



Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Danbury

Monthly **COMMENT** Newsletter

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

SEPTEMBER 2019

From our Consulting Minister



"Ordinarily we are swept away by habitual momentum.
We don't interrupt our patterns even slightly.
With practice, however, we learn to stay with a broken heart,
with a nameless fear, with the desire for revenge.
Sticking with uncertainty is how we learn to relax in the midst of chaos,
how we learn to be cool when the ground beneath us suddenly disappears. We can bring
ourselves back to the spiritual path countless times every day by exercising our willingness to
rest in the uncertainty of the present moment--over and over again."
--Pema Chodron, *Comfortable with Uncertainty*

Dear UUUCD Members and Friends,

I've been thinking, during these long and sometimes-quiet days of waning August, about how much so many of you have going on in your lives. About how not-central your congregation might be in your lives some days, with all that you have calling upon your attention. It's understandable; there is so much clamor in all our lives, even if we just have a TV on in the background.

Perhaps I'm thinking too about attachment to congregational life (or lack thereof) because I'll be away--and so much more detached than usual--in October and November. After 15 years of ministry I have finally been able to align years of service to a congregation (the Unitarian Society of Hartford) with support for a sabbatical, and my spouse (Rev. Cathy Rion Starr) and I will be taking three months of sabbatical from the Hartford congregation from October through December. Since I have not earned sabbatical from UUUCD, I will be taking my annual vacation and study leave weeks during October and November and then working full-time for and with you all in December--I look forward to that, to being able to give you all my more fulsome focus for the busy and meaningful month of December.

In the meantime, as I write this in mid-August, I am aware that many of my ministerial colleagues are away on vacation, study leave or in transition from one ministry to another, there is no active religious education program at UUUCD in the summer, we are in the midst of the search for a Director of Religious Education right now--there are so many ways in which we can feel like we are in limbo, between the robust congregational year that ended in June and yet to leap into whatever the coming year holds once we "kick things off" at our September 8th Water Ceremony and Homecoming service. This feeling of limbo is as much an opportunity for spiritual re-grounding and re-grouping as it is a time for plain old rest. I have re-committed to a daily meditation practice (and invite you to join me, using the smartphone app "Simple Habit" if you have access to that and would like to have some company in that "virtual" environment). Journaling for myself and also logging notes in the books we keep for each of our children are practices I find to be meaningful that chart the passage of time and the cycles of the year.

What are the ways you have found to ground yourself in the drifting unfettered days of summer? What are practices, rituals and routines that you want to hold on to as we go into the busier months of congregational life, school, work, and holiday routines?

(continued)

I will be away from the work of ministry in October and away from Connecticut altogether in November. There will be emergency pastoral care coverage, if needed, provided by a local colleague or two. I know this congregation well enough now to know that you are adept and thoughtful at ministering to and for one another. You have such excellent lay leadership throughout the congregation. Be good to one another, reach out to each other a little more than you might otherwise while your Minister is away, and I look forward to reconnecting with you all in December.

And in the meantime, let's enjoy a wonderful September together! I hope to see you at Homecoming and Water Ceremony on September 8th, if not before!

With deep gladness,



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 October Comment –
Friday, September 20th

Notes from the Board of Trustees

by Melody Levy, President

Our congregation's life is centered around our Mission Statement that was composed and adopted by our congregation in 2008. It is the common thread that joins all of us together. Every member and friend has an obligation to serve our mission, all the time understanding that our goals are open to change while we purposefully continue building a supportive, collaborative community.

Living our principles and values is an ongoing process. How do we hope our congregation's ministry with children will transform their lives? What is our purpose in the city where we are located? Will we reframe or adjust our vision in response to cultural or religious shifts? What do we need to achieve for our future?

