



Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Danbury

Monthly **COMMENT** Newsletter

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

FEBRUARY 2023

From our Minister



After nourishment, shelter and companionship, stories are the thing we need most in the world. ~ English author, Philip Pullman

Much of this congregational year our Sunday services and other events have focused on stories: our own stories, the story of our congregational history, stories from other people and faith traditions. And we have explored lessons from these stories through theater, music, parables retold, and sharing our own stories with each other. Truly, as the English author Pullman asserts, “After nourishment, shelter and companionship, stores are the thing we need most in the world”. Perhaps most especially during difficult times and liminal times, we need to be reminded of old stories, and at the same time, create new ones with and for each other.

I’ve been a long-time student of research, books, and all things related to the study of what makes a good life. In fact, I’m currently reading a recently published book, *The Good Life – Lessons From The World’s Longest Scientific Study Of Happiness*. One of the findings in the study is the importance of connection with others. Healthy relationships are a key to living a good life. My hope since entering professional ministry has been to help congregations cultivate relationships within and beyond the physical walls of it’s buildings because I agree with filmmaker and author Tahir Shah who said “Stories are a communal currency of humanity”. I’m convinced that in sharing stories with one another we nurture the connections we need for a good life.

As I prepare to close the chapter of my ministry with you, and you prepare to open a new chapter of possibility, we navigate a time of leaving and new beginnings. Let us relish moments of vulnerability, gatherings of celebration, and opportunities to face uncertainty together. How fortunate we are to share the next five months of story telling and creating!

Grateful,
Rev. Kathleen

[Last Chance – we need your feedback!](#)

Our monthly community dinner and social action project experiment feedback survey needs your response! This is the last call so please take 5 minutes and click [here](#) by February 5th.

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 March Comment –
Friday, February 17th.

UU Danbury Cancellation Policy – During very inclement weather, our in-person Sunday Services, Religious Education and any other on campus meetings or events will be cancelled. To learn of a cancellation, please check one of the following:

1. Your email;
2. Your text messages;
3. The UU Danbury website, www.uudanbury.org.
4. Facebook, www.facebook.com/UUDanbury.



ASSISTIVE LISTENING SYSTEM

If you have used our assistive listening devices, please check your home to make sure that we have all available devices. Thank You.

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

Sunday, February 5th

The Religion that Says "Yes" to Life

Randy Becker



Most religions form around a core of practices intended to obey, appease, or please some greater entities and/or earn some great eternal reward. Even in the absence of such “gods,” religions tend to form around limitations and prohibitions; “don’t live with attachment,” “don’t worship differently,” “don’t focus on worldly things,” etc. Such religious sentiments endeavor to keep us from our innate human nature by saying, again and again, loudly, “NO.” But what would a religion look like, sound like, feel like if it were to say “YES” to who we are and our potential?

The Rev. Dr. Randolph “Randy” Becker is a life-long Universalist Unitarian who has served in the Unitarian Universalist Religious and Parish Ministries for over 50 years. Now, in retirement, he calls the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Danbury his community of faith.

Sunday, February 12th

Music Stories Part I – Man in Black

Rev. Dr. Kathleen Rudoff

Johnny Cash was a man known the world over – known for his music and many contradictions. His life story of music, passion, pain, and so much more, has lessons for all of us. We take our first look in Music Stories Part I with his song Man in Black and special music from our own Jerry Phelps.

Sunday Connections for Newcomers - Newcomers are invited to join Rev. Kathleen after the service on Sunday, February 12th, 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 February 12th Sunday Connections will be an in-person only session. If you are interested in setting up a virtual Sunday Connections, please reach out to Bruni Edwards to set that up for a different day- bruni30@hotmail.com

Sunday, February 19th

Music Stories Part II – Walk the Line

Rev. Dr. Kathleen Rudoff

We continue the music stories series with Johnny Cash’s song I’ll Walk the Line, and a poignant quote from his wife, June Carter Cash. Connections to the values we hold as Unitarian Universalists are evident in the Johnny Cash musical story.

Sunday, February 26th

From Roots to Forest

Rev. Sierra-Marie Gerfao, Director of Religious Education

Loosely inspired by "biomimicry" (which means learning from strategies of nature), this is a service on growth.



Our Caring Circle is Available

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

Inge Hill is the contact person for February.

Donna Lawrence 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.

