



# Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Danbury

Monthly **COMMENT** Newsletter

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

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APRIL 2023

## From our Minister



*Relevancy rests in the midst of the resilient.*

~ Olawale Daniel

I've never before thought about the connection of relevancy to resiliency, but I've been thinking a lot about relevancy lately. Religious communities must be relevant in order to survive. That is part of what the Religious Education workshop last month was pointing to. And that's what the Unitarian Universalist Association is considering with its work done by the Article II Commission - work to make our principles and purposes relevant for the time we are now living in. Relevancy requires change and that is rarely a comfortable concept for the majority of us! Anything that risks our feeling comfortable or might jeopardize our certainty in how things "are" can be challenging at best. But I am certain that we are resilient people.

Consider all that you have personally experienced in your life. Consider all the trials and tribulations, the difficulties and trauma. You are still here and you are a gift with stories to share. That is resiliency. We don't all, or always, come out of those experiences unscathed, just as a congregation can carry scars and stories of difficulties in its history. But those stories, both in our personal and congregational life, are a part of our gospel and a testament to our resiliency! I have been taking time in my morning gratitude ritual to give consideration to that resiliency and accept that relevancy lies right there in its midst. I believe that is something worth celebrating as a source of strength.

At the risk of sounding like a broken record, it will take every member and friend of this congregation contributing some level of talent, treasure, and time, to create the changes necessary for relevancy. I will admit to you that I'm not sure exactly what changes will take place, but you will be a part of the change process as you are a stakeholder in the congregation! There is possibility of a very bright future for this congregation by way of its relevancy in the midst of its resiliency. What an exciting prospect!

Grateful for our collective resiliency,  
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 21<sup>st</sup>.**

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

**Sunday, April 2<sup>nd</sup>**                                      The Art of Living                      Brought to you by regional UU young adults  
 Art is often an expression of the life experiences of those who create it, and the experience of life itself can feel like art. In this service, eight young adults will each share an original art piece or performance that relates to their experience of life.

**Sunday, April 9<sup>th</sup>**                      Celebrating A Centennial Anniversary                      Rev.s Kathleen Rudoff & Sierra-Marie Gerfao  
 On this Easter Sunday we will celebrate the 100 year anniversary of Norbert Capek’s Flower Communion with story and song. Please bring a flower to be shared in our special ritual. This is a service for all ages and stages of life. Easter bonnets and wearing flowers of all kinds are strongly encouraged!

**Sunday, April 16<sup>th</sup>**                                      Becoming Relevant – Meeting the Challenge                                      Rev. Kathleen Rudoff  
 Let’s take a look at what is happening in our denomination with regard to becoming more relevant as we consider our own congregation’s relevance and the challenges that work presents. There are people who need our religious community and they need us to be relevant.

**Pathway to Membership Class** with Rev. Kathleen, Sunday April 16 – The class will start 15 minutes after the service ends (approximately 11:15 start time). It will run for 1.5 hours, and will be held in person at UUCD. In this workshop, you will...

- Learn about Unitarian Universalism
- Discover what UU Danbury can offer you
- Receive information about how to become a member

**Sunday, April 23<sup>rd</sup>**    Earth Day    Team Green  
 In celebration of Earth Day, please join Team Green for a service offered in conjunction with the Unitarian Universalist Ministry for the Earth.

**Sunday, April 30<sup>th</sup>**                                      Theology of Suffering: Getting a Handle on It and Relieving It                                      Diane M. Daniels  
 What does it mean to suffer - physically, mentally, emotionally, psychologically, and spiritually? Consider the presence of negative emotions and their role as sources of suffering - are we doomed to suffer, or are there things we can do to understand and relieve our suffering?



Guest preacher Dianne M. Daniels is a born-and-bred Detroitter who relocated to Connecticut to be with the love of her life, her husband of 32 years, Aaron L. Daniels. They have three grown children and one grandson, and Dianne enjoys guest-preaching at UU Churches throughout Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts.

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



### What Next? The Future of Children and Youth Ministries

The newsletter deadline is occurring before we have compiled all the notes from our congregational meeting in March on the future of our children and youth ministries. Once they are compiled, our process will include:

- Checking in with participants from the meeting to make sure we accurately captured their work.
- Checking in with families and grandparents who couldn't make it to the meeting and those who had to leave early to receive their input.
- Conceptually testing ideas with families inside and outside of the congregation (Would this idea serve a need your family has? What interests you or not about this idea? What would make you want to try it out?)
- Developing plans for initial experiments with new forms of ministry for children and youth ([attractive and/or missional forms](#)), based on the conceptual tests.
- Deciding what things to set aside or change in order to turn over resources for these experiments. Checking in with congregants and restructuring.
- Engaging the experiments. Learning. Developing other iterations of the experiments. Engaging. Learning. Developing other iterations, and so forth.

