



Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Danbury

Monthly **COMMENT** Newsletter

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

AUGUST 2024

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

Sunday, August 4th

Empathic Distress

Joe Gillotti

Empathic Distress is responsible for stressful human dysfunction in ways that perhaps many people are not aware of. This subject comes from an article by neuroscientists, Dr. Olga Klimecki and Dr. Tania Singer. Reviled in this research is new information and strategies that will help all of us come to a much greater understanding about stress. This new report will help others that we come in contact with and at the same time create greater stress less experiences in our own life.

Sunday, August 11th

The Peace of Trees

Rev. Fred Small

"The rush and pressure of modern life are a form, perhaps the most common form, of its innate violence," wrote Trappist monk and peace activist Thomas Merton. "The frenzy of our activism neutralizes our work for peace. . . It destroys the fruitfulness of our own work, because it kills the root of inner wisdom which makes work fruitful." As we work together for social and environmental justice, how do we remain grounded in a peaceful spirit? What can we learn from trees?

A Unitarian Universalist pastor, singer-songwriter, and former environmental lawyer, Rev. Fred Small serves as Minister for Climate Justice at Arlington Street Church, Boston.

Sunday, August 18th

To be Determined

Stanley Heller

Sunday, August 25th

Revs. Tony Lorenzen and Sierra-Marie Gerfao

Powered by Love (A Backpack Blessing Service)

Kids and adults alike are invited to bring a backpack, a laptop, a notebook or journal, or something else you use for your learning! We'll be blessing them all in this back-to-school season as we reflect on the ways we go out into the world powered by love.

Rev. Tony will be away on vacation until August 18. If you have a pastoral care emergency while he is away, please contact Joan Campbell who will put in you touch with the minister providing vacation coverage while he is away.

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 2024-2025 Children and Youth Programs

Please [click here](#) to register your children and youth for 2024-2025 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 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.

From the Board of Trustees

By Nancy Cullen

More Than Getting Stuff Done

At the UU Danbury Board of Trustees retreat, we got to know each other better, especially our two new board members: Annie Senol, who will also serve as Vice President, and Todd Zagorec.

All of us recently read, *Serving with Grace: Lay Leadership as a Spiritual Practice*, by Erik Walker Wikstrom. This very short book is easy to read more than once. A central concept in it is that how we accomplish things matters as much as what we accomplish. It also advises prioritizing our relationships with one another over 'getting stuff done'. Work still gets done, but with a different approach. The book suggests that we view our participation on the board as an opportunity to engage our spiritual values and live them out. My lived experience did not prepare me for this, so it has kept my interest. When something ceases to be my own personal agenda, it is more likely to be of greater service to others. I am also reminded of how different the world would be if national leaders considered this sort of thinking.

We also discussed:

- What should the Board do to make UUCD more visible and promote justice in the larger, outside community?
- What should the Board do to ensure that UUCD is sustainable as an organization/institution?
- What should the Board do to make our internal community stronger and more welcoming?

We listed our ideas and will be focusing on them in the year to come. Congregation members and friends are also invited to offer us their own ideas for how we can address these challenges together.

Thanks for reading, if you got this far.

Upcoming Events

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



FRED SMALL

Sunday, August 11
4pm

Fred Small is a singer, songwriter, and songleader whose music inspires, heals, and empowers. Powerful, affecting, and inviting, Fred's songs illuminate the goodness and courage of all kinds of people.

Fred's inclusive lullaby of unconditional love, "Everything Possible," has become a standard of LGBT choruses worldwide and is now a celebrated children's picture book. His anthem "Peace Is" is sung in worship, in schools, and on the streets. Fred's classic "The Heart of the Appaloosa" celebrates the enduring spirit of the Nez Perce. Pete Seeger, Peggy Seeger, Rosalie Sorrels, Steve Gillette, Judy Small (no relation), Roy Bailey, the Flirtations, and the Boston Gay Men's Chorus are among the singers who have interpreted Fred's songs to audiences around the world.

