



Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Danbury

Monthly **COMMENT** Newsletter

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

NOVEMBER 2020

From our Consulting Minister



Dear UUCD Members and Friends,

We can find ourselves so immersed in and reactive to the very immediate moment, these days. What are the latest polls saying? What will happen in the news tomorrow? What day is it? How many more days until: _____? Is it over yet?

And so I have been finding it a balancing-out blessing to dive into a Unitarian Universalist book that looks at congregational stories of anti-racism work over *several* years, sometimes even decades and decades. *Mistakes & Miracles: Congregations on the Road to Multiculturalism*, by Nancy Palmer Jones and Karin Lin, follows five diverse Unitarian Universalist congregations in-depth over multi-year periods in their efforts to "create multicultural, antiracist Beloved Community."

As UUCD goes through our own reflection process on possibly adopting the proposed 8th Principle, it is an opportune time to try to get a little more of a birds-eye view of what this process means for the congregation over time. And it is so important for all of us to remember that making mistakes and recommitting to the journey together is part of the process.

Just one story among many in this treasure trove of a book features Linda, a member of the UU Congregation of Annapolis, Maryland, who has been working hard to support the anti-racism discussion at her congregation--and, while guiding a public conversation, she makes some mistakes about which she feels badly. But she reminds herself: "We all have that common goal--that we want to grow, we want to learn, we want to learn how to be better people, we want to learn to understand the person next to us" (*Mistakes & Miracles* 135). Amen to that.

Thinking together about what our Unitarian Universalist faith calls us to do that is particularly relevant to this moment in our country and our world is sacred work. How is this faith impacting and challenging you? That is what it means to have a faith that is meaningful--that it makes a difference in what you prioritize and how you address moral and ethical issues in your life and communities.

I hope you are continuing to find new ways to sustain, challenge, and nourish your spirit. As always, 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. This time in our lives and in our world is not just a historical moment that will be written up in brief in the history books; this is what is really unfolding in our full and complex lives. May you, then, keep finding ways to tend to your spirit and connect with others during these complicated days.

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 December Comment –
Friday, November 20th.

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.

November Services – One Service at 10:00 a.m.**Sunday, November 1st**No Matter What, I Will...

Rev. Heather Rion Starr

There's kind of a significant election coming up this week. Hopefully you have already voted or made a plan for Election Day, and hopefully you have supported friends and neighbors in getting their vote in or will be helping people do so on Election Day. Now, what? What have you learned about yourself and your core values during this tumultuous election year?

Sunday, November 8thNow What?

Rev. Meg Riley and the Revs. Rion Starr

This description, written before November 3, cannot imagine how we will feel or what we will need to share on November 8. But we do know that, whatever else is happening in the world, being together is good, that we are more powerful together. A time to remember hours and days, months and years. Rev. Meg Riley is the Co-Moderator of the UU Association. This service will be in collaboration with the Unitarian Society of Hartford.

A Sunday **Conversation on the Spirituality of Racial Justice Work** has been postponed – date to be determined.

Sunday, November 15thSinging in the Spirit, African and African American Musical Connections

Dr. Kathy Bullock

Join us as we celebrate African American music and culture. We will honor the historical journey of a powerful people, and affirm the power of faith, hope and determination that continues to inspire us all.

Dr. Kathy Bullock is Professor Emeritus of music at Berea College, Berea, Kentucky where she worked for almost thirty years. She is also currently an Adjunct Professor of Music at University of Kentucky, School of Music. Having earned the Ph.D. and M.A. in Music Theory from Washington University in St. Louis, MO, and a B.A. in Music from Brandeis University, MA, her work has included teaching music and general studies courses, directing the college gospel choirs, designing and implementing international courses in West Africa and the Caribbean. Dr. Bullock is now performing and conducting workshops in African American Sacred Music throughout the United States, Europe and Africa, sharing hope and joy during these challenging times.

Join us following the service for a Veterans Day acknowledgement led by Joe Gilotti.

