



# Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Danbury

Monthly **COMMENT** Newsletter

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

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JUNE 2022

## From our Minister



*There will come a time when you believe everything is finished.  
That will be the beginning.*

~ Louis L'Amour

Our first year of ministry together is coming to completion. It has been quite a year, hasn't it? And we have done some good work getting to know one another, welcoming visitors and new members, maintaining quality in our Sunday services, caring for each other, utilizing our incredible multiplatform set up, supporting our youth and religious education programming, continuing to think "green", appreciating our awesome staff, showing up to feed our neighbors at Dorothy Day, and persevering in our efforts to stay connected to one another. So much to be grateful for and so much to celebrate!

The end of year one together may soon be finished but that means the second year of my contract with UUCD is beginning! Just as the good people of this congregation have for 200 years, we will begin again with a new congregational year. Every year is a new beginning to live our mission and envision the future of our beloved community. Endings bring new beginnings which bring opportunities to try new things, to embrace the adventure of change, and make discoveries about ourselves that can help us grow.

We all know the troubles in the world will wax and wane with the political tides here and beyond. We may believe we are finished with one trouble when a new one begins. Such is life. And this is just one reason why being in community is so important. We can face both the endings and the beginnings together and draw strength and inspiration from one another. What a gift!

With gratitude for a challenging and joyful first year with you,

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 July/August Comment –  
Friday, June 17.**

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

**Sunday, June 5th**                      Flower Communion and Religious Education Sunday

Bring a flower to share and join Revs. Kathleen Rudoff, Sierra-Marie Gerfao, and the Religious Education Ministry Team as we celebrate the various ways we each bloom in community.

**The Annual Meeting of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Danbury  
will take place on Sunday, June 5, 2022 following the Sunday service.**

**Sunday, June 12<sup>th</sup>**                      Music Sunday

Join us for a very special musical service on Sunday, June 12th, featuring the many, gifted musicians of UUCD. We will explore a variety of musical genres and attempt to answer the question of why we love music and its important role in our lives. You'll hear everything from rock, classical, pop, and musical theatre. We hope you'll come to bask in the music with us!

**Sunday Connections for Newcomers** - Newcomers are invited to join Rev. Kathleen after the service on Sunday, June 12<sup>th</sup>, in the Fellowship Hall for an informal get-acquainted session. Let us know what brought you here. What questions do you have about Unitarian Universalism and about our Danbury congregation?

**Sunday, June 19<sup>th</sup>**                      Celebrating Juneteenth by visiting our sister congregation in Kent, OH

The UU Church of Kent has graciously invited UUCD to join them via Zoom for a special service with guest Mwatabu S. Okantah, The Muntu Kuntu Energy Poet. Those attending in our Fellowship Hall will watch the service together and those at home will have the link to connect to the service.

**Sunday, June 26<sup>th</sup>**                      Quaker Quiet                      Debra Oria  
UUCD member Deb Oria will share her experience in a Quaker Friends Meeting House and we will experience some of the silence that a Quaker service is known for.

## **Sunday Service Workshop For All!** **Wednesday, June 22, 7-8 p.m.**

This one-hour workshop is for anyone who would like to learn how to plan a lay led service, what the order of service is all about, and other fun facts about Sunday services. This will be a multiplatform offering taking place in the lower Fellowship Hall and online (link sent after registration). Please register by emailing Rev. Kathleen.



### **Summer Sunday Lineup:**

July 3	Guest minister Rev. Julie Taylor of the New York Air National Guard
July 10	Rev. Kathleen Rudoff
July 17	A pre-recorded service from Rev. Susan Frederick Gray, President of the UUA
July 24	Broadway Sunday – a service dedicated to the inspirational music of Broadway
July 31	Presenter - Marcia Brooker
August 7	Rev. Kathleen Rudoff
August 14	Rev. Sierra-Marie Gerfao
August 21	Rev. Kathleen Rudoff
August 28	Guest minister Rev. D.L Helfer

## From the Board of Trustees

by Debra Oria, Trustee

Summer is upon us! It's time once again for warm weather, sunshine, picnic blankets, beaches, fireflies, and badminton. Here in Connecticut, we are fortunate to have all four seasons to celebrate and enjoy, some of which we may wish were shorter than others. Personally, spring and fall are my favorites, but summer and winter also have their merits. The season of summer brings the church year to a close, invites the renewal of the Board of Trustees, along with a new budget, and this year there are also proposed updates to the By-Laws.

As we close out this cycle of the church year, your Board of Trustees has been hard at work to ensure timely provision of information to you, dear congregant, so that you have time to review the budget and proposed By-Law changes and ask questions prior to the Annual Meeting by way of Town Hall meetings. We sincerely hope you have found these to be helpful.

