



Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Danbury

Monthly **COMMENT** Newsletter

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

APRIL 2022

From our Minister



*Generosity is the most natural outward expression
of an inner attitude of compassion and loving-kindness.*

~ Dalai Lama

April is a month where we're never quite sure what we're going to get. It might be sunny and 70 degrees, or it might offer a last blast of snow flurries even as the daffodils are in bloom and the patio furniture was just uncovered! We hope for warm Spring days but can't really count on them being consistent. There is an uncertainty to the weather in April, just as there has been uncertainty in our lives over the past couple of years. It's been difficult to plan ahead and count on things happening as we hope they will. But there is definitely one thing we **can** count on in April. While we will hope to continue gathering in person and hope to offer coffee hour soon, what we know we can count on in April is UUCD's stewardship campaign! It's that time of year when we start seriously thinking about the upcoming year, our visions for the future of our beloved community, and I deliver my annual 'sermon on the amount'! It's that time of year when we start seriously thinking about the upcoming year, our visions for the future of our beloved community, and I will deliver my annual 'sermon on the amount'. It comes around every year, rain or shine, and I will admit to you that I used to dread it. But over my nearly 2 decades of professional ministry, I've come to think of this time of year as one of joyful anticipation. We can joyfully anticipate outdoor gatherings, joyfully anticipate new life displayed in budding trees, and joyfully anticipate opportunities to expand our vision for UUCD's future, and the opportunity to express our compassion through generosity.

I believe we are a compassionate people. I believe we are also a community that strives to possess an attitude of loving-kindness in our words and deeds. And as the Dalai Lama so wisely said, generosity is the most natural outward expression of those things. Even in difficult times, members of this congregation have expressed their compassion and loving-kindness by being generous with their talents, their time, and their treasure. That is exactly how we have sustained this community for 200 years! And in this 200th year we will do it again. Our theme for this year's campaign is One Community Many Hands and it will take all of us, yes, every single one of us expressing our compassion and loving-kindness through our generosity. We may not be able to count on a sunny Spring day for our campaign kickoff April 3rd, but we can count on each other to be generous. And that is worth our joyful anticipation.

Grateful for the opportunity to be generous,

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 May Comment –
Friday, April 15th.

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

Sunday, April 3rd

Welcome Aboard!

Rev. Dr. Kathleen A. Rudoff

Today we kick off our annual stewardship drive with the theme: One Community Many Hands. It takes many hands to tend the steward ship, so welcome aboard as we set sail for another year of adventure and collaboration.

Sunday, April 10th

The Chimes are Changing

UU Young Adults

The world is changing quickly, and so are we. Let’s look to our past, present, and future to consider what change we can make in our own lives and beyond them. This service is planned and presented by UUCD’s own Sequoia Lowe, with members and friends of the Central East Region Young Adult Organizing Committee

Sunday, April 17th

Telling Our Sacred Stories – A Multigenerational Service

Rev. Dr. Kathleen Rudoff, Sierra-Marie Gerfao, and Jerry Phelps

It’s the season of Spring and stories of renewal. We gather to share the stories from sacred texts and our own lives; singing and celebrating in our multigenerational community. It is Easter Sunday so wear your favorite Easter bonnet or hat, just for fun! An egg hunt is being planned for after the service.

Sunday, April 24th

Earth Day

Team Green

We are looking for photographs and/or artwork illustrating blessings the earth has bestowed on our members and friends: a stunning sunrise or sunset, a particularly beautiful tree, flower, rock formation, field of crops - something that spoke to you and evoked your expression of gratitude for the earth in a visual image. Send up to 3 photos to barbara.myersletson@gmail.com by **APRIL 10**. We will include as many in a slide show during the service as we can. Kids are encouraged to submit, too! Please put Earth Day Service in the subject line of your email.

Flowers



The beauty of nature is brought into our Fellowship Hall on Sunday mornings by the contributions of members and friends of UUCD. If you enjoy seeing flowers at our services please consider signing up to provide them on a Sunday of your choice. Let’s start with April 10th!

