



# Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Danbury

Monthly **COMMENT** Newsletter

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

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NOVEMBER 2023



## FROM OUR MINISTER

### “A Generous View of History”

Each year as we approach Thanksgiving, we have an opportunity to adopt a generous or miserly view of American History. This makes some of us grateful and it makes some of our fellow citizens angry. I’m grateful that uncritical and unthinking Thanksgiving pageants in the local elementary school with happy Indians and kind Pilgrims are increasingly becoming history themselves. Reckoning with a National Day of Thanksgiving as simultaneously being a National Day of Mourning for native people is good for us. It means our view of history is widening and expanding, allowing for complexity, nuance, including multiple views of events, and this leads to deeper understanding. It allows us to view the world behind us with a wider, more inclusive lens and doing this helps us see our contemporary situation differently.

When Iranian college students attacked and took over the American embassy in Tehran on November 4, 1979, and kept 52 Americans hostages as part of the Islamic revolution that toppled the Iranian government, President Jimmy Carter said it was an act of "blackmail" and the hostages "victims of terrorism and anarchy." America and Americans were outraged, and this event was a contributing factor in Carter’s landslide loss to Ronald Regan in 1980. A narrow view of history makes it easy to see the Iranian Islamic revolution of 1979 as evil Muslims defeating democracy and arbitrarily punishing innocent Americans by keeping them as hostages. A generous view of history doesn’t *excuse* the hostage taking, nor does it *excuse* any wrongdoing by the Islamic revolutionaries at that time and since, but it does help us *understand* it. In 1953, the CIA led a revolution that toppled a democratically elected government of Iran and used the excuse of that government being socialist to install a regime friendlier to America and its allies, especially England, and more importantly British and American oil companies who wanted more control of Iranian oil.

In the wake of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, many Americans asked with genuine bewilderment, “Why do THEY hate US?” America responded by waging war in Iraq under false pretense, passing the Patriot Act liming civil liberties, and villainizing Muslims. A generous view of history would have helped us respond better without excusing the terrorism and mass murder. A generous view of history helps us understand that the 9-11 terrorist, like many other people around the world viewed (and still do) the United States as a global power that preaches democracy, but practices oppressive colonialism around the world wherever it benefits America’s economic interests.

The current state of affairs in the Middle East can’t be understood without a generous view of history. A narrow and constricted view of history makes it easy to frame Israel and Palestine as a good vs. evil scenario, with who is good and who is evil obscured by which side you’re on. A generous view of history looks with a broad lens.

(continued)

It doesn't justify or excuse the terrorism of Hamas or the apartheid and other human rights violations of the government of Israel (according to the United Nations, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and others), but it helps us understand. And only with deep understanding can we ever hope to eventually find peaceful solutions.

Generously,  
Rev. Tony

### **SPIRITUAL CHALLENGE for NOVEMBER 2023 on the theme of GENEROSITY - Cultivate an Attitude of Abundance**

My challenge to you for this month is to practice cultivating an abundance mindset. Abundance is sometimes presented in a magical thinking framework where if a person just has the right frame of mind, adopts positive thinking, and banishes negativity, riches will flow. That's not what I'm talking about. I encourage you to think of abundance more like a Buddhist. Practice stepping out of the loop of constant desire for more – more money, more prestige, more talent, more everything – and cultivate the awareness of when you have *enough*.

Abundance is the opposite of scarcity. Abundance is an attitude, mindset, or approach that does involve teaching ourselves to change our thinking, not because positive thoughts bring wealth, but because positive approaches help us do our best whatever our situation might be. The abundance mindset doesn't negate the need to be a good steward of resources or ignore the reality of one's situation – financially or otherwise. Abundance is a cycle that emphasizes what's right, what's working, and what we have instead of focusing on what's going wrong, what's not working, and what we lack.

An abundance mindset can follow a circle or a loop of thoughts and actions that keep us focused. The abundance loop begins with gratitude - genuine gratefulness at what we do have and who we are. An attitude of gratitude leads to more peace of mind. Again, think of the Buddhist practice of stepping off the treadmill of constant desire. Having more peace of mind, we tend to make better choices. Making wiser decisions fosters positive outcomes. Then, when things go well, there's more to be grateful for, and the cycle or loop repeats. It's no guarantee we will make more money, be more successful, or improve our situation, but it does maximize our chances working with what we have. We may not get everything we want, but chances are better we'll at least have what we *need*. Abundance doesn't focus on having a surplus, it focuses on *having and being enough*.

