



Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Danbury

Monthly **COMMENT** Newsletter

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

SEPTEMBER 2020

From our Consulting Minister



Dear UUUCD Members and Friends,

Many days, perhaps especially when I'm feeling a little overwhelmed by all that there is to do, this poem comes into my mind. This version of it I mean, this adapted congregational version of Marge Piercy's poem, "The Low Road," reimagined by Rev. Dick Gilbert:

"One person can have faith, but it can be lonely;
Two people make a dyad – one to talk – one to listen;
Three people are a delegation, a committee, a wedge.
With four you can play bridge and start an organization.
With six you can rent a whole house, eat pie for dinner with no seconds,
And hold a fund raising party.
A dozen make a demonstration.
A hundred fill a hall and make a worship service.
A thousand have a house of worship and their own newsletter.
It goes on one at a time. It starts when you care to act.
It starts when you do it again after they said no.
It starts when you say WE and know who you mean,
and each day...you mean *one more*."

I feel like this is the unspoken mantra of our work together as a congregation right now. The Board, the Caring and Membership teams, the Sunday Services Ministry Team (including critical Technical Support right now) and the Social Action Team, the Music and Religious Education programs, the ongoing work of keeping things going administratively through Office and Finance efforts: all of us are trying to make sure that, in every way that we can right now, we are every day thinking about, reaching out to and including *one more*. I love that the Sunday Service Coordinator's script has so frequently included the line: "let this time of social distancing not be a time of social disengagement." And I recognize and feel myself how much extra effort it takes to reach across the physical distance and genuinely connect with each other. It is tiring, and the ongoing rollercoaster that is Covid19 can feel so discouraging.

And. All the work we've done together as a congregation, that you've done together for months and years, all the joy and fun and grieving and meetings -- all of that has prepared this congregation so well for This Time. I observe and marvel at the strong bonds that hold this congregation together. I feel the deep love among you--for one another and for the soul of this community. I am grateful to be a part of UUUCD, to do what I can during these tumultuous times to keep on keeping on. Our deeply principled faith, our humanist respect for science and for the yet-unknown, and our core commitment to be our best selves and encourage one another in the "many right ways" that are essential for our specific lives: I truly feel the significance of what it means to be a Unitarian Universalist right now. I hope you do, too, and that it strengthens even more your commitment to this congregation, to one another, and to our faith's presence and impact on our larger world. Consider striking up a conversation with a neighbor or an unchurched friend about whether or not they might want to join our services during this unprecedented time. We all need others, now more than ever. May we, especially now, truly mean "one more," each and every day.

(continued)

As always, it is our relationships with one another that form the strong interdependent web of this community. If there is anything you 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 keep finding ways to tend to your spirit and connect with others in new ways during 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 October Comment –
Friday, September 18th.

Share our Services!

Feel free to invite friends and family to our service. We will share the link on Sunday mornings for security reasons. Anyone can also add themselves to our UUCD e-list to receive the link directly on Sunday morning by emailing Sherry at officemanager@uudanbury.org with that request.

September Services – One Service at 10:00 a.m.**Sunday, September 6th**Labor & Love: A Labor Day Reflection

UUCD attends, as a congregation, the All Souls-UU New London service, led by Revs. Carolyn Patierno & Caitlin O'Brien. Just as we began the summer over the July 4th weekend, so will we wrap up the summer: the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Danbury will be joining All Souls for this Labor Day weekend service. The link to All Souls' YouTube channel is: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BMI9JyRbOAA>. The service space will be open/"live" at 9:30am. The chat is open and there is robust greeting up until the service begins at 10:00 a.m. Enjoy this "bookend" to our Summer Services by ending this strange Pandemic summer with All Souls-New London, with whom we began the summer on July 5th!

Sunday, September 13th

Rev. Heather Rion Starr and DRE Sierra-Marie Gerfao

Homecoming, Sources Celebration, and Water Ceremony!

Join us for this annual, multigenerational service of tradition and celebration, revamped for our online reality. Bring your joy, gratitude, a glass of water for each viewer, your heart & spirit to energizing this community for the congregational year ahead.

Sunday, September 20thReflections in the spirit of Rosh Hashanah and the Fall Equinox RE Ministry Team

We will be invited to look back on the ways we have grown over the past year and look ahead to a new year of learning and growth as we celebrate the start of a new Religious Education year.

Sunday, September 27thDeeper Than the Skin

Greg Greenway and Reggie Harris – both singer-songwriters, team up for “Deeper Than the Skin,” an electrifying and poignant musical exploration of their unique histories as a White man from the capital of the Confederacy and a Black man whose maternal ancestor was a slave on a plantation just outside of Richmond, Virginia. Together, Harris and Greenway have built a bridge between their lives through 30 years of friendship, shared goals and a passion to build community.

