



Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Danbury

Monthly **COMMENT** Newsletter

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

JULY/AUGUST 2021

From our Consulting Ministers



Dear UUCD Members and Friends,

Thank you so much for connecting with me, coming to the June 13 in-person Social at the Ridge, and/or reaching out in so many ways to acknowledge this transition as my three years of serving as your Consulting Minister comes to a close. I will miss you! It has truly been a delight to work with, support, and get to know this community. You are a congregation with a loving heart at its core and so much appreciation for the value of continually co-creating a Unitarian Universalist multigenerational community. I know you will tend this marvelous community with dedication and love for years to come.

I am currently in the throes of packing up our home and all the things we've accumulated while living here in this house for the past six years. How is it possible that, with all the times I've moved in my life, I'm always surprised by how long it takes? Still, as I pack up each notecard and good book, Pandemic-acquired jigsaw puzzle and fancy clothes I hope to wear again someday, I am grateful. The act of packing in order to move somewhere we (as a family) are genuinely excited to be moving is a joy, box-by-box, moving towards our next good chapter.

I wish the same feelings of optimism and hope for all of you. If there is anything you would like to talk with me about, I'm (still!) always glad 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 will be traveling from June 30 through July 13, and will then be in the final frantic-ness of moving, but please, don't hesitate to reach out if there's something you'd like to say or check-in about before my time as your Consulting Minister concludes officially on July 31. Thanks so much for all your engagement and support along the way! Happy Trails!

Warmly,

Rev. Heather

For Rev. Kathleen's first UUCD column, please turn to the next page!



Dear UUCD,

The Roman Stoic philosopher Seneca said “Every new beginning comes from some other beginning’s end.” This simple thought provides much to reflect on, doesn’t it? You and I are about to begin a journey together that follows the end of Rev. Heather’s beginning with you. UUCD will soon begin to gather in person on Sunday mornings, marking the end of the pandemic lockdown. Some people assert that beginnings are the hardest part of life and I would agree that beginnings can be tricky as they signal change and require adjustment. But beginnings can also be magical--a place for possibility, sharing stories and dreams, connecting and reconnecting. So while the transition to a new minister for you, and new congregation for me, will require patience and adjustments from all of us to the changes, I’m looking forward to experiencing that magic of beginnings with you!

Please take some time over the Summer months to consider the beginnings in your own life and the lives of those around you. Recognize the beginnings that are ending in order for those new beginnings to live fully. And let’s share our beginning stories with one another. In this way we strengthen our community by offering each other comfort, compassion, celebration, and simple presence.

I plan to be settled into my office by the end of July, and in the pulpit the last two Sundays in August. It would be so nice to see you all at our Meet-and-Greet on the UUCD campus on my first official day as your minister, August 1. Be sure to look for details in upcoming email blasts from the UUCD office. See you soon!

With gratitude for this new beginning,
 Rev. Kathleen

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 September *Comment* –
Friday, August 20th.**

Outside at the Ridge - We have a portable restroom onsite. Please make a reservation for your outdoor meetings with Sherry at officemanager@uudanbury.org. A waiver is required to be signed. Kindly abide by CDC and State of CT protocols.

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.

July/August Services – One Service at 10:00 a.m.**Sunday, July 4th**

UUCD will "visit" All Souls-New London again this July 4. Worship Leader: Rev. Carolyn Patierno, Liturgist: Perry Montrose.

Sunday, July 11thBuilding Connections from the Inside Out

Margaret Henderson

How can we build bridges between our UU congregation and the community of Danbury? As we seek to welcome all, who are we setting a place at the table for? Maybe there are changes that we should make to be more inclusive -- but then how can we also meet our own spiritual needs? Come join me in exploring how we might expand our horizons without giving up the parts of UU Danbury that we all love.

Sunday, July 18thNew Normal Ahead

Rev. Heather Rion Starr

We will need to reconsider our expectations and assumptions as we all move towards a 2021-22 congregational and school year informed by over a year of living in Covid19 Pandemic mode. How do we soulfully open our hearts and minds to the reality that Things Are Going To Be Different?

