



Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Danbury

Monthly **COMMENT** Newsletter

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

OCTOBER 2021

From our Minister



Edward Everett Hale is the author of one of my favorite quotes. *“I am only one; but still I am one. I cannot do everything; but still I can do something; and because I cannot do everything, I will not refuse to do the something that I can do.”* As a Unitarian Universalist, I am so often overwhelmed with the many social justice issues that cry out for my loving heart and helping hands. As a Unitarian Universalist minister, and part of a congregation, I am often overwhelmed with the many different opportunities to help and be an active part of the beloved community. After all, I am only one! But what I love about Hale’s words is the admission that because I’m only one I can’t do everything. It’s impossible to do everything. But I can do something. We can all do something and I can’t help but think of the amazing children and families that participated in our Homecoming Sunday service on September 19th. They did the something they could do and it made a difference. It enriched our service with the beauty and energy of multigenerational engagement.

There is exciting news in this month’s *Comment* as opportunities for those of us who are comfortable gathering in person will increase this month. We will also continue to offer online opportunities so all can be a part of the beloved community that is UUCD! As this new congregational year unfolds you will be invited to take part with your loving hearts and helping hands. Yes, you too are only one and yet you are one that can make a difference in the life of our congregation. Being a member of our congregation means you are a stakeholder by committing a portion of your time, your talent, and your treasure. Maybe this is the year that you become a member of UUCD, maybe this is the year that you offer something to our annual auction or help with the children and youth. Maybe this is the year that you consider serving on one of our ministry teams or try out an adult religious education class. We thrive when members and friends engage in opportunities and cultivate relationships with each other. I’m ready for a year of thriving with each of you. And while I am only one, and cannot do everything, I will be doing the somethings that I can do with you.

With gratitude for opportunities to thrive,

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 November Comment –
Friday, October 15th.**



October Services – One Service at 10:00 a.m.

Sunday, October 3rd You Can't Follow Jesus Without Being Christian, Can You? Tom Krattenmaker

Author and *USA Today* columnist Tom Krattenmaker will explore how his secular and humanist search for meaning has led him to a surprising source: the figure of Jesus. Author of *Confessions of a Secular Jesus Follower*, Tom will explore the insight and inspiration one can draw from a secularly understood Jesus—a Jesus shorn of politics and dogma who still stands as one of the great exemplars of the ages.



Tom Krattenmaker is a writer specializing in religion and values in public life. A longtime contributing columnist for *USA Today*, Krattenmaker is the author of three books, including *Confessions of a Secular Jesus Follower*, honored by the Religion News Association as one of the top two religion books of 2016.

Sunday, October 10th Discovering America Again Rev. Clyde Grubbs

In the fifteenth century Christian Europe asserted the right to conquer and subjugate the non-Christian peoples of Africa and the Americas. The result was enslavement and genocide of many peoples. How can we re-discover an America of peace and justice?



Clyde Grubbs is a Unitarian Universalist minister who served congregations in Indiana, Quebec, Massachusetts, Texas, Florida and California. He is presently serving as Minister at Large of the Tuckerman Creative Ministries for Justice and Healing. Clyde honors his Native American heritage (Texas Cherokee) which informs his spiritual understanding and practice, and his anti-racist and anti-oppressive commitment. He has worked for peace, justice and equality since he was in the Unitarian Universalist youth movement, Liberal Religious Youth.

Sunday, October 17th Hope Begins With The Letter “C”: Courage, Change, Community Rev. Dr. Kathleen Rudoff

National Coming Out Day is October 11th, and while UUCD is known as a Welcoming Congregation and proudly flies a rainbow flag at our entrance, it is good to remind ourselves of what it means to be welcoming. Rev. Kathleen will offer a message that centers on hope for all of us and we will be honored with personal stories beginning with the letter “C”.

(continued)

Sunday, October 24thEverything Is Holy Now

Rev. Dr. Kathleen Rudoff

Peter Mayer is a singer/songwriter that is popular in UU circles. His song *Everything Is Holy Now* is a beautiful tribute to the precious gift that is our everyday life. He sings “It used to be a world half there. Heaven’s second rate hand-me-down. Now I walk it with a reverent air cause everything is holy now”. Rev. Kathleen will explore what his song title might mean to us in this time in our world and in our congregation’s history.