The scarcity loop, by contrast, begins with fear, usually fear of what we lack, or the fear caused by what we lack and what is missing – what resources we don't have. This leads to anxiety. When we're scared and anxious, we tend to make poor choices. Unwise decision making tends to leave us in a place where we still don't have what we need, so our fears based on a continuing lack of resources tend to increase and the cycle repeats – and intensifies.

Once again expressing your internal reflection by journaling or creating art is a great way to process what you're pondering. **As always, I'd love to hear about your experiences with this challenge. Call or text me at 508-344-3668 or send me an email at revtony@pm.me.**



## From The Board of Trustees

by Peter Horton



### Can You Hear Us?

One of the items that the UUCD Board spends a lot of time on is how the congregation communicates to each other and with the greater community. Can you hear us? Are we efficient and effective with our communications? Here are some things to ponder:

Sesame Street broke ground decades ago because they followed the model of modern advertising, information was bundled into approximately one-minute segments. As we know, it was a huge success. The trend of condensing messages has continued. Experts recommend that a message on Facebook be no longer than **40** characters. Not 40 words, 40 characters. Wow!

What about our signage on Clapboard Ridge? At 40 mph (the average speed on Clapboard Ridge) letters should be at least 6 inches high and no more than 20 - 30 characters. Everything else is a blur.

UUCD's *Comment* is cherished by a number of our congregants but, sadly, ignored by many. 200 emails get sent out regarding the *Comment*. 70% of those emails are opened. And a small group of folks actually click on the hyperlinks. Even more revealing, less than 10% of the readers open the full .pdf document and those folks are usually the authors of the articles in the *Comment*. More than likely the .pdf version of the *Comment* will be discontinued sometime next summer. The *Comment* articles and messages will appear exclusively on our website.

And what about social media? Currently we have weekly posts on Facebook and Instagram (thank you Melody Levy for the amazing and attention-grabbing visual design). Do you know you can "share" the weekly Facebook posts with your own Facebook followers? Very few of us do. Are we reluctant to broadcast our religious preferences? Maybe.

We'll never be done talking about and strategizing on ways to communicate. One thing is for sure, we are looking ahead of us, not behind.

## From the Finance Team

by Carl Tichler, Chair



UU Danbury  
Fiscal Oversight Dashboard

Financial Status as of September 2023

### Current Year Income vs. Expenses

July 1 – Sep 30 2023	Actual	Budget	July 1 – Sep 30 2022 Actual
Total Revenue	\$86,155	\$64,562	\$74,997
Total Expenses	\$72,499	\$77,159	\$74,453
Surplus (Deficit)	\$13,657	(\$12,596)	\$544

### Paid Pledges / Other Income

July 1 – Sep 30 2023	Actual	Budget	July 1 – Sep 30 2022 Actual
Paid Pledges (for current year)	\$61,450	\$45,000	\$59,282
Paid Pledges (for previous year)	\$5,401	\$0	\$1,706
Other Income (including Anne Thorpe Trust Income)	\$19,304	\$19,562	\$14,009
Total	\$86,155	\$64,562	\$74,997

As of September 30, 36% of the annual pledges have been paid. Thank you for paying your pledges regularly and keeping our budget on track! Note that if you are using a credit card for your pledge payments, we pay processing fees of approximately 2%. Please consider paying your pledge from your bank account if possible (ACH or check). If you have any questions on this quarterly report, please contact Carl Tichler, chair of the finance team.

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



### Upcoming in Religious Education

- **Friday, November 3rd** - Group for Caregivers of LGBTQIA+ Young People
- **Sunday, November 5th** - Regular Sunday morning programs; middle and high school youth groups go to the trampoline park on Sunday evening
- **Sunday, November 12th** - Regular Sunday morning programs
- **Sunday, November 19th** - Regular Sunday morning programs; tentative date for Mitten Tree to begin; final session of Circles of Connection (interfaith rituals for healing from miscarriage)
- **Sunday, November 26th** - No programs (holiday break)

## Upcoming Events

### New Group for Caregivers of LGBTQIA+ Young People

Parents of LGBTQIA+ young people, please join us in gathering on the **first Friday of every month from 7:30-9PM** for mutual support and celebration of our kids. Our November meeting will take place on **November 3rd**. Please RSVP to [dre@uudanbury.org](mailto:dre@uudanbury.org).



