



Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Danbury

Monthly **COMMENT** Newsletter

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

SEPTEMBER 2024



FROM OUR MINISTER

Dear Beloveds,

Each January for the past three years I've received an invitation in my email inbox from a longtime friend named Eric. Eric and I were friends at Fitchburg (MA) State College - now Fitchburg State University, part of the University of MA system. We worked together at the student newspaper and at the college's radio station. Eric was one of a group of friends I hung out with at "The Burg." One of these friends was Matt who invited me to come meet some of his friends Freshman year. Eric was one of these friends and two more of these friends were twin brothers Scott and Steve (Steve, I learned, was just visiting from UVM). Scott and Steve's family had a house on a lake in New Hampshire and one year a group of us headed up there for a summer weekend with a lot of beer and hot dogs and had a grand time. We did it again the next year. And the next. After a while most of us got married, had children, and we'd continue to go up to New Hampshire for a weekend each summer, this time with less beer but more juice boxes, and child carriers and family tents and beach toys. Many of us had drifted apart from each other but during that weekend in New Hampshire we'd reconnect and catch up on the past year in each other's lives. We continued this tradition for more than twenty years. Eventually, too many of us, myself included, moved so far away that it wasn't practical to travel across the country and attendance dwindled until one year the invitation from Scott and Steve never arrived.

More than 15 years passed. I rarely saw my friend Matt. Eric had moved to Colorado. I only had occasional contact with Scott and Steve through social media. I completely lost track of a lot of the others. Then in January of 2022 I got a Facebook message from Eric - "check your email" it said, "Scott and Steve are having the NH weekend again." I opened my email. There it was - an invite email from Eric, writing on behalf of Scott and Steve and two others who were helping to coordinate the event. The invitation said that Covid-19 and pandemic quarantine conditions made it clear that life was too short and too unpredictable to lose track of the important people in our lives so everyone was invited to come to NH on a weekend that July to reconnect and re-establish our annual event.

When I arrived on a Friday night that July, a dozen people were already there. I saw Eric from across the room. We hadn't seen each other in person in over a decade. We hugged and cried like long lost brothers - because we were. Eric's teenage daughter, who I had never met, kidded us about being sentimental saps. We are. Guilty as charged and proud of it.

(continued)

A few weeks ago Tuesday and I spent the weekend in New Hampshire (a photo of the crew is below) at the revived annual pilgrimage of old college friends and their families. Just wonderful and amazing. So. Much. Love.

Thirty-eight years ago I got into a conversation with a guy in my world literature class named Matt. I accepted an invitation from him to hang out with him and a group of his buddies that evening. Through that, I met a lot of other people, two of them twin brothers who invited me to their family compound on a lake in New Hampshire. And then, after a pandemic, I received and accepted another invitation to renew friendships and attend a reunion. I'm glad I had the courage to accept these invitations.

Life continually presents us with opportunities. We are constantly invited into life in many and varied ways. Often, the invitation is unexpected and seems to come out of nowhere. I said "yes" once upon a time to a simple invitation to a very casual gathering. It's turned into forty years of blessing.

Shine on,

Rev. Tony



Rev. Tony with friends in New Hampshire this summer.

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

Sunday, September 1st

What Does UUCD Mean to You?

Margaret Henderson

The Labor Day Weekend service will include a discussion about how things are changing at UU Danbury and what we should keep our sights on as we adapt. What changes have you witnessed? What wider social changes have happened that we want to adapt to? What needs to stay the same, and how do we express our unchanging values as we move into the mid-21st century? Those joining on Zoom will be able to participate in the discussion.

Sunday, September 8th

All Aboard

Rev. Tony Lorenzen

Rev. Tony Lorenzen leads our annual Ingathering service and reflects on the invitation offered each year to create community together. Please bring water with you from a place or experience you've found life giving in the past year. Join us for welcome back potluck after the service.

