



Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Danbury

Monthly **COMMENT** Newsletter

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

MAY 2020

From our Consulting Minister



Dear UUCD Members and Friends,

You may be growing weary of the observation that we are "living in unprecedented times." It's true that probably at some point it's counter-productive to continue remarking on the unpredictability of this moment; doing so may only increase anxiety that is already running rampant.

Still, I have been trying, when I am able, to ponder with (or at least nearby) our children (ages 7 and 3) what impact this Covid19 period will have on their lives. (Yes, there are superficial and hilarious takes on this matter, like the meme that was circulating in late March about the babies that may well be conceived during these quarantining days--when there are no epic sports matches to watch--and a whole generation of children that may someday be called, long after the Millennials are middle-aged, the "Coronials." Ba-dum-bum.)

I find that the more-thoughtful, more-reflective, less-anxious part of me moves forward when I ask myself such questions as: What will our 3-year-old remember of this time? Will she only remember that she couldn't go spend weekly time with Grandma and Grandpa like usual, or will she also remember *always* having her parents around? Will this be the period we will be able to look back upon forever as when she *finally* potty-trained?

I watch our energetic 7-year-old 2nd grader wrestle with having schoolwork-to-do outside of the familiar & structured classroom setting and wonder: will this be the period when she looks back on becoming more of a self-driven, independent learner? Will she remember having the freedom to choose which of her school-subjects she *really* wanted to focus on and explore more creatively, more freely? What lasting impact will this have on the friendships she might have solidified, this year? And will it matter in any kind of lasting way that she has not been practicing her violin or going to dance class for almost 2 months now?

There are almost certainly long-term impacts that I'm not even really tracking right now--will they be obsessive hand-washers for life? There is so much that we can't predict (oops, there I go again!). And so I wonder, for you, what especially, what concretely, makes this time "unprecedented" in your life? What are you most noticing has changed for you? And do you find it helpful to journal, draw, scrapbook, or in some other way reflect upon this strange era? What ways are you finding to embrace living at an unprecedented time?

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 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 you find ways to tend to your spirit and find some value in this time.

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 June Comment –
Friday, May 15th.**

Our Caring Circle is Available

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

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

Maredith 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.

Notes from the Board of Trustees

by Melody Levy, President

In this age of Covid-19, a new normal has arrived. Some days I'm lost in sadness, and other days, gladness. I know the world has changed and although it is temporary, it doesn't feel that way. The loss of normalcy is hitting us hard and we're grieving, collectively. Our inclination is to be connected and to care. A screen full of faces is a scene that is becoming more common everywhere. Now, as always, we can choose to lift up each other and appreciate all that works, and, is sufficient, even wondrous. The necessity to mine the strengths and resources of our community and address our shared fears and struggles will continue making these perilous times bearable. We'll pivot, adjust, wager and reconfigure our vision, and, we will survive. Maybe even thrive.

The financial effects of Covid-19 are not yet clear. We have lost rental income, postponed fundraising events and have a significant reduction in Sunday's offering plate. Our pledge drive will continue as scheduled with the full understanding that even though peoples resources are shifting, our support for one another remains steadfast. If you can increase your giving, you will be making space for whomever has to decrease theirs. Despite the impossibility of an in-person Annual Meeting, we will hold an online meeting June 7th, with pre-meeting ballot delivery that will allow for present and future planning. We are accomplished, resilient, and, we are blest with wonderful staff in Rev. Heather, Sherry, Jerry and Sierra-Marie.

There are uncertainties with a timeline that is open-ended. The precautions we're taking are the right ones. The daffodils at 24 Clapboard Ridge Road are a reminder of our helping hands. Look further and you'll see the Cottage with an open mind, and, beyond that, Fellowship Hall waiting to welcome our loving hearts home. As the great Jewish sage Abraham Joshua Heschel said, "Just to live is holy, just to be is a blessing." When you are unraveling, step outside and smell the buds that are tenderly making way in this fragile seeming world. Until we meet again, take the best care of yourselves and one another.





by Sierra-Marie Gerfao, Director of Religious Education for Children and Youth

Dear Congregation,

Religious Education is not really a program, or a set of programs. Religious Education is the meaning-making we do through the course of our lives. The Religious Education curricula of a congregation is everything we do that resources meaning-making. In addition to explicit curricula (programs and classes), we have implicit curricula (traditions, systems, interactions, attitudes, policies, and so forth) and null curricula (what isn't present implicitly or explicitly).