Sunday, July 25thPete Seeger's Golden Thread: A Life of Music and Activism

Nancy Hershatter

When you put it all together, Nancy Hershatter, Paul Storfer and Sandi Lieb have spent six decades singing the songs of Pete Seeger. Nancy and Paul also had the honor of rehearsing, recording and performing with Pete between 1988 and Pete's death in 2014. Together, we have created this service of music and stories, initially performed at UU Stamford in January 2020 at the request of Darlene Anderson Alexander. We are excited to bring it to UUCD. Join us!

Sunday, August 1stLocal Places of Solace

Deborah Casey

Our environment and community play a significant role in shaping our lives. Where do you find peace and comfort in our local area? Please consider the places you return to often and send me a picture or explanation of why you find this place so rejuvenating or nurturing. If interested, I would love congregants to share their special places on the day of the service. Please send photos, comments, and questions to burnishedstories@gmail.com.

Sunday, August 8th

Minister Zeb Green

Sunday, August 15th

Rev. Molly Brewer

Sunday, August 22ndComing Home

Rev. Kathleen Rudoff

Join with Rev. Kathleen, in her first sermon back "home" at UUCD, exploring the idea of home and whether we really can 'go home again'.

Sunday, August 29thConnecting the Dots

Rev. Kathleen Rudoff

13th Century Sufi Muslim Mystic and poet, Rumi, claims that as we companion each other on life's journey we must be woven together like reeds and rushes of a mat in order to be useful. Rev. Kathleen will share her connect-the-dots model of connection that can assist each of us in creating the powerful energy needed to create loving community.

From the Co-Presidents of the Board of Trustees

Hello! I've only been here for 3 years but I feel I've definitely found my spiritual home at UU Danbury. Here's a bit about my background before that:

I grew up in Norman, Oklahoma as the oldest of 3 children. My father was a professor of History of Science, and my mother was a member of the League of Women Voters, then the Planning Commission, and finally the Norman City Council. I attended the local public high school, where there were two distinct groups of kids: the university brats and the locals, which included a lot of farmers and ranchers. I was mostly raised a-religiously -- my parents described us as "secular humanists" -- although we attended the local Unitarian church for a year or two when I was a pre-teen. The religion that I fled from in my environment was Southern Baptist.

I attended Swarthmore College (which has Quaker roots) near Philadelphia where I met my husband, Keith. We were married the summer after graduation and settled in St. Louis, Missouri where we taught at a boarding school and lived on-campus. I taught Latin and ancient Greek, since the school thought all students should read the *Iliad* in the original Greek. Keith taught geometry and physics.

I spent 3 years as a Trustee of that school, so I'm familiar with balance sheets. Around that time I took several courses in Accounting and Finance and considered becoming a financial planner. Instead, the first of our two children was born (Linden - they/them), followed two years later by Abigail (she/her). I got very interested in childbirth and subsequently taught Bradley classes and worked as a doula, while I dreamed of being a midwife. To that end I took an accelerated nursing program at St. Louis University (where I learned a great deal about Jesuits as well as nursing). I spent two years trying to find a wellness-oriented job as an RN that made me happy, but I eventually realized there was too much time pressure and not enough personal contact in that field for my tastes.

For the last 15 years of our 35 years in St. Louis, I had a union job as a clerk at the local electric company. I enjoyed my stints in a coal-powered generation plant, in the company's mailroom, and at a rural work center for linemen.

Three years ago we moved to Danbury where Keith had accepted a job as a teacher at Wooster School. There he enjoys teaching math, physics, shop, and especially theater tech (lighting and sound). I love living in a more progressive state and an ethnically diverse town like Danbury, and I especially love the supportive, purpose-driven community of UU Danbury! I'm so excited to be trusted as your new Co-President, and I look forward to working cooperatively with Michele and the new minister, Rev. Kathleen.

Margaret Henderson,
Co-President

For Michelle Cousens' first column as Co-President, please turn to the next page!

Hello! I have been attending UU Danbury for 11 years and became a member in 2013. During my time with this congregation I have served on the Membership Team, the Auction Committee, hosted several coffee hours, and worked in the nursery and taught various RE groups. I became trained as an “Our Whole Lives (OWL)” teacher for the K-6th grade age group, and I plan to serve this community by training for the 7th-9th grade age group this coming year. I was previously on the Board of Trustees for four years, including serving as Vice-President in my third year on the Board. I have facilitated numerous chalice circles and attended several Women’s Retreats over the years. I was also on the Search Committee who found Rev. Nancy Arnold. Most recently, I have led Team #4 at Dorothy Day Hospitality House, served as Co-Chair for the REMT, and I have worked many Sunday services behind the scenes as a Zoom tech.

On the personal side, I live in Bethel with my husband of 29 years, Rik, with whom I’ve raised two sons - Devon and Drew. I work part-time as a Community Educator for The Women’s Center of Greater Danbury. I’m currently studying towards an MSW at the University of Bridgeport, and I enjoy cooking, reading and music (of course!), having provided many UU Danbury events with great tunes as the resident deejay.

Michele Cousens,
Co-President

Our Caring Circle is Available

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

Bob Bollinger is the contact person for **July**.

Joan Campbell is the assistant.

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

Donna Lawrence is the contact person for **August and 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

Religious Education Save the Date Announcements

Families with children and youth, please mark the following dates on your family calendar:

- **Sunday, September 19th** - Homecoming service
- **Friday, September 24th through Saturday, September 25th** - "Camping Con," an outdoor youth conference experience for Unitarian Universalist high schoolers across Connecticut
- **Sunday, September 26th** - Sunday programs to resume for K-7th grades
- **Sunday, October 3rd** - Sunday programs to resume for 8th-12th grades

Seeking Volunteers!

The Religious Education Ministry Team and our Director of Religious Education are looking for volunteers for next year's Religious Education programs. We are not doing traditional Sunday School in all groups, so the opportunities are many and varied. If you are interested in volunteering, please send an email to dre@uudanbury.org with the following information:

- How frequently are you interested in volunteering (once or twice during year; three or four times during year; once or twice per month; most Sundays)?
- Are you interested in helping with planning, preparation, or committee work, or is your preference to work directly with program participants?
- What is your preferred style of interaction (for example, do you prefer to be in charge, or are you more interested in mutuality; do you like to have structure or do you prefer to interact in more flexible ways)?
- Is there a particular age group with whom you are best suited to work?
- Do you have a special skill you can offer the children's community in either behind-the-scenes or direct work (some examples might include making music, doing research, telling stories, creating props and sets for stages, art of any type, etc.)?

Religious Education Return Plans

Parents of children and teens, if you have not already done so, please take five minutes to let Sierra-Marie know about your plans to attend in-person or online in the fall using [this survey](#).

From Our Director of Religious Education for Children and Youth

Dear Congregation,

A common refrain during the Covid-19 pandemic has been “we are in this together.” And that refrain has been balanced by the statement “we are all in the same storm, but we are not all in the same boat” (adapted from a statement attributed to Damien Barr). This is as true now as it ever was. One of the numerous ways it is true is that while many of us in Connecticut are fully vaccinated, children under twelve are not yet eligible.

