



Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Danbury

Monthly **COMMENT** Newsletter

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

SEPTEMBER 2021

From our Minister



Each month I choose a quote as a mantra for myself. If you ever have a chance to stop by my office you'll see the quote posted on my door. I find this practice helps keep me focused and mindful, and that's not an easy task these days. It's a challenge due in part to all of the excitement that comes with being your "new minister"; trying to come up with creative ways in which to get to know you and for us all to connect with one another. It's also a challenge due to the swirling chaos in the world that breaks my heart every day and seeks to shred my optimism into tiny bits easily blown away by the wind. So I take a few minutes (literally 2 or 3 minutes) each day to read my chosen mantra over and over. Some days I fill a notebook page writing the mantra over and over again. And some days I have to read it aloud as a sacred chant in order for it to sink a little further into my being.

This month it's Emily Dickinson that grounds me. The quote is "I dwell in Possibilities". Dickinson is actually referring to living in a metaphorical home that is poetry. And she speaks of possibility as potential. I use the quote to mean I dwell in possibility and potential for positive change, and love, and peace, and justice. This quote, and the ideas that I attach to it, bring me a glimmer of hope. I know in my bones that *we* are a people of possibility! Let's share our glimmers of hope with one another as we begin this new congregational year together. We need hope and we need each other as I'm sure most of us thought that by September, the worst of Covid would be behind us. We envisioned gathering together on Sunday mornings as a community of all ages; greeting those we haven't seen in over a year with big hugs and even bigger laughter. Our reality is pointing in a different direction and I understand just how deeply disappointing that is. But while the possibility of returning to pre-pandemic gatherings is still distant at this time, you will find within this newsletter new ideas, events, and opportunities of potential for us to explore together. UUCD leadership and staff are putting extraordinary energy into making this new year one of vibrancy and connection.

I hope that you will reflect on the possibilities before you, both as a part of UUCD and in your personal life. Consider a mantra for yourself that might encourage you, and bolster your strength to face the world when it seems to be crumbling before your very eyes. And be sure to share your glimmer of hope as you dwell in the possibilities. I look forward to seeing you at an upcoming small group gathering, an in-person one-on-one meeting, or on Zoom. It's the possibility of being together somehow, some way, that keeps me going!

With gratitude for possibilities,
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 October Comment –
Friday, September 17th.**



We are the Props that Assist the House!

In Rev. Kathleen's August 22nd message she referred to a poem by Emily Dickson and asked us to consider how we could be the props that assist those who are homeless, on the verge of homelessness, and those seeking home as refugees. Here are some organizations doing good work in this regard:

Danbury: contact our own Judy Lacker to help with the Dorothy Day Soup Kitchen (please see Dorothy Day Soup Kitchen information on page 8)

Connecticut: IRIS <https://irisct.org>

CIRI <https://cirict.org/afghanistan-relief-fund/>

Haitian Health Foundation <https://www.haitianhealthfoundation.org>

Unitarian Universalist Service Committee <https://www.uusc.org>

Foundation Beyond Belief <https://foundationbeyondbelief.org/afghanistan-haiti/>



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

Upcoming in Religious Education

It is time to gather in for the 2021-2022 Religious Education year! If you have not already done so, please register your children by [clicking here](#) and filling out the form.

- **Sunday, September 19th** - Ingathering Celebration and Outdoor Play!
- **Friday, September 24th through Saturday, September 25th** - "Camping Con," a mini outdoor youth conference experience for Unitarian Universalist high schoolers across Connecticut (likely Southbury location, to be confirmed soon)
- **Sunday, September 26th** - Sunday programs to resume for K-7th grades
- **Sunday, October 3rd** - Sunday programs to resume for 8th-12th grades

Programs will be held outside at this time, with masks and other health and safety protocols. The times of programs will be announced by email to those who register (we will set some regular meeting times, but until we begin to have services in the Fellowship Hall, we will not likely meet during the Sunday Service hour). Online options will also be offered.