Like many of us, I value doing. "Yet every spiritual tradition humanity has ever devised teaches the same lesson – that how we do what we do matters far more than what we do" (Erik Walker Wikstrom.) When asked what I hoped to accomplish as the Board President, I couldn't help but recall an afternoon with my four year old grandson. He was drawing and I, admirably observing his process tried to engage him with adult questions that really didn't serve him all that well. He looked up for a moment and said, "It's simple, Gramma!" We have all known for a long time that our goals are as simple as that: We do all we do for no other reason than it just simply matters.

The Board of Trustees will have a daylong retreat in early September to work in common purpose and set this year's goals. By taking time to have an annual Board Retreat we are making time for visionary work that will contribute to our congregation's future. Making sure that we fulfill UU Danbury's mission is a large part of our role.

Service is our primary way of ministering to each other. In light of that I want to express my gratitude for the DRE Search Team and Reverend Heather who worked throughout the summer months, scouting and interviewing potential candidates for our DRE position. Thank you to the Sunday Service Team who orchestrated our July and August services, and to our lay service providers for your intelligent and moving presentations. Thank you to Buildings and Grounds for having a quick pulse and laboring on maintenance and updates during some of the hottest days in July, and, thank you Immigrant Justice Team for keeping the Board informed about time sensitive issues.

As is the custom in many UU congregations, we begin the year with our annual Ingathering ceremony. Please bring a small amount of water from a special place you visited this summer to pour into our common bowl on September 8th. A welcome back picnic will follow the service.

I hope you've had ample time to engage in what matters most to you. I'm looking forward to being together, and, in the meanwhile, I'll be thinking about what I can contribute to the Auction this year. Kayaking, anyone?



by Kristen Papucci, Chair

RE Kick-Off - Sunday, September 15th

We have 31 Volunteers and several others that will be asked to fill in some Gaps in the **Purple** and **Blue** groups. We need two more volunteers on REMT!

The curriculum for this year is:

Orange Group	Pre-K to Grade 2	Wonderful Welcome
Green Group	3rd through 5th Grade	Toolbox of Faith and Spirit of Adventure
Blue Group	6th through 8th Grade	The Questing Year
Purple Group	9th through 12th grade	Led by Brad & Lisa Greene and Samantha McCoy
	9th – 11th Grade will be “Coming of Age”	
	12th Graders will be “Bridging “	

More information about specific groups and curriculum can be found at: <https://UU Danbury.org/religious-education/>

Registration for RE is required! Please take a moment to register your child if they will be attending this year. The link can be found at the same web link referenced above.

Our Caring Circle is Available

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

Donna Lawrence is the contact person for **September**.

Cheryl Edelen is the assistant.

If you have a need, please contact **Donna** at 203-438-0276 or donna.dcL2@att.net.

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

Ministry/Team News

From the Auction Team

by Marian DiFabbio



Mark Your Calendar Now!

Saturday, November 2, 2019 – UUCD Annual Goods and Services AUCTION

COME SAIL AWAY into a night of Fun & Fellowship

Send in your Contract today:

What Will You Offer?

Will You be a Matching Donor?

Will You co-sponsor an Event?

Email **Marian DiFabbio** for more information.

Seeking Matching Donations for the Auction

Each year, the financial success of our annual fundraiser is augmented by our Matching Donor program. This program allows members and friends of UUCD to participate in the annual fundraiser by agreeing to match a % of the auction proceeds (1%, 2%, 5%, 10%...) or simply pledging a flat dollar amount to fit your budget. Often, for some reason or other, members and friends cannot attend the Auction, or get outbid on a particular item, or cannot find something suitable at the Auction to fit their needs. The matching donation program allows everyone to participate. Any contribution, no matter how small, helps. The goal this year is full participation. Contact **Eva DeFranco** with your contribution today. It is not too early.

