



Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Danbury

Monthly **COMMENT** Newsletter

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

JUNE 2023

From our Minister



*There are no goodbyes for us.
Wherever you are, you will always be in my heart
~ Mahatma Gandhi*

Yes, this is my final newsletter column as your Consulting Minister and, no, I'm not looking forward to saying goodbye! And while you will truly always be in my heart, it is not true that "there are no goodbyes for us". I believe it is important to acknowledge loss and leaving. Saying goodbye is an important part of life as it closes one chapter of a story and turns the page to the beginning of a something new. We may not know what that new story will be like or what treasures it may reveal, but we know there is something new ready to begin.

Some of you have asked me where I'm going and what I'll be doing next. I'm staying in Southbury with my husband, Phil, for as long as I can! And I'm not really sure what my new story will look like other than providing some pulpit supply to UU congregations and being available for my family as their needs increase. No doubt other interesting ventures are on the horizon and I know I must say goodbye in order to make room for new beginnings. You too must say goodbye in order to make room for new leadership, new ideas, new adventures in congregational life. I feel particularly grateful to be living these words by A.A. Milne: *How lucky I am to have something that makes saying goodbye so hard*. My approach to endings and leaving is to focus on gratitude and forgiveness as I've found it opens the heart and readies the spirit for whatever comes next.

I am filled with gratitude for the two years we have worked together to serve the mission of our beloved community. Grateful for the lay leaders and staff, opportunities to laugh and cry with you, to navigate our gatherings around difficult pandemic dynamics, to celebrate 200 years of UUism in Danbury, to plan and dream, to disagree and still respect and love one another, to recognize that all we do together is ministry. Let's forgive ourselves and each other for sometimes not listening fully, perhaps not always putting forth our best selves, for not being present in the moment, and forgetting to express just how much we value each other. As the song goes, *though we've broken our vows a thousand times, come, yet again, come!* Being in beloved community for me means we welcome each other, we learn from our differences, we grow from our commitment, we forgive and we are grateful. I hope you have experienced some of this in the time we have been together. I hope you will take the opportunity to say goodbye even if it's difficult. And while I'm feeling quite like Charlie's Schultz's Charlie Brown, who said *Goodbye always makes my throat hurt*, I will say goodbye and promise to carry you in my heart.

With a heart heavy with gratitude,
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 16th.**

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

Sunday, June 4th

Religious Education Sunday: On Mutuality

This service for all ages will be a celebration of ministries for children and youth. After the service, please head outside and down the pathway to the exterior doors of the Fellowship Hall's lower level for a brief ceremony to dedicate our Little Community Library, donated by Melody Levy.

**The Annual Meeting of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Danbury
will take place on Sunday, June 4, 2023 following the Sunday service.**

Sunday, June 11th

Music Sunday

Join us for a very special musical service on Sunday, June 11th, featuring the many, gifted musicians of UUCD. We hope you'll come to bask in the music with us!

Please join us for Rev. Kathleen's Farewell Party immediately following the June 11th service.

Sunday, June 18th

Religion, the Sacred & the Profane: What Connects Us?

Samantha McCoy

The concept of religion raises no shortage of questions. What does religion mean to you? What makes something sacred? What brings you to this UUCD community? Let's explore some of the connections that make us a religious community.

Sunday, June 25th

My Humbling Experience with White Privilege

Dale Miller Hill

Dale Hill will describe, in storytelling style, selected experiences growing up in Richmond, VA, and later working in Washington DC for the World Bank. She will focus on what she learned at various stages of her life that shaped her attitudes toward white privilege, in hopes that there are lessons for others.

Rev. Kathleen's schedule

Rev. Kathleen's last Sunday with the congregation will be June 11, but she will be working through the end of June, and will be available by appointment. July will be spent on study leave and vacation, which means packing up her office and tying up loose ends. If you'd like to help with packing please let her know. There may be chocolate involved!