Sunday, November 22ndFinding Gratitude in a Time of Grief

Rev. Heather Rion Starr

There is so much and so many that we have lost this year. Even the usual opportunities to gather and mourn together have been dramatically altered. As we look towards a strange 2020 Thanksgiving, how do we acknowledge all the pain and upheaval while still finding the deeply nourishing perspective of thankfulness?

Sunday, November 29thDoing the Little Thing *You Can Do*

Rev. Sunshine Wolfe

Rev. Sunshine Wolfe is Congregational Life Staff for the UUA's Central East Region (with which UUCD is affiliated).



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

Upcoming In Children and Youth Religious Education (RE):

Our November content will relate to the spiritual theme of *healing*. Please see the monthly calendar emailed to you for details regarding the following.

- **CLASSES Sunday, November 1st:** Classes and Youth Group
- **CONNECTIONS Sunday, November 8th:** Crafting Circle
- **CREATIVITY Sunday, November 15th:** Outdoor Tree Decorating
- **CARING Sunday, November 22nd:** Making Greeting Cards for the Caring Circle
- **COACHING Sunday, November 29th:** Youth-Led Workshop for Younger Kids
- **On Dates to Be Announced:**
 - Netflix Party for Middle Schoolers and High Schoolers
 - Mitten Tree Kickoff
 - Parents of Preschoolers (POP) Group
 - Parent Covenant Group

November Religious Education Check-In

Families, this month you will be receiving a personalized feedback form regarding the programs we've offered in relationship to your individualized Family Education Plan. Please be sure to let us know how things are going. Also, we have now removed unregistered families from the email list. If you have not been receiving communications and would like to remain in the loop, please click [here](#) to register.

Religious Education Volunteers

Sierra-Marie has been contacting potential religious education volunteers throughout October. If you believe you volunteered for something and have not heard from her, please reach out by emailing dre@uudanbury.org. Volunteers are still needed, especially for weekly sharing circles (a 15 minute coffee hour program).

From Our Director of Religious Education For Children and Youth

Dear Congregation,

How does the old saying go? A “picture is worth a thousand words?” In lieu of written reflections this month, please enjoy some photographic reflections on our seven principles, submitted by our children and youth during our kickoff scavenger hunt.

Warmly,
Sierra-Marie



From the Board of Trustees

by Melody Levy, President

We covenant to live into our church's seven principles and practice being in right relationship with ourselves and one another. We act in ways that express our values. A shared need for community, spirituality, social justice and support prompt us to have meaningful times together without giving up or giving in. Frustrations can happen when tough topics are brought forward. We may not do what we're supposed to do or we may assume a goal hasn't materialized fast enough. As a community that values inclusion and collective care, I for one am reconsidering *patience as a spiritual practice*.

Howard Thurman urged people to take an inward journey in order to "*find the sound of the genuine in you*." Our values and commitments encourage listening to one another. Despite uncertainty or difference, we can engage difficult conversations and remain purposeful. We can create a buffer against the stress of speed and streaming distractions. *We can continue to evolve*.

While the time has not yet come for the UUA to vote on the adoption of the 8th Principle, individual congregations have already voted to formally adopt it. The Racial Justice Forum along with members from the Social Action Council and Board Liaison to SAC have expedited efforts to engage our congregation. On November 2nd at 7 pm, a class titled "Black Voices of the 20th Century" will be led by Board Vice-President, Sam McCoy. On November 8th Marian DiFabbio, Chair of the Racial Justice Forum will facilitate a workshop titled "Spiritual Aspects of Racial Justice Work." Together we are demonstrating our faith in action; together we can choose to "*Side with Love*."

The UUA stands by their Spring 2020 recommendation that congregations plan for online services and meetings through May 2021. This also applies to small in-person gatherings in Fellowship Hall, Lower RE and the Cottage. These recommendations are more stringent than those for schools and businesses for the following reasons:

- We don't want to create in-person situations that inadvertently exclude those at higher risk.
- Our membership and most UU congregations are made up of an older, more vulnerable population than the general public.
- We do not want our staff to be put at risk on the job.
- A normally-operating congregation presents too many opportunities to spread a highly contagious respiratory virus like COVID-19.