From the Board of Trustees

by Peter Horton



...the awkward truth - Rev. Michael O'Sullivan

Nothing is certain but death and taxes

“we crave certainty...” “we seek certainty because it is a comfort”

As a faith we do not offer certainty

Certainty is a comfort. It's why we plan for tomorrow

The uncertainty of the journey

In his UUCD sermon on November 27th, Rev. Michael O'Sullivan focused on the human need of certainty. From the certainty that our car will start in the morning to the certainty that our religious home will be here tomorrow. Rev. O'Sullivan stated that certainty is a comfort we seek and, at times, demand. Our sense of certainty allows us to plan for tomorrow.

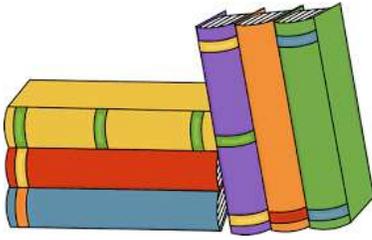
One of the underlying roles that the UUCD Board provides is the comfort and certainty that, as a faith community, we will be present for all of us who need and cherish this home. Members of the Board do not assume that certainty is a given. Most meetings are about uncertainties and how to ameliorate them.

One such uncertainty is the recent announcement by Rev. Kathleen that she will be leaving UUCD at the end of this church year. The Board is already working to bring comfort back to our community by hiring a minister who will help give stability and guidance. It won't be an easy task. Rev. Kathleen is an exceptional minister.

What is certain about UUCD? We have a very generous financial community. We make space and support members who have a passion to share with this community; chair yoga, Death Buffet, Communications task force, fund raising through our annual auction just to name a few.

We also have an awkward truth, to steal a phrase from Rev. O'Sullivan. We have the uncertainty of leadership. The Nominating Committee struggles to find good candidates to fill open leadership roles. Core committees, such as Sunday Services, Buildings and Grounds, and Social Action are in need of passionate and committed members.

As a congregation we do know that our “car will start in the morning.” We do have the comfort that our members love this congregation and are attentive to it. And we do embrace the truth that our journey will always be uncertain. That is the nature of our faith community.



Calling all librarians, book lovers, historians, and organizers:

If you might be interested in working on renewing and refreshing our library, and creating a UUCD historical artifact display over the next few months, please contact Rev. Kathleen. Thank you!

From Our Director of Religious Education For Children and Youth



Dear Congregation,

You won't be seeing children and teens around much at the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Danbury over the coming months. The reason for this is that many of our families have made an intensive commitment to Our Whole Lives sexuality education programs for the rest of the school-year.

These programs meet at times and in places that don't make them visible to you on Sunday mornings. But rest assured, on a weekly basis, we have the participation of at least fourteen children and teens. I hope you take advantage of the opportunity to connect across the generations anyway through this year's [Mystery Buddies](#) program.

Meanwhile, the sexuality education these kids are receiving is vital and life-giving. I want to heartily thank volunteers Lisa Horton, Sequoia Lowe, Julie Tramontana, Jacqui Kaplan, David Parr, Keith Henderson, and Jeff Asher for their faithful work on these programs.

And while we continue to offer kids meaningful ministries every Sunday, we are also looking toward the future. The ministries that this congregation will offer to children and teens in Greater Danbury in another six or seven years when the group of kids moving through our current ministries have aged out will come from foundations we build now.

Congregations that want to build a ministry for children and youth don't usually do it by accident. They decide what they want to do and then make plans for how to get there. I am excited about engaging with you in this process! Please don't forget to mark the March 12 all-congregation vision/strategic plan workshop on your calendar.

Warmly in Faith,
Sierra-Marie

Upcoming in Religious Education

Children are always welcome in Sunday services. Alternatively, for children who would prefer, we have nursery care as well as a child-led, play-based Religious Education program available during services. Additionally, we have kicked off Our Whole Lives Sexuality Education for 7th-8th graders and 10th-11th graders. Children signed up for these programs will meet in February at pre-designated times according to the following calendar:

- **Sunday, February 5th** - Middle and High School OWL
- **Saturday-Sunday, February 11th-12th** - Youth Conference in Worcester, MA
- **Sunday, February 12** - Middle School OWL only (NO High School OWL)
- **Sunday, February 19** - Middle School OWL only (NO High School OWL)
- **Friday-Saturday, February 24-25:** Middle School OWL Retreat and Middle School Youth Group Event TBA
- **Sunday, February 26** - High School OWL only (NO Middle School OWL); Mystery Buddies Program begins!

If your household includes children or teens and you would like to receive regular updates about programs, please get in touch with our Director of Religious Education by emailing dre@uudanbury.org.

Sign Up For Mystery Buddies

We will once again be doing a Mystery Buddies program this year, early March through early April! Have some fun and make a connection with someone from another generation. To learn more about this program and be matched with a Mystery Buddy, [sign up here](#). Buddy pairs will be assigned and instructions will be emailed out at the end of February.

