



# Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Danbury

Monthly **COMMENT** Newsletter

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

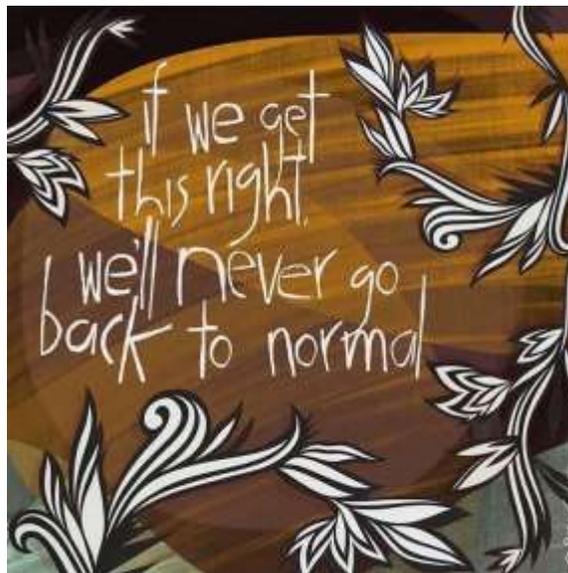
APRIL 2020

## From our Consulting Minister



Dear UUCD Members and Friends,

A friend posted a piece of art sometime around March 21<sup>st</sup> that deeply "landed" with me, and, as with any inspired and provocative piece of art, I've been thinking about it a lot since. Artist, cultural organizer and educator Kate Deciccio (on Instagram as k8deciccio) created this:



(Image by Kate Deciccio, March 2020)

Permit me to share her own words about this image: "Our normal is security for few and dangerous uncertainty for many. Our normal is immediate capitalism over humanity and decisions that include sustaining for future generations as protectors of and partners with the earth. Our normal is individuality over interdependence and class over collective. Is this virus asking us to see that unless we are breathing in sync with the pulse of each other and the larger natural world our future will be lonelier than we could ever imagine?"--Kate Deciccio

Deep breath. This is a lot. We are all going through a lot. And even while many of us are fairly physically comfortable cooped up in our cozy homes, still, there is so much that is unknown and that hovers in our consciousness, just beyond our attention to our next daily action. I feel the push-and-pull of trying to be present during this time, to find some positives in all of this in order to lift up the spirits of my children, and simultaneously wondering about everyone else in my larger community, communities of communities, and truly wondering how they are all doing, who we are not aware of is suffering right now. It's hard to take in over-and-over again that the best thing we can do in this time of international crisis is to stay home.

(continued)

And yet, for most of you reading this and for me writing it, there is so much we can still do. We can meditate on all that this dramatic change in our daily life is bringing up for us. We can reach out by phone, e-mail, text and mail to those in our lives we previously wished we had more connection with. We can write postcards (PostcardsToVoters.org is one of my favorite organized efforts in this regard). Some can make financial donations to the organizations addressing critical needs in our communities. Some can step up to keep this congregation going strong even in virtual ways. Some can pick a few people out in the world who may need an extra hand right now to send a gift card or a note-of-thanks. I'm afraid that there is quite a pull from the Powers That Be to get things "back to normal" but there are things we can do to hold on to the positive re-orienting that this time is requiring of all of us.

As always, even and especially during this surreal time, 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 you find ways to tend to your spirit and find some value in this time.

Warmly,



Rev. Heather



from our Sunday Service, March 22, 2020

*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 May Comment –**  
**Friday, April 17<sup>th</sup>.**

**Our Caring Circle is Available**

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

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

Meredith Spector is the assistant.

If you have a need, please contact **Inge**.

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



**From our Music Director, Jerry Phelps**

Though I'm incredibly sad to not be able to see you in person each week and rehearse with the UUCD Choir, I'm so grateful to be a part of a community that has demonstrated incredible resilience and ingenuity in the face of of an extremely uncertain time. Zoom services have been a joy for me lately!

Music is certainly the balm that many of us need right now. I encourage you to find ways to incorporate music into your daily practices. Find ways to crank up the volume and have impromptu dance parties at home! Consider starting your day with music that inspires you and resets your being before tackling the bizarre world we find ourselves in.

One thing I know is that when this is over, I cannot wait to see your faces in person again! I cannot wait to hear your beautiful voices, singing together in harmony. Sending much love and sparkles to you and yours!

Love,  
Jerry

**Email Phishing Scam Hits Congregations**

Many congregations are reporting that their members have received “phishing” emails appearing to come from their ministers, staff or other members asking for help. The email addresses look like legitimate addresses but are NOT.

