



Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Danbury

Monthly **COMMENT** Newsletter

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

FEBRUARY 2024



FROM OUR MINISTER

“Giving Everyone What They Deserve”

Dear Beloveds,

Justice is defined in classical philosophy as giving each their due – or giving everyone what they deserve. Justice is often discussed as if it is fairness. It’s hard to find anyone who doesn’t want justice done – people should get what they deserve, and people should be treated fairly. That’s easy to agree upon. Where justice gets sticky is agreeing on exactly what it is that people deserve and exactly what’s meant by fair treatment.

I don’t believe in capital punishment, and I’ve spent a lot of time over the years working on death penalty abolition in our country. Ten years ago, I was serving the UU congregation in Huntsville, TX. All of the state of Texas’s executions are done at the prison in Huntsville and protesting those executions became a part of the mission of that church. There are many people who feel that executing those who commit horrific crimes is giving them what they deserve. I do not agree. Justice is giving each their due and executions are not the healthiest thing for a society. Giving everyone their due gets complicated quickly when we move justice beyond the individual to the community.

Seeing justice as fairness is no easier. Treating everyone exactly the same isn’t always what’s fair. People who promote a flat income tax will argue that everyone paying the same rate is fair and thus just. Yet no matter what percentage of income is used as the tax, losing that percentage of income is a far greater burden for the poor than the rich.

In order to approach fairness and giving everyone what they deserve from a moral standpoint, justice and equity need to be considered in tandem. Taken together justice and equity can begin to steer us toward a more compassionate and beloved community.

With Love,
Rev. Tony

SPIRITUAL CHALLENGE – Experience a Poverty Simulation

It's one thing to value justice and equity, but an entirely different thing to experience what life is like for those whose lives are defined by injustice and inequity. My challenge to you this month is to experience one or more poverty simulations and reflect on it. How did the simulation affect your thinking about poverty and people living in poverty? How did the simulation affect you emotionally? Here are some free and readily available poverty simulations for you to explore:

SPENT at <https://playspent.org/> – is a free online game simulation from Urban Ministries of Durham that takes you through a series of choices in a “choose your own adventure” format.

COPE – at <https://thinktank-inc.org/vcope> - is an online version of an in-depth live action simulation run by Think Tank Rethink Poverty.

MONOPOLY – Yes, the classic board game. Play with at least three other people, but instead of every player starting the game with \$1,500, draw lots for starting positions as follows:

Player 1 – Goes first and starts the game with \$6,000. Player 1 begins the game on Boardwalk already owning Boardwalk, Park Place, and all Green Properties – all with hotels already on them, as well as all the Railroads, and both utilities, and one of the Get out of Jail Free cards.

Player 2 - Goes second and starts with \$3,000. Player 2 begins the game on Illinois Ave, already owning all the red properties – each with three houses already on them – and double the usual starting money.

Player 3 - Goes third and starts with \$1500. Player 3 begins the game on Oriental Ave. already owning all the Light Blue Properties.

Player 4 (and if there's more people, all the rest of the players) – Goes last and starts with No money.

Player(s) 4 (and 5,6, etc.) begins the game on GO.

Other than this starting arrangement all Monopoly rules apply as usual.

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.

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

Sunday, February 4th The Under-Told Story Needed for Our Time Tom Krattenmaker
 Columnist and author Tom Krattenmaker will explore the ethical formation and insights we can draw from engaging deeply with the story of the universe. The fact we're made of stardust is more than a cool idea, he contends. Contained therein is a compelling set of values vital for our time and a story that can help humanity regain its bearings.



Our Share the Plate offering will be for Jericho Partnership. Lisa Siedlecki, Co-Executive Director, will speak about Jericho Partnership, a faith-based non-profit with a mission to meet the academic, physical, social, and spiritual needs of Danbury's at-risk youth, for God's glory. We do this through wraparound programs and services including mentoring, after-school tutoring, summer learning program, social-emotional wellness initiatives, college/job/life prep workshops, food pantry, daily meals for our students, weekend meal support for public school students in need, and pediatric healthcare. We have an impact on the lives of more than 4,250 individuals annually.

Sunday, February 11th Pebs and Bristol Bucks Rev. Tony Lorenzen
 Rev. Tony reflects on poverty, debt, late-stage capitalism, and hopeful economic alternatives that prioritize community, showing appreciation, and mental health instead of the accumulation of financial resources.

