



Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Danbury

Monthly **COMMENT** Newsletter

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

APRIL 2024



FROM OUR MINISTER

“A Declaration of Interdependence”

Dear Beloveds,

No less than a dozen Declarations of Interdependence have been proclaimed, in one way, shape or form, since 1936. These declarations have been made in an ecological context but have also dealt with racial and religious tolerance as well as interdependence among nations and cultures.

The first complete declaration that grabbed my attention was one proposed in 1945 by Will Durant, Meyer David, and Dr. Christian Richard, it was introduced into the Congressional Record on October 1 of that year by Ellis E. Patterson. *A DECLARATION OF INTERDEPENDENCE among All People* re-affirms what it calls “evident truths” by listing five statements of support for racial and religious diversity, noting that intolerance is the door to violence and dictatorship. The document ends with the following resolutions:

- *To uphold and promote human fellowship through mutual consideration and respect.*
- *To champion human dignity and decency, and to safeguard these without distinction of race, or color, or creed.*
- *To strive in concert with others to discourage all animosities arising from these differences and to unite all groups in the fair play of civilized life.*

Declarations of interdependence moved decidedly in the direction of that environmental awareness as the 20th century progressed. Originally published in the Whole Earth Catalog Supplement of September 1969 and again in the book *Sources*, edited by Theodore Roszak (Harper Collins, 1972, p. 388), The Unanimous Declaration of Interdependence by Cliff Humphrey and friends makes use of Thomas Jefferson’s, language, style, and cadence, borrowing freely from Jefferson’s historic document to sound an environmental call to arms.

When in the course of evolution, it becomes necessary for one species to denounce the notion of independence from all the rest, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the interdependent station, to which the natural laws of the cosmos have placed them... We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all species have evolved with equal and unalienable rights,

This declaration ends, like Jefferson’s, with an appeal “*to the ecological consciousness of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do solemnly publish and declare that all species are interdependent.*”

In 1992 The David Suzuki Foundation wrote a Declaration of Interdependence for the United Nations Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro. It contains many statements laid out in three sections labeled This We Know, This We Believe, and This We Resolve. You can find a copy here: <https://david Suzuki.org/about/declaration-of-interdependence/>

(continued)

This month as we delve into Interdependence as a spiritual theme, I once again declare myself an interdependent part of the glorious web of creation. I invite you, dear ones, to join me.

Grace and peace,
Rev. Tony

SPIRITUAL CHALLENGE – The Anam Cara, You, and Your Friends

Our theme for the month is Interdependence and my challenge to you focuses on one of the most interdependent of human relationships – Friendship. Not only do we love our friends, but we also depend on them, and they on us. My challenge to you is to reflect on your friendships and the spiritual roles friends fill in each other's lives. Here's some thoughts to get you going.

Anam Cara is an Irish term meaning Soul Friend. As John O'Donohue says in his book *Anam Cara: A Book of Celtic Wisdom*, "In the early Celtic church, a person who acted as a teacher, companion, or spiritual guide was called an anam cara. With the anam cara you could share your inner-most self, your mind and your heart. This friendship was an act of recognition and belonging. When you had an anam cara, your friendship cut across all convention, morality, and category. You were joined in an ancient and eternal way with the "friend of your soul." Pastoral Counselor and therapist Robert Wicks suggests that friends fill four spiritual roles in our lives. He calls these the Cheerleader, The Prophet, the Harasser, and the Spiritual Guide. One friend may fill multiple roles in a friendship. Just as your friends fill these roles in your life, you fill them in theirs.

- The Cheerleader friend is someone who encourages you and reminds you that you CAN do it! You WILL be okay! And You ARE a wonderful person! You are loved! A famous cheerleader friend is Frodo Baggins' friend Sam Gamgee. Who are the Cheerleaders in your life? Who do you cheer for and how?
- The Prophet friend tells you what you need to hear not what you want to hear? Who speaks the truth to you even when it is difficult? Who insists on justice and compassion? Who are the Prophets in your life. To whom do you Prophesy.
- The Harasser is a friend who can get away with nagging you to be your best self. Who calls you to humility? Who reminds you not to blow things out of proportion? Who nags you to do the right thing? Is there anyone in your life you help with these things? Who do you harass?
- The Spiritual Guide is the friend = you talk to about big important questions - how you feel? The origin of the universe? The meaning of life? A friend who helps you understand art, music, poetry? Who helps you be a Unitarian Universalist? Who are the Spiritual Guides in your life. Whose Spiritual Guide, are you?

