



# Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Danbury

Monthly **COMMENT** Newsletter

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

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MARCH 2022

## From our Minister



*We don't have to be perfect,  
just engaged and committed to aligning values with actions.*

~ Brenè Brown

It is so wonderful to be able to once again gather both in person and online on Sunday mornings, isn't it? Our collective fingers are crossed in hope that the days of online-only services are over. Being a multi-platform congregation offers everyone the opportunity to participate in a way that is most comfortable for them! But the pandemic has changed us – changed the way we do things, the way we work with others, the way we view our commitments, and the way we engage in community. There is a plethora of opinion and research on how society has been changed by the events of the past two years. Some of the change may be seen as positive, some less than positive, and some just perplexing.

I've been thinking a lot lately about change in relation to the UUCD community, most especially the visitors we have had on Sunday mornings and the new members ready to commit to being a part of our congregation. It's been interesting to meet our visitors and find people who are seeking community and interested in values rather than beliefs. These are people who describe themselves as "conservative" and hope they will be welcome as they share our UU values. I assure them that we are committed to our mission statement that claims we are "an open religious community that welcomes a diversity of people, ideas and beliefs". That's a commitment that defines us and challenges us.

We are not a perfect place and I have yet to see a perfect congregation of any denominational stripe. But as Brenè Brown says, we don't have to be perfect. I actually tell potential new members that if they're looking for a perfect community, they're looking in the wrong place! But if they're looking for people who are engaged and committed to aligning values with actions, we may be just the right place for them. The pandemic hasn't changed our commitment to "Stand as a beacon for independent thought, and encourage lifelong spiritual and intellectual exploration". This too is part of our mission.

Last month I encouraged us all to commit ourselves to being flexible and I continue to encourage such as we navigate the changing protocols for gathering together in person. But this month I'm specifically asking all of us to reflect on our commitments to UUCD as we consider membership, engagement, and welcoming diversity. What an exciting time we find ourselves in!

Grateful for commitment to community,  
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 April Comment –**  
**Friday, March 18<sup>th</sup>.**

**March Services – One Service at 10:00 a.m.**

**Sunday, March 6<sup>th</sup>**

Don't Forget the Soil!

Rev. Dr. Kathleen A. Rudoff

Imagine a magical garden on the UUCD campus where flowers bloom year-round and each of us is a valued caretaker of that garden. Those flowers are our children and youth that require sunshine, water, and tender loving care in order to thrive. Are we prepared to commit ourselves to being a village that nurtures the spiritual growth of it's children and youth? Get out your gloves and rakes!

**Sunday, March 13<sup>th</sup>**

Spiritual Resilience

Dianne M. Daniels



An exploration of the cluster of beliefs, values and habits that we beautiful, imperfect human beings can learn, cultivate and reinforce in order to encourage the growth and strength of our spirits and our souls.

Dianne M. Daniels is a recent graduate of Starr King School for the Ministry and served as a ministerial intern at the Unitarian Church of Hartford. She has been a committed Unitarian Universalist for more than 20 years. Dianne enjoys walking, music (especially jazz and R&B), reading and restoring her family's 1850's Greek Revival home. She is a Connecticut resident and will be joining us in person.

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**Sunday, March 20<sup>th</sup>**

Feeding our Neighbors, Feeding Ourselves

Lay-led service

Engaging with the Dorothy Day Hospitality House has been an important part of social action at UUCD for decades. Members and friends of all ages have served meals, prepared meals, and supported the good work at Dorothy Day. In feeding our hungry neighbors we feed our hungry spirits and bring the compassion of UUCD to the wider community. This service will feature stories from several of our members who have been moved by their volunteer experiences.

**Sunday, March 27<sup>th</sup>**

Who Do They Say I Am?

Rev. Dr. Kathleen A. Rudoff

Identity is defined as the fact of being who a person is. What does it mean to identify as a Unitarian Universalist? Who do those around us say that UUCD is? Let's claim our identity and celebrate who we are as a beloved community!

## 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.

*“What do you call that scarf thing you wear on Sundays?”*

I love this question! On very special occasions you may see me wear a robe and stole. Most Sundays I will not wear a robe but I will wear a stole. That’s what that “scarf thing” is called. In the Unitarian Universalist tradition, clergy wear a stole once they are ordained. We often receive a stole from our internship congregation or ordaining congregation, and wear them with those communities and connections in mind. Some of my colleagues have described stole wearing as putting on the “mantle of a minister”. I wear a stole as a reminder of my commitment to my calling to professional ministry. I also wear a stole as an homage to all those ministers who have gone before me; clearing the path for me and those that come after me. Every stole I have, and I have lots of stoles, has a story of where it came from, who gifted it to me or where I purchased it, when in my ministry I received it, and memories of the times when I wore it. My collection of beautiful stoles is a tapestry of UU congregations and ministerial adventures!