From Our Director of Religious Education For Children and Youth



Our Little Community Library

With a big thanks to Melody Levy and Gary Mummert, we now have a “Little Community Library”/book exchange box outside the lower level doors of the Fellowship Hall. This is an invitation for kids to share books with one another. If you have a favorite you have finished, bring it by and leave it in the library so someone else can have it. While you are there, take some new books that look interesting to you. We will dedicate our little library in a very brief ceremony after the service on Sunday, June 4th.

Calling All Congregants!

As you may recall from our meeting in March about the future of our children and youth ministries, it is time to get creative as a congregation. But now we need all hands on deck for any of our ideas to come into fruition. You don't have to volunteer directly with kids to help out. Please take this 5-minute [all-congregation survey](#) to let us know ways you might be able to assist.

Bethel Pride Celebration June 3rd

This year we are planning to show up for the Bethel Pride Celebration! The Social Action Council has sponsored a banner for us to carry in the parade and a festival table. Our youth will be leading the way! Would you like to join us for the parade or help out at the table? Please contact Sierra-Marie at dre@uudanbury.org. Of course, all are welcome to come cheer on the parade (1PM) and visit the table (1:30PM-5PM). Please stop by!

Upcoming in Religious Education

Children are always welcome in Sunday services. During the summer we will offer nursery care for young children, but programs for older children go on hold. Early this month we will wrap up the 2022-2023 programs:

- **Saturday, June 3** - High School Youth Group meetup at Bethel Pride
- **Sunday, June 4** - Religious Education Sunday Multigenerational Service
- **Saturday, June 10** - Final Two Sessions of 7th-8th Grade OWL with a celebration dinner; Final High School OWL overnight retreat
- **Sunday, June 11** - Final Parents as Sexuality Educators session

Kids, we look forward to welcoming you back to programs in September!

Religious Education Volunteer Survey

If you volunteered this year in our children and youth ministries and you have not yet had a chance to do so, please take 3-5 minutes to fill out our 2022-2023 [volunteer survey](#).

Sierra-Marie's Summer Office Hours

During June our Director of Religious Education will:

- Continue to have in-person office hours on the first two Sunday afternoons of this month.
- Be available to meet by appointment until June 20th when Ministry Days and General Assembly begin (she will be attending the full event virtually).

For much of July, Sierra-Marie will be taking a combination of professional development and vacation time and will not have an opportunity to read emails. Phone calls will be returned for emergencies only. In August she will be available again by appointment. Email her for an appointment: dre@uudanbury.org.

From the Board of Trustees

By Nancy Cullen

Our congregation's Annual Meeting is Sunday, June 4th after the service. All are welcome to attend and only members can vote. A Budget Town Hall was held on Thursday May 25th live and via Zoom.

Thinking of the budget reminds me of this spring's "Joy of Giving" stewardship campaign at UU Danbury, of what we give, what we receive, and our future hopes. In May, the six of us on the Board of Trustees called UU Danbury members who might have forgotten to pledge. Most of us are not on the Stewardship Committee, but pledging is so vital for planning our future that each Board member made calls.

Officially, the pledge campaign is over. Pledging is required of members, but anyone can pledge. I pledged *before* becoming a member, because I felt grateful and wanted to help support this congregation even if I did not know what 'signing the book' meant - unusual? Who knows. If you have somehow missed out on pledging, here is a [link](#). Pledging can be a year round event.

