



Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Danbury

Monthly **COMMENT** Newsletter

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

MARCH 2020

From our Consulting Minister



And suddenly, it's March 2020. Just a few months ago, I sure thought March sounded like a long way off--but here we are. And though I usually try to write my *Comment* columns on something not solely UUCD related, this moment seems to call for a bit of a review of where we're at, at UUCD, regarding professional ministry and staffing.

Most of you will know some or all of these details, so bear with me while I review things in a linear manner. This congregation experienced what is called an "incomplete* Search" for a full-time minister in the spring of 2018. (*I recently learned that the reason for this terminology is because a truly *failed* Search would be one in which the called-and-settled ministry did not work out, particularly in the first year or two. A random-yet-meaningful ministry factoid!)

That same spring of 2018, I was looking for additional, part-time, consulting ministry work in Connecticut, and the Rev. Keith Kron (the Unitarian Universalist Association's Transitions Director) put me in touch with UUCD's Board President then, Brad Greene. Brad arranged for me to meet with a small Search Team, and we worked out a one-year 1/2-time Consulting Minister contract. After some months with you and under Brad's continued Board leadership, you as a congregation affirmed continuing this arrangement for 2 more years--so I am currently contracted to serve as your 1/2-time Consulting Minister through June 2021.

(Cue reader to ask:) "And then what?"

The UUCD Board has been delving deeply together into that very "And then what?" question for some months now and is eager to share their insights with you in the coming weeks.

I want to say right now that I have truly enjoyed serving as your Minister this past year-and-a-half, and I'm delighted to continue doing so for at least another year-and-a-half! I've found you all to be an incredibly caring, engaged, active, joyful, flexible congregation, of course with your own quirks just as every congregation has its quirks. There is so much that is good and worthy of celebration, here.

One thing we need to collectively wrestle with and that you'll hopefully be hearing more about from others is that I currently receive 95% of my benefits--health insurance (as well as long-term disability and life insurance), retirement contribution, and professional development expenses--through my half-time settled Co-Ministry at the Unitarian Society of Hartford. So, essentially, UUCD hasn't been paying for these benefits and will most likely need to do that starting in July 2021 even just to continue having a half-time Minister. And as most of you probably know, these things just aren't cheap.

And demographics are working against us. As the costs of "doing church" continue to rise, fewer people are able to contribute as much as they once were to their congregations. Fewer people are attending and affiliating with religious communities in general, and fewer people are choosing to live in Connecticut--I'm guessing that none of this is new news to you! It just all factors in to the challenges we face as we look ahead to UUCD's financial future.

(continued)

On the bright side, I'm a big fan of what are now called "yoked ministries"--where 2 (or possibly more) congregations work together to hire and/or call a minister (or ministers). Locally, there is a minister currently serving the UU congregations of Woodbury and Meriden, each half-time, and those congregations went into Search together and created a single salary-and-benefits "package" to offer that minister. Examples such as that nearby collaboration are promising to me.

There are opportunities coming up for you to talk more with one another and ask the questions that must now be percolating in your mind, if they weren't already before you began reading this column. There'll be an All-Congregational "Town Hall"-style Meeting following the service on March 1, and virtual (online) "Town Hall" Meetings on March 3 (7:30-9pm) and March 5 (8:30-10am), all hosted by your Board of Trustees. Read on in this newsletter for more details. We want you to participate and let us know what matters most to you.

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 you just have a quick question or comment. I look forward to hearing from you in whatever way is best for you. May these days of longer daylight hours and sure signs of spring help to lift our spirits and energize us for all that lies ahead.

Warmly,



Rev. Heather

Town Hall Meetings - State of the UU (Danbury)

by Chris Creter

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 the Zoom link and dial in access to the virtual meetings from your weekly email blasts or contact Sherry (Office Manager) for more information.

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.



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.