The Safe Congregation Team has reenergized and will review, update and refresh established Safe Congregation policies. The pandemic and online platforms provide opportunities as well as challenges. Efforts to insure a safe and nurturing environment are taken very seriously. Chairperson of Safe Congregation, Carl Tramontana and Rev. Heather, DRE Sierra-Marie and Board Representative, John Miglietta will be working together to shore up a successful implementation of updates.

Despite the marvels of digital life, our sense of normalcy and control have been disrupted. As challenging and unforeseen as this year has been there's still so much we can be thankful for. Autumn is bidding for our attention and reminding us that her display is our blessing. In this season of thanks may the love of this community give you strength and courage and faith, until we meet again.

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 **November**.

Janet Cory 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 the *Buildings and Grounds Team*

by Gary Mummert



**We need
your help!**

Despite no indoor meetings at UUCD, there are still ways to continue to care for the property, thus we are seeking:

- * Someone to install window coverings in the DRE Office
- * Someone to install drapes/insulated coverings for the Conference Room doors in the cottage house
- * Someone to assist with cleanup of the CH basement
- * Someone to clear tree debris from the parking lots/driveways
- * Someone to do quarterly checks of indoor plumbing systems
- * Folks to serve on the Buildings and Grounds Team

Please contact **Gary Mummert** or **Joe Gillotti** if interested.

From the *Financial Stewardship Team*

by Carl Tichler, Chair

The Financial Stewardship Team has been active over the past months on several items, particularly the 2020-2021 Annual Giving/Pledge Campaign. We have assisted the Board over this time with various questions, concerns, and policies/procedures. We are lucky to have in our Team people with complementary skills and expertise, including myself, **Marie Dupree** (Treasurer), **Eva DeFranco**, **Lisa Horton**, and **John Miglietta** (Board Liaison). We are very pleased to also have **Peter Horton** (Board member) volunteer to lead the Annual Giving Campaign for the next fiscal year, 2021-2022. Thank you, Peter!

Here is an overview of what we have been working on:

- 2020-2021 Annual Giving/Pledge Campaign: We have received pledge commitments totaling just over \$161,000 of our budgeted amount and goal of \$175,000. Although some people were able to increase their pledges, there were many who had to reduce their pledge, as we expected due to the financial concerns related to the pandemic. There were also some members who are moving out-of-state and discontinued their pledge. We thank and appreciate all who have continued their support, and ask all of you who have not yet pledged to let us know – as soon as possible – what your commitment will be for 2020-2021. Please note that all members, in accordance with the UUCD By-Laws, are expected to make a personally meaningful monetary pledge.
- We have been tracking monthly our Endowment Fund valuations and income, reporting this to the Board as part of the monthly financial reporting done by the Treasurer. This has been in place since earlier this year, and allowed us to clearly identify and estimate additional funding available for capital improvements and building maintenance for the budget delivered at the Annual Meeting in June.
- Assisted the Treasurer in applying for a government-sponsored “loan” under the Payroll Protection Program of the small business administration of approximately \$20,000. Note that under the terms of this loan, it will not be required to re-paid (i.e. “forgiven”) since the funds were used to cover staff payroll and other expenses. This was noted in the Annual Meeting presentation.
- Incorporated tracking of the budget in our accounting system (QuickBooks) for clearer and more accurate reporting and review of our finances.
- Provided recommendations to the Board on financial best practices and procedures and policy for fund raising and usage of endowment funds.

Thank you all for your continuing support of UUCD in these difficult times.

From the *Social Action Council*

Racial Justice Forum & 8th Principle Work Update by Sam McCoy

The Racial Justice Forum was pleased to welcome Paula Cole Jones, co-author of the proposed 8th Principle, for the Sunday service on October 18th. If you missed the service live that morning, please visit uudanbury.org and click on the "View Our Sunday Services" button to find the link to the recorded service. Paula's words are helpful in understanding the evolution of various UU congregations' work on the 8th Principle in recent years.