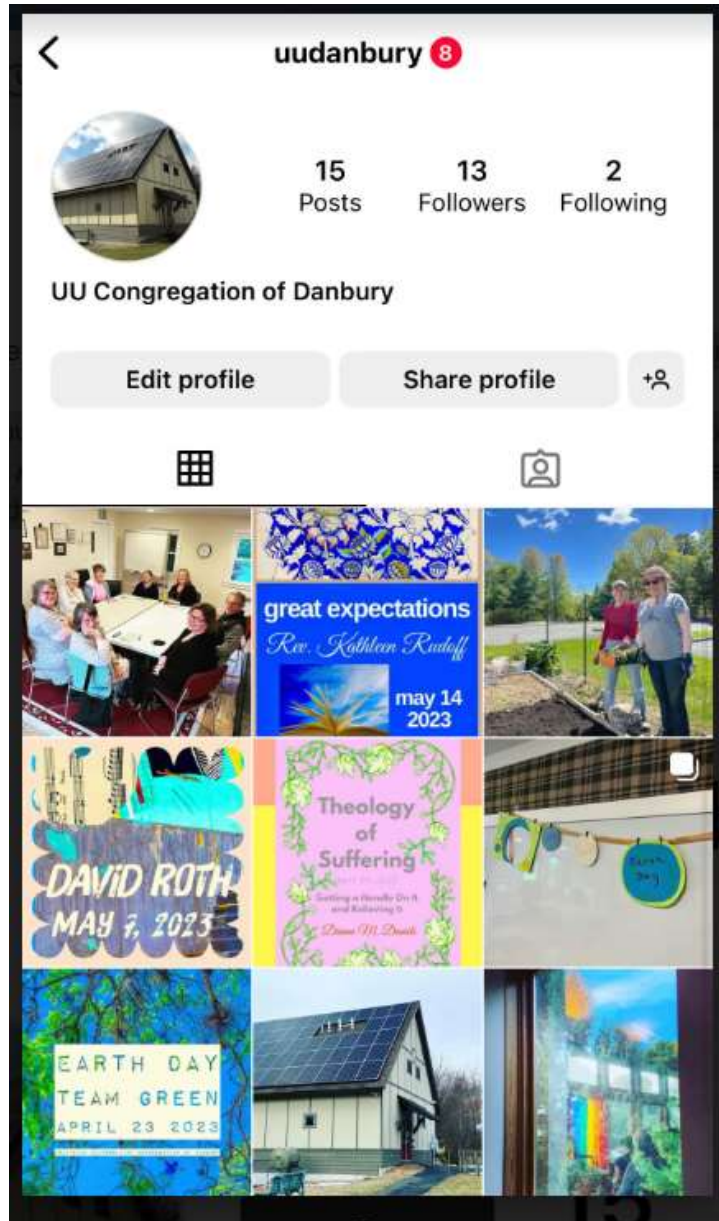
As we recuperate from Covid-19 disruptions, I still miss seeing people who are out of the habit of coming, but understand it. This year's Sunday services, our dedicated staff, the efforts of many volunteers, community dinners, social action projects, Music at the Ridge concerts, OWL education for middle and high school aged young people, the work of the Social Action Council, and an auction that funded social action organizations and sparked creative opportunities and projects, are some of the things I am grateful for.

Last year the corrugated cardboard ship in Fellowship Hall reminded us of the pledge campaign. It looked unseaworthy, yet the pledges poured in. On March 26th, Rev. Kathleen inspired us about "The Joy of Giving". Joy is more abstract - there was no cardboard vessel - only our grateful hearts. Thank you.



The UUCD Instagram Up and Running

If you use the Instagram app on your smartphone or device, give the new uudanbury page a follow! Before or after running a program or event, photos and text can be sent to **Heather Smith** for sharing on Instagram. Ask anyone pictured for permission to post on our social media first please. This will serve as another way to share all of the great activity and work that is taking place on the Ridge! Like and follow "uudanbury". Let's grow our following!



Ministry/Team News

From *Buildings and Grounds*

A Great Big Thanks from B&G

On Saturday, May 13th, we had a great and energetic crew come out to assist with care of the grounds and plantings. Many thanks to Barb Myers for organizing and communicating about the clean-up day. In addition, Barb and I, Gary Mummert, were delighted to have a crew made up of Cheryl Edelen, Deb Oria, John Letson, Jonathan Hill, Ro D'Ostilio and daughter Nellie. To those who could stay, we offered drinks and provided fresh sandwiches. Feed them, and they will come!

Many Thanks to all!!

From the *Caring Circle*



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.

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 the *Social Action Council*

Soup Kitchen Corner

by Judy Lacker

On Saturday, June 3rd, some members of Soup Kitchen Team 4 (Team Leaders **Bruni Edwards & Yvonne Ruddy-Stein, Joanne Davidson, Michael Stengle, the Parr Family, 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.. 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.