**Deadline for the April Comment –
Friday, March 20th.**

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

Sunday, March 1st

Center the Joy

Rev. Heather Rion Starr

Inspired by the January 2020 *This American Life* episode called "The Show of Delights," I'll spend this March morning with you helping us all draw upon joy as an essential soul-nourishing force in our lives. Your delightful preparatory homework (only if you're joyfully able, of course) is to listen to the *This American Life* episode before you come: <https://www.thisamericanlife.org/692/the-show-of-delights>.

Sunday, March 8th

Ode to Sleep

Rev. Heather Rion Starr

On this day when we all "lose an hour" (don't forget to spring your clocks forward on Saturday night), I will delve into the trending current literature on sleep, "sleep hygiene," parenting & the correlating loss of sleep, the spiritual practice of studying dreams, and other things that...keep me up at night. Rise and shine with me!

Sunday, March 15th

Knowing Yourself through Knowing Your Ancestors

Dianne M. Daniels

Knowing who your Ancestors were – about their lives, their struggles and their victories – can help you to understand who you are, and how you are. You can learn about their strengths, their culture and language, and the foundations of what contributed to making you who you are today, and what qualities have been passed along to you by people you may never have been blessed to meet, but who live on through you.

Guest preacher Dianne M. Daniels is a born-and-bred Detroiter who relocated to Connecticut to be with the love of her life, her husband of 30 years, Aaron L. Daniels. They have three grown children and one adorable grandson, and are pet parents to a rescued Greyhound named Duke. Dianne joined the Unitarian Universalist Church of Norwich in 1997 and has served in multiple positions, including President of the congregation. In the Fall of 2016, Dianne enrolled in the Master of Divinity program at the Starr King School for the Ministry and is currently serving a two-year Internship at the Unitarian Society of Hartford, CT.

Sunday, March 22nd

Multigenerational Service: Spring Equinox

Doreen Goncalves & the RE Ministry Team

Come and celebrate the Spring Equinox with us.

Sunday, March 29th

Dorothea Dix

Rev. Julie-Ann Silberman-Bunn

This sermon will explore the life and 'ministry' of a remarkable Unitarian woman whose tireless efforts transformed the face of mental health care in America. More than a century later, let us see the transformation she inspired by her deep belief in human dignity. Followed by a brief exploration of what has happened in mental health care in the time since her ministry.

*Reverend Julie-Ann Silberman-Bunn is a lifelong Unitarian Universalist, who has served as a Parish Minister, Religious Educator, Hospice Chaplain and now a Hospital Chaplain at Mercy Medical Center in Springfield, MA, since her ordination in 1992. An author of chapters in *Everyday Spiritual Practice* and *Living a Call* Julie-Ann. Julie-Ann and her husband Ken are empty nesters who have recently made a move to their forever home a cabin in the woods of Western Massachusetts. Their sons Adam and Ian 31 and 26 respectively currently live in Philadelphia and St. John's Newfoundland.*

Notes from the Board of Trustees

by Melody Levy, President

In our culture of immediacy, it's worthwhile to remember - a flower doesn't go from bud to blossom, *before blossoming*. Where will we go from here? We have a track record of steady and strategic planning and implementation. We've established and actualized big visions, knowing full well that progress is incremental; that it doesn't happen in a click (or a like). In preparation for our Town Hall meetings, the Board of Trustees, and the Financial and Endowment Teams have proactively worked together to present staffing plans, and their revenue implications. I am fortunate to be one among a dedicated and mission-focused Board whose ministry regards spiritual growth as a priority. Within our community and well beyond our physical addresses, we have a distinct calling to release our gifts while understanding the importance of a long view. Can we offer a blessing to the health of our future? Before the sun takes an early bow, I'll take stock of what matters: our fellowship, its roots in activism, and, building together what we cannot do alone.

