



Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Danbury

Monthly **COMMENT** Newsletter

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

NOVEMBER 2018

From our Consulting Minister



Dear UU Danbury Members and Friends,

Now that I'm driving from West Hartford to Danbury (and back) on a regular basis, I have fully embraced the companionship of long audiobooks. It's a very personal thing, allowing someone's voice, story, and perspective to inhabit and share the small space of the car with me for hours at a time. Some of the recent "guests in my car" that have really lingered with me include:

Barbara Ehrenreich's *Living with a Wild God: A Nonbeliever's Search for the Truth about Everything* (2014),

Billy Crystal's *Still Foolin' 'Em: Where I've Been, Where I'm Going, and Where the Hell Are My Keys* (2013),

Maya Angelou's *Mom & Me & Mom* (2013),

Squeezed: Why Our Families Can't Afford America, by Alissa Quart (2018),

and I'm currently in the midst of Anna Quindlen's *Lots of Candles, Plenty of Cake: A Memoir* (2012).

Each of these books and perspectives is quite different from the others. Each has their particular focus, tone, wisdom, journey. I notice how much these stories live in me, long after I've returned the audiobook to the library. I've been reflecting on how different it is to listen, rather than to read on the page, these stories--I can't really skim an audiobook, it unfolds at the speed of the speaker's voice, and no faster. And I'm struck by how rarely we have the chance for these long kinds of reflections and sharings, in person. I've also definitely noticed the emotional impression of some of these stories on me as I move from the chamber of my car into a meeting or just into the hubbub of my own home at dinnertime. I am grateful for this modern way of reading, of absorbing, when there is so little time for deep reflection in the rest of our days and lives.

How do you make time, in creative or perhaps surprising ways, for going deeper in your life? Have you found ways, over the years, to maintain rituals and routines that nourish and replenish you? What daily or weekly habits that you cherish now might have seemed ridiculous or simply undesirable to your younger self?

As always, if any of these thoughts elicit something you'd like to talk with me about or that you'd be willing to share with me, I'd love to hear from you. You can reach me by e-mail, phone, or first class U.S. mail. I look forward to hearing from you, and to continuing to get to know you.

Warmly,

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.

Deadline for the December Comment –
Friday, November 16th.

Our Caring Circle is Available

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

Karen Gillotti is the contact person for **November**.

Janet Cory is the assistant.

If you have a need, please contact **Karen**.

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

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

Sunday, November 4th

Love the Hell out of this World

Matt Meyer

When the culture around us doesn't encourage us to be our best selves, how do we model the kind of world we want to live in? Matt will reflect on the good and bad of middle school, the time he picked the very best costume for a high-stakes 5th grade costume party, & how we find the skills for beloved community. Matt Meyer is a musician and community organizer who has led hundreds of services for UU congregations across the country. He has a degree in hand drumming and has studied abroad in Cuba, Ghana and Central America. Matt serves as Director of Community Life for Sanctuary Boston and is a founding resident of the Lucy Stone Cooperative in Roxbury.

First Sunday Connections Group – 11:30 – 12:30 in the Conference Room.

- Meet members of the Congregation
- Tell us about yourself
- Ask questions about UU Danbury

Childcare will be provided

This group is geared towards newcomers, however all are welcome

Sunday, November 11th

Keep On Moving Forward

Rev. Heather Rion Starr

Depending on your perspective, our country is in a state of turmoil, constructive conflict, cyclical collapse, or, perhaps, maturation. Unitarian Universalists have been a part of this grand experiment that is the United States of America since its founding. What wisdom can our living tradition offer to us now?

Pathway to Membership classe - November 11th from 11:30-12:30 – 2nd session

This 2-session workshop will be offered two times a year

- Learn about Unitarian Universalism
- Discover what UU Danbury can offer you
- Receive information about how to become a member

Childcare will be provided

Veterans Day Recognition --- We are inviting all UU Veterans and all UU friends who are also veterans of the United States Armed Forces to join us for a Veterans Day Ceremony. This brief remembrance will occur right after the regular Sunday Service on Veterans Day, November 11, 2018. For more information contact Joe Gillotti.

