



Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Danbury

Monthly **COMMENT** Newsletter

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

JANUARY 2019

From our Consulting Minister



Dear UU Danbury Members and Friends,

When I was twelve years old, my parents decided to go back to Oregon. We had moved to Massachusetts for my mother's work--she took a job as Library Director of the University of Massachusetts-Lowell, and we lived in Chelmsford, Mass., for a year, and then spent two years in Arlington. Sometime during that third year though, my parents must have decided that they missed friends and family in Oregon too much, or that my stepfather's commute to-and-from Boston each day was too onerous. What *I* remember is being devastated that we were going to be moving once *again*, just when I felt like I'd made some really good friends.

I demanded that my parents make me a promise that I could go to *one* high school for all four of my remaining years at school. Looking back now, I can't imagine things having gone any differently. I had so enjoyed those three years on the East Coast that I was clear that I wanted to come back East for college, and I did. And I threw myself into all the activities of my high school experience and had a rigorous and rewarding four years at that one good high school I attended in downtown Portland, Oregon.

I was thinking of these twists-and-turns of life while this congregation was contemplating and voting on whether or not to continue with this half-time Consulting Ministry arrangement for the next two years. Sometimes things really don't go the way we wish them too--I know and understand that. It can still be possible for things to go well, and even to unfold in such a way that we can't imagine them having gone any differently. I hope that together we will be able to look back on these years of my serving as your part-time Consulting Minister and say: "That was so worthwhile. I can't imagine it having gone any differently."

It also feels to me like this is an important time in our country to be cautious and take extra time to be thoughtful. I don't know what's going on with the economy (does anybody, for certain?) or what the future holds with this current administration, but when I pause to think about the big picture and possible future scenarios, it seems so important right now to take good care of one another and of what we have in our lives that is stable. There is so much reactivity in our country right now, so much "drama!" How can we take a deep breath together and nourish this spiritually-grounding, soulfully-connecting community that we are so blessed to be a part of? How can we be a part of truly making it a sanctuary from the tumult of the world around us?

There are so many good things going on at UU Danbury, so many ways to be involved and to connect more deeply with others. I hope you'll take the time in this first month of the year to try something new, to engage in some activity or conversation that is new to you, and to enrich your life and this community with your engagement. I am so glad to be serving as your Minister. 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. May these months of winter be gentle and nourishing for you.

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 February Comment –
Friday, January 18th.

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 or Facebook, www.facebook.com/UUDanbury.

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

Sunday, January 6th

This is The Year

David Roth

David will speak and sing about new beginnings, with dignity and respect for all. His music has found its way to Carnegie Hall, the United Nations, several Chicken Soup for the Soul books, the Kennedy Center, NASA's Space Shuttle "Atlantis," Peter, Paul, & Mary and Kingston Trio CDs (and 14 of his own), and countless venues in this and other countries for three decades. Poignant to improbable, holistic to hilarious (and a frequent presence at UU gatherings nationwide), David comes to us from his home on Cape Cod. Join us for a morning to remember.

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, January 13th

Change It Up, Clear It Out, Make Some Space

Rev. Heather Rion Starr

"When your room is clean and uncluttered," writes Marie Kondo, "you have no choice but to examine your inner state. You can see any issues you have been avoiding and are forced to deal with them. From the moment you start tidying, you will be compelled to reset your life. As a result, your life will start to change. ...Tidying is just a tool, not a final destination. The true goal should be to establish the lifestyle you want most, once your house has been put in order." It's one of Rev Heather's annual traditions: a January decluttering service! Come mix it up with music from the Brad Greene jazz group.

Sunday, January 20th

Once Faint and Once Weak

Rev. Heather Rion Starr

We have a tendency to look back and think that our heroes had it all figured out— that they *knew* what they were doing. So often that is not actually the case. This Sunday we will ponder together a period in Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s life when he was deeply struggling and uncertain as to the next right thing to do. What can we learn from his struggles about how to discern our own next steps?