Our Caring Circle is Available

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

Donna Lawrence is the contact person for **September**.

Cheryl Edelen is the assistant.

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

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



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

Dear Congregation,

Usually I like to include some reflections in the *Comment*, but this month I can't because I have too many announcements as we get ready to kick-off Religious Education for the school-year. The announcements are below. But first, I want to say thank you to all the families who took time this summer to meet with me and/or fill out our lengthy survey about Religious Education in the time of Covid. Thank you also to the members of the Religious Education Ministry Team -- **Kristen Pappuci, Michele Cousens, and Gina Cassetta** (and outgoing members **Ali Haffner and Alison DiPinto**) -- who worked diligently with me to collect your input and create a plan from your hopes, needs, and ideas. We heard from nearly every family in the congregation, and your input gave shape to an incredibly ambitious and exciting plan. As this is something new, there will be mistakes as we go. I believe that great design is iterative and necessitates failures, which are necessary to learn and create better design. For this reason, part of the plan is to make changes and adjust over time. Your feedback will continue to be critical. Please stay in touch! You can reach me at dre@uudanbury.org. My "virtual office" door remains open, always.

Warmly,
Sierra-Marie

Religious Education Registration

Parents and Guardians: If you have not yet already, you will soon be receiving a Religious Education registration packet in your email inbox. This packet includes initial information about what to expect in this unusual year and a form for you to fill out, as you do each year. Even if you are not yet sure about your child's expected level of participation this year, please complete and submit the form by **Thursday, September 10th**. Whatever level of participation they have, your children are a part of the community, and we always want to include them if we do things like send out books or birthday cards.

Volunteering For Religious Education

We couldn't ask people to volunteer in the spring because we didn't know what we would be asking them to do. We spent the summer meeting with families to design a new way of doing Religious Education for our continued time in "remote" mode. We now know that we need volunteers of varying skills, and that many of the opportunities are one-time or very short-term. Can you help? If so, contact Sierra-Marie at dre@uudanbury.org. Please note that a background check is required for all Religious Education volunteers.

Make as little as a one-time commitment:

- Create a scavenger hunt
- Create or help create animations or illustrations for a story video
- Help create activity kits for kids to do at home
- Lead a socially-distanced lego build
- Lead or supervise a “crafting together” session on Zoom
- Share a spiritual practice
- Set up a drive-through parking lot birthday celebration
- Shop for or find supplies for activity kits or drive-through birthday celebrations

Make a short-term commitment:

- Lead a short-term socially-distanced art project
- Assist the DRE with video production (short-term or optional longer-term commitment)
- Help the DRE with some of her online gaming questions
- Help us create a social action, social justice, or volunteer partnership project with an area organization

There are also opportunities to assist with a yearbook project, join the Religious Education Ministry Team, teach once a month on Zoom, create educational online games, assist in adapting holiday traditions for our “remote” experience, and more. Please be in touch about the skills you could share.

Religious Education Kick-off Dates Of Note



- **Sunday, September 13:** The Sources Service and Water Ceremony will be co-led by the Rev. Heather Rion Starr, DRE Sierra-Marie Gerfao, and Music Director Jerry Phelps
- **Sunday, September 20:** We will celebrate the start of the 2020-2021 Religious Education year in a Sunday service led by the Religious Education Ministry Team.
- **Saturday, September 26th:** Drop off a stuffed animal at UUCD for our first ever RE kickoff “Stuffed Animal Sleepover,” then keep an eye out for photos on our sleepover photobook webpage so you can see what the stuffed animals have been up to. Details coming soon!
- **Sunday, September 27th:** Join in a scavenger hunt organized by Chris Creter, including a trip to UUCD to pick up some goodies from Sierra-Marie and retrieve your stuffed animals (a brief at-home quarantine is recommended).
- **Sunday, October 4th:** As will become a “first Sunday of the month” tradition, “synchronous Religious Education programming” will be offered for most age groups. Please see your registration packet.

From the Board of Trustees

by Melody Levy, President

I am trying to shift the explanation of today's events toward the positive and adapt an optimistic outlook. The stress of adjustment is challenging. Our brains maintain an image of a destination which makes it tricky if every day is like another. Without the midweek crunch or Sunday's dinner, we're becoming accustomed to future blindness. In today's information overload no one is exempt from organizational lapses. Complex events are compressed into trite summaries and mediocre becomes a catastrophe. We have displayed a collective loss of historical memory at a time when we need clearer memory than ever before. If we are serious about improving our literacy we'll pay close attention to where we've been.