Upcoming Events

UUCD Men Conversing over Coffee meets on the second Wednesday of each month. Our next meeting is on Wednesday, June 14th at 10:00 a.m. at UUCD in the Fellowship Hall Lower Level. For more information contact **Gary Mummert** or **Joe Gillotti**.



**ROD
MacDONALD**

**Sunday, June 4
4pm**

**24 Clapboard Ridge Rd
Danbury, CT**

Rod MacDonald is an American singer-songwriter, novelist, and educator. He was a "big part of the 1980s folk revival in Greenwich Village clubs", performing at the Speakeasy, The Bottom Line, Folk City, and the "Songwriter's Exchange" at the Cornelia Street Cafe. He co-founded the Greenwich Village Folk Festival.

He is perhaps best known for his songs "American Jerusalem", about the "contrast between the rich and the poor in Manhattan" (Sing Out!), "A Sailor's Prayer", "Coming of the Snow", "Every Living Thing", and "My Neighbors in Delray", a description of the September 11 hijackers' last days in Delray Beach, Florida, where MacDonald has lived since 1995.

His songs have been covered by Dave Van Ronk, Shawn Colvin, Four Bitchin' Babes, Jonathan Edwards, Garnet Rogers, Joe Jencks, and others. MacDonald has appeared on stage with fellow artists, including Pete Seeger, Peter Yarrow, Odetta, Tom Paxton, the Violent Femmes, Suzanne Vega, Shawn Colvin, Dave Van Ronk, Emmylou Harris, Richie Havens, Ani DiFranco, Tom Chapin, Jack Hardy and David Massengill. He has performed at festivals in Philadelphia, Winnipeg, Florida, South Florida, Riverhawk, Boston, Kerrville, Greenwich Village, Falcon Ridge, New Bedford Summerfest, Port Fairy (Australia) and Trowbridge (UK), and on the radio program Mountain Stage. He was reportedly the first American singer to tour the newly independent Czech Republic in 1991, and has made 40 tours in Europe since 1985, nearly all of them with NYC bassist Mark Dann.

Check out Rod's website for more: <https://www.rodmacdonald.com/bio/>



TICKETS AT:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/rod-macdonald-in-concert-tickets-625419997047>



Notes on Two Hundred Years (and More)

by Douglas H. Parkhurst

The Connecticut Universalist Convention was organized in New Haven on May 9, 1832, as the state-wide governing body of Universalist churches and societies. Within the next few years three regional associations were also established in the state. One of these, the Southern Association of Universalists of Connecticut comprising Fairfield, New Haven, and Middlesex counties was formed in Danbury on June 22, 1836.

Handwritten minutes and reports of the Southern Association still exist. Meetings were usually held in the month of June with societies and churches within the association hosting these gatherings on a rotating basis. Reports on the activities and condition of constituent groups offer snapshots of their progress or lack thereof over time. Let's take a look at some reports from First Universalist Society of Danbury for years immediately following the end of the Civil War. Danbury's population was approaching 9,000 and the town was more and more a center for hatting and related businesses. During these years the Universalist church was located on the south side of Liberty Street, east of Main. The Disciples of Christ church stood diagonally across the street.

"1866 Danbury - No stated preaching for a year, but occasional supplies and lay meetings in the intervals. More money has been raised, and with greater ease than ever before, but not enough for a pastor's support. Rev. A.C. Thomas preaches on alternate Sundays.

"1867 Danbury - No settled pastor. Until recently Rev. A.C. Thomas preached on alternate Sundays. He did much to strengthen the society, adding 6 members to the church and drawing many strangers to hear him. Perfect harmony in church matters prevails. The pecuniary condition is good....Attacks from other pulpits are frequent. One of them was very successfully answered by Bro. A.T. Peck, a layman. The communion is seldom held, but nearly every member of the society belongs also to the church. The Sunday School is growing, the parents take an increasing interest in it....