Once you've worked through this challenge, perhaps tell your friends about it. Or better yet, invite them into the process of reflection with you, like a true anam cara!

As always, I'd love to know how you did with this challenge. Text me or call me at 508-344-3668 or email me at revtony@pm.me.

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

Sunday, April 7th

Sustain the Flame

Rev. Tony Lorenzen

Rev. Tony is joined by members of the congregation for Stewardship Sunday. Rev. Tony will wrap up their reflections by pondering what it means to put our religious identity at the center of our lives and our children at the center of our congregational life.



Our Share-the-Plate offering will go to the Interfaith AIDS Ministry (IAM). Interfaith AIDS Ministry of Greater Danbury, Inc. is a non-profit organization responding to the critical needs of individuals and families infected and affected by the HIV/AIDS virus. Interfaith AIDS Ministry of Greater Danbury, Inc. offers unconditional, critical support services to individuals and families facing the nutritional, physical and emotional challenges of living with HIV/AIDS while providing vital educational and prevention programs that respond to

the greater community since 1989. IAM operates THE LIVING PANTRY, the only shopper’s choice food/personal care item pantry in the region with a nutritionist on staff that seeks to meet the specific nutritional needs of people living with HIV/AIDS and their families.

Sunday, April 14th

Declarations of Interdependence

Rev. Tony Lorenzen

Rev. Tony reflects on how we declare and demonstrate interdependence in contract to independence.

Sunday, April 21st

The Circle of Life Does Not Require Roundup

Marcia Brooker and Mary Ann Kulla

Join us for a morning of poetry and song, presented by poets, poetry lovers and the UUCD Choir, who will perform a song inspired by Amanda Gorman's The Hill We Climb. Mary Ann Kulla will speak on repairing the circle of life.

Sunday, April 28th

An Interdependent Community

Rev. Tony Lorenzen

Rev. Tony reflects on all the ways members of faith community depend on each other and the importance of a common understanding of what it means to belong to a community.



Our Caring Circle is Available

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

Bob Bollinger is the contact person for April.

Valerie Cochrane is the assistant.

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

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

From Our Director of Religious Education For Children and Youth



Upcoming In Children and Youth Religious Education (RE):

Nursery care for children ages 0-3 is available during services on Sunday mornings, or caregivers are of course welcome to keep their children with them during services.

Children over the age of three are invited to attend the first part of the service with the adults. After the story portion of the service, these children have the option to go to children's programs.

Youth groups for pre-teens and teens in junior and senior high school take place on designated Sunday evenings.

- **Friday, April 5:** Group for Caregivers of LGBTQIA+ Young People
- **Sunday, April 7:** Regular Sunday morning programs; Junior High and Senior High Youth Groups meet Sunday evening
- **Sunday, April 14:** Regular Sunday morning programs
- **Sunday, April 21:** Regular Sunday morning programs; Senior High Youth Group meets Sunday evening
- **Sunday, April 28:** Regular Sunday morning programs

Volunteers Needed!

This is the time of year when we turn our attention to program planning. Children, youth, and family plans for this summer as well as the upcoming school year will depend on volunteer availability. However, it is still very important to match people with the right volunteer roles for them. If you are interested in volunteering, please send an email to dre@uudanbury.org with the following information.

- **Frequency:** How frequently are you interested in volunteering (once or twice during the year; three or four times during year; once or twice per month; most Sundays)?
- **Type:** What inspired you to reach out? Are you interested in helping with planning, preparation, or committee work, or is your preference to work directly with program participants?
- **Style:** What is your preferred style of interaction (for example, do you prefer to be in charge, or are you more interested in mutuality; do you like to have structure or do you prefer to interact in more flexible ways)?
- **Age:** Is there a particular age group with whom you are best suited to work?
- **Skills:** Do you have a special skill you can offer the children's community in either behind-the-scenes or direct work (some examples might include making music, telling stories, creating props and sets for stages, art of any type, etc.)?
- **Connections:** Do you have a connection to a community organization with which we could partner for social action events?