Sunday, January 27th

ALICE – Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed

United Way

Our Sunday service will feature a presentation from the United Way of Western Connecticut on ALICE - their in depth study of financial hardship in Connecticut. For six years United Way has studied families in our state that work hard and still can't meet their family's basic needs. **ALICE** is an acronym that stands for **A**sset **L**imited, **I**ncome **C**onstrained, **E**mployed — households with income above the Federal Poverty Level but below the basic cost of living. Fully 50% of households in Danbury are ALICE or federal poverty level households. Who are these people in our community and what are the barriers that keep them (and sometimes, us) from being more financially secure? Kim Morgan, Chief Executive Officer, and Isabel Almeida, Chief Operating Officer, will describe how we can support ALICE households and increase their financial stability which will reduce the number of ALICE households in our community.

Notes from the Board of Trustees

by Brad Greene, President

Buildings & Grounds

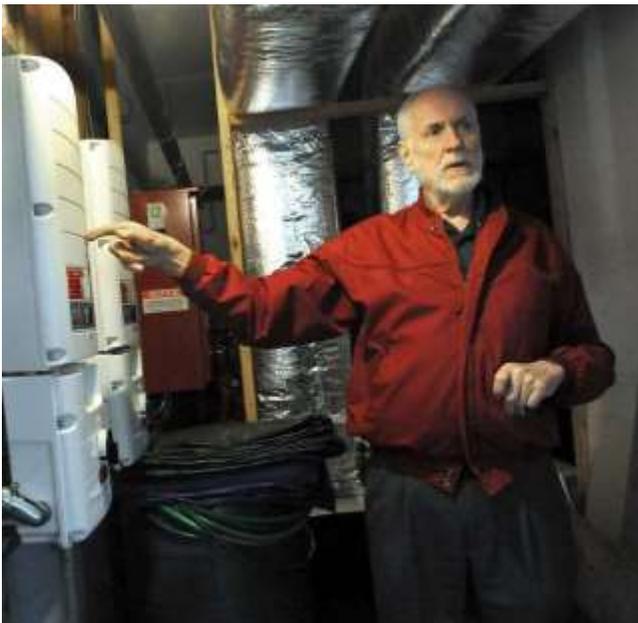
I'm sure most of us are glad we don't have a property as large and complex as UU Danbury which we have to take care of on a regular basis. It's A LOT of work. However, for the last few years that's exactly what has happened here. While there have been many project helpers from time to time, the responsibility for Buildings & Grounds, regular maintenance, and the upkeep of our physical property has largely fallen to **Gary Mummert**.

As many of you have heard, Gary has asked to step down from the level of Buildings & Grounds work he has been doing at UU Danbury at the end of the 2018 calendar year. I don't have enough column inches in the *Comment* to adequately express our gratitude to him for all he has done. For the last few years he has been one of our unsung heroes at UU Danbury. Prior to last year I did not myself realize just how many things he was doing, often behind the scenes and during the week. He has given generously of his time, talent, and love of solving problems and working with his hands. He will be impossible to replace.

That is why we are not going to try. We still have a property to maintain, but we are not going to try to find one person who can do it all. Instead, we're going to see if many hands can, in fact, make light work and find a few people.

Gary has put together a list of all the things that need doing and checking at UU Danbury. He's added the frequency: as needed, monthly, yearly etc. A group of us have been meeting to divide up the tasks into smaller pieces and identify people who could take them on. The intention is to have a Buildings & Grounds TEAM instead of a Buildings & Grounds PERSON.

That's where you come in. Can you help? If you have some expertise to share and like to work with your hands, whatever time you can offer would be most welcome. Please let us know if you are willing.



Thank you Gary!!!