Please be aware that no one from UUCD will ever ask you to share sensitive or financial information via personal email or buy gift cards, etc. If you ever receive a suspicious email using UUDanbury, UUCD, or the name of a staff member, please alert Sherry at [officemanager@uudanbury.org](mailto:officemanager@uudanbury.org). You can find the correct emails for UUCD Staff, Members and Friends, in our Congregational Directory on the Members page of our website: [www.uudanbury.org](http://www.uudanbury.org).

## Notes from the Board of Trustees

by Melody Levy, President

We are doing our best to stay calm, assess things one day at a time, and recalibrate in this unprecedented moment. UUCD has always brought people together for collective inspiration and growth. Now we have a chance to inspire each other and build our community from wherever we are. We are adjusting. We are connected by a novel virus that reminds us of our fundamental interdependence. And, we are focused on connectedness instead of otherness.

As though the ride weren't wild enough, we've gone from losing our cookies to flattening the curve. Our social reality is dramatically different from 3 weeks ago. We've paused routines and are adjusting to uncertain times, confounding variables and new norms. We have taken this seriously and responded well. Our mutual obligation to the health and safety of our congregation supported the decision to close the Cottage and Fellowship Hall until further notice. All of our staff have been working from home.

This isn't like the May 15<sup>th</sup> storm, or the NYC streets on September 11<sup>th</sup>. There isn't enough about this novel virus that's happened to feel familiar, but to a few of us who have experienced displacement and trauma, this may be a reminder of that. Our covenant and fellowship prompt us to be engaged with meaningful, even altruistic work. What if we can actually be better people in a better world?

David Brooks, opinion columnist for the New York Times writes: "There's a weird clarity that comes with uncertainty. There is a humility that comes with realizing you're not the glorious plans you made for your life. When the plans are upset, there's a quieter and better you beneath them."

I hope you are discovering some vast treasure troves inside yourself. There are accumulated pleasures to be had from where we've already been. Our freedoms will be recovered, and in the meanwhile this challenge of containment and distance calls for living deeply rather than broadly. Oriah Mountain Dreamer writes: "It doesn't interest me how old you are. I want to know if you will risk looking like a fool for love, for your dream, for the adventure of being alive."

Until we are together again, take the best care of yourself and of one another.



by Sierra-Marie Gerfao, Director of Religious Education

Dear Congregation,

I couldn't have imagined that this would be the circumstances of my first note to you. I bet there are many things you are doing now with the same sentiment: "I couldn't have imagined." Even those of us who were watching carefully the spread of this pandemic likely did not grasp the extent and nature of the changes ahead of us. Now, we are adjusting to a new reality. This is why we are simultaneously creating a routine for children and youth in Religious Education and holding our plans loosely. We know things might change. We know we will learn as we go.

I have been saying that during this time, there are two primary goals for Religious Education for children and youth. First, we aim for **a sense of normalcy** through routine and continuity of relationship. Second, we help the children and youth feel **a sense of togetherness and connection**, with their friends, the larger congregation, Unitarian Universalism, our neighboring faiths, and the world. That's it. Our two goals right now in Religious Education programs for children and youth are restoring a sense of normalcy and togetherness.

These two goals are as good for adults as they are for children. Each day we can choose to lean into those things that help us restore normalcy through routine or relationship, and we can lean into those things that help us restore a sense of togetherness and connection. Simultaneously, we can hold "how" we do those two things loosely. What things help us restore a sense of normalcy and relationship can vary day to day, or even hour to hour. Sometimes it is making sure we get in our daily showers, sometimes it is preparing a comfort food, and sometimes it is making art. Dearest congregation, I know we are only just meeting, but my heart is full of love for you already. We are a community whether near or far. Do not imagine for a moment that you are alone.

Warmly,  
Sierra-Marie

### Upcoming In Religious Education (RE)

For now, Religious Education classes will meet on Zoom on Sunday afternoons. We will combine the Orange (preK-2nd) and Green (3rd-5th) groups and encourage parents to attend with their children, aka "RE For Families." Blue and Purple groups will continue to meet separately. We will make adjustments to this plan as they become necessary. Changes will be communicated to families by email. If you are a parent of a child or youth in RE -- or an RE volunteer -- and have not been receiving emails from Sierra-Marie, please send her an email at [dre@uudanbury.org](mailto:dre@uudanbury.org).