From The Board of Trustees

by Margaret Henderson, President



A Report from the President

The Board - your Board - is going strong! Energy and participation in all corners are up since the pandemic -- or since the lockdown I should say, since Covid is still circulating and there are still people getting long Covid or dying.

The UUA's national General Assembly (GA) is not until June, but now is the time to register! This year it's 100% virtual to make it more accessible for all UU's. Next year it will be in Baltimore. The Board would like to remind everyone that **UUCD has an endowment fund** just to help members with the expense of attending GA. Black, Indigenous and people of color are particularly encouraged to attend since affinity groups are available at GA that aren't available in our local congregation. For more info, go to uua.org/ga.

In other news the Auction Event Team is coming together! This team will be responsible for the "party" aspects of the auction to be held on November 2nd. They will:

- come up with the theme in April, and meet a couple of times over the summer
- decorate the venue (arrange to rent tables and chairs if needed)
- provide appetizers and desserts, and beverages

If you would like to help out in even a small way, please contact a Board member.

Since more people than ever seem to rely on our UU community gatherings these days, plans are underway to continue more activities through the summer this year. What activities at UUCD would you most like to see continue year round?

Other important items you'll be hearing more about this month include:

- our annual pledge drive, which provides more than half our funds each year.
- Nominating Committee is putting together a slate of trustees for next year's Board. If you're interested, please contact Jackie Alexander.
- Our buildings need some attention to their infrastructure. The Board is considering a number of capital projects for the upcoming year.

Finally, I want to take this chance to thank all of you for being part of our UUCD community. Your presence and contributions mean more than you'll ever know!

Upcoming Events

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 February meeting will take place on February 2nd. Please RSVP to dre@uudanbury.org.

The Kennedys, Maura and Pete, are a husband-and-wife duo who first hit the road as members of Nanci Griffith's Blue Moon Orchestra. After signing with Danbury-based Green Linnet Records, they began touring the US, England, Ireland and Scotland on their own, and didn't slow down until, after nearly three decades of constant travel, the pandemic brought their endless tour to a halt. At that point, they switched to a weekly YouTube Live program, with different songs | every week, and they added a thousand songs to their repertoire. Now in concert again, they bring the magic of live performance, and their songs, uplifting, empowering, and encouraging, are a tonic in these tumultuous times.



MUSIC AT THE RIDGE

presents

THE KENNEDYS IN CONCERT

SUNDAY, APRIL 7 AT 4 PM

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATION OF DANBURY

24 CLAPBOARD RIDGE ROAD, DANBURY, CT.

IN-PERSON AND LIVE-STREAMING TICKETS AT

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/the-kennedys-in-concert-tickets-828866952367>

Lisa Gutkin and Sue Horowitz



MORE INFO: WWW.MUSICATTHERIDGE.ORG



Tickets at Eventbrite.com

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



Wednesday, April 10

Join us at 6:00 p.m. on Wednesday, April 10, when our **Choir will host the Community Dinner:** pasta, salad, garlic bread, and (of course) spirited conversations. At 6:45 p.m., and then we will have a Neighborhood Bridges program on Islam. For background information on Islam see these resources:

- [Basic information](#) including [this link](#) to information about the Five Pillars of Islam
- A video made by a Muslim on [what non-Muslims should know about Muslims](#)
- A politically-focused documentary titled [Inside Islam: What a Billion Muslims Really Think](#)
- A [lecture on religious beliefs in Islam](#) from Ross Brann at Cornell University
- A [Tedx Talk](#) on identity by a transgender Muslim and a [Tedx Talk](#) on drag and Islam (including a short piece on Sufism)
- An informative [children's video](#) and [a second children's video](#) (both from the same source) on Eid-al Fitr – the festival at the end of Ramadan – of special interest because our community dinner this month will be during Eid-al Fitr
- [Books](#) of interest

And for information about Islam in Unitarian Universalism check out: www.uua.org/beliefs/what-we-believe/beliefs/islam.