A Sampling of Topics Explored in Our Whole Lives (OWL)

OWL is a comprehensive, holistic sexuality education program. Both 7th-8th grade and 10th-11th grade programs began meeting in January. Here are some topics the groups have explored so far:

7th-8th grade

- What is sexuality?
- Values
- The language of sexuality

10th-11th grade

- What is sexuality?
- The language of sexuality
- Anatomy
- Body image
- The sexual response cycle
- Reproductive and sexual health care
- Sexually transmitted infections

Ministry/Team News

From the *Auction Committee*



UUCD's Buy-Centennial Auction Website Goes Live Online January 30th

UUCD auction fund-raisers have helped us thrive and have fun! At our [BiddingOwl website](#) you can browse, purchase, bid and outbid for goods and services starting 9:00 a.m. on February 3rd until 5:00 p.m. on February 10th. To bid or purchase, you need to register.

Enjoy the Live Auction Via Zoom!

Saturday, February 11th from 6:00 – 8:00 p.m., UUCD's Jerry Phelps, five other vocalists *and* Master of Ceremonies, Peter Horton, will entertain you and inspire your generous bids! Tickets will be on sale at [BiddingOwl website](#) and a Zoom link will be emailed to ticket holders. **The UUCD Live Auction is guaranteed to be a good time!**

8th Principle: Fund Projects for Two Local Organizations

This fund-raiser supports both UUCD and advances our 8th Principle. There are direct support projects for two local organizations that you can fund on our [BiddingOwl website](#):

- [Danbury TBICO: The Bridge to Independence and Career Opportunity](#) and
- [DARA: Danbury Area Refuge Assistance](#).

Matching Donations:

You can make a matching donation by either matching a percent of the auction proceeds, or donating any amount.

- For example: match 2% and if we raise \$10,000, your matching donation is \$200.
- You may also donate any flat amount, or cap your matching donation - it's up to you!
- All matching donations are welcome.
- Email **Eva DeFranco** with questions or to donate.
- **Matching donations will not be applied to the 8th Principle outreach.**

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

From *Buildings and Grounds*

Help Needed!

There is an urgent need for two people to join the Buildings & Grounds Administration Team (BGAT). With support and guidance from the Board, this committee makes day-to-day decisions about what must be done to maintain our facilities. It collects bids for things like snow plowing or asphalt paving and makes recommendations to the Board. Time required: 2-4 hours per month. If interested, please contact **Gale Alexander** or **Margaret Henderson** immediately.

From the *Social Action Council*

Soup Kitchen Corner

by Judy Lacker

On Saturday, February 4th, some members of Soup Kitchen Team #4 (Team Leader **Bruni Edwards, Joanne Davidson, Michael Stengle, the Parr Family, Yvonne Ruddy-Stein, the 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 and hot lunches for Pacific House 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!



In the past couple of years, we have lost some of our **Dorothy Day** volunteers. Please consider volunteering to be on a DD Team - it only involves a few hours, 3 Saturdays per year. You will find it to be a very rewarding experience. Please contact **Judy Lacker** for more information or to sign up.

Please note that we have resumed collecting non-perishable food donations on Sunday mornings. Please place your food donations in the basket in the foyer. You can sign up to help transport the weekly collection to The Dorothy Day Hospitality House on Spring Street.



Food Donations

Upcoming Events



UUCD Men Conversing over Coffee meets on the second Wednesday of each month. Our next meeting is on Wednesday, February 8th at 10:00 a.m. at UUCD in the Fellowship Hall Lower Level. For more information contact **Gary Mummert** or **Joe Gillotti**.

Chair Yoga - All aspects of this class are designed to lead a person to a feeling of wellness and learning to become calmer. Come join our happy group, it's great value in so many ways, on Mondays 3:00 – 4:00 p.m. at UUCD. Participants must contact their doctor or medical provider for approval before attending this Chair Yoga Class. To register, or if you have questions or concerns, contact **Joe Gillotti** any evening during the week after 7:00 pm.

The discussions of "Mistakes and Miracles," the Unitarian Universalist Common Read for 2023, will occur in March. The start has been delayed until after the recent restocking of the book at the UUA bookstore (also available through Amazon). Watch the March *Comment* for details of why, when, where, etc. If you want more information contact **Randy Becker**.

Save the Date: An All-Congregation Event

Please reserve March 12th on your calendar. We need everyone's participation! After our Sunday service, we will have an all-congregation workshop to re-envision and work on a congregational strategic plan for the future of our ministries for children and youth. We have been encouraged by the UUA regional staff to do this workshop to help us communicate to minister candidates about the vision of the congregation for this part of our ministries.

