entitled “Kids Can Make a Difference”. **What a Wonderful World** indeed!

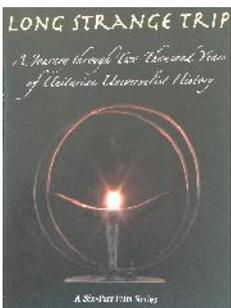
Intersession Service Projects Update:

- ✎ We collected **\$100.55** for music education in the **KIDS Program** (Kids in Danbury Schools)!
- ✎ **Twenty-nine** of us went to **Comida Food Pantry** to drop off all of the donated food collected in the big, red “refrigerator” and to package up rice and beans!
- ✎ The “**Buddy Bench**” is just about ready to face the elements! It should make its debut this month!



The “**Religious Education Sunday Multigenerational Service**” originally scheduled for April 29th will not take place. Instead, there will be a short RE Worship Circle for prek-5th graders centered around Earth Day. 6th-12th graders will be strongly encouraged to attend the Service with their families so that they may hear the ministerial candidate preach! There will be a congregation-wide, RE Ministry Team-sponsored potluck scheduled in June where each class will have a display of something(s) that they learned in RE this year.

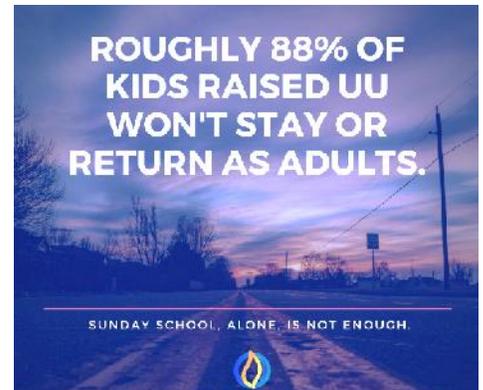
INTERESTING VIEWS ON THE PAST AND FUTURE OF UNITARIAN UNIVERSALISM



As part of my UUA DRE Credentialing work, I am watching a six-part film series on Unitarian Universalist history entitled “Long Strange Trip”. At first I thought I was going to need a lot of caffeine to keep me going through this series, but I was very pleasantly surprised. Our collective history is **REALLY** fascinating! I don’t often stop to think just how radical – and dangerous - being an anti-Trinitarian was during the 16th century. Or how the concept of God not being punitive and all souls being worthy of salvation was just as foreign as the idea of the world not being flat. I would love to share this DVD set with you in part so that you, too, can learn more about our faith, but also so that you might be able to help me come up with a way to make UU history exciting and accessible for our youth.

“UU Identity” is our curricular theme for 2019-20, so we have a bit of time! Please let me know if you’d like to borrow “Long Strange Trip”.

I recently came upon a rather sad commentary on our faith from two distinct sources. A young adult who grew up in this congregation sent me an article, “What if UU Church Was Also for Us?” <https://hazelgabe.wordpress.com/2017/03/29/what-if-we-wanted-bridging-youth-leaders-to-continue-their-work/>. I strongly encourage you to read this reflection on the experiences of a “raised UU adult”. When I told the young adult who shared this with me that it was eye-opening and a bit sad, they said, “it’s so real though”. A few weeks ago, I completed a webinar series entitled “The Sequel to Sunday School” which looked at how we might “do RE” better in the future. The creator of the webinar, Courageous Faith Consulting (<https://www.courageousfaithconsulting.org/>), shared this meme on the right. That’s rather unsettling.



I guess our challenge going forward is to figure out a way to honor our rich heritage in religious liberalism and free thinking while developing contemporary faith formation methods that will enable our youth and young adults to find meaning in our – THEIR - faith.

Newsletter

Finally, I need your help! Tell me what YOU would like to see in the “**Roots & Wings**” column of the monthly “**Comment**”. Should it be shorter with simply a bulleted list of what’s going on in Religious Education? Would you like concrete suggestions on how to help your family live out its faith beyond Sunday morning? Should there be links to UU parenting resources? Would you like a discussion question to consider and a forum in which to discuss it with other UU Danbury parents? Are you honestly inundated with information and don’t actually read this article? PLEASE take a quick minute to send me your thoughts (darlene_dre@uudanbury.org). I’m open to suggestions on how to best meet the needs of busy families!



