



Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Danbury

Monthly **COMMENT** Newsletter

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

DECEMBER 2018

From our Consulting Minister



Dear UU Danbury Members and Friends,

As I write this column, I'm snowed in for the first time this season. I shoveled out one car from our driveway this morning and the stuff on the ground was so wet and thick I stopped after that and am letting it melt. My spouse Cathy, who grew up here in Connecticut, tells me she has rarely seen snow like this come before Thanksgiving. After last March 2018, when every single Wednesday of that month public schools (at least in West Hartford) were closed, I'm increasingly contemplating the question: "is *this* the new normal?"

There are all the routine ways we prepare for winter--the primal, instinctive, annual ways. I also think about ways that we perceptive, forward-looking human beings try to prepare for the impacts of climate change in our homes and our communities. I dream about ways that our congregations can be more supportive and intentional in our efforts to help prepare one another for whatever we might wake up to next week, next month, next year.

What are the ways that you prepare yourself, spiritually and logistically, for being ensconced in your home for a few days or more? If you've lived in New England for a long time, what are your familiar winterizing routines, and how are those evolving with each season? What do you think about in terms of "worst-case scenario" planning in your immediate neighborhood? Has that motivated you to reach out and connect with neighbors in productive, creative, or relationship-building ways?

We are in a time in our country when so many things can change so quickly. One of the gifts that congregational community can offer is some sense of steadiness in the tumult, a place of refuge and sanctuary, rituals and traditions you can rely on from month-to-month and year-to-year. Core to our Unitarian Universalist faith is the shared belief that no one of us is alone or can exist completely on-our-own, that we are and must be here for one another. How does that inform your community-building efforts?

As always, if any of these thoughts elicit something you're inspired about, would 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. Happy Winter! May this be a soul-nourishing season for you and your's.

Warmly,

Rev Heather

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 January Comment –
Friday, December 14th.**

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 text messages;
3. The UU Danbury website, www.uudanbury.org.
4. Facebook, www.facebook.com/UUDanbury.

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

Sunday, December 2nd Centering for Freedom (Intersectionality and Oppression) Rev. LoraKim Joyner

Sunday, December 9th Rev. Heather Rion Starr and DRE Darlene Anderson-Alexander
A World of Peace, Friendship, and Understanding

It's time for our annual, Multigenerational Winter Service! Let's gather for a time of reflection about honoring old traditions, creating new ones, and sharing in the beauty of peace and friendship during this Holiday Season. We will be treated to a beautiful array of recorder, piano, and guitar music. Join us for singing, stories, and seasonal joy!

During today's coffee hour, all are invited to enjoy special snacks provided by the Religious Education Ministry Team while we decorate the trees!

Sunday, December 16th Staying Around Awhile Rev. Heather Rion Starr and the Membership Team
 We will have our New Member Ceremony today, honor membership anniversaries, and reflect upon what it means to commit to a community through all the seasons, all the inevitable ups-and-downs. We will also commemorate the 6th anniversary of the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting and our Share-the-Plate offering will go to Sandy Hook Promise.

Sunday, December 23rd Nurturing Wonder Rev. LoraKim Joyner

Monday, December 24th – Christmas Eve

4:30 p.m. Christmas Eve Pageant

7:00 p.m. Be A Light For One Another: Our Candlelight Christmas Eve Service Rev. Heather Rion Starr

All are welcome to this special annual service of poetry, song, reflection and reenergizing one another amidst the long nights and winter season.

Sunday, December 30th Roots Rev. Jane Thickstun

Let's take a look at the value of tradition in religion, and the healthy tension involved in keeping it balanced with seeking new forms, creative expressions, and original experience. Our tradition grounds us, gives us roots, so we can fly.

NOTICE OF SPECIAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

The Board of Trustees of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Danbury is calling a special Congregational Meeting on December 2, 2018 at 11:30 a.m. at 24 Clapboard Ridge Road, Danbury for the purpose of voting on the following resolution:

The Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Danbury (UUCD) will maintain a part-time, consulting contract with the current minister with a commitment to reevaluate the need for a full-time minister in May 2020.

The right to vote at this meeting shall be restricted to those who have been members of this Congregation as of October 3, 2018. Requests for absentee ballots may be submitted in writing to Brad Greene or to Lisa Austin Smith. Completed absentee ballots must be submitted no later than December 1, 2018. The vote will be by paper ballot of members present at the December 2, 2018 special congregational meeting.

