



Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Danbury

Monthly **COMMENT** Newsletter

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

FEBRUARY 2020

From our Consulting Minister



*"Sometimes it's hard to find a way to keep on
Quiet weekends, holidays, you come undone
Open your window and look upon
All the kinds of alive you can be
Be still, be light, believe me...."
--"Little Bird," by The Weepies*

Dear UUCD Members and Friends,

The Monday of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day weekend was a somewhat challenging one for our family. After attending the amazing Annual West Hartford Celebration of Martin Luther King, Jr. at Town Hall in the morning, the chilly, sunny day suddenly collided with our family members' varied expectations of what the rest of the holiday should hold. There were some hurt feelings, a slammed door or two, some shouting, and some fatigue--there's a great song by The Weepies that has a line that always comes to me at moments such as these: "Quiet weekends, holidays, you come undone...." Quite probably it was just the unsettledness of a very non-routine Monday that brought about some typical household tension.

In the late afternoon, I decided to assuage my own feelings of exasperation by at least clearing off the back porch counter and taking the compost outside before the sun set. I didn't choose the best shoes--my spouse's Keen sandals were handy by the back door--and went outside only to feel my sock-feet getting chilled in our backyard's crisp snow. And then I got to the compost bin, arms laden with my bowl full of vegetable peels, and...the sliding bin door was frozen shut. At this point in the day, I just had to laugh. Here in my quickly-seized moment of quiet solitude, in my earnest effort to just get one.thing.done, even in this I was experiencing failure.

Well, "be here now," is what came to my mind. Give a little more attention to footwear next time I go outside. Don't worry so much about getting things done. Enjoy the fact that the older kid is now happily body-painting the younger kid, and for the moment, no one needs anything. It was a gorgeous crisp winter day. We had gotten to experience one of our children's favorite babysitters giving one of the "Student Perspective" speeches at Town Hall, and tears had welled up in my eyes. There is so much beauty in-and-amongst the exasperating and terrifying realities of our lives and our world. So much beauty.

"Be here now" has been a mantra that runs through my mind at critical moments for many years. It probably got imprinted there when I lived in Taos, New Mexico, in 2001-02. There was an ashram there in Taos that I visited as well as the Lama Foundation that I still dream of returning to. On the Lama Foundation's Facebook page is written about Ram Dass: "Ram Dass' presence and ever-lingering teachings have been a profound and integral part of Lama Foundation since its inception and have contributed in countless ways to its longevity." Ram Dass died in December 2019 and I have been reading parts of his seminal work, *Be Here Now*, out loud to our older child at bedtime. In all the turmoil and hecticness of our 21st century lives, one of the great gifts we can give to ourselves is to pause, even for just a few seconds, and take in the beauty of the day, even with all its imperfections. Its perfect imperfections. Be here now. Savor what is here, now. Blessed be.

(continued)

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 email, cell phone, text, first-class U.S. mail, or Facebook Messenger if you just have a quick question or comment. I look forward to hearing from you in whatever way is best for you. May the oh-so-gradually increasing daylight help to lift our spirits and energize us for all that lies ahead.

Warmly,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Rev. Heather". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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.

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

Sunday, February 2nd

Faith Forward!

Rev. Heather Rion Starr

In partnership with UUCD's Membership Team, we are launching a new program called Faith Forward: the Inquirers Series. The Inquirers Series is geared towards newercomers and visitors, but these topics, conversations and sessions give all of us a chance to revisit what matters most to us about this Unitarian Universalist faith, our hundreds of UU congregations across-the-country and beyond, and what we want to carry forward, as we say at UUCD, "out into the world."

Sunday, February 9th

Aging and Immigration

Religious Education and others

The RE students will have a special presentation for this Multigenerational service. They will be discussing the topics of Aging and Immigration. They have spent three weeks with our wonderful volunteers learning about these important issues. We hope you will join us.

Sunday, February 16th

Being a Nutmegger

Rev. Heather Rion Starr

What identifies the spirit, soul, essence of a Nutmegger (a resident of Connecticut)? How about a New Englander? Join (native Oregonian!) Rev. Heather in this playful pondering of the New England spirit, with a special focus on Connecticut, as we all move through this wintry mix month of February together. Are hearty New Englanders and Unitarian Universalism a match made in...Concord, or too much of a good thing?