3:30 p.m. RE For Families  
4:00 p.m. Blue Group (6th-8th grade)  
5:00 p.m. Purple Group (9th-12th)

## From the *Social Action Council*

### Social Action Update

by Lynn Taborsak

The Social Action Council met on Sunday, March 8<sup>th</sup> with wonderful participation from the congregation to adopt a “UU the VOTE” action plan. Then the Coronavirus stopped all human contact. The good news is that there are still non-partisan things that we can do and the 2020 election is still seven months away. We must identify community partners, set goals, layout a timeline and develop a local plan; including special events, door-to-door canvassing, Election Day mobilization, field trips to a partner UU Congregation in a battleground state, leafletting at area churches and grocery stores and attending public forums to ask candidates their positions on things that are important to our faith. **Gary Mummert and Sally Mandler** will Co-Chair our *UU the VOTE* Team. Please reach out and share your interest and ideas with them.

The Social Action Council will be screening *The Family*, a Netflix documentary that examines a conservative Christian group known as the Family or the Fellowship. 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 3<sup>rd</sup> following the Sunday service in the 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. (This events is tentative, based on whether UUCD buildings are open.)

UUCD members were asked to submit testimony in support of House Bill 5420, An Act Concerning Aid in Dying for Terminally Ill Patients. Although the public hearing was scheduled for March 16<sup>th</sup>, it had to be postponed for deep cleaning of the Legislative Office Building.

### Soup Kitchen Corner

by Judy Lacker

On Saturday, April 4<sup>th</sup>, Soup Kitchen Team #2 will serve up a hot, delicious meal at the Dorothy Day Soup Kitchen on Spring Street. \*Team Leader **Carl Tramontana** will be joined by **Chris Halfar, Darlene Anderson-Alexander, Suze Shaner, Nicole and Sean Paris, Rose Schlemmer, Deborah Casey and Lisa Deldin**. 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](http://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!

\*Due to the Coronavirus Pandemic, meal service will be conducted in a different manner. Team members should already have received information from their team leader(s). If you have any questions or concerns, please contact your team leaders.

## How You Can Help End Voter Suppression During a Pandemic

Voter suppression is alive and well and bad for our democracy.

In the 2018 midterm elections, millions of Black and brown voters were prevented from exercising their constitutional right to vote. We invite you to help us change that by sending pre-paid postcards with a brief hand-written message to 20 voters whose information has been purged from the voter rolls in Georgia. These voters may not even know that they are now ineligible to vote!

We will supply you with postcards, names and addresses and a script. Our goal is to reach 1,000 voters over the next few weeks. This effort is part of the Reclaim Our Vote non-partisan campaign organized by the Center for Common Ground whose partners include the NAACP, Rapid Resist, Black Voters Matter, Virginia Poor People's Campaign, Mi Familia Vota and others.

Given the current public health restrictions on gatherings, we will try to minimize human contact. We have prepared packages of "Grab and Go" material that includes a model hand-written postcard.

**You can pick up a packet at the home of UUCD member Lynn Taborsak.**

Please text or email Lynn to confirm your participation. You can also drop off your completed cards at Lynn's when you are done.

**Alternately, home delivery and pickup can be arranged with UUCD member Chris Halfar.**

Please text or email Chris to make arrangements.

Finally, please watch the excellent Brave New films documentary "Suppressed: The Fight to Vote"

[https://www.bravenewfilms.org/suppressed\\_watch\\_now](https://www.bravenewfilms.org/suppressed_watch_now).

We need 50 local volunteers to combat voter suppression. You can help!

Thank you.

From the *Sunday Services Ministry Team*

by Tony DiFabbio



PLEASE VOLUNTEER to lead a service this summer. It has been suggested by Rev. Heather to create a service that involves one or more of the six Sources of our Living Tradition found at [uua.org/sources](http://uua.org/sources). You can submit your ideas for a service to **Tony DiFabbio** or **Michael Stengle**, Sunday Service Co-Chairs. Thank you.

# Upcoming Events



**UUCD Men Conversing over Coffee will be meeting via Zoom on Monday April 13th at 9:30 am.** Any UUCD men who would like to join, please contact **Jim Russell**.



The Unitarian Universalist Office at the United Nations (UU@UN) is excited to share that their **2020 Intergenerational Spring Seminar** is open for registration to all (age 14+) now through April 9, 2020. Join online via Zoom [April 17-18](#) for engaging programs to explore the theme "All In for Climate Justice: People, Power, Planet." Participants will learn and grow together through workshops, small-group conversations, and rituals to keep spiritually grounded. We won't be in person, but we're still All In for Climate Justice! See more and register at [www.uua.org/unspringseminar](http://www.uua.org/unspringseminar).

**UUA General Assembly** still plans to be held in Providence, RI, June 24-28, 2020  
If GA in person needs to be cancelled, **GA will still happen as a virtual event.**