DON’T FORGET the **Junior High Youth Con** at Shelter Rock from March 24th-25th! What IS a “Con” you ask?

“This conference (“Con”) is a 24-hour Family Focus event where junior UU youth meet. We have fun, make, do and learn stuff. We eat. We get to know each other. UU’s from all over the Metro area attend. The retreat is led by YRUU senior youth. RE teachers and parents attend as advisors.”

The great news is that we already have an advisor/driver and one youth planning to go. We need more 6th-8th grade youth!! Look for details and register here: <https://www.uua.org/central-east/events/youth/spring-jr-youth-retreat-mny-318?month=2018-03>

Notes from the Search Committee

by Carl Tichler

This month's update from the Search Committee will be relatively brief. As mentioned last month, during January we narrowed down our list of candidates to the "short list" of pre-candidates. These pre-candidates are visiting us in person over the coming weeks. By late March/early April, we expect to have decided on the final candidate to bring to the congregation. Later in April, we will announce this final candidate to the congregation, and all of you will then have the opportunity to meet the candidate during Candidating Week --- April 29th to May 6th. They will preach for both Sundays, and on the second Sunday the congregation will vote on whether to call them as our settled minister.

Candidating Week will be a busy time, when the candidate and their family will be meeting with the different committees and staff of the congregation. If you would like to help in any way during this time, please reach out to one of us on the committee.

Thank you from all of us on the Search Committee for your continued support in our work.

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

Ministry/Team News

Ministry of

Appreciation

Many Thanks to **Melene Zagorec, Maredith Spector, Inge Hill, and Jan Galloway** for helping to spruce up the Fellowship Hall and kitchen last week. Taking pride in our space is just another way of loving the community. Thanks from B&G.

Thank you to all who donated to the "**Music in the KIDS Program**" during the Multigenerational Service! We collected **\$100.55!**

If you notice someone doing something nice at UU Danbury, let us know.

Email us at thankyou@uudanbury.org.

From Auction Team



Time Shares Needed for Auction 2018

Thanks to the generosity of the Cousens, the Duprees, and other fabulous folks, we have had lovely time share vacations to offer at auctions past. Please consider adding YOUR time share to this year's auction offerings ~ For more information, call **Marian or Tony DiFabbio**.

Thank you, thank you, and thank you once more !

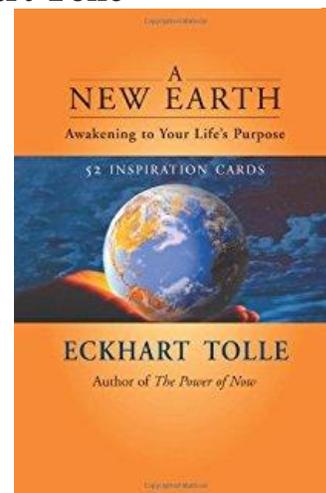
From *Adult Programming*

UU Danbury Adult Education Programs

We are looking for UU Danbury members to volunteer and become active leaders in our new Adult Education Program. Consider starting a program like Chalice Circles, Study/Book Group, Social Group Meetings, Think Tank Discussions, Health and Fitness Programs etc. Any and all program ideas will be considered. Our members have so much to offer and share with other UUCD members and friends. These programs are the ideal way to get to meet and know other people in the congregation in a warm and sharing environment. When you set up a program you will get all the assistance and help you need to get started. For more information contact **Joe Gillotti**.

Chalice Circle “New Earth”, spiritual philosophy by Eckhart Tolle

Join us for a (13) week session studying this riveting and enlightening book. Do you feel your spiritual journey has stalled, or many of life’s relentless problems seem to be gaining more traction? Perhaps fear, suffering, unhappiness and stress are all too common experiences for you? Many people feel this way and wonder why common everyday struggles seem to be so repetitive. The core resolution to these problems lie in the fact that people fail to develop and maintain a daily practice, that is to say, a practice that is simple, insightful and very doable. Take some time for self-improvement, take some time to learn new and insightful spiritual techniques. Without developing new strategies, life’s emotional hurdles remain and often intensify. **IF NOT NOW, WHEN WILL YOU START?**



The first meeting will take place on Monday March 19th from 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm in the Conference Room. For more information and to sign-up (group size is limited) contact **Joe Gillotti**.