From *Adult Programming*

by Joe Gillotti

Now is YOUR Chance to Take Action and Share Your Skills and Ideas with Others

We are inviting all UUCD members to get creative in considering new Adult Education Programs for the upcoming Fall season. In the past, members have offered Chalice Circles (discussions on a whole range of topics). We have had open form meetings, day trips, book groups and group meetings on how to learn new skills. Please be willing to come forward and volunteer for a program of your choice. Coming together, unity, direct education and spiritual growth has always been a corner stone of our UU traditions. All we are asking is for folks to come forward with their best ideas and be willing to make our Adult Education Program work. Starting in the Fall, we will be asking that each participant makes a small donation (one or two dollars) each Adult Education Meeting in order to support utility expenses. Contact **Joe Gillotti** for more information. Joe is more than willing to provide as much help, support and ideas as it takes to get your program started.

COMING SOON TO a Unitarian Universalist Congregation near you “Spiritually Speaking Gathering”

This once a month meeting is for all UUCD Members and Friends. A wonderful opportunity is ahead for all participants to discover more about themselves. You will be learning, practicing and improving your over-all communications and listening skills. You will have the opportunity to exercise your social and speaking skills covering a wide range of topics. Just consider some of the following topics to pick from: spiritual subjects, wide range of personal stories, book summaries, uplifting life events, travel experiences, health subjects, family stories, anecdotal observations, on-and-on-and-on (religion & politics excluded). These talks will be a 3 to 5 minute exercise only.

This is the best part – **No Sign-Up**, come to a meeting when you feel you want to share. Attend when you want to improve your current skills, help others, expand your level of personal growth, meet with like-minded people, get something off your chest, or just give up “TV” for one night.

Here is a brief outline of what you can learn if you are interested. The following topics will be covered over time – how to be relaxed and confident in groups, preparation and mental preparation, eye contact, expressions, gestures, vocal qualities and intonation, using simple direct words, refrain from using fillers, rhetorical questions, timed pauses, rehearsal, posture, using 3x5 file cards and much more.

We will meet the **THIRD TUESDAY** of every month in the Conference Room from 7:00 - 9:00 p.m., beginning September 17th. There will be a monthly reminder in the Sunday Order of Service. The Adult Education Ministry is asking for a \$5.00 donation at each meeting. Except for the small cost of lite refreshments, 100% of the remaining money will be donated to UUCD.

Joe Gillotti will be leading the meeting. Joe has worked as a business consultant and independent/company contract trainer since the mid-eighties. He has completed the International Toastmaster Training CTM, and has a wide range of experience teaching health, stress management, Yoga and Yoga philosophy since the early seventies.

Please contact Joe Gillotti if you plan on attending so that we have sufficient seating set-up.

From the *Membership Team*

by Anne Krieg



The Membership Team is offering and encouraging putting pronouns on name tags. Pronoun preference stickers can be found at the Welcome Table on which you can write your pronoun preferences.

The following is information supporting putting pronouns on name tags:

Why would someone add their pronouns to their name tag?

Typically, society has taught us to make automatic assumptions about what pronouns to use for someone. If a person's *gender expression* (the way they *appear* in terms of gender) seems to be male, we'd likely use *he/him/his* when talking about that person; if a person's appearance seems to be female, we'd be likely to use *she/her/hers*. However, gender is not always that simple.

Sometimes a person's *gender identity* (the way the person *identifies internally* in terms of their gender) doesn't align with their gender expression (the way they look). In addition, not everyone identifies strictly as male or female. So when a person includes their gender pronouns on their nametag, they are simply taking the guesswork away for you! It's their way of saying "when you refer to me using pronouns (opposed to by my name), these are the pronouns I'd like for you to use." ~ adapted from bottomline.org

Simple ways to use pronouns to show LGBTQ+ support:

- Always ask someone's pronouns
- Don't assume which pronoun someone uses
- If you are unsure of someone's pronouns and don't feel comfortable asking, use they or them to refer to that person, it's always a safe option
- Share your pronouns at meetings, before public speaking and in every day introductions to show you are someone who supports proper pronoun usage and set a universal standard for sharing pronouns
- Wear your pronouns on your nametag. By displaying our pronouns it creates an atmosphere of inclusivity for everyone to be referred to in the way they want to be
- ~ adapted from udel.edu

Here is a blog from the UUA website for more explanation and a UU context.

