



Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Danbury

Monthly **COMMENT** Newsletter

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

JULY 2024



FROM OUR MINISTER

“Getting Lost in that Book”

Dear Beloveds,

I spent summer days doing a lot of things while growing up, but the two things I did most of all, especially the summers of my grade school years were playing baseball (and watching baseball on T.V. and listening to baseball on the radio) and reading.

One summer day shortly after fourth grade ended, I spent an entire afternoon in the children’s room of the Leominster (MA) public library and sat in a red, vinyl, chaise lounge on the floor in a back corner of the room and read “A Wrinkle in Time” by Madeleine L’Engle. I like to read. I read a lot. I read all the Hardy Boys books, I read all the Matt Christopher books, you get the idea. But I had not yet been completely captivated by a story like “A Wrinkle in Time”. I was so engrossed in the book that I totally forgot my mom was supposed to pick up after two hours and I didn’t go outside. A frantic search for me ensued while I continued reading, oblivious. Finally, mom came in and found me and I finished the book at home.

“A Wrinkle in Time” hit a lot of spots for me as child that it still does all these years later. Science, spirituality, and the difficulty of being an nerdy bookworm in a culture that values baseball players.

A lot of Unitarian Universalists like to read, but reading is not as popular even among the bookish as it once was. New literacies in visual media and sound have developed alongside technology and I now listen to as many books as I read with my eyes. This month I encourage you to read. Pick up a book if you haven’t in a while. Try something new. Maybe try listening to a book. For the adventurous among you, I have a reading challenge!

Now back to my book,

Rev. Tony

SPIRITUAL CHALLENGE – Pick a Summer Reading List and Read Your Way Through

The theme for the month is summer reading and I challenge you to find a summer reading list and begin working your way through it a book at a time. The task may carry you through the month, into August, and into the fall if you let it. You may find these lists anywhere. Maybe the New York Times bestseller list. Maybe Oprah's book club books. For some more particular suggestions, you might consider one of my three recommendations.

1. [Spiritual reading list](#) – I frequently suggest books from this list to my spiritual direction clients. There's things on it that cover a wide variety of spiritual perspectives and even a list of great spiritual fiction. [Download HERE.](#)
2. A list of Banned Books – Unfortunately, it's all too easy to find a list of banned books. Some major ones get published on a regular basis such as lists of the most banned books in the United States in the past year. Here's one by the American Library Association of the most banned books in America in 2023: <https://www.ala.org/bbooks/frequentlychallengedbooks/top10>
3. A list made up of all the books you planned on reading but didn't – perhaps all the books you've bought in the last year but haven't read or all the books you have been writing down somewhere but haven't read.

If you're in a book group or club and are already working on a list – what book your group reads – maybe look for a list of something different such as a list of graphic novels or books you would listen to instead of read. 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.

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

Sunday, July 7th

Bringing Humanity to Our Institutions

Steve Kennedy

Far too often in recent years, we have outsourced the work of our communities to institutions without real ties to the community and the people in it. This service will consider how we can bring our institutional values and practices into harmony with our natural tendency toward interpersonal relationships and on-the-ground thinking and personal values.

Sunday, July 14th

Camp Song Sing Along

Rev. Tony Lorenzen

Sunday, July 21st

A Square in the American Quilt: James Baldwin at 100

Samantha McCoy

August 2nd, 2024, marks 100 years since author and activist James Baldwin was born. Samantha McCoy will lead a service exploring Baldwin's body of work, his role in civil rights movements, and how his contributions deepen our understanding of what it means to be a citizen of the United States.

Sunday, July 28th

Answering the Call to Love Loudly!

Darlene Anderson-Alexander

Today we will explore the **Worthy Now Prison Ministry Network**, powered by the *Church of the Larger Fellowship*, a Unitarian Universalist congregation with no geographical boundary. Darlene has recently become a free-world pen pal through the Network and hopes to share her experience and perhaps encourage others at UU Danbury to consider how they might get involved.

Survey From Sunday Services

The Sunday Services Ministry Team would like to get your feedback on our Sunday programming and learn more about what you'd like to see in the future. At your convenience, please fill out our [Summer Survey](#) to share your thoughts. The survey will remain open through July, and we expect it will take 10-15 minutes to complete, depending on the length of one's responses. The survey will not automatically collect email addresses, so you have the choice to remain anonymous or share your name. If you have any questions, please reach out to Samantha McCoy. Thanks in advance for your participation!

From Our Director of Religious Education For Children and Youth



Family Ministry Summer Office Hours

In July and August, Rev. Sierra-Marie will be doing a combination of professional development and 2024-2025 preparation time. During this time, she will generally be available to meet by appointment and answer phone calls and emails with the exception of vacation time from August 9th-August 18th. Please note that her summer response time may be slower. If any additional vacation time is added, however, an email auto-reply will notify you of when she next will be available.

Informational Fair!

Our next program-year for children and youth launches in September. Spread the word! Know a family with children who might enjoy checking us out? Our next informational fair for families (with a bounce house and other activities for children) will be on **Sunday, September 8th from 10:30AM-12:00PM**. Please talk with the families you know about this fair, share on social media groups and on your own social media pages, and print and post copies of [this program flyer](#) in your community.