Sunday, October 31stA Welcome Mat for Vampires, Ghosts, and Monsters

DRE Sierra-Marie Gerfao

Halloween is a day when our imaginative play includes even things that might frighten us. Many pagans also celebrate Samhain, a celebration of a new year. We'll consider what it means to welcome even our fears as we move into a new year. If you are coming to this service in person, you are invited to bring a piece of ribbon, yarn, or thin rope (a foot or two long) with the names of a couple of your beloved ancestors written on or tied on to your ribbon, yarn, or rope. If you are participating online, you are invited to have a few longer pieces (about three feet each) of ribbon, yarn, or thin rope available (it is also okay to just use your imagination). We will bring the strength of our ancestors to face our fears and embrace what is to come. The yarn, ribbon, or rope you bring will stay in the Fellowship Hall for a couple weeks.

Return to In-Person Services

Sunday, October 17th



Co-Presidents Michele Cousens and Margaret Henderson, along with Rev. Kathleen Rudoff, have come up with a plan to return to in-person Sunday services. While still holding our services on Zoom every week, on Sunday, October 17, 2021, we will tentatively begin accommodating up to 50 persons in the Fellowship Hall, socially distanced and with masks on, with an RSVP sign-up online for each service. The first week, sign-up will be available to congregants with last names A-L, then the following week (10/24/21) will be for congregants with last names M-Z, and we will continue this alphabetical rotation for each subsequent week. Seating choices will be single seats, or

pods of two, three or four, and will be first come, first served using the online software. More details will be provided by email, and in a special congregational Zoom, as we get closer to the first multi-platform service date. Please note that we are following CDC and local protocols and guidelines, and of course, we will adjust or cancel in-person services if it becomes necessary.

From the Board of Trustees

by Peter Horton



How A Retreat Can Be A Move Forward

Almost every year there are new members joining those remaining from the previous Board of Trustees. A well-functioning Board requires an orientation for those new members. It also requires that the new Board make an assessment of where we've been, where we are now, and where we can go. To meet these goals well-functioning Boards set aside time and space for a retreat; a time and space to focus on the health and vitality of the congregation.

In the past, UU Danbury Boards have physically "retreated" to an offsite location; ostensibly away from the immediacy of governance. Last year our offsite location was an extended Zoom meeting. This year we judiciously choose to retreat to our own Fellowship Hall. It seemed fitting as most of us had not set foot in that space in over 18 months. It proved to be the perfect setting.

As mentioned above, the main agenda for a Board Retreat is assessing the state of the congregation and setting goals for the new Board. It's also a time for team building. Who are these seven members plus our minister? What goodness do they bring to the governance team? How will their personalities meld together so that by June they can report to the congregation that they have moved the agenda forward?

Wisely, one of our Co-Presidents set a retreat goal of having at least one actionable objective defined by the end of our retreat. We spent time reviewing the past five years of congregational challenges, roadblocks, goals, and accomplishments. That helped guide us as to what has been completed and what objectives have been checked off. It also helped identify challenges that are still with us, that almost seem to be ingrained in the structure of our congregation. And if that's the case then why are they so persistent?

Wrestling with that persistence is when one comes to appreciate what a smart and creative professional staff can bring to a congregation. Both our DRE and our Minister have been clear that we aren't going to solve today's challenges with yesterday's solutions. And they have given examples of how "updating" the Board's understanding of what a spiritual community must look like will help the congregation meet its mission in the years to come. That's when, as individual Board members, and as a collective body, we either get excited and passionate about "renovating" our foundation or we duck for cover and lean on yesterday.

No one ducked for cover. And we didn't get to that one actionable objective. We have smart and passionate congregants on the Board. There is interesting and difficult work ahead. We are gathering again for a second retreat in late October with additional leaders from our congregation and a UUA facilitator; we are expanding the circle. No one departed from the retreat tired or overwhelmed. We went home knowing we have a strong Board ready to tackle foundational change.