Sunday, November 18th

Room at the Table

Ali Haffner

Join us for our Bread Communion and gratitude from each decade. We will also be introducing Guests At Your Table.

Sunday, November 25th

Wisdom from Centenarians

Rev. Heather Rion Starr

For all of us, when thinking about how long we might live these days, there's a real tension between *quantity*, or length, of life and *quality* of life—I love how John Robbins, in his book *Healthy at 100*, talks about not only our "life span" but our "health span." How can we live *best*--not just long lives, but healthy, lively, joyful ones?

Notes from the Board of Trustees

by Brad Greene, President

Time for an Important Conversation

It does not seem that long ago that we learned that our Search for a full-time, settled minister was unsuccessful. For the congregation, and especially those who worked so hard on the Search, it was certainly a disappointment. If you subscribe to a theory of life that ‘when a door closes, a window opens’, we have been given the gift of welcoming Rev. Heather and other speakers into our community and the opportunity to experience an alternate form of ministry.

However, because of the length and complexity of the UUA Ministerial Search process, we will need to decide very soon if we wish to enter the Search process for a full-time, settled minister for 2019-2020. The Board has been in regular contact with the UUA since the end of the last Search. They have informed us that, because much of the early ground work was completed by last year’s team, we would need to enter the Search process in early December to be considered timely.

This is a big and important decision for our congregation. And as with any issue there are a number of different opinions and ideas on the best way forward.

To that end the Board is hosting three **Town Hall Meetings** on Saturday, November 3rd at 10:30 a.m., Sunday, November 4th following the service, and Monday, November 5th at 7:00 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall, for the purpose of facilitating a congregational discussion on this topic. We have reached no conclusion, nor do we have a recommendation for the congregation. While we likely have our individual opinions, we have not shared them with each other at this point. Our sole aim is to provide an opportunity for this community to share, discuss, debate and consider.

Budgets are about choices. And unless one of us won the billion-dollar lottery jackpot recently, money is a limited and scarce resource. We need to discuss the tradeoffs of a full-time vs. part-time minister. We need to discuss what we are able to afford in a higher-cost part of the country with our current revenue and pledge stream. We need to discuss whether we have the ability to increase our resources to afford more of what we want to do. We need to discuss whether we want our resources to go toward full-time ministry, enhanced music, being fair share with the UUA or a myriad of other potential priorities.

I’m confident that we will have a spirited, engaged, and open-minded conversation about the future of our community. Thank you in advance for your participation.



Roots & Wings

... what's happening in Religious Education

by Darlene Anderson-Alexander, Director of Religious Education



Fifth Principle Day (a.k.a. Election Day) is almost upon us! Our 5th Principle reminds us that, as Unitarian Universalists, we believe “that all persons should have a vote about the things that concern them”. Here are some activities to do with your children that will get everyone in the mood to vote and/or talk about the issues with their UU values on November 6th!

- ☀ Children have “the talk” with their parents and grandparents in this video. Maybe your child will want to call a relative to!

<https://youtu.be/Yf2gnHQ1ldk>

- ☀ Take the Pledge! Or, for younger children, print out a “vote” coloring page.

<https://www.tolerance.org/sites/default/files/2018-10/Voting-and-Voices-A-Pledge-English.pdf>

- ☀ “Families Weave a Tapestry of Faith”, Fall 2016

https://www.uua.org/sites/live-new.uua.org/files/2016_fall_families_all4_copy.pdf



Things are off to a great start in RE this year! We are settling into our new spaces and varied class offerings centered on the theme of *World Religions & Peace*. I would love to offer “**FAMILY MINISTRY**” or “**WHOLE CONGREGATION**” events where we engage in some faith-based, multigenerational activities while having fun in community together. I need YOUR input though! What days and times work best for your family? What kinds of activities would you participate in? IS this something that you’re interested in? Please drop me an email or see me on a Sunday to offer your ideas. There seems to be a shift in UU circles *away* from traditional religious education programming ... but *toward what*? I look forward to creating something exciting with you!