I will be leaving the Board this month and have been honored to serve for the past two years. They were challenging years for sure, with Covid stretching us, among other things. Through BOT service I have participated in conversations and decisions for the best interest of the Congregation. It was always amazing to me how each Board member could have such differing perspectives and yet, through meaningful conversations arrive at an outcome that we could all agree upon as the best for the congregation. My love and care for this congregation has grown through this service, I've made some great friends, and I believe I have grown as person. I encourage anyone who is considering Board service to give it a try when you are ready.



### Our Caring Circle is Available

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

**Bob Bollinger** is the contact person for June and July.

**Joan Stapleton** is the assistant.

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

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



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

### Congratulations 2022 High School Graduates!

Congratulations to the high school class of 2022! We were so glad to bless your journey into young adulthood during your Bridging Ceremony in May.

#### **Em Strilowich**

*Em Strilowich first came to the UU Congregation of Danbury around 2010. She is graduating from Bethel High School, and she might go to Naugatuck Valley Community College in the fall. She says she might want to be a Radio DJ and is working on her Girl Scout Gold Award on Autism Awareness and Acceptance.*

#### **Amelia McPartlin**

*Amelia McPartlin and her family first came to the UU Congregation of Danbury in 2008 or 2009. She is graduating from New Fairfield High School this year and plans on attending Savannah College of Art and Design for Illustration in the Fall.*

#### **Zoe McCartney**

*Zoe McCartney is excited to announce that she is going to Ithaca College in the fall and her major will be Writing for Film, TV, and Emerging Media.*

### Seeking Community Connections

Have you been active in a social justice movement on the local level, involved in addressing a local issue, or are you connected with one or more local nonprofits? Our Director of Religious Education, Sierra-Marie Gerfao, would like to hear from you! She is seeking opportunities to learn more about what is happening in the communities of this region and to learn about how families can be involved in bettering the community. You can email her at [dre@uudanbury.org](mailto:dre@uudanbury.org) to get in touch.

### Feedback About Our Spirit Play Experiment

There will be some opportunities to offer your feedback about the Spirit Play experiment in June. Please watch the weekly announcements for information about these opportunities. In the meantime, you are welcome to send comments and questions to Sierra-Marie Gerfao at [dre@uudanbury.org](mailto:dre@uudanbury.org).

### Religious Education Summer Office Hours

The Spirit Play Religious Education experiment will continue in June, final day to be announced. During this month, Sierra-Marie Gerfao, our Director of Religious Education for children and youth will:

- Continue to have in-person office hours on the first two Sunday afternoons of the month. Feel free to contact her for an appointment.
- Be away on Sunday, June 19th (Heather Smith will be her substitute) and at General Assembly on Sunday, June 26th (substitute to be announced if Spirit Play continues).

In July and August, we will have a Religious Education vacation. Sierra-Marie will:

- Be out of the office for much of July and will not have an opportunity to read emails sent during that month. Phone calls will be returned for emergencies only.
- Be happy to meet with community members online by appointment throughout August

We will also be re-opening the nursery sometime this summer, date to be announced. Have a great summer!

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### **Notes on Two Hundred Years (and More)**

by Douglas H. Parkhurst

Organized Unitarianism came to Connecticut later than did Universalism. The first Unitarian church in the state was First Ecclesiastical Society, a Congregational church in the town of Brooklyn, in the northeast part of Connecticut. In 1822 this Brooklyn church followed the lead of many Congregational churches in nearby eastern Massachusetts by calling a Unitarian, the young Rev. Samuel Joseph May, as its minister. By 1850 there were three more Unitarian groups in Connecticut, in Hartford, Norwich, and Southington. In contrast, by 1835 Connecticut had about a dozen Universalist societies and a state convention organized in 1832.

At mid-twentieth century Unitarian churches were found in Hartford and New London (Unitarian-Universalist). By then the Brooklyn church was inactive. Unitarian fellowships (see more information below) were added in Westport in 1949, New Haven in 1950, Pomfret in 1956, and Storrs in 1957. The Westport and New Haven fellowships each gained full church status soon after they organized. The Brooklyn group was identified as a fellowship in the 1961-1962 directory of the newly consolidated Unitarian Universalist Association. Several more fellowships were formed in Connecticut in the 1960s, including the short-lived Housatonic Valley Unitarian Fellowship in New Milford.