The *Black Lives Matter Side with Love* banner was in question since the Winter of 2016/2017. At that time the Racial Justice Forum began reaching out to the congregation on the issue of racial inequity in general, and, a banner in particular. The same winter a service was held and a workshop was led to promote a discussion. As racial justice came to the forefront again this June, in the wake of high-profile incidents of police brutality and homicide, several congregants raised the issue to the Board of having our congregation publicly support efforts toward racial justice. Some specifically asked to have a *Black Lives Matter* banner lifted on our property. Rev. Heather and Board Vice President Sam McCoy hosted two open discussions held on June 16th and June 23rd. Many attendees were interested in hoisting a banner and in pursuing the adoption of the 8th Principle. When the bylaws were examined, there was no indication that anything more than Board approval was needed for a banner. At the July meeting the Board of Trustees voted unanimously to produce and display the banner that is now on the lawn facing Clapboard Ridge Road. We are not endorsing any particular point of view beyond the idea that black lives have been endangered by systemic racism in the US and we want to become allies to dismantle it.

*"It goes on one at a time,
It starts when you care to act,
It starts when you do it again
After they said no,
It starts when you say we
And know who you mean,
And each day you mean one more."* - Marge Piercy

The Racial Justice Forum was recently reinstated under the umbrella of the Social Action Council. Marian DiFabbio agreed to chair it as someone who had been deeply involved in its earlier iteration. Sam is serving as the Board Liaison to SAC and RJF activities. The Board of Trustees will be looking at ways to approach the 8th Principle and work with our congregation to understand it and live out its goals. If you have questions about the process we're following or any other thoughts to share, please reach out. The Board of Trustees' annual retreat will be held this month. While we can't predict what's coming with certainty, we can develop more clarity and create a plan to live into.

I'd like to extend special thanks to Sherry Kyriacou for providing the glue that kept the administrative and calendar functions of our congregation working throughout the Summer months. Thank you to the Sunday Service Team for orchestrating our July and August services, and to our lay providers, Zoom facilitators and hosts. Thank you to Gary Mummert for maintaining the buildings and grounds and every member and friend who has reached out with compassion and in kindness. Thank you to UU The Vote organizers who kept us up to speed and many thanks to the Board of Trustees for wrangling with pandemic queries and concerns.

Those we have lost, we remain honored to have known. There will be reflection and remembrance until -- and when -- we are together again.

From our Music Director, Jerry Phelps



Happy September, UUCD! One of the silver linings of this pandemic for me has been being able to involve so many talented musicians in our musical life at UUCD through virtual open mics and Sunday services. As we continue to weather this storm, it is more important than ever to find ways to connect and share. If you, or someone you know, would be interested in offering a special music selection during any of the upcoming services, please contact me. I would love to include a wide variety of musicians. This is an ideal time for someone who lives far away to be involved! Online services give us a unique opportunity to host a variety of musicians in our services that otherwise would not be able to do so. I look forward to a musically-rich fall with you.

Look out for virtual open mic/coffee house dates throughout the next few months!

Ministry/Team News

From *Adult Programming*

by Joe Gillotti

**Now is Your Chance to Take Action and Share Your Skills and Ideas
with other UUCD Members and Friends**

We are inviting all UUCD members to get creative in considering new Adult Education Programs for the upcoming year. In the past, members have offered Chalice Circles (discussions on a whole range of topics). We have had open form meetings, day trips, and group meetings on how to learn new skills. Please be willing to come forward and volunteer for a program of your choice. With the advent of the Zoom Technology, it has become so much easier to set-up and deliver virtual adult activities. Volunteers will be provided all the help and support needed to create interesting and informative programs. Please contact **Joe Gillotti**.

From *Buildings and Grounds*

by Gary Mummert



We are seeking donated drapes and hardware for two double glassed doors in the Cottage House. Insulating drapes are preferred but will use others if they are good cosmetic fit and easy to use.

We have various jobs that can be done while physical distancing. Flexible timing to fit your availability. **Rik Cousens** and others have been so kind to help with the continuing need for maintenance, etc. and it counts as exercise! Please contact **Gary Mummert** for more information.

From the *Social Action Council*

UU THE VOTE

by Gary Mummert

The Social Action Council effort in cooperation with UU the Vote has had a busy summer. Under the leadership of **Lynn Taborsak**, thousands of postcards have been completed and mailed to voters in a number of states. Additionally, our group of over 20 UUCD'ers has been making calls, and recently, have been experimenting with texting. Most of this effort is directed toward **eligible** voters who have been removed from the voting lists as part of voter suppression efforts.