Notes from the Board of Trustees

by Brad Greene, President

Our Minister Decision

For the second month in a row, I'm going to use this space for our minister decision. Hopefully by now you are aware of the congregational vote we're having on this topic and are planning to attend on December 2nd.

First, thanks to all who participated in a Town Hall Meeting on November 3rd -5th. Almost half of our community was present at one of the sessions. The level of dialogue and listening was impressive and is was exciting to experience.

The Board went into the Town Hall Meetings without having formed a position. We saw it as an opportunity to take the "pulse" of the congregation and make an informed recommendation and decision. We had a Board meeting a couple of days later and discussed what we heard. **Unanimously we are recommending that we continue with our part-time, consulting minister contract with Reverend Heather and reevaluate the decision to pursue a full-time settled minister in May 2020.**

Here's the consensus we heard in the Town Hall Meetings that led us to that recommendation:

- As a result of having a part-time minister this year, we are able to afford a regular Music Director/Accompanist (which we are actively recruiting for now) as well as pay our Fair Share dues to the UUA for the first time in years. Congregants seemed to wish to keep this role as well as maintain UUA Fair Share.
- There is a desire to stabilize and grow the congregational budget to support the necessary and competitive salary to attract a full-time minister, without having to cut other priorities.
- The congregation would like to have a full-time settled minister again, but congregants felt this is a workable option in the near term.
- Overall, our congregation is about the people and a part-time minister does not impact the overall strength of the Congregation.

Thank you, in advance, for attending the Congregational Meeting on December 2nd immediately after service where we will vote on this resolution. We look forward to more discussion on this important topic. A quorum is needed, so your attendance is appreciated!



Roots & Wings

... what's happening in Religious Education

by Darlene Anderson-Alexander, Director of Religious Education



Thank you to everyone who took one of the 35 mittens off of the **MITTEN TREE!** Do you know that we have been supporting the Interfaith AIDS Ministry for almost 30 years? This year, we are ensuring that 24 people affected by HIV/AIDS will have presents for the Holidays. Way to extend those helping mittens! Please be sure to bring wrapped, labeled presents **back to UU Danbury BY Sunday, December 2nd** so that the RE Ministry Team elves can make sure they are delivered on time.

Speaking of **December 2nd**, that is when Pageant Auditions begin! Here is the schedule:



Christmas Eve Pageant 2018

Auditions

- for principal roles (i.e., Arch Angel, Joseph, Wise Ones) – Prek-8th graders
- Sunday, December 2nd, 11:45-1:00 OR
- Monday, December 3rd, 6:00-7:30
- Shepherds & Angels need not audition

Junior & Senior High Choir

- no audition necessary, but you **MUST** be able to attend at least one regular rehearsal **AND** the mandatory full dress rehearsal

Rehearsals

- Monday, December 10th, 5:30-8:30 ALL Principals & Choir
- Monday, December 17th, 5:00-7:00 Shepherds & Angels; 6:00-8:00 Principals & Choir
- Sunday, December 23, 2:00-5:00 **MANDATORY DRESS REHEARSAL** for ALL actors and musicians

Need More Information?

Contact Darlene @ darlene.dre.uucd@gmail.com



I hope to see all of you at the **Multigenerational Service on Sunday, December 9th**! Reverend Heather and I will be weaving the stories of The Latke Who Couldn't Stop Screaming (Snicket) and The Snow Tree (Repchuk) into a Service about peace, friendship, and understanding. We are looking for eight readers (of any age) and one actor to help us. Please let me know (darlene.dre.uucd@gmail.com) if you or your child would like to read or act! Following the Service, we will be treated to special snacks courtesy of the RE Ministry Team while we **TRIM THE TREES!** Ornaments will be made by our children and youth during SUUnday FUUnday on the 2nd!



What a busy time of year this is! Know that your family's presence here is a true gift to this congregation and to our Religious Education program! May you enjoy all of your Holiday times together and, in the words of Elena Westbrook, "try just to be present in each moment as it unfolds. Your simple attention is what makes these moments holy."