Please join the Membership Team for a **Homecoming Picnic** immediately following the September 8th service. Look for the Sign-Up Genius email invitation sent to volunteer for set-up/clean-up and to list your contribution to the table. Please RSVP by September 6th. Questions? Contact Heather Smith.

Sunday, September 15th

Braver Angels "An Introduction to Its Mission of Depolarization"

Gary Holland

Braver Angels is a national, nondenominational, nonprofit, non-partisan volunteer organization whose focus is entirely on bringing skills workshops and experiences to America's individual citizens, organizations, communities, and leaders at the local, state and national levels to reduce polarization. Our Mission, simply put, is to: *Bring Americans together to bridge the partisan divide and strengthen our democratic republic*. Everyone is suffering from polarization, but this morning you will learn about what Braver Angels is trying to do about it and how you can take advantage of its programs personally and may even be motivated to join in and help Braver Angels in its many programs to return civility to our interactions at every level.

Sunday, September 22nd

RSVP

Rev. Tony Lorenzen

Rev. Tony Lorenzen reflects on what it means to accept the invitation of membership in a congregation. Following the service there will be a congregational conversation about what it means to be a member of UUCD.

Sunday, September 29th

Permanent Housing

Pat LaMarche

Author and Activist Pat LaMarche reflects on the state of homelessness in our society and how to do something about it. Pat LaMarche is an award-winning broadcaster and journalist who has spent a lifetime traveling around the world and across the nation telling the tales of ordinary folks living through unimaginable hardship. Fascinated by history, LaMarche and her children lived in Europe while she pursued a graduate degree at the University of Amsterdam. LaMarche's first novel, *Magic Diary*, combines her passion for learning with her keen insight into the American healthcare system. Her two non-fiction books, *Left Out in America* and *Daddy, What's the Middle Class?*, exposed the harsh realities of life for impoverished Americans and their ongoing struggle to survive. Frustrated by a lack of change, she ran for office in 2004, as the Green Party's vice-presidential candidate.

From Our Director of Religious Education For Children and Youth, Rev. Sierra-Marie Gerfao



How to Reach Rev. Sierra-Marie

The Rev. Sierra-Marie Gerfao organizes our children, youth, and family ministries. She is available for office hours almost every Sunday after the coffee hour and absolutely *loves it* when you drop by! Come see her anytime after the coffee hour. No need for a big reason! Or make an appointment for a Sunday afternoon conversation.

Other ways to reach Rev. Sierra-Marie:

- **Email:** Rev. Sierra-Marie is happy to have even long or complicated conversations by email. Reach out to her by email anytime!
dre@uudanbury.org.
- **Phone:** You can leave Rev. Sierra-Marie a message in her voicemail at church, 203-798-1994. If you are involved in programs, you also have her cellphone number. Phone calls or texts are welcome, but as she works part-time, this does not necessarily mean she will be able to respond right away.
- **Social Media:** Rev. Sierra-Marie does not “friend” or “follow” congregants on social media, but will accept your friend or follow requests on the platforms she engages. However, she does not use social media for work.

Upcoming In Ministries For Children, Youth, and Families

- **Sunday, September 1:** Labor Day Weekend, no programs
- **Saturday, September 8:** Ingathering service, family fun fair, and homecoming picnic!
- **Sunday, September 15:**
 - **Spirit Play (PreK-1st Grade):** Adult-Child orientation – parents and guardians please join your kids for the program
 - **Love and Wonder in Nature, aka LAWN (2nd-8th Grade):** First-day orientation
 - **Junior Youth Group (6th-7th Grade):** No program yet
 - **Senior High Youth Group (8th-12th Grade):** First day for 11th-12th grades only
- **Sunday, September 22:**
 - **Spirit Play (PreK-1st Grade):** Child Orientation - parents and guardians do not need to attend
 - **Love and Wonder in Nature, aka LAWN (2nd-8th Grade):** Second-day orientation
 - **Junior Youth Group (6th-7th Grade):** No program yet
 - **Senior High Youth Group (8th-12th Grade):** First day for 8th-12th together
- **Sunday, September 29:**
 - **Spirit Play (PreK-1st Grade):** Regular program
 - **Love and Wonder in Nature, aka LAWN (2nd-8th Grade):** Regular program
 - **Junior Youth Group (6th-7th Grade):** No program yet
 - **Senior High Youth Group (8th-12th Grade):** Regular program/possible moving day (cottage house to fellowship hall)