Watch for the invitation/RSVP request that will arrive by email the first week in April.

Neighborhood Bridges in March

The study of Protestant Christianity wrapped up on Sunday, March 24, when 15 members of UUCD visit New Hope Baptist Church in Danbury, where we were welcomed, recognized, and engaged in a lively service. The first span of a potential bridge to some of our neighbors was created. We all went home with palm fronds!



April 13th: 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. We will supply water and popcorn. Feel free to bring your takeout dinner. Donations to UUCD accepted.

UU Passover Seder 2024

This year's UUCD Passover Seder is being co-led by **Lou Ann Villani** and **Nancy Hershatter**. Along with the telling of the Passover story with words and music, we will enjoy a shared potluck. Be on the lookout for sign up instructions. Date and time: Friday, April 26 from 6-9 PM.

Ministry/Team News

From the *Caring Circle*

MEMORY LOSS, COGNITIVE DECLINE, & SUPPORT for CAREGIVERS: FORUM

*Where are my keys? I can't remember her name!
Did Mom leave the stove on again? Should my husband still be driving?*

Wondering if these memory blips and worrisome behaviors are normal signs of aging — or something more? Such concerns can affect us all — and our loved ones — as we grow older.

Join us on **Sunday, April 28**, post-service, for an informative forum: CAREGIVING for LOVED ONES — MEMORY LOSS & COGNITIVE DECLINE. This free forum is open to congregants and their families and friends and will be held **11:30—1p.m.** in the lower level of Fellowship Hall.

Presenters from the Goldstone Caregiver Center at Danbury Hospital and the Ridgefield Visiting Nurse Association will explore issues of memory loss, cognitive decline, and caregiving for loved ones. Q & A will follow the presentations.

The Caring Circle would like an idea of how many of you might attend. So, please email **Lou Ann Heller** if you hope to join us.

From The Nominating Team

by Jackie Alexander

UUCD needs YOU!

If you have been a member of UUCD for two years you are eligible to serve as an officer of the Board of Trustees. It's a one year commitment and can be rewarding for you and a great gift of your service to our congregation. You can gain leadership experience and lend your talents and new ideas to our Board.

This year we are looking to fill the positions of: President - Vice President (or two Co-Presidents) -Treasurer

One Trustee position is also open. A Trustee serves for a 3 year term but does not have the same membership requirement as the officers.

Elections will be held at the Annual Meeting in June. More information about these positions can be found in the Member Portal of uudanbury.org under Board of Trustees Documents. If you are interested please contact one of the Nominating Team: Jackie Alexander, Dan Brodax, or Annie Senol.

From the *Social Action Council*

Soup Kitchen Corner

by Judy Lacker

On Saturday, April 6, some members of Soup Kitchen Team 2 (Team Leader **Carl Tramontana. Rose Schlemmer, Lisa Deldin, Andrea Andersen**) 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. 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.

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

A century ago, around the time First Universalist Society of Danbury (now Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Danbury) celebrated its 100th anniversary, Rev. Lewis B. Fisher, DD, wrote the following to begin his book *Which Way?* Dr. Fisher was dean of Ryder Divinity School in Chicago [see note below].

Universalists are often asked to tell where they stand. The only true answer to give to this question is that we do not stand at all, we move. Or we are asked to state our position. Again we can only answer that we are not staying to defend any position, we are on the march....

Of course we can always say that we stand for God and man, for Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, for the Bible and the immortal soul, for redemption from sin, and for a human race that, in some day yet to be, shall learn to live in harmony with God. But all these words and phrases take on new meanings, and need new definitions, in each succeeding age.... Our worn phrases are always losing their old meanings, and must forever be finding new meanings in the light of new experiences.

The Rev. Harry Adams Hersey retired in the summer of 1948 after eighteen years at First Universalist. Ordained in 1906 and more than forty years in the ministry, Dr. Hersey was by all accounts of the "old school" in his manner of preaching, caring for his flock, and involvement in both local community and denominational affairs. The next quarter century, book-ended by the immediate post-World War II years and the Vietnam era into the early 1970s, would see many changes in both the Danbury church and the larger Universalist and Unitarian worlds.

