



Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Danbury

Monthly **COMMENT** Newsletter

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

NOVEMBER 2021

From our Minister



Following on the heels of my October 24th message, “Everything is Holy Now”, I’m reflecting on the words of Albert Einstein for my monthly mantra:

There are only two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as though everything is a miracle.

I will admit that it is only since experiencing deep grief that I’m able to actually live my life as though everything is a miracle, and express my gratitude accordingly. And if Einstein is right, why in the world would we want to live life as though nothing is a miracle? Some of us might say it’s a miracle that we are able to meet in person again on Sunday mornings! Simply getting out of bed to face the day can be a miracle for others of us. Every day miracles are those unexpected or extraordinary things that we welcome into our lives. It’s good to take time each day to consider what small (or not-so-small) miracles have come our way. And then take a moment to feel grateful. Maybe even express our gratitude in some way.

As we enter the month when gratitude platitudes abound, I want to encourage you to take a breath and reflect on Einstein’s notion of just two ways to live your life. Recognize the unexpected or extraordinary gifts in your life and celebrate them! Truth be told, I’m hoping for a little miracle at our annual Auction this month – an unexpected and extraordinary success! And I hope for each of you a month of finding joy, kindness, love, and gratitude as we continue our work of ministry together.

With gratitude for every day miracles,

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 December Comment –
Friday, November 19th.



It's coming! UUCD will celebrate our 200th birthday in 2022. If you'd like to be part of planning and have ideas as to how we can celebrate and spread the word about UUCD, come and join the 200th Anniversary Ministry. Contact **Gale Alexander**.

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

Sunday, November 7th

The Servants Entrance

Rev. Julie-Ann Silberman-Bunn

This service will help us explore what the world looks like when we see ourselves as the ones who provide for others rather than those who should be recipients of benefits from others, the world or even the divine.



Rev. Julie-Ann Silberman-Bunn is a lifelong Unitarian Universalist, LRY and YRUU leader who has served as a Parish Minister, Religious Educator, Hospice Chaplain and now a Hospital Chaplain at Mercy Medical Center in Springfield, Massachusetts, and quarter time Assistant Minister at the Unitarian Universalist Society of Greater Springfield. An author of chapters in *Everyday Spiritual Practice and Living a Call*, Julie-Ann reflects frequently on what it means to be a Unitarian Universalist and evolving her understanding of faith and spiritual practices. Julie-Ann and her husband Ken live in their forever home, a cabin in the woods of Western Massachusetts with their rescued Maine Coon cat Kattia.

Sunday, November 14th

Grounded in Gratitude

Rev. Dr. Kathleen Rudoff

Getting down to the nitty gritty of what it means to be grounded in gratitude as we move through the world trying to make a difference in the lives of others.

Sunday, November 21st

Evolution of a Pilgrim

Rev. Dr. Kathleen Rudoff

As fellow travelers we are pilgrims; journeying with a moral purpose. Let’s explore what that might mean for us and for other travelers we encounter along the way.

Sunday, November 28th

The Art of Finishing Life Well!

Rev. Dr. Tom Owen-Towle

Unitarian Universalism is increasingly a world of elders. And, for the first time in human history our world will have, by 2050, more people 60 and over than children under ae 15. There exists a deep hunger to engage the difficult yet enlivening homestretch challenges of solitude and quest, joy and service, surrender and legacy.



The Rev. Dr. Tom Owen-Towle has been a parish minister since 1967 and is currently speaking, hither and yon, throughout our movement. Slowly but surely, Tom is also getting back into singing at nursing homes, mentoring youth, and volunteering at the local San Diego homeless center. Tom’s latest book (available through amazon or the UUA Bookstore) is titled: *Making Peace with Our Own Death*. He is a colleague and friend of Rev. Kathleen and is honored to be joining Danbury-ites via zoom.

From the Board of Trustees

by Margaret Henderson, Co-President



As I write this my heart is full from our first multi-platform service -- the first in-person Sunday morning gathering in 19 months. It was so wonderful to see people in person, and to see our beautiful space in Fellowship Hall occupied, as it was meant to be, by loving souls who have come together for a sacred purpose. Many of us who have worked so hard on this project were relieved beyond measure when it actually came off, our first successful service in this new format. It was truly a joy-filled morning.

