



Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Danbury

Monthly **COMMENT** Newsletter

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

MAY 2019

From our Consulting Minister



Dear UUCD Members and Friends,

Eighteen years ago, in June 2001, I attended my first of our annual denominational conferences, General Assembly, in Cleveland, Ohio. It was an inspiring and overwhelming experience--I was there by myself, making my way into workshops and concerts, trying to figure out where to eat dinner and how to pace myself through the long days. I was thinking about seminary and got to sit in on the annual "So You Want To Be A Minister?" workshop which gave me sense of how truly possible and also intense the path into ministry could be. I walked a large canvas labyrinth set up in a quiet corner of the Exhibit Hall and immediately assumed that was a feature of every General Assembly (it's not) and I've missed and recalled it ever since. I witnessed the much-beloved and smart, now-deceased Denny Davidoff (a longtime member of the Westport, CT, UU congregation) wield her marvelous sense of humor and clear-cutting leadership as Moderator of the Plenary sessions. I sang in the worship services, moved, as I think we all are when at our first General Assembly, simply by

the hundreds of people singing out these Unitarian Universalist hymns at the top of our lungs together in one great hall. I wandered the convention center hallways taking in All The UUs with their/our buttons, hats, and T-shirts, all the many perspectives, passions and opinions I could identify even just in the physical mingling, moving flow of our bodies in the halls.

A lot has changed in the format of General Assemblies over the years before and since "my first," but I look forward every June to the dose of energy and inspiration these conferences bring me, and to the sense of solidarity with a dispersed people much greater in number than any one congregation or even cluster of congregations. When I was pregnant in central Oregon with our first child, born in August 2012, General Assembly was in Phoenix that late June; thus began my taking advantage of the increasingly-accessible and substantive "off-site delegate" option. General Assembly is in Spokane, Washington, this June 19-23; I don't expect many of you are planning to attend. It's not too late though to register as an off-site delegate and join me in the chat rooms and worship viewing online spaces! See more in this issue of *The Comment* (page 11) about how you, too, could be an off-site delegate (off-site registration is just \$160 until April 30 and \$185 thereafter). If you would like some personal (ministerial?!) support about how to manage it all online and how to get the most out of the off-site experience, let me know--I'd be happy to meet with you, in person or online, to show you how to navigate things. I'd love for there to be another UUCD'er showing up as a delegate to our annual denominational conference!

Next year, June 24-28, 2020, General Assembly will once again be in Providence, Rhode Island. Mark your calendars now as it would be great to have a UUCD entourage make our way to much-closer-by Providence and take it all in together.

As always, if 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 best by e-mail, cell phone, text, first-class U.S. mail, or Facebook Messenger if it's just a quick question or comment. I look forward to hearing from you in whatever way is best for you, and to continuing to get to know you. May these weeks of spring and the anticipation of summer be energizing and uplifting 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 June Comment –
Friday, May 17th.

Our Caring Circle is Available

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

Inge Hill is the contact person for **May**.

Maredith Spector is the assistant.

If you have a need, please contact **Inge** at 202-427-9318.

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

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

Sunday, May 5th To Step Up, Step Back, or....? Rev. Heather Rion Starr
 How do we observe and shift our ways of being in relationship to the groups we are a part of -- family, work, organizations, communities, circles of friends? How do we try on other ways of being than what we might automatically or typically do?

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, May 12th Guest clergy preaching with Rev. Heather Rion Starr supporting
 Come and get your Mother's Day off to a reflective start with us!

Sunday, May 19th Senior High Youth Service Senior High Youth
 Join us for the Senior High Youth Service! Although this is an annual UU Danbury tradition, each service is entirely unique. We are sure to be treated to music, readings, and musings by our wonderful high school youth. Come and worship with our future!

Sunday, May 26th A Time for Peace Social Action Council
 As the country pauses to honor those who have died in our nation's wars, we will pause to advocate for peace: peace among nations, peace in our communities and peace in our homes. The service will be led by the Social Action Council and include readings, stories and music that manifests our support for peace, justice and freedom. The service will conclude with a tolling of the bell for global conflicts and deceased UUCD members and friends. We will also recognize and thank all service members present for their service in the military.

**The Annual Meeting of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Danbury
 will take place on Sunday, June 2nd immediately following the service.**

Upcoming Dates for UUCD Budget

May 5th: Deadline for submitting your "Sustained Giving" elections on SimpleGive OR submitting your pledge card for other payment options (credit card, check, bill-pay, etc.) Pledge cards may be turned in at Sunday services or mailed directly to: Office Manager, UUCD, 24 Clapboard Ridge Road, Danbury, CT 06810.