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

Upcoming In Children and Youth Religious Education (RE):

You can register children and youth for Religious Education (RE) [using this link](#). This will put you on the RE email list so you will receive all program updates.

RE programs for children and youth will continue to be offered **Sundays at 11:30AM**. This time was selected so that every young person can feasibly attend RE activities, whether their family is attending the service in-person or online on any given week.

Occasionally, however, the meeting time or location -- or alternative activities offered to those who are opting out of in-person RE -- may be altered slightly in order to accommodate field trips and special activities. Families, please watch your emails for week-to-week information. Here are a few things to note in advance for this month:

- **Sunday, October 10th:** Learn about Indigenous Peoples Day! Materials will be sent to families. This is a three-day weekend, and unlike the other Sundays of the month, there will be no in-person Religious Education on this day.
- **Saturday, October 30th:** Save the date for a pumpkin carving event alongside the Mattatuck Unitarian Universalist Society. Time and location to be announced.
- **Sunday, October 31st:** If we have enough interest, we will have a Trunk-or-Treat event, a costume parade, or another Halloween-themed activity. Stay tuned for details to come!

From Our Director of Religious Education For Children and Youth:

Dear Congregation,

A colleague of mine has been brilliantly working on a sermon called "Hold Please," about living our lives when so much is still placed on hold. I am not so certain, though, that being "on hold" is a descriptor of the state of our communities in Connecticut right now.

Here, nearly all children are back to in-person school for the time being, and fall sports have begun again. Some people who have been working from home have started to get called back into their offices. (At the same time, many disabled activists continue to offer a moral clarity that the accessibility of work-at-home options should be

preserved wherever possible. This is one of many examples wherein the transition out of being “on hold” is presenting creative tensions and opportunities to move into our future well-informed by our Covid-19 experiences.)

The surge in Covid cases caused by the delta variant remains a significant concern, but in Connecticut where almost 68% of the population is fully vaccinated, some kind of “new normal” is emerging, in which health precautions such as masking, social distancing, and ventilation are a greater focus for many of us than they were before 2020, but not so much of life is being placed on hold for most people, at least not completely. Rather than an “on hold” experience, in Connecticut, we seem to have begun a transitional phase between what we have experienced over the last couple years and what will emerge from it.

While being on hold can offer some space for reflection, being in transition means that new opportunities arise regularly, bringing new dilemmas that require active decision-making. These are not simple dilemmas for many of us, especially for parents whose kids can’t get vaccinated yet. If we can be carriers for the delta variant even if we are vaccinated, potentially getting our children sick, is it okay to eat in a friend’s home? In a restaurant? If the delta variant is spreading even outdoors, should we make the kids keep their masks on at the park, or only at the library? Do we feel comfortable sending our children to indoor playdates? Sleepovers? What about bringing our children to a bigger place full of people, like the fellowship hall for Sunday services?

We do our best to muddle our way through these questions as individuals and families, and as a religious community, we do our best to care for one another by not presenting unnecessary dilemmas that *won’t* likely produce creative, useful tensions. For example, wearing masks when we are together even if we are vaccinated means that families don’t have to worry so much about their children in our community spaces. In other words, this takes away a dilemma and barrier for family participation in in-person events and in this way makes us a more welcoming community.

Being in transition means that things will be fluid. It will take some time this year for Religious Education (RE) to take greater shape. There are many reasons for this, including but not limited to (1) a need for more fully-vaccinated volunteers; (2) the process of figuring out how to coordinate RE with services that not everyone can attend in-person together; (3) the effort it takes to regain the energy and momentum of regular Sunday RE attendance; (4) the incorporation of weekly multi-platform options for RE engagement so children can participate without being present in person; and (5) the desire to experiment with some new models of RE given everything we’ve learned over the last two years.

What you *can* count on is that with rare exceptions, we will offer in-person activities for children and youth each Sunday when it is safe enough to do so. At the same time, we will slowly begin to integrate options for those children who can’t be present in-person. This is a community where children and youth can learn about who they are, what they value, and the world around them. It’s important work to do together, even during transitions. RE is not on hold. Families and volunteers, see you on Sundays at 11:30!