Roots & Wings

... what's happening in Religious Education

by Darlene Anderson-Alexander, Director of Religious Education

Let's start off the New Year with some of our *Words of Friendship & Hope* that hung on our trees during the Holiday Season!

light, color, and happiness every day ... love & taught me to make latkes and present them earth ... togetherness, peace, acceptance, better together, hope ... love, food, ice exploring, hugs, baking, friends ... that's okay; in fact it's fantastic and gentle ... peace, love, and joy to all ... mine of life ... hope is the thing with togetherness ... love is more powerful wishing for peace ... I love UU church community, love, friendship ... be there ... friendship is important to life; hope is one can give to another person ... opportunity, good pay, fun, helping others, we may all live together in peace



peace & good health to all! ... mother-in-law in friendship ... energy for respecting the love, believe in magic, so mote it be ... skating, dinner, cookies, movies, nothing good or bad lasts forever and wise ... smiles, hugs, celebrate, share, friends are the diamonds in the coal feathers (Dickinson) ... mutuality ... than darkness ... tolerance, love, xoxo ... family, generosity, for each other by listening ... respect special ... friendship is the best thing enlightened government ... new short commute, meaningful work ... that

So may it be!



We will not have our typical "RE January Intersession" this year because of the way our year has been scheduled ("Regular RE Days", "Jedi Academy", and "SUUnday FUUnday"). HOWEVER, we WILL have a **Multigenerational Service** on February 10th around the theme of "*Love Isn't Love Until You Give It Away*"! There will be a service project woven into the Service ... and we will be making fabulous music with our own Prism (Joanne Davidson, Nancy Hershatter, and Dan Brodax). Stay tuned for details ... and mark your calendars!

Ministry/Team News

Ministry of *Appreciation*

Thank you to all of the musicians, speakers, and actors who made last month's multigenerational Service a success – Tina, Susan, Elise, Emily, Nancy, Cheryl, Nellie, Drew, Ro, Marian, Tony, Vivienne, Kathleen, Phoebe, Ethan, Emma, Anja, Jan, Michael, Faith, and Daniel!

And to our wonderful RE Ministry Team members –
Sam, Kathleen, Alison, and Ali – for a festive Tree Trimming experience!

Thank you to Sharon Tavares for jumping right in to congregational life by volunteering to be the Costumer for this year's Pageant and THEN for pinch-hitting as the accompanist at a rehearsal!

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 **January**.

Meredith 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 *Membership Team*

by Nancy Tramontana

First Sunday Connections Groups, 11:30-12:30 in the Conference Room - : Sunday, January 6th

- 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.

Pathway to Membership Classes, 11:30 – 12:30 – Sunday, February 17th and Sunday, March 3rd

This 2 session workshop will be offered twice each year

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

Childcare will be provided.



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, February 22nd, 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.

From the *Social Action Council*

Social Action Update

by Lynn Taborsak



We were deeply moved by the inclusion in our Sunday service on December 16th of a thoughtful commemoration on the sixth anniversary of the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting. Many thanks to our Religious Education program for the special children's focus and the 28 luminarias along the half wall in the sanctuary. Two Sandy Hook Elementary School survivors spoke at the service. Riley Deloughy was a first grader six years ago and his brother Mark was in the third grade. Both boys hope that telling their story will help reduce gun violence in our country. We are confident that their story will have an impact. A special Share the Plate offering to benefit the Sandy Hook Promise Foundation will be sent in honor of their courage and commitment. If you missed the offering and want to send a donation by mail, the address is Sandy Hook Promise, P.O. Box 3489, Newtown, CT 06470.

Soup Kitchen Corner

by Judy Lacker

On Saturday, January 5th, Soup Kitchen Team #3 will serve up a hot, delicious meal at the Dorothy Day Soup Kitchen on Spring Street. Team Leader **Lynn Taborsak** will be joined by **Bob Taborsak, Jim Wruck, Liz Casey, Jim Moore, Julie Gordon, Cynthia Stevens, Margaret Henderson and Bob Garavel**. 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 38 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!