May 8th – 19th: UUCD Board of Trustees will develop our budget for the 2019-2020 fiscal year.

June 2nd: Annual Meeting of UUCD Members to approve 2019-2020 budget.

Notes from the Board of Trustees

by Brad Greene, President

The Pendulum

Recently we had a Common Council meeting after the service. It's a great opportunity to sit with our lay leaders and staff and discuss issues of importance to the congregation. During the dialogue on many of the topics, I sensed a tension that I have felt in the congregation of late. I can best describe it as a tension between those who feel we need more process, structure and policy and those who feel our community needs less of that.

Any group of people who are going to share space and resources need some sense of organization on how they are going to operate together. A common understanding of the "rules" (or covenant, if you prefer) can help to reduce conflict, promote efficiency, and support safety and security of people and property. Getting to that optimal place of enough, but not too much, process and policy is the challenge.

I don't have the answer of what is enough and what is too much. What I do believe is that whatever we do will be best accomplished through dialogue amongst our staff and lay leadership. If we're thinking about adding a policy or guideline, it's important that we ask ourselves a few questions. The first of which is 'Why'. Why do we feel it is needed? Articulating the 'Why' helps to promote understanding and stimulates discussion. Equally important is asking what is the risk to the congregation if we don't add a particular policy. In some cases, it may be that what we are trying to control for isn't worth the addition of another policy or rule.

Ultimately we all are invested in creating a community the works for everyone. Putting the concern and disagreement on the table; openly listening to other perspectives; and working toward solutions for our congregation are the best way to get there.



Roots & Wings

... what's happening in Religious Education

by Darlene Anderson-Alexander, Director of Religious Education

It's time to gear up for ...



and we need YOU to make it happen!

The **Religious Education Ministry Team** is busily considering attendance projections and UU Identity curricular options to create the best possible RE opportunities for our children and youth! It is a Coming of Age and Bridging year for our Senior High Youth as well – so exciting! Please look for REMT members in the foyer following Services beginning on May 5th. They will share with you the age groupings for next year and descriptions of the chosen curricula. They will also skillfully help you match your gifts and talents with the needs of our program ... a win-win for all! You should also feel free to contact me (darlene.dre.uucd@gmail.com or 203-798-1994) if you would like to set up a time to talk about volunteering in RE. There are opportunities for **EVERYONE** to get involved!

Transitions



As many of you know, I (finally!) achieved the distinction of being a UUA Credentialed Religious Educator in early April. A process that typically takes 2-3 years ended up taking me six due to family obligations and “life”! It was a fabulous learning journey that truly informed my work as a religious educator in this congregation. If you are interested in the process, check out the video and other information here: <https://www.uua.org/careers/re/credentialing>.

I would also welcome the opportunity to share the details of my journey with you! I truly believe that congregations benefit from all of the professional development opportunities that religious educators engage in. Shortly thereafter – and, yes, the timing was odd, yet completely unrelated to my credentialing achievement - I resigned from my position as the Director of Religious Education here at UU Danbury after 7 years of employment. This was a *very* difficult decision for me as this congregation has been my spiritual home – really, the only one I’ve ever had – for just about 30 years! As I hope you know, I care very deeply about everyone involved in the Religious Education Program (and beyond!) here and I know that it will continue to thrive - and grow – in the future. There are really wonderful initiatives developing now in UU Religious Education – especially around family ministry and racial justice – and I think many would be a good fit for this congregation. As a member in good standing of LREDA (Liberal Religious Educators Association), I will honor the professional courtesy of making space for the next DRE by not attending UU Danbury Services or events for one full year and, for the year following, participating in limited capacities. Details of my “letter of understanding” are yet to be finalized, but will be available to be viewed before the end of the year.

And now, there is MUCH work to be done in the next two months to get RE 2019-2020 in a good place so that the transition to a new DRE is as seamless and well-supported as possible! I hope you will join me in welcoming the next DRE when they arrive. One of the best ways to do that is to have a fully-staffed program waiting for them (you might want to circle back and re-read the first paragraph of this article!!!).

UPCOMING EVENTS

- ★ Saturday, May 4th - 9:00-5:00 (drop in or stay all day) – **STAR WARS DAY!**
- ★ Sunday, May 5th – **SUUnday FUUnday** in RE! We need 2-3 additional volunteers to make this day of outdoor games and planting a success! Please let Darlene (darlene.dre.uucd@gmail.com) know if you can help.
- ★ Sunday, May 19th – **SENIOR HIGH SERVICE**
- ★ Sunday, June 9th – **FLOWER COMMUNION AND BRIDGING** followed by an **END-OF-YEAR PICNIC** hosted by the REMT

Ministry/Team News

From the *Auction Team*

by Marian DiFabbio



Join the Fun at
UUCD Auction 2019
Saturday, November 2nd

From the *Sunday Services Ministry Team*

by Tony DiFabbio



Calling all SUMMER SUNDAY PRESENTERS!