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

## From the Board of Trustees

by Marie Dupree, Treasurer



As most of you know, UUCD is celebrating it’s 200 year anniversary. And of that 200 years, Keith and I have been members for more than a quarter of those years! We first came here three weeks before I gave birth to my son, Jonathan. He was born in November 1969. We soon became members. We have been involved with UUCD for these many years.

Keith was president in 1972. The first time I was Treasurer was in 1971. I have served as Treasurer several different times. I also was Board President in 1987. I said I would only be President if I did not have to speak before the group until the Annual Meeting. That was not to be: three weeks into my Presidency, the RE building went up in flames. This was on Picketts Ridge Road in West Redding. So I held my first meeting in the “Barn” in front of the whole congregation to figure out how we were going to proceed! “When life gives you lemons then make lemonade” - that was and is my philosophy.

UUCD has been an integral part of our lives and my kids lives. This group is supportive, it has defined my beliefs and supported our family in good times and bad. The Unitarian Universalist religion has given me strength to survive the various stages of life. UUCD has given me so many friendships who accept me as a liberal, thinking outside of the box and who I am.

I feel privileged to be a long-time member of UUCD. I extend an invitation to sit down with me and Keith to tell you our story and to learn more about you and your story!

## Notes on Two Hundred Years (and More)

by Douglas H. Parkhurst

It was just twenty years ago this month, in March 2002, that the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Danbury (UUCD), then known as the Unitarian Universalist Society of Northern Fairfield County (UUSNFC and also called the Barn by members), took the action that confirmed its anticipated move from West Redding back to Danbury. The First Universalist Society/Church was organized in Danbury in 1822 and had three permanent homes on and near Main Street from 1833 to 1966. The Unitarian Fellowship of Ridgefield was formed in 1964 and for two years rented space in the downtown there. The two groups merged in 1966 as the UUSNFC and met in other rental space in Danbury before the purchase of the Barn property in West Redding in 1970.

By the late 1990s interest was growing among members of the UUSNFC to relocate to a larger and more visible location in Danbury. A Comprehensive Planning Committee (CPC) was formed to explore this possibility. The CPC met regularly to weigh the pros and cons of this change, what steps would be needed to accomplish it, and to determine how to proceed. The Rev. Dr. Daniel O'Connell, Society minister at the time, gave his full support and encouragement to a plan to move.

In early 2002, the process of relocating was in full motion. This is an excerpt from the minutes of a Board of Trustees meeting held on February 20<sup>th</sup>:

"Bruce Berg [a CPC member] was invited to give his presentation on the CPC's proposed meetings with the congregation....and if this proposal passes on March 9, the architect must be chosen very shortly. There will be immediate need for many committees to give feedback on their space needs in the new building. There would be discussion about what feelings from the Barn do we want to take with us. There must be [consideration of] meeting immediate needs as well as future expansion. The Board members asked for clarification on many issues."

The proposed informational meetings and group discussions were conducted soon after. Questions were asked and answered and opinions shared. On March 9, 2002, a congregational meeting was held to address the issues and come to a final decision. Here is an excerpt from the minutes of that meeting.

"The congregation...was meeting to make a decision about the selling of the Barn and buying of property on Clapboard Ridge Road....Ross [Fenster, President of the Board of Trustees] pointed out that a 2/3s vote was required to pass this resolution....Don Schober, chairperson of the CPC, made the motion to sell/buy. Marilou Parkhurst seconded it. There was some discussion and clarification of issues, most of which had been covered in the informational meetings....Henry Lewis called for the question and Betty Lewis seconded.

The voting took place and motion was carried to support the resolution by the following numbers:

85 total votes

79 yes

4 abstaining

2 no

20 absentee ballots

The meeting was adjourned...with a champagne and chocolate toast."

(continued)

One year later at a congregational meeting on March 16, 2003, with the physical move to Danbury only months away, the members of the UUSNFC voted to change the name of the Society. This process began during summer 2002 and continued into the autumn. Informational meetings were held and comments and suggestions were solicited. More than fifty people provided input. In the end, five choices were presented by the Name Change Consideration Committee chaired by Wayne Raulerson. They were, in alphabetical order:

1. Unitarian Universalist Church of Danbury
2. Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Danbury
3. Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Danbury
4. Unitarian Universalist Society of Danbury
5. Unitarian Universalist Society of Northern Fairfield County (no change)

This writer remembers the meeting well. The attendance at the Barn was almost a full house. Opinions were offered and reasons given. The final selection came down to a choice between numbers 2 and 4 above. The name Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Danbury was adopted and remains so today.