The Board has been busy with many other things as well. There's of course the Auction, which will be only a week away when this is published. It too includes some new features along with the traditional ones -- features like "Put Your Money Where Your Principles Are", in which we reach out beyond our doors to support oppressed groups who have not gotten their fair share of economic investment over the years. We are partnering with the Danbury NAACP to underwrite a workshop on re-entry for formerly incarcerated citizens, and we will help the Connecticut Worker Center (an agency that supports in-home workers like nannies, caregivers, and house cleaners) to purchase much-needed office furniture. Tune in to the Live Auction on Nov. 6 to contribute and to hear from these agencies directly.

This outreach stems from the covenant we accepted in the 8th Principle, to journey "toward spiritual wholeness [and] Beloved Community, by our actions that accountably dismantle racism and other oppressions." As we work to identify and implement these "actions", the Board is creating an 8th Principle Action Group made up of members of our community who feel called to do this social justice work. As you know, nationally the UU's have a long history of saying we oppose racism but underestimating how hard it is to rid our institutions of the white supremacy that so permeates our culture. This group will do its best to hold us accountable for progress. If you'd like to participate, please contact me at ravenhen@gmail.com.

We, the members of the Board, appreciate the trust you've placed in us. We will continue to do the very best we can for this community that we all love.

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**.

Joan Stapleton 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.



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

Mitten Tree

It's almost Mitten Tree time! You are invited to share a holiday gift with a family of the Interfaith AIDS Ministry of Greater Danbury. Each November the AIDS Ministry gives us a list of families (generally the same ones each year), along with some requests for small gifts (maximum \$25) for family members.



The children and youth decorate paper mitten ornaments with the gift requests listed on the back and hang these on a "Mitten Tree." You are invited to **collect a mitten ornament starting Sunday, November 21st**, and to **bring back the gift, unwrapped, to UUCD by Sunday, December 13th**. Our youth group will wrap the gifts that afternoon, and we'll bring them to the AIDS Ministry early the next week so there is plenty of time for them to get to families.

Upcoming In Children and Youth Religious Education (RE)

At this time, Religious Education programs are offered for children and youth every Sunday at 11:30AM except when otherwise announced. In November, we plan to meet every Sunday except November 28th (we'll take a break for that holiday weekend).

A couple requests:

- Parents and guardians, please remember to fill out your monthly Religious Education RSVP form when it is emailed to you.
- Please remind children and youth to dress for the weather, including hats, coats, and mittens as needed.

From Our Director of Religious Education For Children and Youth



Dear Congregation,

Last spring, I wrote to you “The pandemic has changed us. . . .Not all of it is heartbreaking, of course. We are eager to give up things about our ‘old normal’ that are life-diminishing. Many of us are eager to embrace a new normal if it means things like universal healthcare or the end of violent policing. Many of our experiences of pre-pandemic community, though, we will grieve. We long for what was.”

So here we are, in November, and we have begun to come back together in person, yet nothing feels the same, and in fact, nothing really is the same. For now, we are meeting for services alphabetically. For now, the kids are doing Religious Education after services, so families who have been at the service online can drive in for in-person Religious Education. Attendance is unpredictable and always lower than we remember. As a result of this and lower than usual energy for volunteering, we need to do more “one-room schoolhouse” or “family-style” Religious Education, with the children interacting more across age groups.

Families whose weekly routines may have shifted away from Sunday morning congregational activities during the pandemic are sorting out how to make a return, especially since the kids are older and their weekend sports, scouting, and other extracurriculars consume more of their time and energy than ever before, as is common when kids age.

Families may ask, is it worth it to bring the kids to Religious Education if there may be no children their age present? Will the kids get discouraged? Should we wait until things are more “normal?” Will things ever be more “normal?” And it is a catch-22 because everyone’s normal, the normal we want to wait for in order to return, is dependent on others returning.

Here we are, interconnected, trying to find our way back to one another in an embodied way. We make it feel “normal” for each other by showing up, but we don’t want to show up until it feels more “normal,” like an easy routine to which children can be re-introduced. I don’t know the way out of the catch-22, but I would like to recommend you reach out to one another.

Over the last year of the pandemic, I have noticed that when people want to make sure there are others present at activities with children the same age as theirs, the most effective way of doing this is for them to call or text other families and say, “let’s go together.” This is also a form of community care; it is a way of telling people that they matter to us.