A note will be included in the OOS each week with the name of the person donating the flowers and the occasion for which they are donated: remembering loved ones, special events, honoring someone’s birthday or anniversary, or just because you wish to add some beauty to our Sunday service. . To sign up email officemanager@uudanbury.org with the date and occasion you would like to bring flowers. Thank you.

Questions for the Minister



For the remainder of this congregational year, Rev. Kathleen will answer a question that has been frequently asked by members of the congregation.

*“I miss the way we used to drop stones in a bowl during Milestones.
Are you going to put that back in the service?”*

I know that there are a number of things that were traditionally done at UUCD prior to the pandemic, and some of those things are sorely missed. What I want all of us to do is think about why some traditions and rituals are important to us. Why do we feel compelled to do these things? And what will bringing something back mean to all those who have become part of UUCD since the start of the pandemic – those who have not had the experience of engaging in these traditions?

For me, dropping the stones in water is a beautiful way to make the shared milestones accessible to those who may not be comfortable sharing with words. It also adds a tangible element to that portion of the service. Having an opportunity during our shared milestones on Sunday mornings to drop a stone in a bowl of water is a tradition that I look forward to reviving sometime during the month of April. I am working with the Sunday Services Team on reintroducing that ritual in a way that both honors the tradition and offers a new approach that signifies a new time in the life of the congregation.

Please feel free to reach out with other questions, concerns, and suggestions. I love hearing from you!

Membership News: APRIL 5th DEADLINE!

April 5th is the deadline for signing the membership book in order to take part in the Annual Meeting vote in June. Please contact Membership Team Chair, **Bruni Edwards**, or **Rev. Kathleen** if you wish to sign the book by April 5th.

All members give their time, talent, and treasure on an annual basis. Anyone who is struggling financially and unable to make a contribution of record, but wants to become a UUCD member, or retain their membership, can speak with Rev. Kathleen about a waiver or other alternatives. Conversations are confidential. You may reach her at uurevkathleen@gmail.com

From the Board of Trustees

by Samantha McCoy, Secretary



Your Board of Trustees has been thrilled to be able to take part in the return to multiplatform services in recent weeks. Each week when I attend a service, whether I participate online via Zoom or head to the Ridge in person, I find myself struck by how lucky we are to have the community that we do. We have our beloved property on Clapboard Ridge Road, with a light-filled Fellowship Hall and terrific classroom/meeting facilities on its lower level. We also now have a state-of-the-art audio-visual system that allows us to have services that are simultaneously live in-person and live via the web, with the possibility of hosting both presenters and guests from anywhere around the world. At these services, I get to see so many familiar faces that I've come to know and care for over the nearly nineteen years that I've been attending UUCD services and programs. I also get to see more and more new faces, some arriving for the first time, and others beginning to get to know us after a few visits. Each of these factors is a gift and I am grateful for all of it - and all of you!

April is stewardship season at UUCD. I won't try to steal Peter Horton's thunder, our dedicated Stewardship lead, but I do want to take a few moments to make note of this moment. Each month, your Board of Trustees is examining ways to serve and strengthen this community. A part of that is our financial commitment to this congregation and its future. We are each carefully considering and committing to our 2022-23 pledges as I write this piece. The hard truth is that our congregational budget can only be what our pledges allow it to be. If we appreciate and care for our beloved staff members, if we want to maintain and continue to improve our welcoming campus and facilities, and if we want to see vibrant and exciting programs, we each need to pledge in a way that funds this crucial work. The other side of stewardship is giving of ourselves and saying "yes" when a need is presented. For the 2022-23 congregational year, your Board will be looking for new members to fill the positions for those rotating off and various ministries and teams will be looking for new participants to support their efforts that make UUCD the place we know and love. Please consider how you can find a way to say "Yes!" when the opportunity is presented to you. As I mentioned when I opened this piece, I feel lucky to be part of this congregation and am cognizant of the many gifts it has given me and my son in the years we've been attending. My pledge and service next year will reflect that feeling and my gratitude.