From Our Director of Religious Education For Children and Youth

Dear Congregation,

At a staff meeting this week, Rev. Kathleen asked each staff member to name one of the things they love about their jobs. My answer I am sure was predictable: “the kids,” of course! But as soon as I said it, I was struck with sadness for the congregation.

Over the last year, even though Covid-19 meant I didn’t get to spend as much time with as many kids as I might have otherwise, I still have gotten to know a number of the congregations’ kids. I have learned about their interests, been moved by their questions and ideas, shared in their joys and sorrows, and learned along with them. We’ve both laughed and cried together, and we have had some really fun times.

I know that it has been more than a year since some of you have spent time like this, in intergenerational community. But I am writing with a joyous invitation! I am writing to invite members of the congregation to spend time with the kids this year. Even though we can’t quite yet gather in-person for Sunday services, small groups of children and youth will be meeting outside and online to continue sharing joys, sorrows, ideas, questions, and learning.

Come catch up with the 5th graders who were in the 3rd grade the last time you were with them. Get reacquainted with 10th graders who were still in Junior High when you last saw them. There is a lot of fun to be had, games to be played, things to discover together, and stories to tell one another!

The Religious Education programs for children and youth are a cooperative ministry of the congregation, a method of providing an intentional community for children as they grow. This is a community in which children can learn about themselves, each other, and the world. One of the key terms here is “community.”

As your half-time Religious Education staff person, I am excited to assist you with coordination of your programs and help you develop methodology and content to support what you want to offer the children and youth, but *you* will need to bring the community, and it is the community where all the fun happens!

In 2021-2022, we will need as many as 20 adults willing and able to regularly spend time with the children and youth of the congregation. This isn’t a job for everyone, but it is probably a job for more than the 7 adults who have volunteered so far. If you would like to explore whether volunteering is right for you, please get in touch with me by emailing dre@uudanbury.org. We’ll talk about what is involved and whether volunteering at this time is the right fit for you.

I look forward to shaping Religious Education ministries with you in 2021-2022!

Warmly,
Sierra-Marie

Greetings from the Board of Trustees

by Michele Cousens, Co-President



By the time you read this, Rev. Kathleen Rudoff will have been with UU Danbury for her first few weeks, and she will have settled into her role beautifully. Welcome back to our congregation, Rev. Kathleen – some of us have been missing you, some of us are getting to know you – and all of us are lucky!

The new Board of Trustees (BOT) has been struggling the past few weeks with how to safely conduct in-person Sunday services; unfortunately, the rise in COVID-19 cases (especially the Delta variant) has informed our decision to keep our services virtual, at least through our Homecoming on Sunday, September 19th. We will continue to seek input from our Hygiene Team as they monitor the CDC and state and local guidelines and protocols. Keeping in mind the immunocompromised folks within our congregation, and the fact that children under 12 cannot yet be vaccinated, the Board wants to ensure that our services are as safe and welcoming as possible for everyone. Stay tuned.

In the coming weeks, the BOT will be conducting several retreats to create a new covenant and goals for the 2021-22 congregational year. We are excited to again be working with our UUA liaison Evin Carvill-Ziemer, as they had been so helpful in guiding the previous Board in their service to UU Danbury. Our monthly Board meeting minutes are available in the Member Portal section of our website (www.uudanbury.org), so please take a look at what we've been discussing, and let us know if you have an agenda item you would like to put on the table. As always, Margaret Henderson (my Co-President) and I welcome any suggestions or concerns about our congregation that you might wish to bring forward.

I am happy to announce that we have our annual Goods and Services Auction scheduled for Saturday, November 6th – so please save the date – and we'll have more details to come. This year's event will again be virtual, and with your help, just as successful as last year! If you have an idea for a dinner, or if you would like to donate your services, please contact Barb Myers or Lisa Horton. You might also consider a matching donation as well – and for that, please contact Eva DeFranco.

