



Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Danbury

Monthly **COMMENT** Newsletter

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

OCTOBER 2019

From our Consulting Minister



"...my heart sometimes can't handle either the worry or the glory of life without knowing I am held in abiding relationship to every merciful thing in this fragile world" (107).

--Rev. Nancy McDonald Ladd,

After the Good News: Progressive Faith Beyond Optimism

Dear UUCD Members and Friends,

Here are some of the words of my sermon on Sunday, September 22nd, with hopes that they are useful to you! It's not ideal that my schedule lined up in such a way that I'm going to be away from you-all for the next two months (on a long-planned sabbatical from the Hartford UU congregation, and vacation/study leave from UUCD), and I am genuinely sorry about that. But I'm looking forward to coming back and being with you full-time for the always meaningful month of December. I'm looking forward to coming back with stories from our Epic November Trip with our Family when we will be visiting Unitarian Universalists in the Philippines and northeastern India. I'm looking forward to coming back just a bit more refreshed, reenergized and grateful for this work, this calling, this platform, these communities and people that I have the privilege of serving and getting to know well.

I'm looking forward to coming back with a renewed appreciation for the challenging and beautiful thing we're trying to do here: to craft a multigenerational caring community that week-in and week-out works together to create a welcoming place for the newcomer and the longtimer, a place for reflection and learning, for honest sharing and tears, for challenging and stretching ourselves and one another, for singing and inspiration and the special sacred silence that only an intentional community can co-create.

How can you gently step up during these two months that I'll be away and help to tend this beloved community-- not in a controlling way, but in an extra-positive and caring way? What extra appreciation or offer to help can you extend to your elected volunteer Board members? What extra appreciation or offer to help can you extend to the devoted Religious Education Ministry Team that is so valiantly carrying on with all the programming for children and youth even while the search continues for a quality Director of Religious Education? What extra appreciation or offer to help can you extend to the Caring Ministry or the Auction-coordinating Teams? This community exists and thrives because you do, because you care for it, because it matters to you and you let one another feel that care on a regular basis. This congregation's steadfast Office Administrator, Sherry Kyriacou, can share with you at your request the latest edition of the "Opportunities for Service, Enrichment, and Fun!" brochure (or you can always find it in the Members section of the UUCD website). There may well be something in here that you didn't realize was happening, or someone you didn't know you could reach out to and call, have coffee with, take out to lunch, appreciate what they've been doing and find out how you could be more involved.

In any and every action we take, we can observe: are we trying to wrest more control for ourselves or are we opening ourselves up to deeper relationship? "[T]he only motions we can choose are motions toward mutual inclusion or mutual destruction," (89) writes Rev. Nancy McDonald Ladd. We move towards or away from each other in all our seemingly routine actions. Whenever we feel that tug of tension, let us pivot *towards* one another. May it be so!"

I wish you well and look forward to seeing you in December!

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 November Comment –
Friday, October 18th.

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

Sunday, October 6th Multigenerational Service: “The Peddler,” an Opera Rev. Ed Thompson
 Rev. Ed Thompson, the Minister of Music at the Unitarian Church in Westport, has written and produced a church opera performed by youth entitled “The Peddler.” It addresses Unitarian values and was very enthusiastically received at the premier in the spring.

First Sunday Connections begins October 6th. Attention, Visitors — Guests — Anyone NEW or NEWISH to our UU congregation. Join us in the Cottage Conference Room from 11:30 - 12:30 for this informal monthly get-acquainted session. Let us know what brought you here. What might you be looking for in a continued relationship with us? What questions do you have about Unitarian Universalism and about our Danbury congregation in particular? Childcare will be provided.

Sunday, October 13th Sanctuary Brian Snow
 Brian will be addressing the theme of Sanctuary as well as acknowledging Indigenous People’s Day. Throughout history, both the history of our country and our religious movement, we have been seeking sanctuary and security. We have sought to form a ‘more perfect union’ and a more authentic mode of worship that creates sanctuary and even makes our sanctuary more inclusive. While these ventures have provided sanctuary and enabled our movement to grow, it was at the expense of the indigenous people of our land. How do we continue to build sanctuary given the history we inherit, what is the ‘spiritual ecology’ of our sanctuaries? How does this help spread sanctuary in these difficult times where the concept of sanctuary becomes more and more elusive?

Sunday, October 20th The Golden Rule Rev. Leo McIlrath, DMin
 Rev. McIlrath was born and brought up in Danbury, attended Danbury High School, St Bonaventure University and Christ the King Seminary with degrees in Philosophy and Theology. Leo was ordained in the Roman Catholic Priesthood in 1966 and enjoyed ten years of ministry in NC, serving as a pastor of churches and chaplain to the students at Duke University. Leo resigned from the diocese of Raleigh in 1976 over the issue of mandatory celibacy and began a lengthy career in social service fields, e.g. the Department of Elderly Services, City of Danbury, Chaplain to Regional Hospice of Western CT, the Western CT Area Agency of Aging, Professor at Western Connecticut State University classes in Latin, Psychology and Gerontology, and for the past twelve years, the Ecumenical and Interfaith Chaplain to the Lutheran Home of Southbury, a residence focusing on Alzheimer’s Diseases and other dementias. Rev. McIlrath was co-founder of the Dorothy Day House of Hospitality. He officiated at multiple weddings, funerals and other rites of passage. Along with his wife, (Dianne,) of thirty-five years, Leo raised six children including two from the Philippines and one from Brazil.