Each month this year, a Board member has been "hosting" a coffee hour chat after a Sunday service. I will take that turn in April. Please keep an eye out for me and don't hesitate to approach me with any questions you might have, ideas you'd like to forward to the Board, or stories you'd like to share. Happy spring!



Our Caring Circle is Available

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

Inge Hill is the contact person for April and May.

Joan Campbell is the assistant.

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

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

Upcoming In Children and Youth Religious Education (RE):

As of April 3rd, masks are optional for those participating in our children and youth programs.

- **April 3:** K-8th Regular Religious Education programming; Ropes Course for High Schoolers
- **April 10:** Spring Break
- **April 17:** Easter Sunday multigenerational service followed by an Easter Egg Hunt
- **April 24:** Regular Religious Education programming

Parents and guardians, please remember to **fill out your monthly RSVP form** when it is emailed to you, and please be sure to note any accessibility needs in our program locations or if your child or teen needs to access programs virtually from home or another location. We want to make sure every kid can participate! If you would like to be added to the email list, send this request to dre@uudanbury.org.

Family Feedback Requested

We are starting to plan for our 2022-23 Religious Education programs that begin next fall. If you have a child or youth in your household and have not yet filled out a form indicating your expected attendance and giving feedback on program priorities, please [click here](#) to do so at your earliest possible convenience.

Support Those Impacted By the Crisis in Ukraine and Our Easter Egg Hunt at the Same Time

The Religious Education Ministry Team will be collecting financial donations over the next two weeks to benefit organizations that are supporting Ukrainian refugees along with other important work. The following two organizations are donor recipients recommended by the Unitarian Universalist Association's International Office:

- [The Unitarian Universalist Service Committee Emergency Relief Fund](#)
- The Hungarian Unitarian Church's [Providence Charity Organization](#) (this may be sent through a [Faithify Campaign](#))

A third organization is a longtime partner with the Law School at Yale:

- [The International Refugee Assistance Project](#)

On Easter, the children's egg hunt will involve not only prizes for the children, but tokens they can use to vote in order to determine how we divide the donations received between the three organizations. Please see the weekly announcements for instructions on how to donate.

From Our Director of Religious Education For Children and Youth



Dear Congregation,

Though I have been following the news and had certainly been tracking a number of pieces of upsetting legislation, I was stunned to read a message from the Unitarian Universalist Association's [Side With Love campaign](#) that at this time "there are approximately 150 anti-transgender bills moving through state legislatures across the country."

I want to say to trans and non-binary readers that I love you, I am sorry, and I will work to combat these threats to your safety and well-being.

Whether restricting public bathroom access, preventing participation in sports, or criminalizing gender-affirming health care for young people, the consequences not only of the legislation but the rhetoric that accompanies it are too often deadly. We must speak out against and work to defeat such legislation and continue to find ways to affirm and celebrate trans lives as a community.

[Click here](#) to find a Side With Love conversation on combating anti-trans legislation. There are some additional efforts we can make as a community to ensure we are doing as much as we can to provide systems of support and affirm and celebrate trans lives in our community, including in our community of young people.

I want to encourage cis-gender members of the community, and especially Religious Education volunteers and people considering volunteering in the future, to take some time this month to visit the [Transgender 101: Identity, Inclusion, and Resources page](#) on the Unitarian Universalist Association's website.

I'll close with a hope-filled story about some young people in my life outside of the congregation. A child shared with their community that their pronouns were "they, them, and theirs." The other children did not get agitated about using singular "they;" did not self-defeatingly declare that they would get it wrong most of the time and apologize in advance for their expected mistakes; and did not complain that the change would be difficult.

Instead, the kids immediately made every effort to get it right and be graciously corrected when they made a mistake, and they began to say to one another – when the child was not around – "let's practice _____'s pronouns so we don't mess them up." They would talk to one another about the child using they/them/theirs with the intention of committing these pronouns to memory. What a good example to follow. Love is a practice, beloveds!