The Racial Justice Forum has more activities, workshops, and surveys planned for the coming months and we hope that many of you will choose to participate:

- Sam McCoy's *Black Voices of the 20th Century* course will continue to run on the first Monday evening of each month, via Zoom, at 7p.m. If you'd like to sign up and receive the syllabus for the course, please email Sam.
- The RJF will host a discussion on the spirituality of antiracism work after the Sunday service on November 8th.
- Also expect to see a survey link sent out in November, which will help the RJF gauge our congregational needs with regard to the 8th Principle and gather feedback to shape future antiracism education and discussion for the rest of this congregational year.
- In December, the RJF will host a workshop on the history of racism inside Unitarian Universalism - date TBD.
- In January, the RJF will host a workshop on the nature of systemic racism vs. individual racist acts - date TBD. The group is also planning to hold another congregation-wide Town Hall Meeting that month to discuss progress toward adopting the 8th Principle.

The Team thanks you for all of your engagement thus far on this important issue! If you have questions you'd like to pose to the RJF, please email **Marian DiFabbio**.

Soup Kitchen Corner

by Judy Lacker

On Saturday, November 7th, members of Soup Kitchen Team #1, **Judy Lacker, John Miglietta, Rose Schlemmer, David Teagarden, Brian Teagarden, Jane Leff, Sally Mandler, Gary Wynn, and Inge Hill** will be returning to the Dorothy Day Soup Kitchen on Spring Street to help serve take-out meals that were cooked in volunteers' homes as well as bagged sandwiches, also prepared in volunteers' homes as well as through donations. Unfortunately, we are not yet able to serve the clients a meal inside because of the Covid pandemic.

You can also help feed our neighbors with a gift card in any amount from any local supermarket or make food donations to the Daily Bread Food Pantry (25 West Street - entrance off Terrace Place). Donations are accepted on Mondays between 11 am and 2 pm and on Fridays between 8:30 - 11:30 am. Lynn Taborsak has also been scheduling the sandwich donations so we have just the right amount each day at Dorothy Day Soup Kitchen. If you are interested in making sandwiches, please email her at ddhhsandwiches@gmail.com. We can all be an important part of the fight to end hunger in our community!

Help Wanted for SAC Teams

Do you have extra time on your hands these days? Want a chance to help out without having to leave your comfy armchair? All you'll need is a computer or smartphone. The Social Action Council is looking for people in the following areas:

- **Political Observer for CT** - Chris Halfar does a great job of monitoring issues in the state legislature that are of concern to UU's. Anyone want to work with her on this? It'd be a great opportunity to learn the ins and outs of state politics from an expert!
- **Liaison with RE** - anybody want to act as a go-between for SAC and the RE Ministry Team? There are lots of chances to involve the UU youth in SAC projects and education, but we don't have enough time to pursue them all.
- **Right to Flourish Team** - As many of you know, Meredith Spector is working on plans to move closer to her family in the Midwest, and this will leave a big gap in our program to protect the rights of our elders. Meredith has promised to stay involved from a distance, but we need some local UUCD folks as well.
- **Team Green members** - Help us administer energy-saving projects like the solar panels, the HVAC system, maybe getting an electric car charger in the parking lot. Or can you help with the garden, or with plans for how to best manage the lawn and trees at UUCD? Ideas that we'd love to look into include a meadow or native-pollinator-plants garden, maybe a rain garden or a memorial garden somewhere on the property, but right now we just don't have the people power.

Thank you for considering these opportunities. The time required is minimal, and your help will be much appreciated! Contact **Margaret Henderson** or any other member of the Team.

Upcoming Events



UUCD Men Conversing over Coffee will meet via Zoom on Monday, November 9th at 9:30 a.m. 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 Tuesday at 4:00 p.m. November 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 **Jane Leff** for more information and the Zoom links.



On Thursday, December 10th at 7:00 p.m. we will be discussing *The Yellow House* by Susan Broom. This book is also a New York Times bestseller and was winner of the 2019 National Book Award for Nonfiction. The author recounts the story of 100 years of her family, a black family, living in or around New Orleans. The story is also about a yellow house which her mother bought long before Sarah was born, and how her mother struggled to maintain the house until the whole area was destroyed by Hurricane Katrina. The book explores the enduring drive of family and clan to resist erasure.

You do not need to read the book to attend. For more information please contact **Mary Ann Kulla**.