Powderpuff Plumbing

Want to learn some basic home plumbing skills? Sign-up for this two hour class for women to be offered on Wednesday, March 21st from 7:00 – 9:00 p.m. in the first floor Conference Room. This class will be offered by UU Danbury member **Lynn Taborsak** who became a licensed plumber in Connecticut 36 years ago. Please use the sign-up sheet in Fellowship Hall and provide your contact information. The class will be limited to sixteen participants. Please plan to bring your own set of screwdrivers.

From the *Social Action Council*

Soup Kitchen Corner



On Saturday, March 3rd, Soup Kitchen Team #1 will serve up a hot, delicious meal at the Dorothy Day Soup Kitchen on Spring Street. Team Leader **Donna Lawrence** will be joined by **John Miglietta, David Teagarden, Keith Dupree, Inge Hill, Judy Lacker, Janet Cory, Dawn Reshen-Doty and Mike Zacchea**. 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**

A Hearty "Thank You"

To all of our WONDERFUL UU DANBURY FRIENDS who made pints and quarts of delicious soup for the Women's Retreat Soup Sale and to all of our FABULOUS UU DANBURY FRIENDS who bought the soup, we send a heartfelt "Thank You" to each and every one of you.



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

We are pleased to announce that the Women's Retreat registration is going very well. Please note the February 14th deadline for the initial registration payment has passed. To those of you who have sent in your payments, **THANK YOU!** If you have already registered, please get your payment in as

soon as you can, as we are obligated to a specific and prearranged schedule with the Guest House.

NOTE that the final payment for your registration is due March 20th.

After we have our completed roster of registrants, we will send you information regarding meal preferences, carpooling, workshops, masseuse sign-up and supplies you may want to bring. We have a robust scholarship fund due to our successful soup sales. **Melody Levy** will be happy to take any inquiries and requests. Remember, we want everyone who wants to attend to have the means to. That was the initial reason and continues to be the only reason for building a fund.

Should you have any questions, please look for the women at Sunday services with a flower attached to their name tags (Melody, Sharon, Karen, Joann, Elise).

Thanks for your help in moving the registration process along. We're looking forward to being together.

Upcoming Events

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 **MaryAnn Kulla**. Reading the book is not mandatory in order to participate and enjoy the gathering. March 8, 2018: "**Born on Third Base**" by **Chuck Collins**. Chuck is a one percenter who makes the case for tackling inequality, bringing wealth home and committing to the common good. He gave up his inherited fortune to fight the vicious inequality that is destroying our country. He is also a Unitarian Universalist. In this book he makes the case for tackling inequality, bringing wealth home and committing to the common good. He has many practical suggestions to create economic and social change. This book is a call for action and an uplifting and enjoyable read.



Love me when I least deserve it, because that's when I really need it. - Swedish proverb

Our films in March, to use Stephen Simon's words, give us a chance to peer beneath the "surface at the beauty of redemption and the rebirth of ...dreams."

7:00 p.m. – *Lost Property* -- Every day at 4:00 an elderly lady comes into the lost property office in search of an item she has lost.

7:10 p.m. – Discussion of the short film *Lost Property*, including Stephen Simon's point of view.

7:25 p.m. – *The Surface* – The paths of two men meet unexpectedly in the vastness of Lake Michigan. We here, living on the east coast, perhaps overlook how beautiful, and how dangerous, the waters of the Great Lakes can be!

8:55 – 9:25 p.m. – Time for wrap-up and discussion of the feature film.

We believe that good experiences are even more fulfilling when shared with others. 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, March 9, at 7:00 p.m.** in the Conference Room. 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.)**



You are invited to our almost-annual Passover Seder on Monday, April 2nd at 6:00 p.m. in Fellowship Hall. All are welcome! Dinner will be potluck style; haggadahs (the telling of the Passover story) will be provided. There will be lots of singing, fellowship and delicious food shared, along with old traditions we cherish and new ones we create together. Email **Nancy Hershatter** and let her know what and

whom you are bringing. Suggestions: a main course such as chicken or fish; a vegetable dish or salad; wine; dessert; matzoh ball soup; potato kugel. Nothing containing flour or rising agents. Macarons and fruit are always welcome if cooking isn't your thing. RSVP to Nancy H. so we know how many to expect. Each family should bring their own plates, silverware and drinking glasses.