We need to care for one another through grief as we move forward, without letting grief drive our decision-making. The future of ministries for children and youth will be different than in the past. This is because the pandemic accelerated changes that were happening in the lives of families in the congregation even five years ago when the Sunday School model was in its final days. There are things we miss from the past. Here are some general notes about themes from the meeting:

- **Families in the congregation** that have kids living with them (mostly ages 10+) are feeling torn between wanting all that regular Sunday attendance used to offer but feeling a constant pull from many directions. They are trying their best to balance it all in the ways that make sense within the particular contexts of their family lives. Meanwhile, many kids are struggling with mental health issues, stress, and trauma.
- **Grandparents** in the congregation who have grandkids ages 10 and under are reporting a variety of very real struggles in their adult children's lives, from financial to mental health, divorces to single parenting and co-parenting between homes, and so on, and they report that it is hard for families with kids to think about going to church, though many feel that their grandkids are being raised with UU values.

- We were able to very quickly name **many resources we have to offer** the Greater Danbury community, including children and youth. The ideas we had for how to use these assets to meet needs named by families ranged widely, but there were two more evidently recurring themes: (1) **partnerships** with other faith communities in Danbury and other UU congregations in CT to serve children in the community and (2) **multigenerational** activities, generational mentorship, and youth-adult leadership partnerships.

Warmly in Faith,  
Sierra-Marie

### Upcoming in Religious Education

Children are always welcome in Sunday services. Alternatively, for children who would prefer, we have a child-led, play-based Religious Education activities available during services. Additionally, children and youth enrolled in the Our Whole Lives (OWL) Sexuality Education program for 7th-8th graders and 10th-11th graders meet at pre-pre-designated times included on this special programs calendar:

- **Sunday, April 2** - Middle School OWL (NO High School OWL); High School Youth Con at Shelter Rock
- **Sunday, April 9** - Easter! No regular programs or activities; Possible Easter Egg hunt
- **Sunday, April 16** - End of Spring Break; No programs or activities for children and youth
- **Sunday, April 23** - Middle School OWL (double session) and High School OWL
- **Sunday, April 30** - Middle School OWL (NO High School OWL); High School begins preparation for Senior High Sunday

## From the Board of Trustees

by John Miglietta, Vice-President

As I sit here in my nice cozy home office as the last of winter is trying to drag me into gloom, I am heartened by this congregation and its vision. One thing that gives me hope is our adoption in 2021 of the [8<sup>th</sup> Principle](#). You know the one where we say “*We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, 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.*”

While one of the most obvious and clear cases of racial injustice is that borne by our African-American brethren, they are not the only ones. We mention a case every Sunday in our Welcoming. We recognize that our property was once the domain of the Paugussett’s. While we may not have individually been party to their plight, we collectively have benefited. This is what the Eight Principle means. It means that we have to acknowledge and rectify (to whatever extent possible) the damage done by our forebears. I didn’t know that the Native Americans didn’t have access to basic [civil rights](#) until 1968, nor that they didn’t have freedom to practice their [religions](#) until 1978. My ignorance is no excuse for my lack of awareness. Our own [Danbury New-Times](#) recently has had a [series](#) of articles on the looting and retention of Native American artifacts in museums and collections around the state. The return of these objects to their rightful heirs I believe is something that we can all support and push for.

So, how can we work toward supporting and living the 8<sup>th</sup> Principle? We just had an online workshop entitled “*So You’re Working on the 8th Principle...*” As part of our annual Auction we also supported two local organizations Danbury [TBICO](#), and [DARA](#) that directly help those in need. We surpassed our goals for both of those appeals. But there is more to do. It’s time to roll up our sleeves.

Hoping that all are enjoy the coming of Spring!

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# Ministry/Team News

From the *Caring Circle*



### Our Caring Circle is Available

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

**Karen Gillotti** is the contact person for April.

**Valerie Cochrane** is the assistant.

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

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

From *Nominating Team*

## Nominating Committee Progress Report

The Nominating Committee nominates candidates to fill openings on the Board of Trustees, Nominating Committee, and Moderator. These nominees, and any others nominated at the Annual Meeting, are voted on at the Annual Meeting (June 4, 2023) by those members of UUCD who have been members for at least 60 days.