DATES TO REMEMBER

- **December 2nd**, SUUnday FUUnday in RE for Prek-12th graders
- **December 2nd**, Pageant Auditions, 11:45-1:00
- **December 3rd**, Pageant Auditions (for those who can't come on Sunday), 6:00-7:30
- **December 9th**, Multigenerational Winter Service
- **December 24th**, 4:00, Christmas Eve Service, including The Pageant
- **December 24th**, 7:00, Christmas Eve Service
- Sundays **December 16th**, **23rd**, and **30th** regular RE groups meet

Ministry/Team News

Ministry of

Appreciation

Thank you to this year's **Christmas Eve Pageant Elves** for getting on board already! We have **Cheryl Edelen**, Musical Director and Accompanist ... **Carl Tichler**, Audition Accompanist ... **Tony DiFabbio**, Acting Coach ... **Val Cochrane** transitioning to **Sharon Tavares**, Costumers ... **Carl Tramontana**, Sound. What a team!

Thank you to the **RE Ministry Team** (**Sam McCoy, Kathleen Granger, Alison DiPinto, and Ali Haffner [BOT]**) for helping to keep the Mitten Tree Project moving!

From *Building and Grounds*

by Gary Mummert

While we're still celebrating our basement build-out project, there are many people who helped with off-budget items to enhance the new digs. Much appreciation to: **Gale Alexander, Tony DiFabbio, Michael Edwards, Joe Gillotti, Alex Makai, Tim O'Donnell, Nicole Paris, Melene Rose, Sharon Stram, and Walt Sizemore.**

Many Thanks to **Michele and Rik Cousens** for donations of many tools and devices that will make our work easier.

Finally, if anyone feels the call to volunteer over the winter months, there are many small projects where we can use your help. Contact: **Gary Mummert.**

From the *Caring Circle Ministry*

Our Caring Circle is Available

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

Joan Campbell is the contact person for **December and January.**

Maredith Spector is the assistant.

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

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

From the *Social Action Council*

Social Action Update

by Lynn Taborsak

Gun Violence Prevention: The Social Action Council will offer a remembrance for the victims of the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting on Sunday, December 16th with a special Children's Focus and reflections from two Sandy Hook School students. There will also be a Share-the-Plate offering for the Sandy Hook Promise Foundation.

Think Pink: When we began our congregational year this fall, we asked everyone to fill out a bright pink Social Action Survey. We need to know what social justice issues are important to you. Do you want to save polar bears and feral cats? Do you want to end hunger and homelessness? Do you want to collect children's books for family day care providers in our community? Please fill out a survey and hand it in. Your ideas will create more opportunities for us to do more good! Our wider community benefits when we engage our UU values in social action. Please join us.

Thank you to everyone who signed a letter of support for the Dorothy Day Shelter. We will be sending 40 letters to Hartford asking Judge Marshall Berger Jr. to keep the shelter open. If you missed this opportunity to show your support, see **Lynn Taborsak** or **Gary Mummert** for a copy of the letter.

Soup Kitchen Corner

by Judy Lacker

On Saturday, December 1st, Soup Kitchen Team #2 will serve up a hot, delicious meal at the Dorothy Day Soup Kitchen on Spring Street. Team Leader **Sharon Stram** will be joined by **Carl Tramontana, Chris Halfar, Rose Schlemmer, Suze Shaner, Nicole and Sean Paris, Darlene Anderson-Alexander and Brian Teagarden**. 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!

It is also time for members and friends to sign up again for another year. UU Danbury has been committed to serving a meal once a month for the past 37 years. It's a UU tradition! Sign-up sheets for each team are available in Fellowship Hall, or if you would like to volunteer to be part of a team, please contact **Judy Lacker**. All Teams meet on the first Saturday of the month, 3 times per year.

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 *Knitting Ministry*

by Karen Gillotti



Annual Knitting Sale Sunday, December 2nd after the service.

The Knitting Ministry has been busy all year and knitted up many and varied items to be offered for sale. Selections include scarves, shawls, socks, hats, fingerless mittens, felted handbags, and pillows and more. A great opportunity to get a jump on your holiday shopping and purchase one of a kind, unique hand knitted items for family and friends at very reasonable prices. All proceeds are donated to UU Danbury.

From the *Women's Retreat Planning Team*

by Sharon Stram

CHEERS FOR 20 YEARS! SOUP SALE – DECEMBER 9, 2018



The “Cheers for 20 Years” Women’s Retreat Committee is sponsoring our annual **Soup Sale**, the first of which is to be held after the Service on **December 9, 2018**.