Eight of our Senior High Youth went off to “CONada” at the UU Congregation of Montclair, NJ, last month. Social cons such as this one provide a safe space for UU youth to meet other youth and explore their religious identity. At cons, UU youth from different congregations come together for a weekend of worship, workshops, and fun! Here’s what Kelsey had to say about her experience:

So CONada started off as any CON would. We drove a long ways out, saw some familiar faces, ran to hug them, and met new faces. It was really nice to see some people that I haven’t seen in a while and to meet new friends who we’d bond with even more over the weekend. Then we went over the rules, got introduced to the advisors, and then created our own covenant which is probably the most boring part about CONs in my opinion.

We saw and met so many people through workshops, which are little time periods in which we’d participate in an activity like painting or acting. Sometimes we’d just lay down in the middle of the floor in a “cuddle puddle” where we’d pretty much just lay down in a big pile and cuddle each other.

The largest activity is this thing we like to call the “All CON.” All CON’s are basically this big activity that everyone is highly encouraged to participate in. We’re given a problem or a goal and we have to do different activities in order to reach that goal. The All con we had was that America had run out of all types of cheese, so we needed to go to Canada in order to get that cheese back. Little did we know, Canada was actually prison and we had to play ninja, which is a game where you’d stand in a circle and try to “karate chop” other people’s hands to “cut them off” and the last person standing wins, in order to get out of prison and eat food!

Worships were probably one of the most bonding experiences for me though. We’d enter this sacred, dark space, do some sort of healing “ritual,” listen to some music, and then at the end of it all, we’d gather in a tight circle and hug each other. The worships all have some sort of lesson though. Sometimes we’d hear some quotes on how to take care of ourselves or how to carry the good memories with us as we reach another milestone in life. I don’t remember the message of CONada’s worships, but I remember that in the last worship, we had to write a love letter.

I think one of my favorite parts of CONs are to participate in and watch the Coffee House. The Coffee house is pretty much a talent show, but you can pretty much do whatever you want on stage and there’s no winner. I sang and played the ukulele, someone read a story and had someone else act it out, other’s told jokes, and much, much more.

CON’s are really just another home away from home for me. They’re the place where I can just take a nice breath of air in this busy place and that’s exactly how CONada felt to me.

Wow! That sounds like a great experience for our youth! Did you know that WE are hosting the final CER-MetroNY CON of the year the weekend of March 29-31? The youth will be reaching out to folks for help with different aspects of that, so we will ALL have an opportunity to help them create just the atmosphere that Kelsey described above!

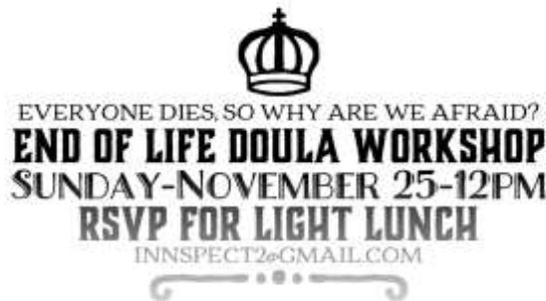
November

- ☀ Join us for our traditional multigenerational Service of Thanksgiving on Sunday, November 18th. Look for opportunities for children and youth to participate in the Service in upcoming weekly emails and family emails. We will kick off the annual UUSC Guest At Your Table program during this Service as well.
- ☀ Look for the Interfaith AIDS Ministry Mitten Tree at the end of the month ... another tradition of caring for those in our community.
- ☀ Coming soon ... information about this year's Christmas Eve Pageant! Start talking to those thespians in your house about helping to tell this important Holiday story!

Ministry/Team News

From the *Caring Circle Ministry*

by Meredith Spector



“EVERYONE DIES, SO WHY ARE WE AFRAID?” by Holly Kruzshak

Through her experiences volunteering as a Stephen Minister and with hospice, along with some personal events, Holly Kruzshak realized the fears surrounding dying often limited someone’s ability to enjoy their life. As a result, Holly successfully completed End of Life Doula trainings with Doula Givers in 2016 and with the University of Vermont in 2018 to become more knowledgeable in helping others through the dying process. Founder of Embracing Ends, she continues to pursue her passion to help people die with dignity and educate others in the need to complete their advanced directives and DNRs and often facilitates family conversations that help loved ones to be aware of and accept those decisions.