Sunday, February 18th Todd Zagorec, Nancy Hershatter, and Darlene Anderson-Alexander
"We Are Not Going to Carry Your Water For You": Beyond Land Acknowledgement
 Join members of the Sunday Services Team for an interactive service. We will explore together what our weekly land acknowledgement statement really means and how we might take an action-planning approach to showing solidarity with the local Paugussett people going forward. We will listen to native voices via readings, music, and interviews and then do some of our own work as justice-seeking Unitarian Universalists. Come be part of the conversation!

Sunday, February 25th Evil and Ignorance Rev. Tony Lorenzen
 Rev. Tony reflects on stigmatizing ignorance and the uneducated in light of Deitrich Bonhoeffer's contention that stupidity is a greater threat to the good than evil, and reminds us to beware of our own ignorance, not just that of others.

From Our Director of Religious Education For Children and Youth



Upcoming In Children and Youth Religious Education (RE)

On Sundays, children are invited to the upper level of the Fellowship Hall to attend the first part of the service with the adults. After the story portion of the service, children have the option to go downstairs for children's programming. Teens of high school age do not attend the first part of service, but instead go straight to their meeting room in the cottage on Sunday mornings.

- **Friday, February 2:** Group for Caregivers of LGBTQI+ Young People
- **Sunday, February 4:** Regular Sunday morning programs; Junior High Youth Group meets Sunday evening
- **Sunday, February 11:** Regular Sunday morning programs
- **Sunday, February 18:** Regular Sunday morning programs (note: Sierra-Marie will be away)
- **Sunday, February 25:** Regular Sunday morning programs

Neighborhood Bridges: Resources for Learning About Buddhism

Our Neighborhood Bridges program is an opportunity for people of all ages to learn about and connect with the faith communities around us. In February we will learn about Buddhism. Let's learn together! Please join us at 6:45PM, after the monthly Community Dinner on Wednesday, February 14th for a brief 101 program on Buddhism coordinated by Melody Levy. We are also planning a visit to the Buddhist Center in Carmel, NY, so stay tuned for information. In the meantime, check out this [video introduction to Buddhism](#), this [fact sheet on Buddhism](#), and [this website](#) with a variety of background materials, including information on differing forms of Buddhism and a reading list.

Mystery Buddies

Depending on interest, some years we have offered a postcard exchange program in February or March to help nurture intergenerational connections in the congregation. Participants have exchanged postcards over three or four weeks with a "mystery buddy," and then there is a finale during which everyone finds out who their buddy was. Is there interest this year? If you are interested, please email Sierra-Marie at dre@uudanbury.org.

From The Board of Trustees

by John Miglietta, Vice-President



When we ‘sign the book’ to become a member of UUCD, one of the things we agree to is to ‘Pledge to support our congregation’. We each understand that this means monetarily, to give something to help provide for the physical building, the heat, and for the salaries of the staff amongst countless other things. But it also means pledging some of our time and energy to ensure that our congregation and mission thrive. This time commitment from each of us is as necessary to do the work of our community as the more tangible dollar commitment.

Much as we have differing financial resources, we all have different abilities to offer our time and energy. Some of us have a special talent, ability, or training that can help a specific need (here I’m thinking of finance, to help our Treasurer). Or perhaps you know your way around a kitchen, your skill would be helpful during coffee hour, at the Dorothy Day Soup Kitchen or perhaps for the upcoming Auction in November. Or are you comfortable wearing a tool belt? Buildings and grounds can always use the extra hands. Do you have a creative flair? How would you decorate the sanctuary for an upcoming function?

Some of these commitments are longer term (three years for a Trustee), and some are only for a few hours. Some teams meet regularly, and some are ad hoc, meeting only when needed. Some of these opportunities are inward facing, helping UUCD primarily; and some are more visible in the wider community. There are such a wide range of opportunities and needs to be addressed that everyone can find something that suits their particular skills, passions, and availability. While none of us can do everything, I believe the each of us can do something.

If you are unsure about your ability to commit, start small. Volunteer to be a greeter, bake a batch of cookies for coffee hour, or help with a rake on spring cleanup. If you don’t know where to look for opportunities to help out, there are many committees and ministries that could use your help here and here. Or just ask someone during coffee hour, I’m sure that you will be pointed in a useful direction.