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

### **Upcoming In Children and Youth Religious Education (RE)**

We are excited to be able to once again offer **in-person, indoor programs** for children and teens! On Sundays, children and teens are invited to the upper level of the Fellowship Hall to attend the first part of the service with the adults. After the story portion of the service, children go downstairs to meet with their Religious Education group(s). Teens go to their meeting room in the cottage (newly fitted with an air filter).

Parents and guardians, please remember to **fill out your monthly RSVP form** for these programs when it is emailed to you, and please be sure to note any accessibility needs related to moving to these 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, please email your request to dre at uu danbury dot org.

Additionally, throughout this month, participants in our **2022 Mystery Buddies** program will exchange weekly postcards. **On March 27th** we will have a special “buddy reveal” event, to be announced. Stay tuned for details!

## From Our Director of Religious Education For Children and Youth



Dear Congregation,

A little less than a year ago I wrote to you to say that “the method is the message.” Now I want to write the same thing to you as part of planting a seed that I hope will sprout in the late spring or early summer.

The children and youth programs next school year (2022-2023) will need volunteers. I want you to know that it makes a difference if you volunteer. It communicates to the kids – among many other helpful things – that we are a community on whom they can rely as they explore what they believe, develop a relationship with this congregation and Unitarian Universalism, and try living out their values in a complicated world. It also communicates to parents and guardians that this is a community on whom they can rely, that they are not alone in learning alongside of and guiding future generations. The method is the message.

While working in this congregation over the last couple years, I have often heard adult congregants say that they wouldn’t be a good fit to volunteer with children. “I wouldn’t even know what to say to kids these days!” “They don’t want me. I’m too old and can’t relate to kids like young people can.” And so on. This method has a message, and I am not sure it is the message you want to communicate to children and their families. I imagine you don’t want to communicate with your distance from the next generations that they are so different from you that common ground can’t be found; that there are no resources from the past that can help them; and that they and their parents and guardians are on their own in this uncertain era.

Soon, we will begin to make some decisions about the shape the next program-year will take. After that, we will be looking for volunteers to help the programs take form. Surely there will be opportunities both long-term and short-term, even things you can help with just a time or two to see how it goes. I may ask you if you would be willing to volunteer. This question is an invitation to move through discomfort to help build an intergenerational community where the generations can learn from one another. I hope that is a method and a message in which you will consider investing.

Warmly,  
Sierra-Marie



### **Our Caring Circle is Available**

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

**Valerie Cochrane** is the contact person for March.

**Karen Gillotti** is the assistant.

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

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

## From Our Music Director, Jerry Phelps



Exciting news for all the singers out there! Choir rehearsals resume on March 6<sup>th</sup> from 11:45 a.m. - 12:15 p.m. Come make music with us and help prepare for the upcoming music service. If you are interested in joining us, please reach out to Jerry at [musicdirector@uudanbury.org](mailto:musicdirector@uudanbury.org) for the detailed rehearsal schedule.

*Please note that all singers must be vaccinated against Covid-19 and wear a mask for the duration of rehearsals.*

# Ministry/Team News

## From the *Social Action Council*

### Soup Kitchen Corner

by Judy Lacker



On Saturday, March 6<sup>th</sup>, 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 [ddhsandwiches@gmail.com](mailto:ddhsandwiches@gmail.com). We can all be an important part of the fight to end hunger in our community!

### The 8<sup>th</sup> Principle Action Group

The 8<sup>th</sup> Principle Action Group meets on the first Tuesday of each month at 7:00 p.m. Join us online March 1<sup>st</sup> 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, March 9<sup>th</sup> 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 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesdays at 3:00 p.m. March meeting dates are the 8<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup>. 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, March 17<sup>th</sup>, the **Book Conversation Group** will be discussing “Unthinkable” by Jamie Raskin via Zoom starting at 7:00. Cheryl Edelen will be leading the discussion. In this searing memoir, Congressman Raskin struggles to come to terms with the painful and unanticipated suicide of his son. Only 6 days later he lived through the violent insurrection in our nation’s Capital. Congressman Raskin then was appointed to lead the impeachment effort to hold President Trump accountable for inciting the political violence. This book is a page-turner. Once you start it you won't want to put it down. Call **Mary Ann Kulla** if you want to join the discussion.

On April 21<sup>st</sup>, we'll discuss “Mine!” by Michael Heltzer 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.

May 19<sup>th</sup>, we'll discuss “Doughnut Economics: Seven Ways to Think like a 21<sup>st</sup> 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.