By the way, this isn’t just true for families with children. While adults are more likely to go to services and other activities even if we don’t have people our same age with whom to connect developmentally, it still helps us to know that others care about our presence, and it still helps us to feel more comfortable when we know others are coming to these events because they want to be with us. Reaching out is one form of community care we can all practice.

Warmly in faith,
Sierra-Marie

Ministry/Team News

From the *Auction Team*



Our annual fundraising Auction is upon us.

Tickets are on sale, and our online auction went live October 29th. You can bid and out-bid, for all the online items you want before we close the site at 9:00 p.m. on November 5th. Then get your popcorn, hang on to your hats, find your seat and get ready for the Show!

At 6:00 p.m. on November 6th, we will bring back our own musical genius, **Jerry Phelps** and his sidekick, Master of Ceremonies, **Peter Horton**! They'll sing; they'll dance; and they will get you to give generously. This year we will be giving not only to our wonderful community but also putting our money where our 8th principle is. (See next page for details)

In addition to our online auction and our live Showtime don't forget about the chance to make a matching donation. (Matching donations will not be applied to monies raised for our 8th principle outreach). In case you are unfamiliar with matching donations, you can match a % of auction proceeds, or a flat amount. For example, if you agree to match 2% and we raise \$10,000.00 at the auction, your matching donation would be \$200.00. Many donate a flat fee, without regard to auction earnings. Some matching donors cap their matching donations. Any commitment to match would be most welcome. For questions or to join in, email Eva DeFranco.

For any other questions please contact **Lisa Horton** or **Barb Myers** at auction@uudanbury.org, and let's raise some money and have some fun!

8th Principle Outreach Auction: Putting Our Money Where Our Principles Are

by Lisa Horton

At UU Danbury's Annual Meeting in June 2021 our congregation voted overwhelmingly to adopt the UU 8th Principle. The Principle will give guidance to our community to help us work "...to build a diverse multicultural Beloved Community by our actions that accountably dismantle racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions." Working beyond our walls we are working with minority leaders and organizations in the Greater Danbury area. Two of those organizations are the Danbury NAACP and the Connecticut Workers Center*.

What are those programs?

NAACP: Underwriting Reentry Informational Workshop - Getting a Fresh Start

Who's helping the men and women released from prison every day? Who is welcoming them home? The purpose of Getting a Fresh Start Workshop is to provide information about services and resources available to Returning Citizens in the community.

UU Danbury objective: raise \$1,000 to help underwrite the Getting a Fresh Start workshop.

Connecticut Workers Center: New Office Furniture

CWC's conference table is breaking apart! And it would be very helpful to have a stable table to give their 7 lead workers and members the ease and pleasure to feel comfortable at their biweekly meetings. Also, they would love to have a file cabinet to start organizing and separating new cases with the different departments (DOL/DOH/DSS/New intakes).

UU Danbury objective: raise \$1,000 to purchase a new conference table and file cabinets.

How can we help? We'll ask our Auction participants to directly donate to the specific programs at the NAACCP and CWC. Auction participants will be able to buy tokens in increments of \$10, \$20, \$50, \$100...or fund the entire program with a \$1,000 token. All funds donated, even in excess of the \$1,000 goal, will go directly to designated NAACP and CWC programs.

*CWC's value is to help to restore peoples' sense of self-worth, respect and dignity. We are committed to assist immigrants find their voices and access resources. We work to foster a sense of belonging for immigrant workers in our wider US communities and nation. We promote tolerance and acceptance of all, regardless of immigration status. We champion the importance of joining together collectively to solve our problems as community members. We believe that alone we go faster, but together we go farther.

From *Adult Programming*

by Joe Gillotti

The UUCD **Spiritually Speaking Group** meets 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 *Buildings and Grounds*

by Gary Mummert



Community Service Options at UUCD

If your middle school or high school youth need community service hours, the fall is a great time to accumulate hours. Buildings and Grounds would appreciate working with youth who need creditable hours. Preferably, a parent or other adult would need to be present when the work is being done. Covid safety would also be observed. Contact Gary Mummert to discuss tasks and scheduling.

Kudos to Volunteers

The Buildings and Grounds Team Says THANKS!! Numerous volunteers have stepped forward to assist in taking care of our facilities in the past months.