Sunday, February 23rd

Langston Hughes – In Poetry and Jazz

Rev. Ben Bortin

Langston Hughes liked to compose poetry in night-clubs, where jazz would aid and abet his creativity. His aspiration, he once said, was to convey in words the spirituality he experienced with jazz. He developed a profound appreciation for the African American contribution in this country, but his eloquent writings and prophetic message also spoke universally to the human condition. He strove for beauty; he also was a conscience for the nation and for humanity as a whole. A look at Langston Hughes' life and poetic power, accompanied at times by jazz.

Rev. Ben Bortin has served as minister at the First Unitarian Church of Duluth, Minnesota, and the Unitarian Universalist Church of Staten Island, New York. More recently, between 2007 and 2019, he was the Volunteer and Membership Coordinator at the UU Congregation at Shelter Rock. He also served two terms as President of the UU United Nations Office, and taught the course, "Religions of the World," at St. John's University in Staten Island, NY. Growing up in California, he graduated from the University of California and Starr King School for the Ministry. He currently resides with his wife, Andrea Starr, in Port Washington, New York.

Notes from the Board of Trustees

by Chris Creter, Vice-President

SAVE-the-DATE – Town Hall Meetings

Time sure is moving quickly! Just 18 months ago we met in congregational Town Hall meetings to discuss how we were going to address our staffing and budget situation. At that time, the decision was made to continue with Rev. Heather as our part-time minister, pay our fair share to the UUA, and to move forward with a Music Director... as long as we promised to re-visit this as a congregation.

As we enter this new decade... the time has come to resume the conversation on whether or not we should take on the Search for a Settled Minister, and what that might look like. We must look at our current and prospective financial position and make some decisions together. The Board has done a great deal of work to analyze our financial position, look at historical trends, discuss possibilities and resources with our UUA advisors, and layout options which we will share at these meetings. We ask for as many people to come as possible and participate in open dialogue, sharing your thoughts and opinions.

The Board has set 3 dates for Town Hall Meetings with the hope that as many people as possible may participate. ALL are welcome... members, friends, etc.

- 3/1/2020 Sunday Live in Fellowship Hall after Service 11:45 a.m.
- 3/3/2020 Tuesday Virtual via Zoom or call-in, at 7:30 p.m.
- 3/5/2020 Thursday Virtual via Zoom or call-in, at 8:30 a.m.

Look for more information to come in the Order of Service and Weekly Emails.

Information and links for joining the Zoom meetings will be sent in the days prior to the meetings.



by Doreen Goncalves, RE Coordinator

The RE Ministry Team is happy to announce another Social Justice Intercession for RE students. The session dates so far were January 19th and 26th, and the third will be February 2nd. We have 5 amazing volunteers who will be leading activities and discussion around 2 important topics: Aging and Immigration. This program is for students from Pre-k to 8th grade. We urge all our UU students to take advantage of this special opportunity.

The students will be presenting what they learned at the February 9th Multigenerational Service.

We look forward to sharing this special event.

Ministry/Team News

From the *Caring Circle Ministry*

Our Caring Circle is Available

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

Karen Gillotti is the contact person for **February and March.**

Val Cochrane 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.

From *Membership Team*

by Nancy Cullen



The Membership Team invites newcomers, members and friends to the Inquirers Series starting February 2, 2020. The 9-topic series of conversations will take place on Sundays starting in February. Everyone is welcome to participate in any of the sessions. Each session will feature a different speaker from our congregation and will be facilitated by **Margaret Henderson**. We will meet after the Sunday service from 11:15-12:15 in the Fellowship Hall lower level Conference Room. Childcare will be provided in the Orange classroom in the R.E. wing. Rev. Heather will be the speaker for the first session and answer questions you might have about our community and our U.U. faith. Bring your inquisitive selves! Small circles make for strong friendships! We hope to see you there.