The Danbury Chapter of Together Women Rise (formerly Dining for Women) will meet Sunday afternoon at 3:00 pm, November 12, at Donna Lawrence's home. Our chapter evolved over ten years ago after a book discussion on *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide* by Nicholas D. Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn. Mary Ann Kulla will lead this session which features a project in Pakistan titled, "Kaavish: Girl Rising in Pakistan". Please check out the website and video on [www.togetherwomenrise.org](http://www.togetherwomenrise.org) before the meeting. If you have questions or would like to carpool, please contact **Anne Krieg** or **Judy Lacker**. At this meeting we'll enjoy snacks and beverages instead of a full meal. There are recipes on the website for Pakistani fare, or just bring a snack you enjoy to share. Newcomers are welcome! Please R.S.V.P. to **Donna Lawrence**.



### UU Danbury's Wizard of GenerOZity Auction Website is now Online!

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. The Online Auction will close at 5 pm on Nov. 3.

#### Get your tickets now at the BiddingOwl website

Each ticket holder receives an individual Zoom link in their email. The UUCD Live Zoom Auction is guaranteed to be a good time!

[To bid or purchase, you need to register.](#)

#### Enjoy the Live Auction via Zoom Saturday, Nov. 4th from 4:30 – 6:30 pm

UUCD's Jerry Phelps, other vocalists and Master of Ceremonies, Peter Lerman, will entertain you and inspire your generous bids!

#### 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:

[Association of Religious Communities - Comida Food Pantry in Danbury](#) offering food for those in need *and*

[Apex Community Care / AIDS Project - Greater Danbury](#) offering primary care, case management, food bank, meals, transportation, mental health, and housing.

#### Make a Matching Donation:

- You can either match a percent of the auction proceeds, or donate any amount.
- For example: match 2% and if we raise \$10,000, your matching donation is \$200.
- You may also donate a flat amount, or cap your matching donation - it's up to you!
- All matching donations are welcome.
- Email [Jeff Asher](#) with questions or to donate.
- Matching donations do not apply to the 8th Principle outreach.
- For any other questions please contact Lisa or Barb at [auktion@uudanbury.org](mailto:auktion@uudanbury.org)

Let's raise money and have fun!





# MAD AGNES

SUNDAY  
NOVEMBER 5  
4PM

*Mad Agnes is mad – but only in the most endearing way.  
And if you ask them what they're mad about...  
Why, they're mad about you.*

Mad Agnes has won hearts on two continents with their signature intricate harmonies, compelling songwriting, and passionate delivery. The genre-bending trio—Margo Hennebach, Adrienne Jones and Mark Saunders—creates an exciting, inclusive performance, delivering new original songs, selections from their thirteen-album catalog, storytelling and impromptu vocal improv.

In their current iteration, Mad Agnes uses primarily one microphone around which they form and re-form, early-radio style. Their ease with one another on stage invites the audience into their world of human connection and spontaneous fun. Well-crafted instrumentation – using guitars, mandolin, ukulele, piano, melodica, an inventive keyboard and three-part harmonies as tight as jeans from the dryer – enralls audiences again and again. Mad Agnes is now recording their newest studio album, *Likely Story*.

*“Dazzling harmonies, superb arrangements, terrific instrumental virtuosity, brilliant original songs and fine treatments of other material... there really aren’t enough superlatives to describe one of the best evenings I’ve seen in the many years I have been involved in the Folk scene.”* Folk on the Moor, Devon, UK



[www.musicattheridge.org](http://www.musicattheridge.org)

24 Clapboard Ridge Road

Danbury, CT

\$25 in person/\$20 streaming  
tickets at door (as available)  
at same price as online



In-person and live-streaming  
tickets at Eventbrite.com



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



## Monthly Community Dinner

Our next **community dinner** will be a pasta dinner on Wednesday, November 8<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 p.m. A gluten free pasta primavera will be included among the options.