Sunday, October 27th All Soul’s Day Sierra-Marie Gerfao
 A service of remembrance and sharing. Sierra-Marie is a UUMA Member, Candidate for Ministry, has an MDiv and an MSW.

Notes from the Board of Trustees

by Ali Haffner, Trustee

Having very nearly forgotten that I'd volunteered to write this month's Board Notes, I was relieved to recall Rev. Heather's mention of Worship Web, a resource available at uua.org that enables topical searches of Unitarian Universalist inspiration. (How cool is that?) To celebrate October, I'll share a few lines I found in "Autumn Prayer" by Christine C. Robinson:

*"God of the Autumn, help us to live
with the grace of falling leaves
the enthusiasm of the flaming Aspens
with the serenity of the old trees, whose roots reach deep into the earth."*

Grace, enthusiasm, and serenity. And all in one month! For me, this calls to mind the grace to balance often competing responsibilities, the enthusiasm (mine, not theirs) for a still-new school year, and the serenity to accept the prospect of winter weather looming ahead.

Grace, enthusiasm, and serenity. It could also be a description of the Board of Trustees Retreat we enjoyed on a beautiful Saturday in early September. We experienced each other's' grace in learning about our backgrounds and our congregation's past through shared stories; there is much grace in acknowledging that no one voice holds all of the answers and that we work best when we encourage and support each other. And we reveled in all-out enthusiasm for our new congregational year and all that we want to achieve as a Board. And while a lively sharing of diverse perspectives on goals and priorities might not suggest serenity, we reflected with comfort on the knowledge that this congregation - each member and friend - is strong and resilient and continues to rise to meet new challenges.

As we complete the work started at the Retreat, we are planning opportunities for dialogue with the congregation to share our ideas and to encourage and welcome yours at a series of "Open Forum" sessions, the first of which will be announced soon.

I wish you and your loved ones grace, enthusiasm, and serenity this month and throughout the year.

Our Caring Circle is Available

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

Karen Gillotti is the contact person for **October and 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.



The RE Ministry Team will meet on the 1st Sunday of every month at 8:30 a.m. in the Cottage first floor Conference Room.

2019-20 Religious Education

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.

For more information about our RE program, contact **Kristen Papucci**.

From the *Music Ministry*

by Jerry Phelps, Music Director

CALLING ALL MUSICIANS!



As we begin to prepare for the winter holiday season, UUCD is looking for anyone who is interested in offering musical selections during our services. It can be instrumental or vocal. You can present a solo, duet, or ensemble. Please see **Jerry Phelps** if you're interested in participating. Let's make our holiday season a very musical one!

Hello UUCD members and friends!



During the months of October and November 2019, I will be away for a long-planned sabbatical period accrued through my ministry with the Unitarian Society of Hartford. In terms of my agreement with UUCD, this is simply when I am taking my vacation and study leave this year, and I will then be full-time with you all for the month of December, to balance things out--and I look forward to that! In October, I will simply be resting and recuperating from 15 years of parish ministry--a vocation in which I am usually, in some way or another, "on call" day-in and day-out. In November, I am going on a Big Trip with my family--first to Quezon City in the Philippines to visit dear friend Rev. Joseph Santos-Lyons and family as well as visit UU communities in the Philippines. Then we will travel to Delhi, India, and hopefully visit large Unitarian communities in the Khasi Hills of northeast India. We return on November 30th and I look forward to serving UUCD full-time for the month of December. While I am on sabbatical in October and November, I and the UUCD Board have agreed to engage Margalie Belizaire as emergency Pastoral Care Minister should a clear, urgent need arise for professional ministry--be in touch with Board President Melody Levy and/or Office Manager Sherry Kyriacou if you feel something has occurred that warrants connecting with Margalie. I know not what stories, experiences and learnings I will bring back to you in December and beyond, but I am sure there will be many. I wish you a positive and spiritually-rich time while I am away, and very much look forward to seeing you in December!

Warmly,
Rev. Heather

Ministry/Team News

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 have always been a cornerstone 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.

“Spiritually Speaking”

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. 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 Nancy Cullen

Open Mic will be Friday, October 25th, from 7:00 – 9:30 p.m. in Fellowship Hall. Sign-ups start at 6:30 p.m. UUCD Members and friends are invited to perform, enjoy the performances, bring a snack or dessert and bring friends to UUCD's Open Mic. Hosted by the Membership Team.



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



On Sunday, September 22nd we welcomed the New Sanctuary Connecticut travelling photo exhibit to Fellowship Hall. It was a powerful display of how people of faith can create safe spaces for immigrants facing deportation. It's also a powerful display of the love, support, pain, suffering and uncertainty that immigrants in sanctuary endure. We are still a "sanctuary in waiting" congregation but we are committed to make our space available when needed.