Many Thanks to:

Tim O'Donnell for door trim repairs and other tasks, **Tony DiFabbio** for refinishing the Fellowship Hall Kitchen wood countertop, **Melene Rose** for cleaning, decoration, and weeding, **Todd Zagorec** for mulching with wood chips and for invasives control, **Nancy Cullen** for assisting with various clean-up tasks, **Alex Makai** for weed-wacking, **Matthew Paris** for assisting with heavy door work, **Mike Edwards** for assisting with electrical fixture inspections and troubleshooting, **Keith Henderson** for assisting with outdoor cleaning tasks, **Margaret Henderson** for mulching work and plumbing inspections, **Barbara Myers, John Miglietta, Lisa Austin-Smith and Lisa Greene** for plant and shrub care and other clean-up, **Melody Levy, Virginia Cook, and Deb Oria** for basement clean-up in the Cottage House, **Adam Kyriacou** for assisting with various connectivity issues, **Joe Gillotti** for assisting with shrub and tree trimming, and **Carl Tramontana** for hours of consulting work and procuring supplies.



Raising a virtual glass in celebration!

From the *Finance Team*



UU Danbury
Fiscal Oversight Dashboard

First Quarter 2021-22

From the Finance Team

After this year’s annual meeting in June, some of you asked to see budget information more often than once a year. So your Board promised to present quarterly reports to the congregation. In fulfillment of that promise, please see the chart below. It shows how much we’ve spent/earned in the first 3 months of this fiscal year (Year [To Date](#)), followed by how much we predicted we’d spend/earn. After that comes a snapshot of where we were at this point last year and the year before, so you can see what the trend is.

It’s our hope that publishing this information every quarter will give the Board and the congregation similar expectations when it comes time to vote on our annual budget. Also, it will allow all of us to be more confident about UUUCD’s future and, at the same time, to hold our financial course steady through the year.

Trend Analysis – Current Operating Budget

07/01/2021 - 09/30/2021	YTD Actual	YTD Budget	2020 YTD Actual	2019 YTD Actual
Total Revenue	\$62,016	\$50,748	\$67,826	\$54,755
Total Expenses	\$68,074	\$67,409	\$63,477	\$56,556
Surplus (Deficit)	(\$6,058)	(\$16,661)	\$4,349	(\$1,800)

Paid Pledges / Other Income

07/01/2021 - 09/30/2021	YTD Actual	YTD Budget	2020 YTD Actual	2019 YTD Actual
Pledges	\$56,230	\$39,607	\$58,970	\$50,611
Other Income	\$5,786	\$11,140	\$8,856	\$4,144
Total	\$62,016	\$50,747	\$67,826	\$54,755

Additional Information:

- 75% of our income comes from fulfilled pledges.
- 57% of our expenses support our professional staff.

You Can Help by Moving Your Donation to SimpleGive

by Margaret Henderson



If you already use SimpleGive you don't need to read this article. But if you prefer to give to UU Danbury by writing a check or some other way, I'm going to ask you to open your mind for a minute to the idea of switching -- not just because it's more convenient, but because our beloved UUCD can get a matching gift of \$50 per person if you switch to SimpleGive.

I myself never bothered to set up SimpleGive because I preferred to give by automatic debit. Why go through the hassle of figuring out a new system, I thought. But that was before SimpleGive started their Donor Match Program.

Here's how it works: For every new recurring gift that is added between November 1 and December 31, 2021, they will match the gift, up to \$50, up to a maximum of \$1,000 per organization. To be eligible for the matching gift, more than one installment must be set-up and the first recurring gift must be transacted by December 31, 2021.

That's it. It's that simple. Go to www.simplegive.com or download the SimpleGive app. If you have any questions or have trouble switching to SimpleGive, please contact Sherry at officemanager@uudanbury.org or Margaret. But don't switch until Nov. 1!

Thank you for considering changing how you donate. We'll let you know how successful this project is!

From the *Social Action Council*

Soup Kitchen Corner

by Judy Lacker



On Saturday, November 6th, some members of Soup Kitchen Team #1 (Team Leaders **Judy Lacker and John Miglietta, Rose Schlemmer, Inge Hill, Brian Teagarden, Jane Leff, Sally Mandler and Gary Winn**) 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



UUCD Men Conversing over Coffee meets on the second Wednesday of each month. Our next meeting is on Wednesday, November 10th at 9:30 a.m. at UUCD in the Fellowship Hall Lower Level. For more information 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. November meeting dates are the 9th and 23rd. 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, November 11th, 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 was rescheduled from October 14th to give the group more time to read the book. 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**.