Sessions:

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| 1. | February 2 nd | Q and A with Reverend Heather |
| 2. | February 9 th | Unitarian & Universalist History, Principles and Sources |
| 3. | February 16 th | Campus Tour & Orientation |
| 4. | February 23 rd | Faith Development for Children and Adults |
| 5. | March 8 th | Worship and the Liturgical Year |
| 6. | March 15 th | Community Service & Racial Equity |
| 7. | March 22 nd | Pastoral Care and Caring Community |
| 8. | March 29 th | Small Group Connections |
| 9. | April 5 th | Membership 101 & Congregation Life |
| | April 12 th | Possible Make Up Session if an event above is cancelled due to weather |

From the *Social Action Council*

by Lynn Taborsak

The Social Action Council will be screening the final episode of the Netflix series “**Living Undocumented**”, a six part documentary that follows eight undocumented immigrant families living in the United States. Please join us on Sunday, February 2nd following the Sunday service in the Fellowship Hall Lower Level Conference Room. A light lunch will be provided and discussion will follow the screening.



During February, we are asking members and friends to donate disposable diapers for infants up to 18 pounds in weight for the local WIC program. WIC provides food, health care referrals, and nutrition education for low-income pregnant, breastfeeding, and non-breastfeeding women, and to infants and children up to age five. WIC is a wonderful program but it doesn't provide diapers for these new arrivals.

On Sunday, February 9th, we are requesting a “**Share-the-Plate**” offering for the **New Milford Refugee Resettlement Committee**. They are supporting a family of four from Honduras who are seeking asylum in our broken immigration system. Several members of our congregation are assisting with day to day support for this mother and her three children. There will also be an “Echos of Sinatra” fundraiser at the Maguire Auditorium at Canterbury School in New Milford at 7:00 pm on February 8th. Tickets are \$50.

Social Action Council members are looking for members who have a family immigration story that they can share on Sunday February 9th. Please contact **Lynn Taborsak** or **Margaret Henderson**.

Soup Kitchen Corner

by Judy Lacker

On Saturday, February 1st, 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 **Joanne Davidson, Michael Stengle, David and Gia Parr, Bruni Edwards, Yvonne Ruddy-Stein, Serena Stein, Rik Cousens, and the Bonansinga/Twombly family**. 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 can all be an important part of the fight to end hunger in our community!

From the *Music Ministry*

by Jerry Phelps



CALLING ALL UUCD MUSICIANS! Do you play an instrument or sing? We are fortunate to have so many awesome musicians in our congregation and would love to include you in upcoming services. Please reach out to **Jerry Phelps** and he will get you on the schedule!

From the *Sunday Services Ministry Team*

by Tony DiFabbio

We want to share a UU experience that occurred this past November with the congregation. Five of us attended a special training meeting at Mt. Kisco UU entitled “Best Practices for Preachers and Sunday Service Volunteers.” We learned much about what we are doing effectively in our Sunday services, and we also learned what areas could use some improvement. After much review and discussion, we all agreed the following suggestions have merit and should be implemented.

1. First and foremost, the Sunday Service Ministry Team will continue to make every effort to enlist the very best substitute ministers and speakers we can enlist to cover the Sundays that Rev. Heather is not available.
2. The opportunity to “Greet Your Neighbor” has been moved to the end of the service. We felt this was a much more appropriate time.
3. We are asking the pianist to start playing 10 minutes before the service begins. This time will give us all a better opportunity to become more contemplative and quiet.
4. In deference to the opening words of the service, we are requesting when possible that people who arrive after the service has started and the doors have closed refrain from entering the sanctuary until the music begins.
5. By request, we are now keeping the doors closed to the kitchen until the postlude has concluded. This keeps the noise down and respects the final aspects of the service.
6. We are asking people not to bring drinks into the sanctuary during the service in order to preserve the carpet.
7. We are also asking everyone to turn off cell phones.

These are changes that we feel will enhance our spiritual time together. Suggestions are always welcome. Please feel free to jot down your comments or ideas and pass them along to one of the Sunday Service Coordinators: **Tony DiFabbio, Michael Stengle, Inge Hill, Deborah Casey or Joe Gillotti.**

Upcoming Events



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



It's been a while since we had our last DFW meeting! We'll be having our next one on Sunday, February 9th, from 6:00 – 8:00 p.m. in Fellowship Hall. This month's featured grantee that we'll be learning about is **The Shared Interest Group from Malawi**. Here is a link to Customs and Cuisines of Malawi, at the bottom of which you can click on recipes: <https://diningforwomen.org/customsandcuisine/customs-cuisine-of-malawi-shared-interest/>. Please RSVP to **Judy Lacker** if you'll be able to attend and what food/drink contribution you plan to bring. Hope to see you on February 9th!

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, February 10th at 9:30 a.m. at MOTHERSHIP CAFE, 331 Main Street, Danbury. For more information, contact **Gary Mummert**.



Women On Our Own

This group is for women who are living on their own. Our circumstances will be similar, but different, and we might talk about what works well, what is lacking, and so on. We meet in the Cottage Conference Room on the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays of each month at 4:00 p.m. February dates are the 11th and 25th. 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**.



by Keith Dupree

*Being deeply loved by someone gives you strength,
while loving someone deeply gives you courage.*
– Lao Tzu (Chinese philosopher, 6th century, BCE)

Entwined with each of our films on this Valentine's Day is a love story, though not the type of love story you might expect to find.

- 7:00 p.m. - **CODA** – A young dancer struggles with conflicting feelings as the hearing child of deaf adults. This short film is a student production from the filmmakers' program at USC.
- 7:25 p.m. - **You & Me** – An unusual friendship develops when Ella, who is deaf, meets Tony, who is blind. This delightful film is one of the first to star disabled actors in both leading roles.
- 8:55 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, February 14th, at 7:00 p.m. in the Cottage Conference Room. As usual, all are welcome. Pizza will be provided. BYOB and 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.)



The **Conversations** group meets every other month on the second Thursday of the month at 7:00 p.m. in the 2nd floor Conference Room. You do not need to read the book to attend. For more information please contact **Mary Ann Kulla**.

On Thursday, March 12th, our book will be *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism* by Shoshana Zuboff.



Our national annual denominational conference, General Assembly (GA), is wonderfully close by this year, in Providence, Rhode Island, June 24-28. Please consider if *you* might attend! Ask anyone who has attended a GA - there is nothing quite like it. It can be incredibly energizing to be around thousands of UUs from across the country, continent, and beyond. Especially in this pivotal national election year, nourish your spirit by worshipping, organizing, connecting, rallying, and engaging with your Unitarian Universalist community. Full details are here: <https://www.uua.org/ga>.

The UU Congregation of Danbury is able to provide some financial support for attending GA on a limited basis. Please let Board President **Melody Levy** know if you are interested in attending GA and in need of financial assistance. Anyone who wishes may attend GA. As a congregation, we will have 3 members attend GA as delegates who vote on behalf of our congregation on matters of denominational business and significance. If you are interested in serving as a delegate to GA 2020, please let **Melody and Rev. Heather** know.



Greetings old and new friends. I'm packing for DC and Florida in a couple of days and want to take a moment to thank my friends Nancy Hershatter and Gerry Hinson for getting me back to Danbury, to Joe Gillotti, Carl Tramontana, and the whole crew at the UU, and of course YOU for your interest and support *of* community gatherings with live music. This can't happen in a vacuum, and your presence makes it all possible. I treasure my opportunities to sing for you *and* was very grateful to be with you all.

Here's a direct link to an amazing video of "Home of the Brave" that I sang at the concert on Saturday, with immeasurable gratitude to Los Angeles'

Sherry Hursey and Rick Cowling of TOtl Entertainment for their incredible and world-class work, donated when they heard the song for the very first time in February, 2017 at the Positive Music Festival in Florida: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pL4Rb4TT0F0> ~ feel free to share and disseminate as inspired.

With gratitude,
David Roth

**Deadline for the March *Comment* –
Monday, February 17th.**



UU Danbury Cancellation Policy – In general, please always put your safety first and only come to UUCD if you feel you can do so safely. During very inclement weather, Sunday Services, Religious Education and any other meetings or events will be cancelled. To learn of a cancellation, please check one of the following:

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