Help Wanted: The Social Action Council is looking for a volunteer to coordinate the annual Interfaith AIDS Ministry Holiday Gift Tree. We already have the tree and the children in Religious Education will make the mittens to hang on it. You'll be responsible for getting the "wish list" from IAM, putting the item, size and color on each mitten, and collecting the gifts on two Sundays in December. Your reward will be the smiles you won't see on Christmas morning in some local family celebrating the holiday with a family member with AIDS.

Every Sunday in October we will be collecting travel sized toiletries for two homeless shelters in Danbury. Please bring in single use razors, soap, shampoo, conditioner and lotion that you have collected in your travels. We will put them to good use.

Soup Kitchen Corner

by Judy Lacker

On Saturday, October 5th, Soup Kitchen Team #4 will serve up a hot, delicious meal at the Dorothy Day Soup Kitchen on Spring Street. Team Leader **Michele Cousens** will be joined by team members **Rik and Drew Cousens, Joanne Davidson, Joni & Robert Lowe, Michael Stengle, David and Gia Parr, Bruni Edwards, Yvonne Ruddy-Stein, Serena Stein, and Leah and Kelsey Hall**. 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 Fellowship Hall.

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 Comida food pantry at ARC. We can all be an important part of the fight to end hunger in our community!

From *Team Green*

by Gary Mummert

Exciting News: New Heat Pump in the Cottage!

Team Green is excited to announce that we have installed a heat pump in the Cottage first floor Conference Room for a one-year trial. The unit looks similar to a window air-conditioner and we will be training frequent users of the Conference Room on how to use it.

What is a heat pump anyway?

Basically, it is a unit that extracts air from the outside, absorbing its heat in winter, and, conversely, ejecting heat into outdoor air in summer. It can work for all 4 seasons, depending on the outside temperature.

The biggest advantage of a heat pump is that it is highly efficient. In this trial, we will be only heating the Conference Room to the desired comfort level when the room is being used. We already have a heat pump system in our Fellowship Hall Lower Level.

Why are we doing this?

In 2015, UUCD voted to make continual efforts to reduce our fossil fuel consumption. Although Team Green has made great strides in the Cottage over the last four years, we still have an inefficient oil burner, with 30% of oil in the system going up the chimney. We will test the use of a simple heat pump in one room of the Cottage, with an eye toward expansion to other areas of the Cottage in the future.

How will the congregation operate the heat pump?

The leadership of each group that typically uses the Conference Room will be provided training on how to use it; there will also be clear instruction signs posted.

Our existing oil boiler will also continue to be used to prevent pipe freeze-up in the Cottage by maintaining the temperature at 58 degrees, as we have in the past.

What will happen at the end of the trial?

Team Green will monitor use of the heat pump October – May, and evaluate the data for energy savings. In the spring, we will also solicit feedback from those folks who have used the heat pump. If it has been successful, Team Green may recommend expansion of the idea to include other rooms of the Cottage; if not, we will remove the unit.

Upcoming Events



Join us in conversation, spirituality, and social action every Sunday at 12:00 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall Lower Level Conference Room. Designed for ages 18-25, but all are welcome. Please contact **Sequoia Lowe** for more information.



by Keith Dupree

Who will give me back those days when life had wings and flew just like a skylark in the sky.
- Marceline Desbordes-Valmore (1786-1859)

We vary our format this month by offering two short short films and one hard-hitting feature.

7:00 p.m. – *Family Ties* – A touching tribute to how a father/son relationship evolves over the years.

7:10 p.m. – *Contigo* – A short, sweet, and animated film, but not a cartoon!

7:20 p.m. – *Blur Circle* – A story of an impossible woman with an anguishing burden which she just cannot lay down.

8:55 – 9:20 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, October 11th, at 7:00 p.m. in the Cottage first floor 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 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.)



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, October 14th at 9:30 a.m. at MOTHERSHIP CAFE, 331 Main Street, Danbury (near North Street).

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

Women Living on Their Own

This is a new group for women who are living on their own. We might have much to share about their lives. Our circumstances will be similar, but different, and we might talk about what works well, what is lacking, and so on. Although Jane is getting it going, she hopes that we will all take part in shaping the group. We will meet in the Cottage Conference Room on the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays of each month. Join us at 7:00 p.m. on Tuesday, October 8th, and then on Tuesday, October 22nd. All those who identify as women, are UUCD members or friends, and are living on your own are welcome to join us. We hope to see you. Bring your ideas. Contact Person: **Jane Leff**.

From the Auction Team

by Marian DiFabbio



Come Sail Away on Saturday, November 2, 2019 UUCD Annual Goods and Services AUCTION

Join us for a Good Time of delicious food, entertainment, door prizes *and* the wonderful feeling that you are doing your part to support the financial health of our Beloved Community.

We need folks to host/attend Events/Dinners, to offer Goods & Services, to be Matching Donors, and, of course, to buy tickets!

Need more info? Contact **Marian DiFabbio**.

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.