“Happiness held is the seed; Happiness shared is the flower.” (John Harrigan)

Our Caring Circle is Available

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

Karen Gillotti is the contact person for **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.



by Doreen Goncalves, RE Coordinator

Religious Education has been very busy these last few weeks. We had a wonderful three week Intercession taught by an amazing group of volunteers. The subjects covered were Aging and Immigration. The volunteers planned many engaging, fun activities that helped our children better understand these issues. Our youth then presented at the Multigenerational Service on February 9th. They did a great job, engaging the congregation in some of the activities they had participated in.

Several of our High School students attended the Winter Con in Summit, NJ.

Our High School students announced that they are planning an Earth Day Celebration. More information will follow as soon as it becomes available.

Coming in March - Youth Con for our middle schoolers. March 28th – 29th.

Ministry/Team News

From the *Adult Programming Ministry*

by Joe Gillotti, Chair

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 2020 year. In the past, members have offered Chalice Circles (discussions on a whole range of topics). We have had open forum meetings, day trips, and group meetings on how to learn new skills. Please be willing to come forward and volunteer to lead a program of your choice. Coming together in unity, direct education and spiritual growth have 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 2020 we will be asking that each participant makes a small donation (one or two dollars) each meeting in order to support church utility expenses. Contact **Joe Gillotti** or 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 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 March 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 *Building and Grounds*

by Gary Mummert

Buildings and Grounds needs some Help

Here is a list of items needing attention now:

- Cleaning of the FH Janitors Closet.
- Routine cleaning of surfaces in the FH Lift.
- Vacuuming of the stairs and basement floors in Cottage House (CH) basement.
- Digging for a new drywell and drain system for front of CH. The current drain system has failed, resulting in intermittent water entry to the basement.
- Wall repair and repainting of RE Office and Admin Office.



When warming starts:

- Exterior painting tasks.
- Blowing tree debris off of parking areas.
- Other outside clean-up and disposal.
- Wood chip spreading.

Please contact **Gary Mummert** to volunteer.

From *Membership Team*

by Nancy Cullen



The Membership Team invites newcomers, members and friends to the Inquirers Series. This series of conversations takes place after the Sunday service, from 11:15 – 12:15 in the Fellowship Hall lower level Conference Room. 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**.

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| March 8 th | Shaping Sunday Services Across the Year |
| March 15 th | Community Service & Racial Equity |
| March 22 nd | Pastoral Care and Caring Community |
| March 29 th | Small Group Connections |
| April 5 th | Membership 101 & Congregation Life |
| April 12 th | Possible Make Up Session if an event above is cancelled due to weather |

(There will be no Inquirers class on March 1st, due to the Town Hall Meeting that day.)

From the *Social Action Council*

Soup Kitchen Corner

by Judy Lacker

On Saturday, March 7th, Soup Kitchen Team #1 will serve up a hot, delicious meal at the Dorothy Day Soup Kitchen on Spring Street. Team Leader **Judy Lacker** will be joined by **David Teagarden, Inge Hill, Brian Teagarden, Jane Leff, Sally Mandler and Gary Wynn**. 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. This month, we ask 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

The Social Action Council will meet on Sunday, March 8th at 11:30 in the 2nd floor Conference Room in the cottage. We will be discussing our participation in the *UU the VOTE project*.

Please mark your calendar for a special ZOOM meeting at the Ridge on Thursday, March 5th at noon where we will learn how to create a *UU the VOTE* team, identify community partners, set goals, layout a timeline and develop a plan.

The Social Action Council will be screening *The Family*, a Netflix documentary miniseries that examines a conservative Christian group—known as the Family or the Fellowship—its history, and investigates its influence on American politics. The series was produced by Jeff Sharlet, who previously wrote books about the same organization, including *C Street: The Fundamentalist Threat to American Democracy* and *The Family: The Secret Fundamentalism at the Heart of American Power*. The five part series will begin on Sunday, May 3rd following the Sunday service in the Fellowship Hall lower level Conference Room. A light lunch will be provided and discussion will follow the screening. You may sign up in advance in Fellowship Hall.