Where do things stand in this nominating process?

The following will be nominated:

President	Margaret Henderson	for a 1 year term beginning July 1, 2023.
Vice President	John Miglietta	for a 1 year term beginning July 1, 2023.
Secretary	Nancy Cullen	for a 1 year term beginning July 1, 2023.

3 other Board members, the Moderator, and 2 Nominating Committee members have terms that extend beyond June 30, 2023. So they do not need to be voted on in 2023.

This leaves 2 openings to be filled:

- Trustee on the Board of Trustees for a 3 year term beginning July 1, 2023.
- Nominating Committee member for a 3 year term beginning July 1, 2023.

Anyone interested in learning about and possibly serving in either of these positions may contact one of the Nominating Committee: Bob Bollinger (Chair), Jackie Alexander, Dan Brodax.

## From the *Social Action Council*

### Soup Kitchen Corner

by Judy Lacker

On Saturday, April 1<sup>st</sup>, some members of Soup Kitchen Team #2 (Team Leader **Carl Tramontana, Rose Schlemmer, Darlene Anderson-Alexander, Suze Shaner, Deborah Casey, Lisa Deldin and Andrea Anderson**) 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.. Lynn Taborsak has also been scheduling the sandwich donations so we have just the right amount each day at Dorothy Day Soup Kitchen. If you are interested in making sandwiches, please email her at [ddhhsandwiches@gmail.com](mailto:ddhhsandwiches@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

## Passover Potluck Seder! All are welcome! Friday, April 7<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 p.m.



We are planning another fabulous music-filled, Jewnitarian-led, humanist Seder in Fellowship Hall on Friday evening April 7<sup>th</sup>. Hosts are **Judy Lacker, Sally Mandler and Nancy Hershatter**.

We will use Sally's family Haggadah (which literally means the telling) to retell the story of how Moses freed the Jews from slavery under Pharaoh in Egypt. There will be music, shared readings and delicious traditional and not-so-traditional foods to share in the celebration (no bread or foods containing flour or rising agents). Children are welcome.

RSVP via the email invitation you received on March 24<sup>th</sup>. For questions and to let us know what you are bringing, contact Sally. Pesach Sameach! (Happy Passover.)

**UUCD Men Conversing over Coffee** meets on the second Wednesday of each month. Our next meeting is on Wednesday, April 12<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 a.m. at UUCD in the Fellowship Hall Lower Level. For more information contact **Gary Mummert** or **Joe Gillotti**.

## Men's Dinner Group Starting in April



**Men's  
Fellowship  
Dinner**

The Men's Coffee Group along with Pete Simon are hoping to provide opportunities for men's fellowship at a time when more men can meet, taking into account work schedules. Pete organized men for monthly dinners years ago and has agreed to re-launch this effort.

A date has been set for Monday, April 24<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 p.m. We hope to choose centrally-located restaurants and plan to start at The Grill by Barbarie at the Danbury Mall.

Emails will soon go out to all local men listed in the Directory and to those who are associated with members and friends. If you do not want to get further emails, just let us know. For more information contact **Gary Mummert**.

## Hudson Valley Sally



**Music at the Ridge** presents **Hudson Valley Sally** in concert Sunday, April 2 at 4:00 p.m. Hudson Valley Sally is a folk trio in the tradition of Pete Seeger, known for their tight harmonies and joyful sound. Their music is designed to make you think and inspire hope. To quote veteran songwriter and performer Charlie King, "Hudson Valley Sally lights up the stage with a joyous energy. They breathe new life into old songs and make them sound brand new. Their roots are deep and their eyes are on the prize. They remind me of what a song can do and make me want to keep singing." Learn more at <https://musicattheridge.org/> Tickets, both in person and livestream at: [www.eventbrite.com/e/hudson-valley-sally-tickets-5729254644487](http://www.eventbrite.com/e/hudson-valley-sally-tickets-5729254644487)

## Notes on Two Hundred Years (and More)

by Douglas H. Parkhurst

The formal process leading to the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Danbury's (UUCD's) move to its present location at 24 Clapboard Ridge Road began in 1996. It was in response to a growing sentiment among parishioners that the group pursue a vision and dream to intentionally grow a diverse membership in a larger space more visible and accessible to the public.