All over the world, children and adults alike are engaged in intensive religious education right now. What meaning are we -- and the children in our lives -- making of this global pandemic? Among adults, I hear a variety of conversations: the ethics of our old normal and the possibilities of a new normal; the repeating patterns of racism that have made even a virus more deadly for people of color; the challenges that people with disabilities offer to common assumptions about what gives life its worth; and so on.

One of the things children may learn during this time is that the inherent worth and dignity of every person is not conditional and applies even to ourselves. One of the ways they learn that is by watching their caregivers mess up, reflect on what happened, do repair work, practice self-forgiveness, and return to relationship. In other words, caregivers, you don't need to be perfect right now. In fact, your struggles are helpful to the meaning-making of your children.

Warmly,
Sierra-Marie

Upcoming In Religious Education (RE)

Religious Education classes for children and youth take place on Zoom every Sunday.* Updates and changes are 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.

11:30AM RE For Families (preK-5th grade and parents)

5:00PM Blue Group (6th-8th grade)

5:00PM Purple Group (9th-12th)

* Please note that there will not be classes on Coming of Age Sunday, May 31st. We love having children attend Sunday services with their parents any week, but on Coming of Age Sunday, that service will be the sole event of the day.

From *Building and Grounds*

by Gary Mummert

Volunteer Opportunities Abound with Buildings and Grounds

- Soon the trees around UUCD will be producing many seedlings and other debris. We will need help blowing off the driveways and parking areas to keep the storm drains clear.
- If anyone can root some forsythia cuttings, the perimeter of the property could use some more spring color.
- As it will be warming soon, numerous painting projects exist.
- The gardens are calling for help with weeding, planting and perhaps watering.
- Wood chips will be arriving soon which will be used as mulch at scattered areas.



We will not be working in groups: supplies and gloves will be provided, from a distance. Contact **Gary Mummert** to volunteer or if you want to talk about opportunities.



With all the interest in baking these days, we have a **bread machine** at UUCD that was donated some time ago. If anyone wants to check it out, it will be placed in the office. Contact **Sherry Kyriacou or Gary Mummert** to make an appointment to pick it up, resting assured that it will not be touched by a bare hand while placing into a box.

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. You can submit your ideas for a service to **Tony DiFabbio** or **Michael Stengle**, Sunday Service Co-Chairs. Thank you.

From the *Caring Circle Ministry*

by Donna Lawrence

On behalf of a number of members who have been the recipients of support and care from many UU's during the past month, the Caring Circle would like to offer thanks to those caring people. The offers of help came from the Caring Providers list and beyond.

In future issues of *Comment*, the Caring Circle column will provide an opportunity for those who would like to offer their thanks to do so.

If anyone would like to do this, please contact Donna Lawrence at donna.dcl2@att.net.

Dear friends,

I am writing this letter to each of you out of the profoundest sense of humility and gratitude for your support for me and my son Colin and my service dog McKinley in the recent past. Many of you met McKinley when I introduced her to the congregation. Unfortunately, the landlord at my previous residence did not feel the same way and forced me to vacate the premises. All of this in the middle of the pandemic. I am sure everyone understands given the current pandemic how fraught and difficult the past two months have been and can imagine how stressful it is to be dislocated during a pandemic.

It's really hard to ask for help. It's really hard to admit when you've been victimized by prejudice. It's really hard to admit when you've been victim of an actual crime. It's really hard to be that vulnerable.

The good news is, I found a new place to live. I closed on a condo in Brookfield on March 31st. I am now stable and as safe as any of us can be at the moment.

I want everyone in our congregation to know how important each of you is to me, and how important our congregation is to me. I also want to acknowledge in particular the support of **Sierra-Marie Gerfao, Alex Makai, Joe Gillotti, Gary Mummert, Anne Krieg, and Melody Levy.**

Thank you all

Semper Fi

Mike Z.

From the *Social Action Council*

Social Action Update

by Lynn Taborsak

The Social Action Council has formed a **UU the VOTE team** to be ably led by Co-Chairs **Sally Mandler and Gary Mummert**. Even though the coronavirus has all but stopped human contact among members and friends, we still hope to 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. In March we completed 700 postcards to inactive voters in Duluth and Lawrenceville, Georgia. Thanks again to UU the VOTE team members **Judy Lacker, Phil Winters, Chris Calabro, Inge Hill, Janet Cory, Mary Consoli, Melody Levy, Barbara Myers, Anne Kreig, Chris Halfar, Cheryl Edelen, Suze Shaner, Meredith Spector, Patricia Bowen, Ellen Krafick, Margaret Henderson and Sally Mandler**. Write on! It will make a difference. Please reach out to Sally and Gary to express your interest and share your ideas with them.