Wishing everyone a happy and healthy 2024.



Our Caring Circle is Available

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

Joan Campbell is the contact person for February.

Joan Stapleton is the assistant.

If you have a need, please contact **Joan Campbell**

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

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

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



February 10th: **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.



Our wonderful Community Dinner for February will fall on Wednesday, February 14 - an auspicious day - and our Board and Common Council will make sure we are fed both physically and spiritually. What does the spirit of love mean when applied to a community? We will find out. Watch for the signup notice at the beginning of February.

Lui Collins With Anand Nayak



Sunday, February 11, 2024, 4pm

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

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

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



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

Tickets:
In-person and
Live-streaming
At Eventbrite.com
<http://tinyurl.com/4t8mxv2z>





Generally speaking, people do not like to talk about death. Joni Lowe and Marcia Brooker invite you to have such a conversation with members of this congregation beginning in February. The **Death Cafe** will be offered to give participants an opportunity to explore different aspects of death and/or the dying process. The cafe is conversational amongst a small group of attendees so everyone one may ask questions and share. The group will be limited to 8 people and will meet on Sundays right after the service every other week

beginning February 25th. Sign up to claim your spot, grab your tea/coffee after the Sunday service and come downstairs for community and conversation. Please contact **Joni Lowe** or **Marcia Brooker** for questions or to sign up.

Ministry/Team News

From the *Social Action Council*

Soup Kitchen Corner

by Judy Lacker

On Saturday, February 3rd, some members of Soup Kitchen Team 4 (Team Leaders **Bruni Edwards and Yvonne Ruddy-Stein, Joanne Davidson, the Parr Family, the Boninsinga/Twombly Family, 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 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.



From the *Sunday Services Ministry Team*

The Sunday Services team is planning a service in April, which centers around the 7th principle - Interdependence. We'd like to alternate poetry and music on this theme. If you'd like to present a poem you've written related to the interdependence web of existence, or one that someone else has written, please contact **Mary Ann Kulla**. If there is music that might work, we welcome that too.

Notes on Two Hundred Years (and More)

by Douglas H. Parkhurst

The past few 'Notes on 200 Years...' articles focused on people and events from the first part of the twentieth back to the late eighteenth centuries. This month we will look at more recent happenings at the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Danbury (UUCD).

Our monthly newsletter *Comment* is a staple of UUCD communications and has been so for more than forty years. Both present-day and previous issues contain a wealth of information about people and events in the church. Let's see what was going on at UUCD fifteen years ago, based largely on *Comment* for the month of February 2009.

The Congregation was well established at 24 Clapboard Ridge Road, having completed its move to this new facility just over three years earlier. Rev. Dr. Suzanne Spencer [note - now Rev. Dr. Suzanne Redfern-Campbell] began her two-year term as Interim Minister the previous August, following the departure of Rev. Dr. Linda Hansen, who served the UUCD as Settled Minister from 2003 to 2008. Rev. Peggy Block was the UUCD's endorsed Community Minister, Mary Collins was Director of Religious Education (DRE), and Sherry Kyriacou was Office Manager.

The 2009-2010 Canvass commenced in early January [2009]. Rev. Spencer, in her *Comment* column for February, discussed the act of pledging in ways meaningful to both pledger and recipient. Board President Carl Tichler echoed her thoughts, with emphasis on the personal growth he experienced in his work with the Board of Trustees and Social Action Committee. Canvass Co-Chairs Bruce Buzby and Ross Fenster reviewed canvass results so far. Fifty-six pledges had been received accounting for just under half of the \$196,000 goal. The confidentiality of individual pledges was emphasized.

The UUCD welcomed five new members recently. There were ten updates or additions to email address listings. It was noted that Ann Thorpe passed away on January 20. Writer, teacher, friend, Ann came to the congregation in 1974 and later became a most generous benefactor.

Mary Alice Kimball, representing the Denominational Affairs Committee, announced that candidates for the upcoming election to the office of president of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) would appear at Community Unitarian Church in White Plains, New York, on February 14. The candidates were Revs. Laurel

Hallman and Peter Morales. Carpooling to White Plains would be arranged. [Note - Rev. Peter Morales was elected to two terms and served as president of the UUA from 2009 to 2017.]