"Big-hearted and inspirational" —The Washington Post
 "Simple majesty in songwriting" —The Boston Globe
 "One of America's best songwriters" —Pete Seeger

for more about Fred: <https://www.revfredsmall.com/listen>



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)



Movies with a Message returns the second Saturday of the month beginning on September 14th from 6:30 – 8:30 p.m.

We have rented a movie for this month called Unseen. To cover the cost we are asking for a \$10 donation for each person to the UUCD.

"Unseen": Most people dream of a better future. Pedro, an aspiring social worker, is no different. But as a blind, undocumented immigrant, Pedro faces political restrictions to obtain his college degree, secure a job in his field, and support his family. As he finally graduates, uncertainty looms over Pedro. What starts as a journey to provide mental health care for his community ultimately transforms into Pedro’s path towards his own healing. Through experimental cinematography and sound, UNSEEN reimagines the accessibility of cinema, while exploring the intersections of immigration, disability, and mental health.



Chalice Circles for September

This coming September there will be two opportunities to join a Chalice Circle for monthly reflection with other members of the congregation.

The two circles will be the:

1. 2nd Sundays of the month after the service at 11:45 am - 12:45 pm (meeting room TBA) with Marcia Booker facilitating or,
2. 3rd Tuesdays of the month at 1 pm in the minister's office with Rev. Tony facilitating

If you are interested in participating in either chalice circle, please email or text Rev. Tony.

Ministry/Team News

From *Team Green*



Can you be our next “Composting Champion?”

For years we have had a compost tumbler on the side of the Fellowship Hall. We regularly compost our coffee grounds and other UU kitchen scraps; some members have also been bringing their kitchen scraps from home. The finished compost is used to enrich the soil in the small organic vegetable garden, as well as in garden beds.

Gary Mummert has been in charge of the operation of the composter, tumbling it when necessary and screening the compost for use on the grounds. BUT.... Gary will be retiring from the position; we need a new Composting Champion!

What would this entail? At first, it would be to continue the established protocols. We are hoping to purchase a new (improved) dual-chamber compost tumbler to simplify the job. Gary would provide orientation, guidance, and help to the Composting Champion.

This is a great position for someone who likes to work on their own schedule, with a well-defined task - no committee meetings here!

Can you help us out? Contact **Barbara Myers** or **Keith Henderson** if you are interested in learning more!

From the *Auction Team*



This Year's November 2nd Auction Theme is Hullabaloo: *Mark Your Calendar!*

Hullabaloo is an invitation to be your freest version of YOU, in costume if you choose. Donna and Val are gathering accessories and garments to offer for use in costumes to rent or buy.

The Auction is UU Danbury's most successful fundraiser and it also helps to fund organizations in greater Danbury that help others.

Donna Lawrence and Val Cochrane are organizing the event. Food, entertainment, and many hands are needed to make it fabulous. You are invited to join the event committee!

This fall, the Auction Team will accept donations of goods, services, as well as fun and interesting events to be auctioned on our Auction website and at the event! UU Danbury's Auctions have many moving parts. If you want more details: [click here](#). The Auction categories include:

- Baked goods
- Gift baskets
- Dinners/Events
- Classes/Tutoring
- Gourmet Adventures
- Services
- Original art by members and friends
- And more — be creative!

To find out more email: auktion@uudanbury.org

Event Planners: Val Cochrane, Donna Lawrence, Auction Webmasters: Lisa Horton, Barb Myers, and the rest of the Auction Committee.

From the *Social Action Council***Soup Kitchen Corner**

by Judy Lacker

On Saturday, August 3, some members of Soup Kitchen Team B (Team Leaders **Bruni Edwards and Yvonne Ruddy-Stein, Joanne Davidson, the Parr Family, the Bonansinga-Twombly Family and Ali Haffner**) will be returning to the Dorothy Day Soup Kitchen on Spring Street to help serve take-out meals 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 July 2024...