We wish to invite you to connect with any one of our Seven Principles as a central theme. We encourage you to sign up for a topic of your choice for one of the services this summer.

Please contact **Tony DiFabbio** or **Michael Stengle**, co-chairs of the Sunday Services Ministry Team, if you would like to present and find out what Sunday's are available.

From the *Social Action Council*

Soup Kitchen Corner

by Judy Lacker

On Saturday, May 4th, 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, Mike Toto, Liz Casey, Jim Moore, Julie Gordon, Margaret Henderson, Bob Garavel and Rose Schlemmer**. 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 Update

by Lynn Taborsak

New Sanctuary CT Traveling Photo Exhibit

We have been invited to host the New Sanctuary Traveling Photo Exhibit from September 21-29th here in Danbury to publicize the harm and suffering that occurs when a family member is ordered to be deported.

The exhibit will feature family photos and photos of community events, rallies, press conferences, and vigils that were organized to bring attention to the harm these deportations cause in every community in our state.

The exhibit will travel to 10 other sanctuary congregations in Connecticut; nine churches and one synagogue, in an effort to draw attention to the suffering of immigrant families caught up in the latest round of hostile immigration enforcement. UUCD will hold a public opening of the exhibit on Sunday, September 22nd.



Chris Halfar and Gary Mummert at the opening of the Traveling Photo Exhibit

Legislative Action

Chris Halfar has been kind enough to highlight bills under consideration by the state legislature that align with our principles, especially in the areas of gun violence prevention, immigrant justice and environmental conservation. Please put this information to use and contact your State Senator and State Representative to support these bills.

Share-the-Plate

The Social Action Council held a Share-the-Plate offering in April for a Honduran mother of three who crossed the frontier in November seeking asylum and is now living in New Milford. We were able to raise \$147.50 to help with housing and utilities until she is approved for a temporary work permit. The funds will go to the New Milford Refugee Relocation Committee. If you missed the Share-the-Plate offering and want to make a contribution, please see **Jackie Alexander**.

Immigrants in Sanctuary in Faith Communities in the U.S.

UUCD member **Margaret Henderson** helped New Sanctuary CT develop a fact sheet on immigrants in sanctuary in the U.S. There are currently 87 people living in sanctuary. This includes 37 children and two dogs. While they come from many corners of the world, four countries account for more than 74% of those in sanctuary: El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Mexico. Fifteen states have sanctuary residents and the predominant faith groups providing sanctuary are Methodist, Congregational and Unitarian Universalist. Be proud that UUCD has authorized us to offer sanctuary here on the Ridge.

Other Important Information

COFFEE HOUR HOSTS NEEDED

Be a Coffee Hour Host for a Sunday morning. Bring a few snacks and make the coffee. You will need to stay and put the cups in the dishwasher and tidy up. Sign-up on the bulletin board in the hallway or contact **Annie Senol or Inge Hill**.

Upcoming Events



Join us for a congregation-wide celebration!

Saturday, May 4th – 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.
Come for a while or stay all day!*

- * Movie Marathon of the original Star Wars Trilogy
- * Lightsaber training with Jedi Master Max
- * Games of “Light Side vs. Dark Side”
- * Themed crafts and activities
- * Pizza (or BYO lunch) served at 12:30. \$5/family for pizza and beverages. **Please RSVP** to Darlene (darlene.dre.uucd@gmail.com) if you would like pizza.
- * Feel free to wear themed clothing or costumes!

All are welcome!

*This is not a drop-off event. Parents/Guardians of children in prek-8th grade must stay with their children or work out arrangements with other parents/guardians who will be on-site.

Theatre Aficionados

by Keith Dupree

Mark your calendars: Thursday, May 2nd, is the next “Pay What You Want Night” at Theatreworks, New Milford. The evening’s performance is Ronald Harwood’s “Quartet”, an English comedy set in a home for retired opera singers.

Please join us for an evening at Theatreworks, 5 Brookside Ave., New Milford. But note 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. We convene at the theater when the doors open at 7:30. All are welcome.



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**.

On Thursday, May 9th, we will be discussing *Genghis Khan and the Making of the Modern World* by Jack Weatherford. The Mongol army led by Genghis Kahn subjugated more lands and people in 25 years than the Romans did in 400. This book follows the exploits of his generals, sons and grandsons after him. In nearly every land they conquered the Mongols soon brought an unprecedented rise in cultural communication, expanded trade, and new inventions. It could also be argued that there was a blossoming of civilization in the newly annexed lands. Genghis Kahn abolished torture, granted universal religious freedom, smashed feudal systems of aristocratic privilege, and improved the status of women. This revisionist history is nothing less than the epic story of how the modern world came to be.