The Social Action Council has postponed the screening of *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*. It will be rescheduled as conditions permit.

The United Methodist Church, across the street on Clapboard Ridge Road, has asked us to partner with them in a new ministry called *Josiah's Closet*. It will provide low-income and at-risk families with young children new and gently used infant and toddler clothing to size 4T. Donations will be collected in the foyer of Fellowship Hall when we reopen but please set aside any donations you have at home for this new, worthwhile interfaith ministry.

Soup Kitchen Corner

by Judy Lacker

Because of Covid-19, Dorothy Day Teams have not been able to volunteer in the way we have in the past. However, people are still being served grab-and-go sandwich bags (containing sandwiches, fruit, cookies, snacks and a water bottle) from the door of the kitchen from 3:00 - 4:30 p.m. and bags are also being delivered to people who are sheltered at the Super 8 Motel. Because of increased need, we need donations of BOTTLED WATER, FRUIT (APPLES, BANANAS) COOKIES AND SNACKS. These items can be dropped off at Dorothy Day Hospitality House on Spring Street. Lynn Taborsak has also been scheduling sandwich donations so we have just the right amount each day. If you are interested in making sandwiches, please email her at ddhhsandwiches@gmail.com.

Since they are not likely to need non-perishable food donations (ex. soup) for a while, they are directing people to the Daily Bread Food Pantry (25 West Street – entrance off Terrace Place). Donations are accepted on Mondays between 11:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. and Friday between 8:30 a.m. and 11:30a.m.

Commit to Vote

We are less than six months away from the most critical election in our lifetime and the right to have our votes counted and our voices heard is fundamental to our democracy. It's also a moral imperative for faith communities. So much is at stake for our country! We need every eligible person to vote in a fair, safe and secure election.

If we work together to mobilize voters in our community, we can become a nation that welcomes the stranger, feeds the hungry, heals the sick, lifts up the poor, and fixes our broken healthcare system. If you are passionate about climate change, racial justice, income inequality and immigration reform, bring your faith, your values and your passion to UUCD in October. Join us to mobilize voters in our congregations to ***Commit to Vote*** this November.

These are truly difficult and uncertain times and so many people feel isolated and fearful. They've lost trust in our public institutions. They've lost faith that their vote can make a difference. They've lost hope that we can attain the justice and fairness we want to see thrive in our community. We can remind them that together we can boldly bring about the changes that we want to see in our public life: more acceptance of our differences, more compassion for our neighbors, more respect for the inherent worth and dignity of every person, more equity in every facet of society.

Our congregation will schedule a ***Commit to Vote*** weekend on October 10-12. Several members will relate personal stories to illustrate what makes them vote. Each person in the congregation will receive a ***Commit to Vote*** badge and a range of choices to help mobilize voters in our congregation, our extended families and in our community. They may:

- Contact everyone in the congregation who may need an absentee ballot
- Contact everyone in the congregation who may need a ride to the polls
- Contact everyone in the congregation who hasn't shown up for a month
- Contact everyone in their family and ask them to commit to vote
- Volunteer to go door to door in the community with information about where and when to vote

Can you be part of this exciting endeavor? Can you help to mobilize voters in our community? It's not about candidates. We are strictly non-partisan. It's about our shared values for every person's right to vote. Please join us and make a difference.

For more information, contact **Lynn Taborsak**.

Upcoming Events



UUCD Men Conversing over Coffee will be meeting via Zoom on Monday May 11th at 9:30 am. Any UUCD men who would like to join, please contact **Jim Russell**.

Women On Our Own

This group is for women who are living on their own. Our circumstances will be similar, but different, and we will be talking about what works well, what is lacking, and so on. We meet in the UUCD Zoom Room on the 2nd and 4th Thursdays at 4:00 p.m. May dates are the 14th and 28th. 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 **Jane Leff** for more information and the Zoom links.



June 24 – 28, 2020

The UUA Board of Trustees has passed a resolution to make the 2020 General Assembly a 100% virtual event.

General Assembly (GA) is the annual meeting of our Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA). Participants worship, witness, learn, connect, and make policy for the Association through democratic process. Virtual Registrants are able to watch and ask questions in live sessions including workshops and business sessions (mini-assemblies, hearings, etc).

Virtual registration for General Assembly is \$150 per person. Register at <https://www.uua.org/ga/off-site/registrants>.