For anyone of *any age* who would like to stay for a **program after dinner**, please join us for a guest from the Hindu group (renters of our space) who will share with us about their religious tradition. This is part of our intergenerational Neighborhood Bridges program, which helps us meet our religious neighbors in Greater Danbury and learn a little about their traditions. Later in the month we will visit the Hindu group, on a date TBA.

A big thanks to the Children, Youth, and Family Ministry Team (aka the REMT or Religious Education Ministry Team) for hosting this month's dinner!

### Resources for Learning About Hinduism

This month, through our Neighborhood Bridges program, we have the opportunity to meet our Hindu neighbors. To learn more about Hinduism, check out the following resources:

- [A basic background information sheet](#) on Hinduism from the UUA's Tapestry of Faith
- [Hindu American](#)
- [Hindu Website](#)
- [The Heart of Hinduism](#)
- [Hinduism Today Magazine](#)



# Movies with a Message

**November 11<sup>th</sup>:** **Suze Shaner and Dan Brodax** are facilitating **Movies with a Message**, using **Spiritual Cinema's** movie shorts the second Saturday of each month **from 6:30 – 8:30 p.m.** These nights will consist of 1-3 short movies that explore the big questions about life and living (i.e, Who are we? Why are we here? Where are we bound? and What can we become when we live at our highest level of potential? ) with discussion afterwards. You are welcome to bring your dinner. We will supply gluten-free popcorn and bottled water. Donations to UUCD accepted.



**ARC**  
Association of Religious Communities

**INTERFAITH  
THANKSGIVING  
SERVICE**

**MONDAY, NOVEMBER 20TH AT 7PM**

First Congregational Church of Danbury  
164 Deer Hill Ave Danbury, CT 06810

Guest speaker: **CANTOR LILAH SUGARMAN**  
of the United Jewish Center

*See you there!*

The poster features illustrations of pumpkins, a turkey, and autumn leaves. A photograph of Cantor Lilah Sugarman playing an acoustic guitar is included in the top right corner.



It is almost time for our annual Mitten Tree program, which benefits families of the Interfaith Aids Ministry of Greater Danbury (IAM). Here is how it works: a little later in November (expected date November 19th), the children and youth ministry team will invite you to take home a paper “mitten” from our mitten tree. Each mitten has a gift request. After purchasing the gift, you will bring the gift back to the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Danbury. In early December, we will take all the gifts over to IAM.

### Holiday Tree

Want to pick out this year’s holiday tree for the Fellowship Hall? Funds provided! You just pick out the tree the weekend of December 1st and bring it to the holiday party on December 3rd. Don’t want to do it alone? Get friends from the congregation to join you. Contact Sierra-Marie at [dre@uudanbury.org](mailto:dre@uudanbury.org).



#### Our Caring Circle is Available

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

**Donna Lawrence** is the contact person for November and December.

**Joan Stapleton** is the assistant.

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

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

# Ministry/Team News

From the *Social Action Council*

## Soup Kitchen Corner

by Judy Lacker

On Saturday, November 4<sup>th</sup>, some members of Soup Kitchen Team 1 (Team Leaders **Judy Lacker and Rose Schlemmer**) 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](mailto: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.



## Notes on Two Hundred Years (and More)

by Douglas H. Parkhurst

...Continued from October 2023

Work on the new Universalist church commenced and a cornerstone was placed on September 15, 1892, "a beautiful day" as noted in church records. Just a year later, on Sunday morning, September 10, 1893, the new structure at 347 Main St. was dedicated. According to reports the day was pleasant and the church filled with members and guests. The order of service included an organ voluntary with anthems sung by the choir, hymns, and a responsive service and reports from the building committee. A sentence of dedication was followed by a scripture lesson and prayer. Rev. Dr. J. Smith Dodge, Universalist minister in Stamford, Connecticut, preached the sermon taking as his text Matthew xvi 18 "And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church..." A special child dedication was also performed, that of little Nathan B. Dibble, great-grandchild and namesake of the late Col. Nathan B. Dibble, a prominent Danburian, stalwart Universalist, and longtime member of the society and church.