Warmly,
Sierra-Marie

Notes on Two Hundred Years (and More)

by Douglas H. Parkhurst

The 1896 *History of Danbury* by James M. Bailey and Susan B. Hill includes a chapter on early churches in town. The Rev. James Vincent, then pastoring the Danbury Universalists, contributed a four-page history of his church to this book. Rev. Vincent began his article by saying that in September 1807 Rev. Hosea Ballou preached at the courthouse the first Universalist sermon ever heard in Danbury. The New England Convention of Universalists was meeting nearby in Newtown and Ballou, a rising star in the denomination, attended this gathering. There is little doubt that Hosea Ballou did visit Danbury during this time. Whether his late summer appearance at the courthouse was the first time Universalism was preached in Danbury bears further investigation.

Universalism came to Connecticut around the time of and following the Revolutionary War. John Murray, known to history as the founder of American Universalism, arrived in New Jersey from England in 1770. Before long, Murray began a career of itinerant preaching along the coast from the Middle Atlantic colonies to New England. Universalist stirrings were also being felt inland. In Connecticut Universalist societies were formed in Norwich, Stafford, Windsor (Poquonock), and possibly Southington before 1800. In 1801, the New England Convention ordained an Episcopalian named Solomon Glover, from an old Newtown family, as "a minister of the gospel and pastor of the church of Universalists in said Newtown." It is hard to imagine that Rev. Glover did not soon spread the good tidings of Universalism into Danbury, only a short distance away. In 1821, a Danburian named Josiah Dikeman was fellowshipped and ordained by the General Convention of Universalists meeting in Hudson, New York.

Then, on December 9, 1822, a group of twelve men in Danbury formed a Universalist Society. It met at first in the Great Plain area of town, lay-led and meeting in private homes and a nearby schoolhouse. The group later moved to the central village and used meeting space in the courthouse. By 1824 this new Society was part of a circuit of Universalists served by the Rev. Thomas F. King of New York City, then in his 20s and at the beginning of what proved to be a relatively short but significant ministerial career (one of his sons was the eminent Thomas Starr King). Other preachers came and went during the first decade, too, and Danbury's Universalist Society grew large enough by the 1830's to construct a building on the northwest corner of present day Main and Wooster Streets and to sponsor a Sunday school. Today this Society is the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Danbury (UUCD), in continuous existence under a variety of names and at different locations since 1822. It is among the oldest churches in Danbury. Those which pre-date UUCD, with their present names, are First Congregational Church (1696); St. James Episcopal Church (1762); Baptist Church of Danbury (1790); United Methodist Church (1812); Central Christian Church (1817); and Long Ridge United Methodist Church (1820). A Sandemanian Church was organized in Danbury in 1765 but is long extinct. Also, Congregational Church of Brookfield (1754 when Newbury parish was created from parts of Danbury, New Milford, and Newtown) and First Congregational Church of Bethel (1759 when Bethel parish was created from the southeast part of Danbury) both pre-date UUCD.

The Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Danbury stands in good and venerable company.

UUCD's New Website

by Nancy Cullen



The old website needed updating and we pitched in. With time on my hands and experience adding content to WordPress websites, I began work on the new website in November 2021 - hoping to be finished by January. The process is like assembling a puzzle. WordPress, described as 'a free, open-source content management system', has templates, evolving features, and is used by over 40% of the top 10 million websites. The new <https://uudanbury.org/> also will work on mobile devices or tablets, and uses UUA's best practices for accessibility.

It was collaborative:

- UUA (Unitarian Universalist Association) offered a template for congregations, guidance and a user-tested structure.
- Carl Tichler set the template up and offered technical support.
- Margaret Henderson offered decisive input, leadership perspective, and expertise in writing and proofreading.
- Melody Levy gave good suggestions, photos and design skills with text and images created for Facebook.
- Mary Ann Kulla did Photoshop editing.
- Barbara Myers and Reverend Kathleen proofread and gave helpful feedback. (You can do this too!)
- Sherry Kyriacou is becoming familiar with updating it.
- Jon Dupree provided troubleshooting and a depth of technical knowledge.
- I also used content from the old site and the *Comment*.