With low rates of infection, this might seem relatively inconsequential, but I was struck by the reality the other day when a friend’s kids had to begin summer vacation in quarantine after a classmate got infected. Among kids, the risk of death from Covid-19 is relatively low, but about half of infected children develop “Long Covid” or symptoms that might even become lifelong impacts. Children are also at special risk for Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome as the result of Covid-infection. Finally, new Covid-19 variants present new risks. Even if vaccinations become available to young children sometime in September, many won’t be fully vaccinated until November. To put that in perspective, by that point, winter holidays will be on their minds. When the pandemic began, one of the messages children received was that it was important to stay home to protect elders. They have done so for big portions of their short lives. As a person at high risk, I consider myself among their beneficiaries. Now, I hope to be in solidarity with them (and their parents/guardians, who work so hard to protect them) as they continue the long wait for the protection of immunization. In that spirit, here are some ideas for those of us hoping to support kids and families. Many of these ideas came from my colleague Alex Haider-Winnett:

- Stay masked around children (no one can tell who is vaccinated by looking at them, and not having to worry about avoiding an unmasked person in places like the grocery store is one way to help parents -- and some children! -- not carry so much of that worry).
- Send a family a take-out/delivery gift card, or arrange to drop off a home-made dinner you know they all enjoy. If you are feeling ambitious, do it on a regular basis.
- Offer assistance whenever you can. Out at the pharmacy or grocery store? Give a call and ask if anything is needed. Have a little extra energy or time? Offer to mow a lawn.
- If you can, get vaccinated. If you are vaccinated, offer to spend some time with the children in your life. Even doing some sidewalk chalk with a kid outside while a parent rests on a porch or weeds a flower bed can make a big difference.
- Send a postcard of encouragement to a child or parent in your life, or make something for the child just to let them know you are thinking of them (sew an outfit for a stuffed animal or doll, create a lego structure and give it to them to add onto, make a kite, etc.).
- Help out in any way you can, including volunteering in Religious Education. Parents are utterly exhausted and can’t do as much right now as they once could.

Warmly,
Sierra-Marie

Ministry/Team News

From *Buildings and Grounds*

by Gary Mummert

Thanks (and pleas) from Buildings and Grounds

Numerous volunteers have assisted with exterior projects at UUCD during Covid. My hat is off to **Todd Zagorec, Sequoia Lowe, Alex Makai, Tim O'Donnell, Serena Stein, Yvonne Ruddy-Stein, Joe Gillotti, Connor McPartlin, Keith and Margaret Henderson, Tony DiFabbio, Erick Lopez Gonzales and the gardening experts- Barbara Myers, Lisa Austin-Smith, John Miglietta, and Lisa Greene.** Many Thanks to all and apologies if I missed you.

In the coming weeks and months, we will be getting the buildings ready for re-opening. **Tony Difabbio** will be cleaning and refinishing the wood serving counter in the FH. The cottage house needs a gentle pressure washing. Many other small jobs exist, inside and outside. Please let me know when you can spare a few hours, and I will be as flexible as possible to support your contribution to the community.

Soup Kitchen Corner

by Judy Lacker

On Saturday, July 3rd, some members of Soup Kitchen Team #2 (Team Leaders **Judy Lacker and John Miglietta, Rose Schlemmer, Inge Hill, Brian Teagarden, Jane Leff, Sally Mandler, and Gary Wynn**), and



On Saturday, August 7th, some members of Soup Kitchen Team 2 (Team leader **Carl Tramontana, Rose Schlemmer, Chris Halfar, Darlene Anderson-Alexander, Suze Shaner, Nicole & Sean Paris, Deborah Casey and Lisa Deldin**) 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 for lunches and breakfasts, (to be delivered to the Super 8 homeless shelter), also prepared in volunteers' homes as well as through donations. Unfortunately, we are not yet able to serve the guests 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. In addition, you can still continue to 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 am and 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!

Upcoming Events

Sunday, August 1st – Meet-and-Greet to Welcome Rev. Kathleen

We will have a Meet-and-Greet at UUCD on Sunday, August 1st to welcome Rev. Kathleen to UUCD. Watch for details in the weekly email and Sunday announcements.



UUCD Men Conversing over Coffee will meet on Monday, July 12th and August 9th at 9:30 a.m. out-of-doors at UUCD in the NEW parking lot in the shade when weather cooperates. Watch your email for announcements of alternate places if weather is inclement. For getting on the list for updates, contact **Gary Mummert** or **Joe Gillotti**.

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. July dates are the 13th and 27th, August 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.