Dozens of diapers are headed to three early childhood facilities that serve low-income families in our community. Please continue to donate disposable diapers sizes 3, 4 and 5 for toddlers in training!

On Sunday, February 9th we held 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. A total of \$178.50 was raised in this effort. Thank you to everyone who contributed.

Legislative Advocacy

by Chris Halfar

The Connecticut General Assembly is in session for 2020. Once again, we at UUCD can examine the bills being proposed and lend our support to those which align with our principles of justice, equity, compassion, and the interdependent web of existence. Our legislators are eager to hear from us by phone calls or email or by presenting statements at public hearings.

As I have done for the past few years, I will be providing updates in the Thursday weekly email on the status of proposed bills in the legislative process, links to further information such as full text of the bills, as well as our legislators’ contact information.

Some of the proposals already in motion include: capping the cost of insulin; compassionate choice aid-in-dying; fair work week scheduling; easing post-prison barriers to housing and employment; protecting the rights of immigrants through strengthening the TRUST Act; furthering gun safety; legalizing adult marijuana use; improvements to waste management and bottle redemption programs; support of clean energy.

Please let me know if there are issues you wish us to follow. Also note these are only my suggestions for our consideration.

From the *Sunday Services Ministry Team*

On February 16th, Rev. Heather led a service during which she shared stories from a variety of different texts or sources. Here are those sources if you'd like to read or find out more!

- *Bootleggers, Lobstermen & Lumberjacks: Fifty Of The Grittiest Moments In The History Of Hardscrabble New England*, by Matthew Mayo
- *Frog Hollow: Stories from an American Neighborhood*, by Susan Campbell
- *Hartford Mayor Ann Uccello: A Connecticut Trailblazer*, by Paul Pirrotta and Dennis House
- *All Eyes Are Upon Us: Race and Politics from Boston to Brooklyn—The Conflicted Soul of the Northeast*, by Jason Sokol
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maria_W._Stewart, and this book I haven't yet acquired:
- *Maria W. Stewart, America's First Black Woman Political Writer: Essays and Speeches (Blacks in the Diaspora)*, by Marilyn Richardson
- *She Came to Slay: The Life and Times of Harriet Tubman*, by Erica Armstrong Dunbar, and
- *You Never Forget Your First: A Biography of George Washington*, by Alexis Coe

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.

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. March dates are the 10th and 24th. 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**.

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





by Keith Dupree

Life is just one grand sweet song, so start the music. - Ronald Reagan (1911 – 2004)

A question we might ask of ourselves: What is the music to which our life dances? Could either our feature film or our short suggest an answer?

7:00 p.m. - **From Life** - In a setting designed to engender wondering, an artist and a mysterious woman meet in a churchyard cemetery.

7:10 p.m. - **Being Rose** - Cybill Shepherd plays the role of Rose, a retired ex-cop with health issues who nonetheless sets off in search of her estranged son.

8:40 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, March 13th, at 7:00 p.m. in the 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.)**



Contact Meredith Spector.



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 March 12th, the Conversations group will be discussing: ***The Age of Surveillance Capitalism*** by *Shoshana Zuboff*. Is privacy dead? Do you care? Or was it a good trade off to allow Google to track your every click so they can connect you to the consumer items you want in the blink of an eye? Does it bother you that Amazon's Alexa is always on, recording personal conversations? Come prepared for a lively discussion.

Come Relax, Connect, Refresh, and Rejoice!



The **21**st Annual Women's Retreat
will be held on

Saturday, March **21**st
at the Lake Place Clubhouse in Danbury

Morning Yoga will be held 8 - 9:30 AM
OR come at 10 AM to join in for the rest of the
Retreat (10 AM - 3 PM)



Soothe your hands & body with a balm you will take home;
create a delicious lunch, and feel your spirit uplifted in the
afternoon Kirtan, connecting our hearts with sound.

Cost: \$20.00

To register, or for questions, email
barbara.myersletson@gmail.com

Registration Deadline: March 8