In the afternoon a second service was conducted, called a "Service of Friendship and Good Will." Clergy from First Congregational, Disciples, Methodist Episcopal, Second Congregational, Union Hall (non-sectarian), and Second Baptist churches participated. As noted previously the Baptist, Disciples, and Methodist churches had only recently dedicated their own new homes in downtown Danbury. From September 19-21 the Connecticut Universalist Convention met for its 1893 annual meeting in this brand new Main St. church.

Contemporary descriptions of the new building are found in Bailey's *History of Danbury, Conn. 1684-1896* and the *Christian Leader* (a Universalist periodical) issue of September 14, 1893. The structure stood on the east side of Main St., facing the street a little south of the railroad crossing. Its dimensions were sixty-four by ninety feet. The foundation was granite and the exterior walls North Haven brick. Exterior details were of brownstone. The tower and steeple, located at the southwest corner of the building, was one hundred twenty five feet tall at its peak. The main entrance was by a porch at the base of the tower; this opened into the large auditorium (sanctuary) with floor gently sloping toward pulpit, choir space, and pipe organ diagonally opposite this entrance. Total seating accommodated several hundred persons in pews of quartered oak. The ceiling was finished in ash. Auxiliary seating space was available through sliding doors at the east side of the auditorium which opened into what was otherwise a large Sunday school room. A substantial stained glass window donated by Cola S. Peck and Carrie B. Peck in memory of their parents dominated the west wall facing Main St. Amber-tinted windows graced the north and south walls. A porch on the south side of the building toward the rear led to a hallway, the auditorium, a parlor, the Sunday school room, and a staircase to the second floor. Upstairs was another parlor, a large banquet hall finished in cypress wood, and a kitchen. When new the building was heated by three furnaces and lighted by gas and electricity.

Mention should be made of two furnishings in this new church. One was the Opus 1345 pipe organ built and installed by L.C. Harrison and Company, then of Bloomfield, New Jersey. This instrument was expertly played by Miss Adelaide Grabert, beginning in the 1890s until her retirement early in 1961 when it was named in her honor. The second item was a communion table given by relatives and friends in memory of society member Col. Nathan B. Dibble. This is the same communion table (usually covered by cloths) used today during Sunday services at 24 Clapboard Ridge Road.

This church, with modifications and updates, served the Danbury Universalists and Universalist-Unitarians for seventy-three years. This writer, as a child, remembers receiving palms on Palm Sunday and geraniums during Children's Sunday services in the auditorium. I climbed, with other kids, at least partway up the steep, narrow stairway in the tower and with my father descended into the damp, dark basement with muddy floor and planks to walk on before Sunday school rooms and a children's chapel were constructed in this space in the late 1950s. There were Sunday school classes for younger children in the large hall on the second floor (where I grew to dislike and attempted to avoid fingerpainting) and dinners, rummage sales, and fundraisers in that same large hall. And I saw volunteers wash piles of dirty dishes stacked near the sink in the kitchen. Some of that same china has been stored in boxes in the "cage" in the basement of the house next door to the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Danbury's present-day Fellowship Hall. [Note - Reminiscences of this church by Eleanor Lyon and Carolyn Wells LaPine can be found in chapter five of *The Story of the Unitarian Universalist Society of Northern Fairfield County 1822-1995* by Reverdy Whitlock.]

By the autumn of 1966 the Danbury church and the Ridgefield fellowship had completed their merger. The renamed Unitarian Universalist Society of Northern Fairfield County left its 347 Main St. home for a rental on West Starrs Plain Rd. The reasons for this change were varied, generally having to do with the expense of building upkeep and repairs and limited parking space as well as some newer members' discomfort with the traditional though comfortable atmosphere of the old church. Much debate preceded this action. The following year the building was sold to Congregation B'Nai Israel, by coincidence the same congregation, then called Children of Israel Society, which had purchased and moved into the former Universalist church on Liberty St. in 1907. A few years later Congregation B'Nai Israel sold the now synagogue at 347 Main St. to a private party in anticipation of the group's move to a new location. For a short while after this the building was used as a theater. Then, in October 1974 this venerable old edifice was torn down. The site was redeveloped and today a modern glass-fronted office building stands in its place.



*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 December Comment –**  
**Friday, November 17<sup>th</sup>.**