Proceeds from the Soup Sale will fund scholarships to defray the cost of attending the Women’s Retreat, which will be held April 27-28, 2019 at the Guest House in Chester, CT. Details and reservation information to be forthcoming.

To those of you who generously made soup for our sale, a hearty “Thank You!” And a big “Thank You” in advance to all who will buy our fabulous, homemade soups! Your participation will help make our “Cheers for 20 Years” 2019 Women’s Retreat a success.

With much appreciation,

The 2019 Women’s Retreat Committee

Upcoming Events



The next meeting of the Danbury Chapter of **Dining for Women** will take place at UU Danbury on Sunday, December 2nd, from 6:00 – 8:00 p.m. in Fellowship Hall. The featured grantee that we will be learning about is Gramin Vikas Vigyan Samiti, from India. If you are interested in attending, please email dfw.danbury@gmail.com or contact **Judy Lacker** or **Anne Krieg** for more information.

Men Conversing over Coffee

by Gary Mummert



We are now seven men meeting once a month. Join us when you can. Note the new date.

New Day: Second Monday of the month

Next Date: Monday, December 10, 2018

Time 9:30 a.m.

Where: Dunkin Donuts, 407 Main Street, Danbury (near North Street)

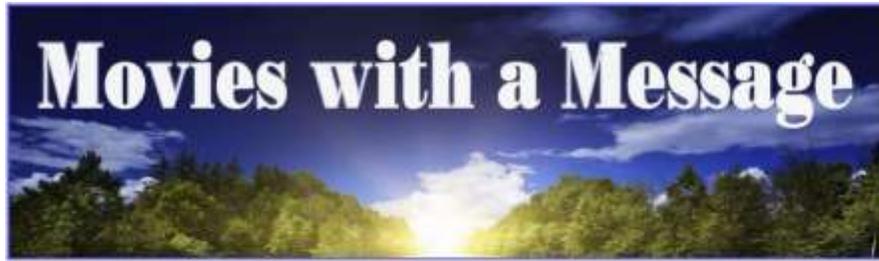
Theatre Aficionados

by Keith Dupree

Mark your calendars: Thursday, December 13th, is the next “Pay What You Want Night” at Theatreworks, New Milford. The evening’s performance is that storied musical, *Man of La Mancha*. I have seen *Man of La Mancha* only once before. Even though it was many, many, many years ago, I remember it well. The music, the lyrics, the story have been with me a lifetime. I really look forward to seeing the play once again.

Please join us for an evening at Theatreworks, 5 Brookside Ave, New Milford. There is no reserve seating for this performance: it is first come, first seated, so don’t be late! For more information, go to the website www.theatreworks.us, or call **Keith Dupree**.

Theatre Aficionados is a very informal gathering of people who enjoy seeing local theater together. All are welcome. We usually convene at the theater when the doors open at 7:30 p.m. As this may be a popular performance, however, you may want to arrive even a bit earlier to assure getting a seat.



by Keith Dupree

Dreams, by their very nature, are often at odds with the sensible recommendations made by those who love us and who want the best for us.

Joan Samuelson

The popularity of our short films suggests that when we have the opportunity, we might add a second short to our program. And, let's face it, some shorts are just too good to be ignored!

7:00 p.m. – *The Final Show* – An elderly lady has just “crossed over” and now has a very important decision to make. The starring role is played by 89-year-old Marion Ross (Happy Days).

7:15 p.m. – *The Bake Shop Ghost* – The spirit of a town's legendary baker refuses to vacate the premises, even when the right person comes along.

7:35 p.m. – *Slipaway* – Adam is a homeless musician. When he agrees to sell his keyboard to an eccentric elder, he soon finds himself trapped on a sailboat with a very feisty lady. The film has a rather controversial ending as both the elder and Adam stretch out to reach their dream.

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, December 14th, 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 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**.

Our next meeting will be on Thursday, January 10, 2019. We will be discussing **She's Got Her Mother's Laugh** by Carl Zimmer. Its topic is the powers, perversions and potential of heredity.

In March the book will be **Being a Dog** by Alexandra Horowitz. It explores how dogs perceive the world through their most spectacular organ - the nose.