You may notice:

1. We write a lot. Here are UUA's tips on writing for the web- [Use fewer words and design for skimming](#). I am trying to follow this.
2. **Mistakes.** A website is never finished. Tell me about them! You can reach me by emailing Margaret or Sherry.
3. **Content is repeated.** People navigate websites in different ways with limited time; the idea is to make content available especially to people browsing for a congregation like ours. It is not intended to be linear like a book with a table of contents.
4. **The member portal has a new password.** Email Sherry at officemanager@uudanbury.org for the new password. It may change again to secure our content. Hacking happens.
5. **Newer photos.** We need newer photos. If you have good photos of our activities or photos representing our ideals submit them. Tell me if you object to a photo that makes you look ten years Eyounger!
6. **Content missing.** If you are part of a committee or activity that needs to be included tell us.
7. There is more to do. Get in touch if you want to help, are a Wordpress expert or wannabe!

Ministry/Team News

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

At UU Danbury’s Annual Meeting in June 2021 our congregation voted overwhelmingly to adopt the UU 8th Principle. As a result we included two local organizations in our Auction this year. One of those organizations is the Connecticut Workers Center.

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).

Thanks to our very generous congregation here are the results!



From *Buildings and Grounds*

Help needed with Buildings and Grounds

The spring is upon us and there are tasks that need to be done off-budget. The B&G team is very flexible and can work to meet your schedule. Please contact **Gary Mummert** via email if you can paint, use a rake or shovel, clean windows, or operate a blower or trimmers. Also, listen to the spring peepers and frogs, and take time to meditate near our pond.

From the *Social Action Council*

Soup Kitchen Corner

by Judy Lacker



On Saturday, April 2nd, some members of Soup Kitchen Team 2 (Team Leader **Carl Tramontana, Rose Schlemmer, Chris Halfar, Darlene Anderson-Alexander, Suze Shaner, Nicole and Sean Paris, Deb 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 for Pacific House 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!

The 8th Principle Action Group

The 8th Principle Action Group meets on the first Tuesday of each month at 7:00 p.m. Join us online April 5th as we look for ways to "accountably dismantle racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions" so we can build a diverse, multicultural Beloved Community. Contact **Margaret Henderson** for more information.

Upcoming Events



UUCD Men Conversing over Coffee meets on the second Wednesday of each month. Our next meeting is on Wednesday, April 13th 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

by Jane Leff

After nearly three years, WOOO had its last meeting together on March 8th. This gathering of women has been a time and place for us to get to know each other, and to share, sometimes with a tear, more often with laughter, how and what lives were like. As the leader of this group I had the pleasure spending time with you on the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month. I send thanks to all who participated, and to Sherry, who never failed to put it in writing and send a zoom link, for each time we met. If any of you would like to start a new women's group next Fall, I'd love to be a part of it - U UWOMEN, perhaps!



On Thursday, April 21st, the **Book Conversation Group** will be discussing "Mine!" by Michael Helter and James Salzman. It explores the topic of ownership and how the hidden rules of ownership control our lives. For example, why is plagiarism wrong, but it's OK to knock off a recipe or a dress design? Remarkably the authors found only six rules that everyone uses to claim everything. But we can choose differently. Call **Mary Ann Kulla** if you want to join the discussion.

May 19th, we'll discuss "Doughnut Economics: Seven Ways to Think like a 21st Century Economist" by Kate Raworth. Renegade economist Kate Raworth says most of the fundamental ideas in economics are centuries out of date. Yet they are still taught in college courses worldwide and still used to address critical issues in government and business alike. The author says it's time to revise our economic thinking for this century. She points out ways to break our addiction to growth; redesign money, finance and business to be in service to people. Ultimately, we can create economies that are regenerative and distributive by design.