- Learn how to be with someone who is dying
- Conversations with your loved ones

- Steps to planning your last wishes
- Caring for the caregivers

LUNCH AND SPEAKER SPONSORED BY RIGHT TO FLOURISH

From the Auction Team

by Marian and Tony DiFabbio, Co-Chairs



Into The Woods, UUCD Auction 2018, was a HUGE success!

Our Beloved Community met, and exceeded, expectations.

We proved to ourselves and to each other that we know how to step up when needed, we treasure our faith community, and will open our hearts and our wallets to support our spiritual home.

So we thank every one of you for doing your part, and we particularly thank our Auction Committee Members: Val Cochrane, Lisa Greene, Barbara Myers, Suzanne Perry, Yvonne Ruddy-Stein, Lola Strilowich, and Jim Walsh, who have worked tirelessly since January to bring this auction to life.

Also to the many Elves, Workers, and Performers, Matching Donors, those of you who bought tickets and to all bidders, and all who joined in the spirit of the celebration... maybe you wore a costume, maybe you wore a smile and brought your sense of humor... We thank you all.

It Takes a Village to Create an Auction....

The Auction Committee worked hard, and many folks helped out during October 20 Auction night. We had business donors who were thanked elsewhere, but the following list of UUCD members and friends donated a massive amount of baskets, goods, dinners, events, classes, services, and wine. It is an impressive list, and we thank you all!

Alex Makai
 Anne Krieg
 A-Team
 Barbara Myers
 Board of Trustees
 Brad & Lisa Greene
 Bruni Edwards
 Caring Ministry
 Cheryl Edelen
 Chris Creter
 Chris Halfar
 Debbie Musumeci
 Donna Lawrence
 Dre Dretzin
 Elisabeth Levy
 Eva DeFranco & John Bonansinga
 Fred Carpenter
 Gary Mummert
 Gina Cassetta
 Helen Brazil

Jan Galloway
 Jane Leff
 Jen & Matt McPartlin
 Jennifer Leavitt
 Jim Russell
 Joan Campbell
 John & Leslie Miglietta
 John & Donna DiFabbio
 Judy Lacker
 Karen & Joe Gillotti
 Knitting Ministry
 Kristie & Lou Liotta
 Lisa Austin-Smith
 Lisa & Peter Horton
 Lisa Paw
 Lynn Taborsak
 Marian & Tony DiFabbio
 Mary Ann Kulla
 Melene Rose

Melody Levy
 Membership Team
 Michael Stengle
 Michele & Rik Cousens
 Nancy Arnold
 Nancy Tramontana
 Neil Failla
 Pat Coulston
 Rev. Heather Rion Starr
 Rich Strilowich
 Right to Flourish
 Sally Mandler
 Sharon Stram
 Sue Walsh
 Suzanne Perry & Carl Tichler
 Suze Shaner
 Team Green
 Valerie Cochrane
 Yvonne Ruddy-Stein
 Women's Retreat Committee

From the *Membership Team*

by Nancy Tramontana



Open Mic Coffee House at UU Danbury (sponsored by the Membership Team)

Comfy chairs, yummy desserts, and great entertainment! Come one, come all to UU Danbury's Open Mic Coffee House! We need performers and we need an audience!

Friday, November 2nd, 7:00 – 9:30 p.m. (sign ups begin at 6:30) in the Fellowship Hall

A great chance to perform at the hottest venue on Clapboard Ridge Road!

All ages are welcome to share:

- Poetry
- Spoken Word
- Comedy
- Story Telling
- Music

Bring a dessert, a snack or a beverage to share, and bring a friend

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From the *Social Action Council*

by Lynn Taborsak

Dorothy Day Hospitality House Annual Meeting Summary

On Monday, September 24th the annual meeting of Dorothy Day Hospitality House was held at the First Congregational Church in Danbury. This summary is provided to thank all of the volunteers who make it possible for us to help those in need in our community day after day and year after year.

Last year, volunteers from area churches and civic organizations served 23,424 hot meals every afternoon, closing only for Thanksgiving and Christmas when local churches provide the meal. In addition, volunteers handed out 14,560 bag lunches for guests to take away with them. The Evening Program, which operates a warming center from 5 to 9 during the five coldest months of the year, served an additional 5,386 meals at the William Street location.