Social Action Documentary Series – January 25, 2019

by Gary Mummert

Coming of Age in Aging America - American longevity has far-reaching implications for society, and experts, policy makers and the general population are only just beginning to grapple with how to reframe our thoughts on aging. What does it mean for communities, programs and policies, and how we live and work? **COMING OF AGE IN AGING AMERICA** is a penetrating documentary that probes these questions. Over the course of an hour, the program examines the current social security system; looks at the data being collected on the aging brain and body at a Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) lab; explores a town re-designing itself for multi-generational use; and observes a large medical system remodeling its work environment to both retain older workers and welcome younger ones.

From the *Women's Retreat Planning Team*

by Sharon Stram

CHEERS FOR 20 YEARS!
20th Annual Women's Retreat
APRIL 27-28, 2019 at the GUEST HOUSE
CHESTER, CT



Although winter has just begun, the Women's Retreat Committee is busy thinking about Spring and our 20th Annual Women's Retreat--**CHEERS FOR 20 YEARS!** Our Team is busy working to ensure a worthy celebration of our 20 years together.

We have several workshops planned but always welcome your input. So please contact **Melody Levy** if you have a special idea for this special occasion. We are all ears!

Our second **Soup Sale** will be held on January 20, 2019 after the Service. Sign up for those who wish to make soup will be on January 6th and January 13th. We appreciate all of your efforts!

Registration information will be forthcoming shortly after the new year with prices and details.

Until then, stay warm!

Contacts:

Melody Levy - tuition assistance, workshops, random thoughts

Sharon Stram - communications, carpools

Barb Myers - registration

Sherry Kyriacou - checks/subject-line women's retreat

Upcoming Events

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, January 14th

Time 9:30 a.m.

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



by Keith Dupree

*Courage does not always roar.
Sometimes courage is the little voice at the end of the day
That says I'll try again tomorrow.*
Mary Anne Radmacher

You hear something, or you see a face that looks somehow familiar, and your thoughts begin to tread a nearly forgotten path in the gardens of your mind. Welcome to our films for January.

7:00 p.m. – *Echoes of You* – Pushing a broom, a young man works as a janitor and steals a few minutes to tap some keys on a piano. He is overheard by a boy who sleeps in the alley.

7:25 p.m. – *Lovely, Still* – Ellen Burstyn and Martin Landau star in this holiday-themed movie. Mr. Landau plays the role of Robert Malone, age 78 and alone his whole life. A week before Christmas, a mysterious woman moves in across the street. The two are remarkably drawn to each other despite their contrary ways. A light love story, yes, but on another level, this is a love story spelled with a capital L.

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, January 11th, at 7:00 p.m. PM 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.)



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**.

Thursday, January 10, 2019 we'll be discussing **She's Got Her Mother's Laugh** by Carl Zimmer. This book's topic is heredity. The author was one of the first people to willingly have his whole genome sequenced, so the book has a personal quality. Zimmer looks at historical views of heredity as well as the findings of cutting edge science. It turns out that heredity is one of those topics where truth is stranger than fiction.

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

Thank
you 



Dear Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Danbury,

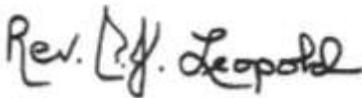
Thank you! ARC is guided by a Mission that should enrich the lives of the people served and your generosity has helped to do exactly that. We are very grateful for your donation of food for ARC's food pantry, Comida.

One of the nicest parts of my work is hearing people express how they have an emotional attachment with ARC. That bond may be with one of us on staff. It may be with a child or adult they knew who was helped. Or it may rest in their own beliefs and view of ARC as a reliable agency to put their faith into action.

Your bond with ARC makes it possible for our Mission to cover many bases. When homeless people need housing, ARC is there. When a family experiences domestic violence, ARC is there. When a family needs food or when kindergarten children need academic mentors, ARC is there. When positive bridges can be built (or when they are threatened by a hate crime), ARC is there.

Your bond with ARC is very appreciated and I thank you on behalf of the people we serve!

One love.



Rev. Phyllis J. Leopold
Executive Director



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FIRST CLASS MAIL