On Thursday July 11th, we’ll be discussing *Enlightenment Now* by Steven Pinker.



Men Conversing Over Coffee - We are now nine men meeting once a month on the second Monday. Join us when you can. Note the new PLACE. Monday, May 13th, at 9:30 a.m. at MOTHERSHIP CAFE, 331 Main Street, Danbury (near North Street).



by Keith Dupree

The great tragedy of life is not that men perish, but that they cease to love.
 W. Somerset Maugham (1874-1965)

It is very unlikely that many of us would consider either of this month's films a love story, yet I would argue that each one is. If recognition of the humanity of another, if the casting aside of prejudices and seeing another for the goodness within is a first step toward love, then I rest my case!

7:00 p.m. – *Scrap Dolls* – On the east side of Detroit an 11-year-old boy mourns the death of his best friend, but even as he is bullied by his older peers, he meets an unlikely artist who finds value in objects that other people throw away.

7:20 p.m. – *Cas & Dylan* – In our feature film this month, Richard Dreyfus plays the role of Cas, a dying doctor with one last mission. Tatiana Maslany plays 22-year-old Dylan, very confused, very unusual, but very determined. When they wind up on the lam together, they weave an often humorous story of unexpected tenderness.

9:00 – 9:20 PM – 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, April 12th, 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.)**

ROD MACDONALD IN CONCERT

Friday, May 31st, 7:30 p.m. in Fellowship Hall

Throughout a 35-year performing career, Rod MacDonald has been entertaining audiences worldwide with his timeless ballads, modern folk songs, and his musical versatility. Possessing the heart of a troubadour, the soul of a poet and the voice of a virtuoso, he is as distinctive an entertainer as he is a songwriter. Rod was a key part of the Greenwich Village folk scene from the 1960's through the early 1990's. He paints compelling portraits of city life, the contemporary political landscape, love that endures and love lost in his songwriting.

Opening for Rod will be *Prism*, a folk-rock trio with **Dan Brodax** on guitar, harmonica and vocals; **Nancy Hershatter** on guitar, piano and vocals; and **Joanne Davidson**, harmony vocals. "Songs from the 60's and 70's in close three part harmony."

Tickets \$10 at the door, cash or check only

Looking Ahead to June! General Assembly 2019 – June 19th – 23rd & ways you could join in “off-site”

General Assembly is the annual business meeting of our Unitarian Universalist denomination, and it’s a whole lot more. Inspirational worship services, informative workshops, entertaining programs, and a bustling exhibit hall help make GA an unforgettable experience for the thousands of Unitarian Universalists that attend. Attendees leave with a renewed sense of energy, inspiration, and innovative ideas to take back to their congregations and communities.



What do we want Unitarian Universalism to be? It is a time when we are asking big questions in our faith, and GA 2019 will be focused on digging into those questions together. It is a critical chance for congregational leaders and passionate UUs to set new goals and aspirations for our religious community. Help begin to reshape our Association and our congregations in new and powerful ways.

This year’s theme is about collective power, “The Power of We,” as well as the possibility, the purpose, the struggle and the joy of what it means to be together in faithful community. In the past two years, Unitarian Universalism has recommitted to the work of liberation inside and outside our faith community. The antidote to a time of dangerous dehumanization is a love that connects us to our deeper humanity.

Come to Spokane to experience what our shared faith can become when we embrace the Power of We.



UUA GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Visit uua.org/ga for

- Programming Information
- Registration and Housing
- Financial Aid Information
- Volunteer Opportunities

Wired Lecturer Richard Blanco
Selected by President Obama as the 9th inaugural poet in U.S. history, Richard Blanco is the youngest and the first Latino, immigrant, and gay person to serve in such a role.

Robin DiAngelo
Author of *White Fragility*, Robin DiAngelo speaks dynamically on what it means to be white in a society that proclaims race meaningless, yet is deeply divided by race.

Rev. Lindi Ramadan
Rev. Lindi Ramadan, Director of Partnership and Emerging Programs at Starr King School for the Ministry, will deliver the sermon at the Service of the Living Traditions.

Rev. Marta J. Valentin
Rev. Marta J. Valentin, minister with the Unitarian Universalist Church of Medford, MA, will deliver the sermon at the Sunday Morning Worship.

UUA GENERAL ASSEMBLY
SPOKANE, WASHINGTON | JUNE 19–23, 2019