Volunteers for the shelter located behind the soup kitchen provided a total of 4,753 bed nights for homeless individuals in our community last year. In November, Dorothy Day operates an Overflow Shelter at the First Congregational Church for the 5 coldest months of the winter so that no one is left outside. Last year, the Overflow Shelter was open for 140 nights and provided 3,184 bed nights for homeless men and women, an increase of 664 bed nights from the previous year.

The Evening Out of the Cold Program ran from Sunday, November 5, 2017 until Saturday, March 31, 2018. It opened for a third year in the lower level of Saint James AME Church at 45 William Street almost directly behind the Overflow Shelter. This location consists of a large hall, furnished with tables and chairs, two restrooms and a kitchen. It was open daily from 6:00 to 9:00 pm, often earlier in inclement weather. Seven teams of volunteers provide coverage for the 21 weeks of winter weather. Last year there were 5,426 visitors from Danbury's 4 emergency shelters. There were 51 women and 202 men, an increase of 409 visitors from the previous year.

With no paid staff or taxpayer funding, Dorothy Day Hospitality House opens each day to serve people in need and has been doing this successfully for more than 35 years. It is an amazing community effort that should be commended, not condemned. We are grateful for your hours of volunteer support, your donation of goods and services, and the generosity of our community. You make it possible for us to provide food, shelter and hospitality to our neighbors all year long.

Please consider signing a letter of support this month for the shelter as Dorothy Day heads back to court in Hartford for a decision from Judge Marshall Berger on its fate.

Soup Kitchen Corner

by Judy Lacker

On Saturday, November 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 Team members **John Miglietta, Rose Schlemmer, David Teagarden, Keith Dupree, Inge Hill, Judy Lacker, Janet Cory, Dawn Reshen-Doty, Mike Zachea, and Tony DiFabbio**. 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!

Social Action Documentary Series

by Gary Mummert

Join us on Friday, November 30th at 7:00 p.m. in the Conference Room - WHERE TO INVAD E NEXT - Michael Moore makes us laugh by exploring social problems plaguing the USA.

Upcoming Events

Men Conversing over Coffee



Some male veterans have been meeting for coffee and conversation and would like to invite other men to join us. It matters not if you are retired or working, veteran or non-veteran. All that matters is that you want to meet with men over coffee or tea for conversation and sharing.

We are meeting on the second Tuesday of the month, 9:30 a.m. at Dunkin' Donuts, 407 Main St, Danbury, near North Street. Typically, we meet for about an hour, then go about our busy-ness. Please consider joining us. Contact: **Gary Mummert**.

Movies with a Message

by Keith Dupree

Each day, and the living of it, has to be a conscious creation in which discipline and order are relieved with some play and pure foolishness.
 May Sarton (1912 – 1995)

The main characters in our films this month are not content to let circumstances write the script for their lives. Each bravely chooses instead to take the script into their own hands.

- 7:00 p.m. – *The Game* – A new kid in school tries out for the basketball team. But this short, skinny kid is a driven athlete with a secret that is very personal.
- 7:20 p.m. – *Quality Problems* – Brooke Purdy is a wife, mom, and a cancer survivor. Or is she? When her cancer recurs, Brooke declares, “I won’t let cancer hijack my life!”
- 9:10 – 9:30 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, November 9, at 7:00 p.m. in the Conference Room. As usual, all are welcome. Pizza will be provided. Popcorn optional! Contributions will be gratefully accepted, all of which will go to the 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.)



The **Conversations** group meets every other month on the second Thursday of the month at 7:00 p.m. in the Conference Room. You do not need to read the book to attend. For more information please contact **Mary Ann Kulla**.

November 8th we'll be considering "**The Woman's Hour**" by **Elaine Weiss**. Set in 1920 when only one state is still needed to ratify the 19th Amendment and conclude the seven-decade long crusade to win the vote for women, this book opens a window on a part of our history that is usually glossed over. Who opposed the suffragettes? The opposing forces included politicians with careers at stake, liquor companies, railroad magnates and racists who didn't want black women voting.