When a congregation is building a ministry for children and youth from scratch (as this congregation will be doing over the next six years as the majority of this congregation's young people age out), it requires the efforts of the entire congregation. While our Director of Religious Education and the Religious Education Ministry Team will be providing key leadership and expertise in this process, the vision must come from the whole congregation.



Lui Collins
with
Anand Nayak

Sunday,
February 5, 2023

4pm

Folk singer/songwriter Lui Collins has been performing, writing and recording for over 40 years, earning international acclaim for her music. Her repertoire, accompanied on tenor ukulele and banjo, ranges from original and traditional folk songs and American standards to bossa nova in the original Brazilian Portuguese. She’s made 16 CDs, performed on others’ projects, and shared the stage with such folk-world notables as Tom Rush, Bonnie Raitt, and Stan Rogers.

Lui has been hailed by the Boston Herald as a “folksinger for our times” and by the Boston Globe as “one of New England’s first and brightest stars.” She was voted third most popular performer at the Champlain Valley Festival in 1992, along with Pete Seeger and French Canadian band La Bottine Souriante. Renowned guitarist Dave van Ronk called her “one of the best guitarist-arrangers I have heard in years,” and Canadian folk icon Stan Rogers quipped, “Lui sings my songs better than I do!”

Both solo and with Anand accompanying her, Lui’s concerts are intimate affairs. She interlaces her songs with stories about their background, her life, the weather – like a conversation with an old friend...with music.

[IMPORTANT NOTE: The artists have requested that all in live attendance at this concert wear masks (KN95, K95, or KF94). In addition, it is suggested that all attending be fully vaccinated and, if possible, have a negative home COVID test within the 24 hours before the concert. If you feel you will not or cannot meet these restrictions, please get a ticket for the live-stream of the concert.]



MUSIC AT THE RIDGE
24 Clapboard Ridge Road
Danbury, Connecticut
www.musicattheridge.org

Tickets:
In-person and
Live-streaming
At Eventbrite.com



Notes on Two Hundred Years (and More)

by Douglas H. Parkhurst

This month's article is adapted from the "Welcome" given by this writer at the bicentennial celebration service of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Danbury, Connecticut, (UUCD) on Sunday morning, October 16, 2022.

We are here on a very special Sunday. Today we formally mark the 200th anniversary of this church, organized in the Great Plain district of Danbury on December 9, 1822, as the First Universalist Society. This means two centuries of continuous service to the Danbury and for a time the Ridgefield and West Redding communities. In fact we are celebrating 200 years of us, you and me and all those members and friends who came before. We are fortunate to have two talented and energetic members of the clergy now serving us, Rev. Kathleen Rudoff, our consulting minister, and Rev. Sierra-Marie Gerfao, our director of religious education. Prior to their coming approximately sixty clergy have been associated with this congregation. This means an average ministerial tenure of three to four years. There are exceptions but three to four years has been the average. Many were settled ministers. There was at least one circuit rider and others have been part-time. We have had supply, interim, extension, and consulting ministers, a community minister, and a minister as director of religious education.

As members of the clergy have come and gone faithful lay people have persisted through ups and downs, through times good and not so good. Among those faithful members today are Keith and Marie Dupree who signed our membership book 52 years ago, in 1970, and are still active today.

Michael and Barbara Searing signed the book in 1973, both were active members until they moved south a few years ago.

There are those who have been here approximately four decades. Some are with us today in person, perhaps others are present online. Gale Alexander. Members of the Alexander family have been associated with this church since the late 1960s. Bob Bollinger. Donna Lawrence. Janet Swift. Joanne Davidson. Jane Leff. Barbara Myers.

We remember long-time members who have passed on in recent years. Jean Renjilian. Bill McWilliams. Jack and Kathy Charles. Ross Fenster. George and June Volckhausen. Seabury and Eleanor Lyon. Anne Thorpe. Sally Flatau. Henry and Betty Lewis. Philip Hadley. Mejt Glean. Wayne and Rosemary Raulerson.

As I was growing up there were other "pillars" of our church. The Olmstead family. The Taylor family. Francis "Spike" Albert. Frank and Sallie Rollins. Edith Ritton. The Voegele family. Arthur Olson. The Parkhurst family. William Wood. Helen Wood. Harry Lincoln and family. The Don Stone family.