YOU too can get involved. With our group, we are working with RECLAIM OUR VOTE which is a non-partisan effort, and it is easy to just go to their site, <https://actionnetwork.org/forms/reclaim-our-vote-signup>, register, take the brief training, and then go to work on your own. If you need some coaching, **Sally Mandler** and others in the group, or I would be happy to work with you.

There is also an opportunity now to reach out to Spanish speaking eligible voters. Again, it's relatively easy to get connected to this effort.

Before COVID, we were hoping to work in Pennsylvania, and there are now efforts to ally with groups reaching out to PA eligible voters.

Fortunately, we are in an area where absentee voting in the fall will be readily available. Our team is hoping that we get 100% of our friends and members to vote our values. Each one of us can do our part. No excuses.

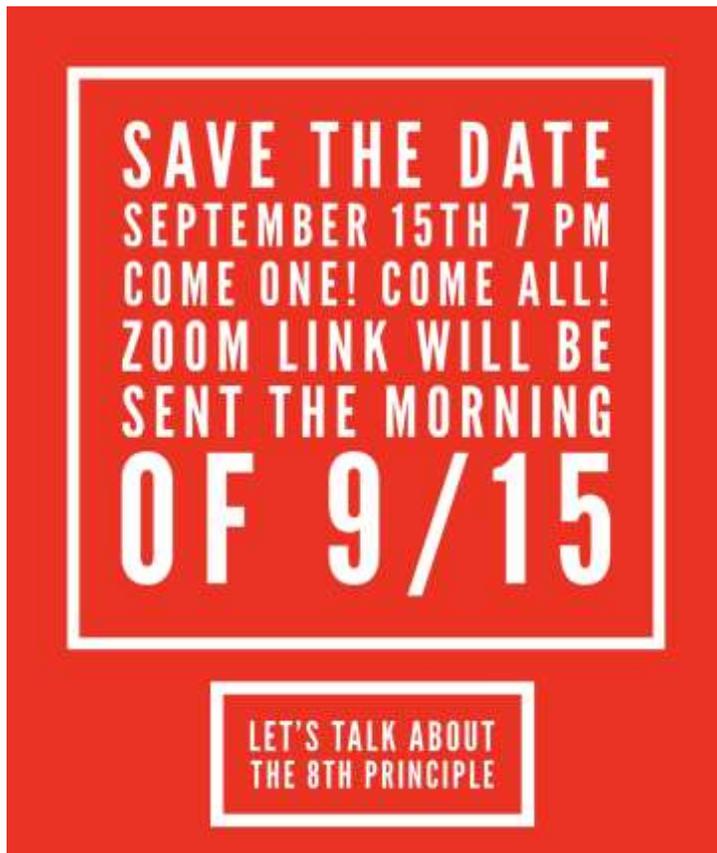
Soup Kitchen Corner

by Judy Lacker

On Saturday, September 5th, some members of Soup Kitchen Team #3 (Team Leader **Lynn Taborsak**, **Bob Taborsak**, **Jim Wruck**, **Liz Casey**, **Jim Moore**, **Julie Gordon**, **Diane Purvis** and **Laura Reynolds**) will be returning to the Dorothy Day Soup Kitchen on Spring Street to help serve a meal.

It is also time for members and friends to sign up again for another year. The UUCD has been committed to serving a meal once a month for the past 39 years. It's a UU tradition! Contact **Judy Lacker** for more information and to sign-up. You can also help us feed our neighbors with a gift card in any amount from any local supermarket. In addition, you can still continue to make food donations of fruit and snacks. We can all be an important part of the fight to end hunger in our community!

Adopting the 8th Principle



The Board of Trustees supports the work of the Racial Justice Forum to move UUCD toward adoption of the proposed 8th Principle. The text of the 8th Principle reads, *"We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to affirm and promote: journeying toward spiritual wholeness by working to build a diverse multicultural Beloved Community by our actions that accountably dismantle racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions."*

To begin this process, the Racial Justice Forum is asking members and friends to take part in this brief survey to assess the needs of the congregation on this issue. **We ask that participants complete the survey by Friday, September 4th.** Additionally, the first Town Hall meeting to discuss the issue will take place on **Tuesday, September 15th at 7PM** via Zoom. The Board and RJF look forward to your participation and engagement with this important issue. Please direct questions to Racial Justice Forum Chair **Marian DiFabbio.**

Survey

link: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfzikE8BvIDUxu2ft-dn2xZKnodESiUimFkpXTx-r9ZNZWYQg/viewform?usp=sf_link

Upcoming Events



UUCD Men Conversing over Coffee will be meeting via Zoom on Monday, September 14th 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 will meet in the UUCD Zoom Room on the 2nd and 4th Friday at 4:00 p.m. September 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 **Jane Leff** for more information and the Zoom links.