Volunteers Needed!

At the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Danbury, staff and ministers are all part-time. Our programs are the result of the efforts of the whole community. Help is needed with the children, youth, and family ministries next year! That doesn't mean everyone will be working directly with children (roles with children take a volunteer application and background check). There are greatly varying opportunities to contribute. Please take a few minutes to [fill out this form](#) with your volunteer interests, and Rev. Sierra-Marie will be in touch to help you get matched with the right opportunity for you.

Save the Date Notices - Children, Youth, and Family Ministries

Families with children and youth, please mark the following dates on your family calendar:

- **Sunday, August 25th** - Backpack blessings
- **Sunday, September 8th** - Homecoming/ingathering service and the Children, Youth, and Families Fall Ministry Fair, 10:30AM-12:00PM! We are inviting families from across Greater Danbury, so please [help spread the word](#). The Fair is for all ages but our promotional materials reflect a special focus this year on building programs for families with preschool-aged children.
- **Sunday, September 15th** - Fall programs will begin launching

Register for 2023-2024 Children and Youth Programs

Please [click here](#) to register your children and youth for 2023-2024 Nursery Care or Children and Youth Programs. This registration form takes most families about 10-15 minutes to complete and is a required form for nursery care and all programs.

A Note on Welcoming Newcomers in Children and Youth Ministries

In an effort to be as welcoming as possible to families newly joining us, we have been reducing our use of abbreviations. When we use an abbreviation, we make sure to always stop and share what it means. Even though it takes a little longer, it is worth ensuring that we aren't using insider language that can make newcomers feel left out and uncertain what we are talking about.

This last year, we decided to move away from the term Religious Education or "RE" because in this era it too is a bit of "insider language" that is unfamiliar to families newly joining us, especially those who do not have prior experience with another religious community.

Newcomers tend to ask things like "Do you have programs for kids?" When we respond to their questions by talking about "Religious Education," this opens more questions than it answers. For this reason, we have started using more familiar and direct terms like "Programs for Kids," "Children and Youth Ministries," and "Family Ministries." Please note that we no longer have a Children and Youth *Religious Education* Ministry Team. This team has been renamed: Family Ministry Team.



Our Caring Circle is Available

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

Joan Campbell is the contact person for July and August.

LouAnn Heller is the assistant.

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

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

Report from This Year's Online General Assembly

by Margaret Henderson

Hi all, I've just spent the last 4 days immersing myself online in GA (the UUA's annual General Assembly) with over 2,000 other UUs, and it was fabulous! Here are some of my favorite moments:

- I felt privileged to watch and read thoughtful debates about this year's Actions of Immediate Witness, which are: to care for those still being impacted by Covid, to support the human rights of Palestinians, to support scared and grieving Jews, and to work this summer to nurture vulnerable individuals being affected by climate change;
- the 2 Co-Moderators have added Process Observers this year, who would occasionally stop the Pro and Con comments when they threatened to become too emotionally charged or provocative;
- after 40+ years, the official statement of our UU goals was changed from 7 Principles and 6 sources, to 7 values with Love at the center, by an 80% to 20% vote.
- the gentlest, most artistic Ware lecture I've ever seen. It was on Disability Wisdom by Julia Watts Belser, with beautiful artwork on each slide to illustrate her point;
- a fabulous discussion between 2 Black trans artists from "The Black Trans Prayer Book," Lady Dane and J Mase III, that taught me *volumes* about their world view;
- the beautiful speech for Sunday worship given by Rev. Molly Housh Gordon on "Weaving Our Lives." (UUCD wisely used this for our Sunday service as well)

I love GA because every year for me it clearly shows our UU beliefs and ways of being in action. For instance, the Con line of potential speakers (those opposing a proposal) is described as the "Concern" line, not the "Contra" line, as a way to stress discernment and the hope for consensus over an adversarial model. As another example, every speaker gives a brief visual description of themselves for visually impaired folks. This is simply an attempt to share "the visual information that a non-blind person gleans automatically," like age, skin color and gender presentation. (More details at <https://www.uua.org/files/2023-05/Guide%20to%20Self-Descriptions--UUA.pdf>.)

There was also a great two-part talk on Fat Liberation - its history and current status, given by the head of NAAFA (naafa.org) and by the author of "Fat Church."

If any of these whet your interest, I encourage you to explore more, either online or by asking me about them. And I hope many of us can attend next year's GA in Baltimore, MD June 18-22, 2025. UUs are such wonderful people!

Upcoming Events

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

Movies with a Message will not be meeting in July and August. We will resume meeting again in September.



CLAUDIA SCHMIDT

**Sunday, July 14
4pm**

Claudia Schmidt is one of the most popular folk, blues and jazz musicians from the Midwest. Her smoky alto voice, multi-octave range and skillful playing of the 12-string guitar and mountain dulcimer have been showcased on National Public Radio's *A Prairie Home Companion*. As a gifted storyteller and songwriter, she incorporates a wide range of musical influences into her original material. With over 20 albums recorded and award-winning compositions, Claudia Schmidt's Music at the Ridge concert on July 14, 2024, promises to fill your heart and refresh your soul.