There was Bessie Jackson who with her husband Ralph lived on Hoyt Street near the firehouse. Bessie signed the book in 1908 and was still active in the 1960s. I believe Bessie went with the church when it first moved to West Redding in the early 1970s.

Adelaide Grabert holds a place of honor in our memories, associated with this church for about seventy years, first as assistant organist, then starting in 1897 as organist and choir director. Miss Grabert held these positions for sixty-four years until 1961 when she retired at age ninety.

There were those who went back earlier in the 20th century and to the 19th. Their last names were familiar in both Danbury and the Universalist society and church. Hubbell. Stuckey. Scott. Fanton. Bates. Foster. Dibble. Hurlburt. Ambler. Peck. Andrews. Clark. Ryder. Hopkins. Heath. Treadwell.

There are other members and friends from all eras who are too numerous to name here. Some came and went, others stayed for the long haul. They have been an integral part of our heritage and our memories, the backbone and great strength of this and any free church, the lay people.

UUCD Member Doug Parkhurst has written a series of articles, *200 Years and More*, in our monthly newsletters. To read - or print - a compilation of all these articles, please click [here](#). If you have trouble printing your own, you can order one through the UUCD office for a small fee. Please email officemanager@gmail.com.



SIDE WITH LOVE

30 Days of Love 2023

Feeling in need of spiritual sustenance for justice work? The UUA's Side with Love group is providing bits of spiritual nourishment, political grounding, and shared practices for the faith and justice work UU's do all year. At <https://sidewithlove.org/30daysoflove2023> you can find details about the remaining weeks in this annual celebration.

WEEK 3 (January 30 - February 5)
 WEEK 4 (February 6-12)
 EXTRA DAYS (February 13-14)

Resilience :: Climate Justice
 Healing :: Decriminalization
 Blessings :: Liberatory Intersections

Workshop on Feb 25: "So You're Working on the 8th Principle..."

Congregations throughout the Central East Region of the UUA are at different stages of work on the 8th Principle (see text below*). Sign up for this year's "New Day Rising" event to learn from neighboring congregations about ways we can grow in our anti-oppression work. [Click here for a detailed agenda.](#)

*The proposed 8th Principle of Unitarian Universalism, which UUCD adopted in 2021, reads:

*We covenant to affirm and promote
journeying toward spiritual wholeness
by working to build a diverse multicultural Beloved Community
by our actions that accountably dismantle racism and other oppressions
in ourselves and our institutions.*

General Assembly registration is now open!



This year the Unitarian Universalists' annual conference, known as GA (General Assembly), will be held in Pittsburgh June 21-25.

So why think about it now, in February? Two reasons: Pittsburgh is close enough that we might rent a van and drive together; and, registration fees go up March 1 -- and again May 15. Registration details are at <https://www.uua.org/ga/registration>. Please note that this year there's a special rate for folks who have never attended GA before, or for those under 25. Also, **as always, there are scholarship funds available** for those who need them.

If you're thinking about going - even if you're not sure yet - please email Margaret and let her know. And keep an eye out for a brief information session coming on February 5th or 12th.

A letter from former member Maggie Hooten

Dear Friends and Family,

It has now been 2 years, 3 months and 27 days since Bill died and left us to figure out how to carry on without him. Because of Covid, we were not able gather together to mark such a momentous event with a celebration of his life and while we kept picking tentative later dates and making plans for a service of some kind, we have now realized this is not what we want to do.

Last week, on the same day and without communicating with each other, Beth and Nathan each called me with the same suggestion: that I might want to create a commemorative book on Bill's life and it immediately felt right. I enjoy writing and Bill was often encouraging me to write a book in my retirement. While I am not sure that this is what he had in mind, I think he would get a kick out of the irony! And I hope it will be a more lasting tribute than a fleeting service.

I am hoping you will be willing to participate in The Bill Project. I would be so very grateful if you would email or snail mail me (or call me and I'll take notes) with any anecdotes, thoughts, quotes, memories, or stories you have about Bill as well as any photos you want to share; anything that might bring that vibrant personality back to life on the page would be wonderful. They can be as many or as few as your memory holds; any length and they don't need to be anything extraordinary or significant - just every day Bill would be delightful. I am also happy to edit for you so no need to fuss over the writing.

When I am done, I will send you a copy that you can read and then stick in a drawer or on a shelf and maybe years later others who never knew Bill might come across it in a secondhand bookstore or a tag sale and muse over who this person was, back in the day. That would bring us so much pleasure!

Maggie Hooten
Beth and Nathan

Timing: I am hoping to begin this within the next month so if you could send your contributions before Valentines Day that would be lovely!

Please include a mailing address for the finished product in case I don't have yours.