Warmly,
Sierra-Marie



In an effort to keep everyone informed about UU Danbury's financial situation more than just once a year, the Board of Trustees will begin posting summary financial data quarterly. Look for the report on the first quarter of the church year in November's newsletter! And thank you all for supporting the UU Congregation of Danbury.

Our Caring Circle is Available

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



Karen Gillotti is the contact person for **October and November**.

Joan Stapleton is the assistant.

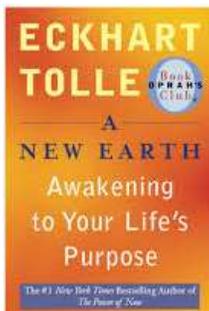
If you have a need, please contact **Karen** at 203-730-9440 or joekarengillo@yahoo.com.

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

Ministry/Team News

From *Adult Programming*

by Joe Gillotti



The UUCD **Spiritually Speaking Group** will meet on Tuesday evenings at 7:00 p.m. via Zoom. The group is reading Eckhart Tolle's book *New Earth*. This spiritual practice is simple, insightful and very doable. For more information and availability of space, contact **Joe Gillotti**.

From the *Auction Team*

by Michele Cousens

Save-the-Date: Saturday, November 6th

Watch for more information in upcoming weekly emails and Order of Service announcements.



From the *Social Action Council*

Soup Kitchen Corner

by Judy Lacker



On Saturday, September 2nd some members of Soup Kitchen Team #4 (Team Leader **Michele Cousens, Joanne Davidson, Michael Stengle, David & Gia Parr, Bruni Edwards, Yvonne Ruddy-Stein, Rik Cousens, and the Bonansinga/Twombly Family**) 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 ddhsandwiches@gmail.com. We can all be an important part of the fight to end hunger in our community!

...from a press release from the Office of the Attorney General of CT, William Tong

Attorney General William Tong Launches ELDER JUSTICE HOTLINE ... a "one stop shop" for older adults in CT in need of information, aid, and justice. Elder justice issues can range from age-based discrimination in the workplace to scams, frauds, elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation. As a result, no one state agency can answer every question. The Consumer Assistance Unit of the Office of the Attorney General will staff the hotline and refer matters as appropriate to agencies across state government. The hotline can be reached at 1-860-808-5555. Individuals may also access information about the hotline, resources, and an online complaint portal here: <https://portal.ct.gov/ag/elderhotline>.

Upcoming Events



Meet & Eat Repeat!

Saturday, October 9, 5:30-7:00 p.m.

Rev. Kathleen will repeat her Meet & Eat gatherings for any folks who were unable to make it in September. This will take place outdoors unless it is raining. If indoors, masks will be required. Bring your own food and drink, chairs, and sense of humor. This is a time for conviviality with the minister! RSVP to Rev. Kathleen at minister@uudanbury.org.



UUCD Men Conversing over Coffee will meet on Monday, October 11th 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 meet on the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays at 3:00 p.m. October meeting dates are October 12th and 26th. 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, October 14th, the Book Conversation group will be meeting at 7:00 via Zoom. We will be discussing Posterity: Letters of Great Americans to Their Children. This book of almost 100 letters was compiled by Dorrie McCullough Lawson. There are letters from people ranging from Albert Einstein to John Adams and Groucho Marx. Barbara Bush, Mary Todd Lincoln and Abigail Adams are also included. Questions will be written by Annie Senol. Do you have a letter you should write to someone? For more information and the Zoom link, please contact **Mary Ann Kulla**.

The following month we'll be digging into The Well-Gardened Mind by Sue Stuart Smith. This book provides a new perspective on the power of gardening to change people's lives. Stuart-Smith explores how the process of tending a plot can be a way of sustaining an innermost self.

Following that, we'll dig our teeth into Lights Out: Pride, Delusion and the Fall of GE by Thomas Gyra. How could General Electric, perhaps American's most iconic corporation, suffer such a swift and sudden fall from grace?