"1868 Danbury - The existence of a very liberal Congregational society is found to draw away some persons from the Universalist church, and yet this is considered as partly the fruit of the society's labors in past years. There is a feeling of confidence and strength. The society has suffered for want of a pastor, but is now engaged in seeking one....3 members added to the church. The Sunday School has about 53 scholars and 9 teachers. Monthly concerts are held.

"1869 Danbury - A pastor was settled here about Nov. 1st [1868, Rev. William G. Haskell] and all concerned are greatly satisfied. The society has increased in vigor though not in numbers. Every active member of the society is a church member. 3 have been added to the church. The Communion is held quarterly....There are about 55 scholars [in the Sunday School], and the average attendance has increased to 40....Weekly conference meetings and monthly teachers' meetings are held. Average congregation 140.

"1870 Danbury - This Society boasts of life and activity rather than numbers. They endeavor to make all members of this congregation also church-members. They keep their Universalism [before?] the community in deed and word, and are generally respected and cordially treated by the other denominations. The church numbers about 50 members, 9 having been added during the past year....During the past year several prominent members have died. The Sunday School has 58 names enrolled, with an average attendance of 38....Much credit is given to the Pastor for efficient Sunday School labors....

"1871 Danbury - We are united and strong in the faith. Have added 14 members to the Church during the year. Our average attendance at Sunday School is 45. Have no debt and no reason for discouragement....Sunday School is in a transition just now. Have adopted the One Session System which is working admirably....Are strengthening in working power and zeal. Rev. D.M. Hodge is Pastor.

"1872 Danbury - Additions to the Parish 8 Loss 3 - Additions to Church 7 Loss 3 - Baptized 5 children - Added 9 or 10 to S School. The Pastors salary has been increased....Have recently purchased an organ for \$350 - nearly paid for - There is a tendency in the town favorable to our continued growth....We have influence in the town - Much progress has been made in the town in religious things - We are on a perfect equality with other sects. Union Prayer meetings have been held - to which we were invited and where we were made welcome. We are not in debt - are united and moderately prosperous for a small society....Added about 30 volumes to Library. Number in S. School about 80 Teachers 14 Teachers efficiency has increased under our one lesson system." The government of First Universalist Society had a dual form which was common in New England then and later. Those associated with the group belonged to the "society" and what was often a smaller group of society members also belonged to the "church." Society and church each had a governing board; the same person might serve on both boards simultaneously. And, it appears that participation in an active Sunday School program played a significant part in life at First Universalist.

As noted above there was no settled minister between 1865 and 1868. Rev. Abel C. Thomas, nearing the close of his career, supplied pulpits in Danbury, also Bridgeport, during part of that time. Thomas, born in Pennsylvania to a Quaker family, was a prominent Universalist parish minister, evangelist, historian, and author. During the 1850s he traveled to England and Scotland as a Universalist missionary. Rev. William G. Haskell came to Danbury near the end of 1868 and served First Universalist for three years. Haskell was succeeded by Rev. Dwight M. Hodge who began his ten-year pastorate in 1871.



Thank you again for your generous support of DARA and our mission. We couldn't do the vital work of helping our Danbury area refugee families without our generous donors. The donation from your congregation was sizable and allowed our young clients to take additional steps towards independence by contributing to purchasing two (new to them) cars. The vehicles allowed the recipients to look for better employment opportunities and enroll in college courses.

The donation was split between the young men, easing the financial burden and allowing them to consider more reliable vehicles.

This is particularly important because independence is a paramount goal in refugee resettlement, and owning vehicles in our area plays a significant role in meeting that goal. In addition to the pride of ownership, cars mean reliable transportation to and from work, medical appointments, school, and other obligations. As we participate in our family's arrival with little more than a few suitcases of belongings and assist them in building new lives, purchasing a car is a game changer and among the most significant milestones.

Please share our heartfelt gratitude with your congregation. Their generosity is paid forward multifold!





From TBICO – This is a classroom from STRIVE New Fairfield school system’s program for students who graduated but need little more time (18 to 22 years)