Several committees were advertising for "help." These included the Sunday Service, Religious Education, Finance, and Buildings and Grounds Committees, and the Even Month Scrub Club. An online UUCD Interest and Talents Survey was also underway. Respondents could indicate how they wished to contribute their time and talent to the congregation. Darlene Anderson-Alexander was contact person for anyone interested in getting involved in committee work or looking for additional information.

Finance Committee chair Bruce Buzby and Treasurer Marie Dupree reviewed the UUCD's church year 2008-2009 institutional income profile. The total budgeted income for that year was \$240,000. The three largest sources of budgeted income were pledges at 69% (\$166,000), fundraising at 10% (\$25,000), and interest and dividends at 6% (\$14,000).

Planning for the upcoming 9th Annual Women's Retreat continued. The Retreat was fully subscribed with a waiting list available. The 2009 gathering would take place the weekend of April 17-19 at Wake Robin Inn in Lakeville, Connecticut. Price per person was \$260. Among activities scheduled were bird watching, flower arranging, comedy night, movies, and a book discussion group.

DRE Mary Collins provided a detailed report on religious education matters. The RE Committee was at work evaluating curricula and activities including Neighboring Faiths, Our Whole Lives Sexuality and Values (OWL), Coming of Age, Tapestry of Faith, Jewish and Christian Heritage, World Religions, UU Identity, Small Group Ministry for children, and one or more youth groups. Additional adult helpers were needed for the 11 am RE program [note - religious education activities were conducted at both 9 and 11 am]. A "Love and Appreciation Lunch" was planned for February 7 for religious education volunteers. A weekend youth conference called "CONic Book" was scheduled for later in February at the UU Society in Ridgewood, New Jersey.

The Sunday Service Committee was experimenting with a food offering as part of the Sunday morning order of service. Canned, non-canned, and a variety of non-food items were being accepted for distribution to local shelters and soup kitchens.

The Ministerial Search Committee was starting to build a profile of the congregation to aid in the search process. Gale Alexander had more information. [Note - Rev. Barbara Fast was called and ministered to UUCD from 2010 to 2016. To date she is UUCD's last Settled Minister, that is, called by the congregation, not interim or consulting.]

The Social Action Committee was busy. In January two members attended the first inauguration of Barack Obama as the nation's 44th president. Committee members also attended a Martin Luther King remembrance ceremony at Western Connecticut State University. Petitions supporting immigrants' rights were circulating and letters directed to area congregations with information about the New Sanctuary Movement were being prepared.

The Green Team was looking into the potential and possibility of UUCD becoming a Green Sanctuary. Ann Krieg had further information on this. Finally, thanks were offered to those who made donations to assist after a recent serious fire on New Street in Danbury.

UUCD's Team #4 was scheduled to work at the soup kitchen of the Dorothy Day House in Danbury on the first Saturday of February. Lisa Austin-Smith was team leader and among the dozen or so volunteers were Randy and Tucker Smith, Joanne Davidson, Cathie Billings, Jackie Alexander, Jane Leff, and Jan Galloway. Duties included preparing meals, making bag lunches, setting up, and serving. By this time the congregation had been providing support to the soup kitchen for more than twenty-five years.

A variety of activities were upcoming at UUCD. These included: five Chalice Circles; the Knitting Ministry; multi-week study sessions on the book *The Power of Now* by Eckhart Tolle; Comedy Night at the Ridge; a Candlemas Potluck; UUCD Conversations (Nonfiction Book Discussion Group); Movies with a Message; Men out to Breakfast at Windmill Diner; and Women out to Breakfast at Elmer's Diner. Also, the annual Goods and Services Auction was "right around the corner," planned for March 28. The theme in 2009 was a Masquerade Ball.

Sunday services were scheduled for both 9 and 11 am. The calendar listed:

February 1 - "A Sense of Mission" by Rev. Sue Spencer.

February 8 - "Lincoln at 200" by Rev. Sue Spencer.

February 15 - "In Celebration of Charles Darwin" by UUCD member Dr. Bob Wallace.

February 22 - "Let's Celebrate! Appreciation Sunday" featuring a Jazz Quintet with service led by Rev. Sue Spencer, DRE Mary Collins, Ross Fenster, Charlie Schott, and others.

February 2009 was surely a busy month at the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Danbury!

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.