(continued)

In 1945, as the Second World War was ending, the American Unitarian Association (AUA) revisited an idea from the past to organize "lay-centers" or "lay-units" in communities which lacked a formal liberal religious presence. A denominational committee was formed to oversee this effort and a layman, Munroe Husbands, was appointed director. These new groups, re-designated "fellowships," would be lay-led, with a minimum of ten members, a statement of purpose, by-laws, and a financial commitment to the AUA. Fellowships were not intended to start as full-fledged Unitarian churches though some evolved as such. Others remained small with active lay leadership and programming but no full time minister. Nor did all fellowships survive.

Denominational historian Carol R. Morris has written of fellowships that the AUA would "facilitate their birth, allowing them to find their own identity, develop their own style, and produce their own leadership." The first modern fellowship was organized in Boulder, Colorado, in 1948. By 1957 more than 200 had been established. In the spring of 1964 George and June Volckhausen, residents of North Salem, New York, determined to form a Unitarian fellowship in Ridgefield, Connecticut. The Volckhausens were committed and enthusiastic. While living in Pennsylvania in the 1950s they helped to organize a most successful fellowship which today is the Main Line Unitarian Church of Devon. On June 4 and 21, 1964, initial meetings of the Unitarian Fellowship of Ridgefield were held at the Ridgefield Community Center, 316 Main Street. Twenty-one men and women became founding members with Sunday services and activities planned for the coming months. Guest speakers were engaged, one of the first being author Merle Miller. The Fellowship began meeting at Odd Fellows Hall on King Lane; subsequently it occupied space in a nearby building that once housed a kennel.

Given Ridgefield's proximity to Danbury the Ridgefield Unitarians and Danbury Universalists began to take note of each other. Rev. Ralph Bailey, minister in Danbury, spoke at least once at a Sunday service in Ridgefield.

Soon it was evident the two congregations could accomplish more working together than apart and in June 1966 each voted to pursue plans to merge. Rev. Bailey would continue as minister and it was agreed to sell the Danbury Universalist Church building at 347 Main Street though this latter decision came only after debate.

The merger was completed that autumn and the Unitarian Fellowship of Ridgefield and the First Universalist-Unitarian Church of Danbury (as it was known since 1960) united under a new name, Unitarian Universalist Society of Northern Fairfield County. The UUSNFC literally met in the middle at a new location, a rented building known as the old Connecticut Inn at 6 West Starrs Plain Road in Danbury, just off route 7 near the Ridgefield town line. Services were also conducted at Danbury's Morris Street School prior to the Society's 1970 purchase of property and move to West Redding. An exciting and significant new chapter was being added to an old, old story!



# Ministry/Team News

## From the *Membership Team*

**Sunday Connections for Newcomers** - Newcomers are invited to join Rev. Kathleen after the service on Sunday, June 12<sup>th</sup>, in the Fellowship Hall for an informal get-acquainted session. Let us know what brought you here. What questions do you have about Unitarian Universalism and about our Danbury congregation? The June 12th Sunday Connections will be an in person only session **but** we have a Zoom Newcomer Connections session planned for Tuesday, June 7<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m. If you would like to attend the Zoom session, please RSVP to **Bruni Edwards** by June 3<sup>rd</sup>.

## From the *Social Action Council*

### Soup Kitchen Corner

by Judy Lacker



On Saturday, June 4<sup>th</sup>, some members of Soup Kitchen Team 4 (Team Leader **Michele Cousens, Joanne Davidson, Michael Stengle, the Parr Family, Bruni Edwards, Yvonne Ruddy-Stein, Rik Cousens, Bonansinga/Twombly Family and Ali Haffner**) 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](mailto:ddhsandwiches@gmail.com). We can all be an important part of the fight to end hunger in our community!.

## Calling All of Us for Juneteenth Celebration!

Join us for the Juneteenth -- National Independence Day -- Celebration 2022! The theme is "Honoring our Heritage: Forging the Future." Come help us build connections in the community and bear out our 8th Principle by showing our support for the past and future of African Americans. Admission is free and open to the public.

**When:** Sunday, June 19th from 12-5PM

**Where:** Western Connecticut State University (WCSU), Midtown Campus  
181 White Street, Danbury, CT 06810

**Free Parking** is available at the garage across White Street or around the corner on 5th Ave.

- Rahsaan Langley, one of Connecticut's premier R&B singers
- live entertainment by DJ Frank Stewart
- music and dance performances by local artists, including hip hop artist DeAndre "D.J." Gaines
- Cultural & historical activities featuring a Juneteenth Exhibit and Walking Tour by the Danbury Museum
- "Liberation" Cultural Art Gallery Exhibit, sponsored by the Cultural Alliance of Western CT
- Panel Discussion featuring leaders from education, the arts, the nonprofit sector, corporate and community leaders
- Wellness Center providing FREE COVID-19 vaccinations and health screenings
- Kids Corner with children's activities
- Food trucks and local vendors

and so much more!