Let's look first at some of what was happening in the two denominations. In 1935 the Universalist General Convention (later renamed the Universalist Church of America) adopted an avowal of faith building on professions of 1803 and 1899. It read this way.

The bond of fellowship in this Convention shall be a common purpose to do the will of God as Jesus revealed it and to co-operate in establishing the Kingdom for which he lived and died.

To that end we avow our faith in God as Eternal and All-Conquering Love, in the spiritual leadership of Jesus, in the supreme worth of every human personality, in the authority of truth known or to be known, and in the power of men of good-will and sacrificial spirit to overcome all evil and progressively establish the Kingdom of God. Neither this nor any other statement shall be imposed as a creedal test, provided that the faith thus indicated be professed.

Two changes were made to this statement in 1953. The word "Convention" was replaced by "church" and the final words in the avowal, "provided that the faith thus indicated be professed," were deleted.

Unitarians offered the following statement in 1944.

Five Principals of Modern Unitarianism:

Individual freedom of belief;

Discipleship to advancing truth;

Democratic process in human relations;

*Universal brotherhood, undivided by nation, race, or creed;
Allegiance to the cause of a United World Community.*

And, in 1959, two years before the formation of the Unitarian Universalist Association and five preceding the Unitarian Fellowship of Ridgefield, an earlier Unitarian profession was updated to read like this.

In accordance with its charter, the American Unitarian Association shall "be devoted to moral, religious, educational, and charitable purposes."

In accordance with these purposes the American Unitarian Association shall:

- 1. Diffuse the knowledge and promote the interests of religion which Jesus taught as love to God and love to man;*
- 2. Strengthen the churches and fellowships which unite in the Association for more and better work for the Kingdom of God;*
- 3. Organize new churches and fellowships for the extension of Unitarianism in our own countries and in other lands; and*
- 4. Encourage sympathy and cooperation among religious liberals at home and abroad.*

The Association recognizes that its constituency is congregational in polity and that individual freedom of belief is inherent in the Unitarian tradition. Nothing in these purposes shall be construed as an authoritative test.

The origins of these avowals differed, but for our purposes here, no matter. As the Universalists and Unitarians progressed through the late 1940s and the 1950s to their historic consolidation in 1961, the statements above were at least partly a basis for the creation of the original six Principles of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) These six were stated as follows.

...the members of the Unitarian Universalist Association, dedicated to the principles of a free faith, unite in seeking:

- 1. To strengthen one another in a free and disciplined search for truth as the foundation of our religious fellowship;*
- 2. To cherish and spread the universal truths taught by the great prophets and teachers of humanity in every age and tradition, immemorially summarized in the Judeo-Christian heritage as love to God and love to man;*
- 3. To affirm, defend and promote the supreme worth and dignity of every human personality, the dignity of man, and the use of the democratic method in human relationships;*
- 4. To implement our vision of one world by striving for a world community founded on ideals of brotherhood, justice, and peace;*
- 5. To serve the needs of member churches and fellowships, to organize new churches and fellowships, and to extend and strengthen liberal religion;*
- 6. To encourage cooperation with men of good will in every land.*

[Note - Ryder Divinity School was part of Lombard College (Universalist) of Galesburg, Illinois. Ryder relocated to Chicago in 1912. When Lombard closed in 1930 its Illinois college charter was transferred to Meadville Theological School (Unitarian). Meadville had moved from Pennsylvania to Chicago a few years earlier. Today the school is known as Meadville Lombard Theological School.]

To be continued in May 2024...



P.O.Box 677
New Milford, CT 06776

Dear Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Danbury,

Thank you so much for your “Share the Plate” donation. We are so grateful for your generosity!

Your donation comes at a very good time. We just learned that the Welcome Corps will begin the vetting process for our Afgan family of 8, the Mohammadis! We don’t know how long this will take, but our hope is that they will arrive some time in the fall. In the meantime, your donation will help us to begin preparations for their arrival.

Thank you again for supporting the work that we do!

Sincerely,

Michele Shackelford, President
NMRR

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 16th.