Also by the time you read this, Rik and I will be empty-nesters, having settled our youngest into his apartment at UCONN-Stamford, and our oldest into his own place in Waterbury, where he is attending Porter and Chester Institute for automotive repair. Our sons grew up in the RE program, and will take our UU values and principles with them out into the world. It is my honor and pleasure to give back to the community that has given our family so much – thank you for trusting me (and the rest of the BOT) with the stewardship of this loving and generous congregation.

We hope to be a more visible and approachable BOT, and in the coming year, you will have an opportunity to stay in the main room after a Sunday service (instead of going to a break-out) and chat with a different Board member each month. I look forward to connecting with some of you during the coffee hour of our Homecoming Service on the 19th!

With gratitude,
Michele

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.

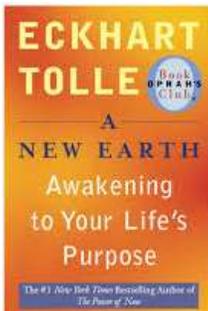
If you have a need, please contact **Donna**.

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

Ministry/Team News

From *Adult Programming*

by Joe Gillotti



The UUCD **Spiritually Speaking Group** will resume meeting on Monday, September 20th, from 7:00 - 8:30 p.m. via Zoom. The group will be 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*

by Margaret Henderson

All are invited to join the 8th Principle Action Group!



As you may recall, we adopted the following as our 8th Principle at the Annual Meeting in June.

“We 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.”

We made the decision, now it's time to act! We need to decide what actions our congregation should take first, and we need to put them into practice. As I see it, we don't have the luxury of deliberating for months or of taking baby steps that don't have any real effect on the structural racism that's all around us.

If you'd like to be part of the Team that puts our resolution into action, please join us! We will be meeting sometime between September 15th and 22nd (exact date TBD depending on participants). Email **Margaret Henderson** if you're interested. We hope to have a broad cross-section of the congregation to help guide this effort into fruition.

Soup Kitchen Corner

by Judy Lacker

On Saturday, September 4th, some members of Soup Kitchen Team #3 (Team Leader **Lynn Taborsak, Bob Taborsak, Jim Wruck, Julie Gordon, Diane Purvis and Laura Reynolds**) 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



Please join Rev. Kathleen for small group gatherings to break bread together. BYOB (bring your own bread!), chair or blanket, and whatever you choose to eat or drink. We will gather outside and social distance at UUCD, weather permitting. If we need to move indoors masks will be required. Space is limited as groups will not exceed 10 people. Email Rev. Kathleen at minister@uudanbury.org to reserve your place. You will receive a confirmation within 24 hours.



UUCD Men Conversing over Coffee will meet on Monday, September 13th 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 resume our meetings on the 2nd and 4th Tuesday at 3:00 p.m. Our next meeting will be September 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.



On Thursday, September 16th, the **Book Conversations group** will be meeting at 7:00 p.m. via Zoom, to discuss *How to Avoid a Climate Disaster* by Bill Gates. Weather and Covid rules permitting, we might start early and meet in person. For more information and the Zoom link, please contact **Mary Ann Kulla**.



"Let gratitude be the pillow upon which you
kneel to say your nightly prayer.
And let faith be the bridge you build to
overcome evil and welcome good."
-Maya Angelou

August 6, 2021

Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Danbury
24 Clapboard Ridge Rd.
Danbury, CT 06811

Dear UUUCD,

We cannot thank you enough for hosting a day at our Interfaith Peace Camp 2021. You helped give the campers an amazing experience that they will carry with them forever.

Times have been tough, with virtually everyone affected, one way or another, by Covid-19, Unemployment, and closed businesses. At ARC, we've witnessed, first-hand, the increased need among those who avail themselves of our Comida Food Pantry, our programs to house the homeless, and our Emergency Aid Network. However, we've also witnessed, first-hand, incredible generosity, compassion and heroism among those who have chosen to help others.

With your help, we have more resources to apply towards our mission "to alleviate the causes of violence, suffering and hate while advancing peace, justice and human dignity."

With appreciation,

Ari Rosenberg

Ari Rosenberg
Executive Director



*Thank you for hosting UUUCD!
ARC can always count
on you! -Ari*

ASSOCIATION OF RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES