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](https://www.eventbrite.com)

Ministry/Team News

From the *Social Action Council*

Soup Kitchen Corner

by Judy Lacker

On Saturday, July 6, some members of Soup Kitchen Team A (Team Leader **Lynn Taborsak, Bob Taborsak, Diane Purvis, Nancy Brown, Linda & Steve Schneider, Jyo Buyyala and Lisa Deldin**) will be returning to the Dorothy Day Soup Kitchen on Spring Street to help serve take-out meals and sandwiches that were cooked or prepared in volunteers' homes or through donations. Unfortunately, we are not yet able to serve the guests a meal inside Dorothy Day Hospitality House.

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. If joining a team is not for you, you may consider being an alternate. It would require you to be available to substitute for a team member who would contact you a few days in advance of the particular first Saturday of the month. You can sign up on the poster on the bulletin board in the lobby and indicate "Alternate".

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 June 2024...

Late winter 1956 saw a new minister at First Universalist Church (now Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Danbury or UUCD). Ordained in 1949, the Rev. Frederick L. Harrison came to Danbury from serving two congregations, the Orange Universalist Church in Orange, and the North Orange Community Church in North Orange, Massachusetts. As it happened, his time in Danbury would be brief, about a year. In the spring of 1957 Mr. Harrison assumed the full-time position of superintendent of Universalist churches in Massachusetts and Connecticut, following the retirement of Rev. Dr. Clinton Lee Scott.

Nonetheless, 1956-57 was busy and fruitful for First Universalist. It was the start of a half-decade long period of growth in and vitalization of the congregation, under the guidance of Rev. Harrison and his successor, the Rev. Gaston M. Carrier.

Rev. Harrison's formal installation service and reception were planned for early May. A minister will customarily present ideas for a local church's development and improvement as he or she begins a new pastorate there. So it was with Mr. Harrison. Among his first suggestions to the Danbury church officers and trustees was adoption of what is noted in church records as the "Hanson Fund Raising Plan," apparently an organized and effective method of financial stewardship. A two part canvass was scheduled for early April 1956, with a special gifts canvass to be followed by the regular yearly campaign. A budget proposal for the 1956-57 church year would be presented at First Universalist's annual meeting on April 26. Among offices needing to be filled for the coming year were two three-year trustee positions; treasurer and assistant treasurer; clerk; agent; head usher; superintendent of the church school; and weekly offering collector.

Among First Universalist's officers and trustees, and committee and other active members during this period were the following [note - this list is not all-inclusive]: Frank Keaney, board chairman; Carol Stage, clerk; Richard Thompson, collector; Edith Ritton; Albin Voegele; Wilbur Olmstead; Walter Sweet; Arthur Wilson; Jack Rowland; Francis Albert; Louis Morgan; Wallace Parkhurst; Bessie Jackson; Paul Hull; Donald Stone; Arlene Bazarian; Louise Parkhurst; Pauline Olmstead; Clifford Taylor; Ralph Jackson; Charlene Shepard; Elizabeth Stannard; Irene Clark; Sallie Rollins; Frank Rollins. Rev. Harrison regularly attended board meetings. Organist and choir director Adelaide Grabert continued her now sixty year tenure at First Universalist. Roger Taylor would substitute for her if and when needed.

Reorganization of the church's religious education program was undertaken. A chairperson would lead a five member RE committee which would in turn oversee the church school superintendent and an RE clerk. Francis Albert was chair of this committee; Vinson Bronson was appointed superintendent; and Marion Keaney was clerk. Teachers included Judy Genest; Louise Parkhurst; and Tisha Walton. Time would be added to Sunday school sessions (10:15 to 11:45 am) and children would occasionally participate in Sunday morning worship services. Improvements were made to existing classroom space. First Universalist's most recent youth group had evidently run out of steam and a new youth group with six members was formed with Arlene Bazarian as advisor. An All Day Institute for Religious Education was planned for January 1957. And, adult religious education study groups were instituted which proved popular. A half-dozen or so of these groups met that church year. Most of their topics are lost now to history, but two mentioned in board minutes of March 11, 1957, are The Old Testament and the Life of Jesus.

Maintenance work was done on the church heating system and organ. The front vestibule was redecorated. Repairs were required in some ceiling plaster. A fire escape was needed at the rear of the building. Already underway by early 1956 were repairs and renovations to the parsonage at 17 Homestead Avenue, in preparation for putting this house on the market. Archie Olmstead was accorded special recognition for his work on this project. A larger house at 37 Pleasant Street in Danbury had been under consideration as a new parsonage. This house was purchased (price \$19,500) in time to become the home of Rev. Harrison and his family, which included wife Gladys and their three children. It would be home to First Universalist's clergy through the end of Rev. Ralph C. Bailey's pastorate in 1970.

To be continued in August 2024...

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 August Comment –
Friday, July 19th.**