**Why:** Juneteenth is the oldest nationally celebrated commemoration of the abolition of slavery in the United States. Dating back to 1865, it was on June 19th that the Union soldiers, led by Major General Gordon Granger, landed at Galveston, Texas with news that the war had ended and that the enslaved were now free. This was two and a half years after President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation - which had become official January 1, 1863.

Fast-forward to 2021, in a great example of bi-partisanship the United States Senate voted unanimously on a resolution to make Juneteenth an American federal holiday. The Senate resolution officially establishes June 19th as "Juneteenth National Independence Day." The day after the Senate passed the resolution, the United States House of Representatives also approved the resolution and President Biden signed the bill into law.

In an effort to recognize and celebrate the rich history of this holiday and to highlight the extraordinary contributions made by African Americans to the community, the Danbury Juneteenth Coalition is planning a fun-filled day for the entire family – both young and old.

**Who:** The Danbury Juneteenth Coalition includes The Greater Danbury NAACP, the WCSU Racial Justice Coalition, Salt & Light Ministries and other community organizations and residents.

# Upcoming Events

## Senior Chair Yoga Classes Planned at UUCD

by Joe Gillotti



It has become abundantly clear to almost all of us that physiological stress, uncertainty, civil unrest, and radicalization of much of the population is an ever-increasing national problem. What can we do? The first and most important duty is to ourselves, to take care of ourselves at a different level. Exercise, cultivating stronger mental capabilities, spiritually and physically during these trying times is one of the most stable activities a senior person can strive towards.

Chair Yoga is a powerful and at the same time gentle technique in helping a person feel stronger and more balanced with simple stretching exercises while sitting on a chair, or standing and stretching while holding on to the back of a chair. Additional Yoga techniques to be included are breath control, brief meditation practice and what can be the beginning of greater expansion of consciousness through a better understanding of one's self.

Only for those interested, an additional 30-minute class will be added which will include Yoga Philosophy and Consciousness Awareness. All participants must contact their doctor or medical provider to gain approval to attend this Chair Yoga Class.

For those interested in this 6 week, 1 hour class (to start with), please contact **Joe Gillotti** to register, space is limited. This class is tentatively scheduled to begin on Monday June 6<sup>th</sup>, at 10:00 a.m. in the lower level of the Fellowship Hall.

If you questions or concerns feel free to call Joe Gillotti any evening during the week after 7:00 p.m.



**UUCD Men Conversing over Coffee** meets on the second Wednesday of each month. Our next meeting is on Wednesday, June 8<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**.

## Music at the Ridge

by Nancy Hershatter

Beginning on October 2<sup>nd</sup>, one Sunday per month at 4:00 p.m. our Fellowship Hall will ring with the sounds of a brand new live music series which we are calling Music at the Ridge. These live acoustic music shows will feel like a cross between a house concert and a Saturday night coffeehouse. October 2<sup>nd</sup> our performers will be Mustard's Retreat, a folk duo from Ann Arbor, Michigan. On November 6<sup>th</sup>, Pat Wictor will be performing. Pat is a singer-songwriter who grew up in Venezuela, the Netherlands, Norway and England but currently makes his home in Brooklyn. We are hoping to livestream these shows; more on that later.

If you would like to be on the team that makes these intimate concerts a success, email **Nancy Hershatter**. We especially need folks who are willing to a) help with tech setup b) take tickets at the door c) bake and serve refreshments at intermission d) be on the publicity team that gets the word out to the larger community and e) hospitality--making sure our performer(s) have what they need. Our objectives are to build bridges in the community through music, while providing a sustainable venue in western Connecticut for live music to be shared and enjoyed. Revenue will be shared between performers and UUCD.

## Thank You Note



International Rescue Committee  
122 East 42nd Street  
New York, NY 10168-1289  
1-855-9RESCUE

Rescue.org

May 9, 2022

On behalf of everyone at the International Rescue Committee, please accept my heartfelt thanks for your generous gift. It is only because such compassionate supporters as you take the important step of partnering with us that the IRC can help so many uprooted people – not just to survive conflict or disaster, but to recover and regain control of their futures.

With your partnership, the IRC is mobilizing resources to serve families fleeing conflict in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Our teams are on the ground in Poland, partnering with local organizations to assess humanitarian needs and respond as needed. Your support is critical to ensuring that we can be there for these families.

With nearly 80 million people displaced by war and persecution – more than at any time in recorded history – your generosity is especially appreciated. Thank you for being an important part of the IRC community and for your commitment to ensuring that the IRC will continue to be here for humanity.

Sincerely,

David Miliband  
President and CEO