In July 1956 Rev. Frederick Harrison reported that a silver tankard and chalice for communion services had been given to First Universalist Church (now Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Danbury or UUCD) by the "Universalist Convention," likely the Connecticut Convention. New-to-the church office equipment was acquired. A second-hand mimeograph machine was purchased for \$75.00 at Stryker's Office Equipment in Bethel, and a used typewriter for \$65.00. Two file cabinets for the church school were also obtained. A fund for the purchase of a tape recorder was started; the tape recorder was purchased later in the year.

Mr. Harrison was a founding member of the Humiliati, a group of younger clergy which embraced "emergent Universalism." The symbol of a circle enclosing a small, off-center cross in the lower left originated with the Humiliati; with Rev. Harrison's arrival First Universalist adopted it for use on orders of service, stationery, and the like. A metal rendering of this symbol, owned by and which in recent years has been displayed at UUCD, was probably fabricated around this time by member Jack Rowland, who operated a local iron working business.

Major changes to First Universalist's governance structure were approved by the congregation at a special meeting on November 1, 1956. Such action had been under consideration for several months. It entailed adoption of a revised church constitution and the formal merger of Danbury's First Universalist Society and First Universalist Church into a single organization. The annual stewardship campaign would be conducted during the fall, and First Universalist's fiscal year changed to coincide with the calendar year. The annual meeting and election were moved to January and existing pledges continued to the end of 1957. The membership list of the newly merged group would be revised. In addition, filing to incorporate the church under Connecticut state law was anticipated in the coming months.

Weekly church attendance during this period ranged between forty and sixty adults. There were forty to fifty children enrolled in First Universalist's religious education program. Summer services were scheduled for 1956; during Rev. Harrison's absence for two Sundays in late August guest ministers would cover for him at \$25.00 per Sunday. A Christmas Eve Candlelight Service was planned, with a soloist and the children's choir taking part and a special Christmas offering collected.

In late January 1957 Mr. Harrison announced his resignation from First Universalist, though he would continue as pastor until May 1. As Easter approached, a Lenten devotional guide called "Greatly to Be" was distributed to each family with the March 1957 copy of the Danbury church newsletter "The Universalist." Palms were distributed to congregants on Palm Sunday, April 14. Rev. Harrison planned to participate in Danbury's community Lenten services and a special communion service was scheduled at First Universalist for Maundy Thursday.

Around this time a Wayside Community Pulpit was installed on the front lawn of First Universalist Church. It faced the sidewalk and street. This large, glass-fronted bulletin board displayed short pithy statements or spiritually-related quotations, usually of a liberal bent, for reflection by passersby. For example, this quotation from Anonymous: "War does not determine who is right - only who is left." These messages were provided by subscription and could be changed on a regular basis. They can still be seen today in front of some Unitarian Universalist churches. The Wayside Pulpit stood in front of the Danbury church at 347 Main Street for a number of years.

Rev. Harrison attended his last First Universalist board meeting in April 1957 as he prepared to leave Danbury for his new position as superintendent of Universalist churches in Massachusetts and Connecticut. A lengthy discussion by board members ensued at the May meeting regarding the on-going search for Rev. Harrison's successor. The board's first choice of the several ministers who showed interest in coming to Danbury had accepted the offer of another church. As it appeared a new minister would not be in place by early summer, the board voted to close the church during July and August, to reopen on September 8.

To be continued in September 2024...

PLEASE JOIN US FOR A
Celebration of Life
SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 1ST, 2PM



**GERI
BOGGS**



68 SADDLE ROCK ROAD,
STAMFORD, CT 06902



PLEASE PARK ON THE ROAD. FOLLOW THE
BALLOONS TO THE TENT IN THE BACKYARD.
FOOD AND LIBATIONS WILL BE SERVED.

RSVP to kecrook@gmail.com

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 September *Comment* –
Friday, August 16th.**