What was then called the Unitarian Universalist Society of Northern Fairfield County (UUSNFC) made its home at 9 Picketts Ridge Road in West Redding, just east of route 7 and the Ridgefield town line and southeast of Great Pond. This former farm, purchased by the church in 1970, contained two-plus acres of land in a setting more rural than the suburban neighborhood it is today. The property included a house, a barn, and smaller outbuildings. The barn was remodeled into sanctuary space. The house, at first called the Religious Education Building and later renamed Founders House, became classroom, meeting, and office space with an apartment upstairs. This building was damaged by fire in 1983 and redesigned and rebuilt. The outbuildings were all eventually torn down. In its early years what became known by the collective nickname "the Barn" had a campus large enough for worship, religious education, social activities, and parking, with the benefit of a lovely natural setting.

By the mid-1990s change was in the air. On March 8, 1992, the UUSNFC had adopted a new statement of Promise...

*To provide an open, caring community, welcoming people of diverse backgrounds  
who come seeking spiritual, personal and intellectual growth;  
To create a place where adults and children are taught, nurtured, loved,  
and given freedom to explore and define individual beliefs;  
To affirm and promote Unitarian Universalist values of peace, social justice,  
and religious tolerance for all people.*

Could the society fulfill this promise in its place and space in West Redding? During the latter part of 1996 the board of trustees, Maggie Hooton president, formed what was called "Task Force 2001." Six interested and active members of the society were appointed to the task force: Bruce Berg, Mimi Davisson, Bill Hooton, Mary Alice Kimball, Chris Schmitt, and Art Warren. Society member Heidi Winslow, a Danbury attorney, while not a task force member, was helpful to the work of the group.

A time of promise, this was also a time of transition for UUSNFC. The Rev. Barbara Pescan, who gently but persistently coaxed members and friends to think boldly about the future, completed her seven year pastorate in West Redding. She is among the longest-serving ministers in the two hundred year history of this church. The Rev. Dr. Linda Hart came to the society for the 1995-96 church year and proved to be a most effective and popular interim minister. In the summer of 1996 UUSNFC welcomed Rev. Dr. Daniel Simer O'Connell to his first settled ministry. That October Rev. O'Connell was ordained and installed in a memorable weekend celebration at the Barn. Change also came in the leadership of the society's religious education program. Mala Ranade was succeeded as director of religious education by Karen Judd. Both women were UUSNFC members. The newly created task force began meeting in late fall 1996. Over four months the group worked to engage, in Maggie Hooton's words, "the task of articulating our collective vision and charting a five year course for our Society." The task force set about gathering opinions from members and friends. Anyone who was at the Barn

during this time will remember "The Great Wall of Comment." This was not "Comment" as in the church newsletter but rather large sheets of paper fastened to available wall space inside the Barn itself. Markers were provided and members and friends were invited to share in writing their "comments, insights, thoughts, and ideas." Over a period of several months dozens of such thoughts were posted for all to read. Here is a sampling.

*A congregational commitment to a Social Justice Program---one involving children.  
Will have a more up-to-date P.A. system, better lighting in the Barn if we are still here.*

*But I do see this in a new location, on a main street in Danbury.*

*Instead of assuming we have to move, let's have a design/purpose-sensitive architect do an initial evaluation of our current site. This is a magical spot.*

*I can see co-ministry in our Society and we're in a Main Street Location in Danbury.*

*I see many people of all ages and backgrounds.*

*Our dream sees "The Barn" as the distinctive core of our spiritual community into the 21st century... We see The Barn reaching outward on the Internet with cyber-wise ministry influencing the minds and hearts of interconnected viewers worldwide....*

*Expanded membership, increased community impact, well known in community as activists for religious freedom, social justice, and loving caring.*

*Our Youth Group hosted their third Conn. It was well attended and our youth planned and executed the entire program.*

*Let's find a place where we can bring the UU spirit to at least twice as many people as we serve now.*

*A spacious building for Sunday Service, R.E. and Social Hall on a main street where people can just pop in to see us.*

*A place where the RE program is properly funded to carry out its mission and dreams.*

By the end of March 1997 Task Force 2001 was ready to share its findings and recommendations with members and friends of UUSNFC. The report was presented to the congregation in a meeting at the Barn on Sunday afternoon, April 6, 1997.

To be continued in May 2023...