[Affirming the Promise: Full Dignity of Queer & Non-Binary Folx in Unitarian Universalism](#)

The above is adapted from a newsletter from the Unitarian Society of Germantown, Philadelphia.

From the *Music Ministry*

by Jerry Phelps, Music Director



Did you know that singing can quite literally make you happier? The great Maya Angelou once said, "Music was my refuge. I could crawl into the space between the notes and curl my back to loneliness." Countless research has indicated that singing has both positive physiological and psychological benefits. The act of singing releases endorphins, the brain's "feel good" chemicals. At UUCD, we are re-launching the choir program this September and I could not be more excited! We have had a few wonderful rehearsals over the summer and everyone is gearing up for a music-filled year. I extend an invitation to anyone interested in collaborative music making and singing to join us as we build connections and explore music and artistic expression and their integral roles in our lives. Rehearsals begin on Wednesday, September 4th, from 7:30-9:00 p.m. and will be held on the first and third Wednesday each month. Let's make music together!

From the *Sunday Services Ministry*

by Tony DiFabbio

Please help our Sunday Service Ministry Team by volunteering. We need members to set up the chairs before services and partake in the Welcome and Announcements, etc. Please contact co-chairs **Michael Stengle** or **Tony DiFabbio** if you are interested in helping us! You may also contact **Inge Hill** or **Joe Gillotti**.

From the *Social Action Council*

by Lynn Taborsak

New Sanctuary CT Traveling Photo Exhibit

For the week of September 21st – 29th, UUCD will host a traveling photo exhibit 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 is travelling to 9 other sanctuary congregations in Connecticut; eight 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 host a public reception on Sunday, September 22nd or Wednesday, September 25th.

Soup Kitchen Corner

by Judy Lacker

On Saturday, September 7th, 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, Margaret Henderson and Diane Purvis**. 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. UUCD 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 the foyer at Fellowship Hall. For more information, please contact **Judy Lacker**.

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 can all be an important part of the fight to end hunger in our community!

Upcoming Events



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, September 12th, we'll be discussing **Educated - A Memoir** by Tara Westover. This is a riveting, real life story about a young Mormon girl and her survivalist family in Idaho. With a violent older brother and a charismatic father who answered only to the Lord, life was not easy. Though nominally home schooled, Tara was 17 before she set foot in a real classroom. Despite her fathers' objections, she broke away from her family and attended college. This book raises difficult questions. Did her upbringing include child abuse? Can people be too enthralled by religious principles? What do children owe their parents? When are families asking too much? Can education change ideas and lives? Join us to discuss this inspiring and disturbing biography.



Men Conversing Over Coffee - We are now nine men meeting once a month on the second Monday. Join us when you can.

Our next meeting is on Monday, September 9th at 9:30 a.m. at MOTHERSHIP CAFE, 331 Main Street, Danbury (near North Street).

For more information, contact **Gary Mummert**.



by Keith Dupree

The family you come from isn't as important as the family you're going to have.
Ring Lardner, American humorist (1885-1933)

I can imagine that every family has its times of trial and celebration. There are many good stories written to relate how some families are able to heal their fractures to find renewed hope. It is our pleasure this September to present two of them.

7:00 p.m. – *A Bicycle Lesson* – An opportunity to rebuild a broken relationship opens when a young woman teaches her mother to ride a bicycle.

7:20 p.m. – *The Storyteller* – A young girl appears from nowhere and seems to have an amazing effect on everyone she meets. But this young girl has a story of her own.

8:50 – 9:15 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, September 13th, 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 UUCD.

(For more information on these films and on the service from which we make our selections, please check the website at www.SpiritualCinemaCircle.com.)