Fair for Children, Teens, and Families September 8th

Kids and families, please join us on the lawn on September 8th 10:30AM-12PM (adults attending the service can join kids outside after the service ends). We will have a bounce house, games, and other activities for the kids. There will also be information for adults about this year’s programs for kids, teens, and families. If it rains, we will set up some activities in the fellowship hall.

Volunteers Needed

We still need volunteers for our planned programs for children and youth this year. The only way to guarantee that this is a congregation that offers programs for children and youth is to join a team to make it happen. There are both large and small opportunities to volunteer. Reach out to Sierra-Marie (email dre@uudanbury.org), and she can help you determine whether one of those volunteer opportunities is the right one for you.

Thank You For Registering!

Thank you to those of you who have submitted a 2023-2024 registration form for your children and youth. If you have not yet had the opportunity, [please click here to do so](#). We need an updated form on file each year for the children and youth in our community. Please also share the link with family, friends, and neighbors who are interested in joining us on Sunday mornings.

UUCD Board Meets Monthly on Monday Nights

Beginning in September the UUCD Board of Trustees meetings are moving from the 2nd Thursday of each month to the **2nd Monday**. We generally meet in person at 7 pm in the Lower Level of Fellowship Hall. Members of UUCD are always welcome to come observe any meeting - this is one way we keep our actions transparent to the congregation. Non-members may contact a Board member to arrange to observe a meeting. (Note: Occasionally for sensitive matters such as personnel issues, the Board goes into Executive Session where observers are not permitted.)

We also publish the minutes of our monthly meetings [here](#) in the Member Portal of <https://uudanbury.org/> under "Board of Trustees Documents." Minutes are posted as soon as they've been approved.

If you need access to the Member Portal, please contact Sherry or Margaret for the current password.

From the Board of Trustees

by Todd Zagorec

Did I Just Say Yes?

I have trouble saying no. Sometimes this is a problem, which is why I avoid missionaries and timeshare sales people. Other times, though, I'm surprised by how happily it works out.

For example, one Sunday at coffee hour, I was minding my own business, quietly chewing on a carrot and thinking about the state of the world. I'm not antisocial. I like it when someone comes up and talks to me, but approaching someone else to start a conversation doesn't come naturally.

A friend tapped my shoulder. I won't name them - some people are shy about publicity. They asked if I would like to join the Sunday Services Ministry Team. It had never occurred to me to do that. But I liked everyone on the Team, it sounded like it might be fun, and for me it's always easier to say yes than no. So I said yes. I've now been on the team for nearly a year, and I enjoy every minute of it.

A few months ago, following another shoulder-tap from another friend, I accepted an invitation to join the Board of Trustees - another group of people I like, doing interesting things. Sometimes my reflexive 'yes' works out very well.

Which brings me to my point. Don't be afraid to volunteer, or to accept an invitation to volunteer. There are lots of opportunities to connect. You can join one of the teams, or get involved with the Family Ministry (what we used to call RE . . .), or help with a particular project (like the auction, or a task force to make recommendations about how we might show our solidarity with the Paugusett people, or a possible Climate Revival this fall if we get enough volunteers). Or you can learn a new skill, like how to manage the coffee or the Zoom platform on Sundays, or how to help with UUCD's composting program.

Any of those is a chance to contribute your talent and personality, to get to know other people, to grow, to have fun, and to help build our UUCD community.

Do you have to? No, of course not, and I have no desire to pressure anyone. My reflexive 'yes' is not a habit I would necessarily recommend. You know what you like and don't like, what you are capable of, and what time and other constraints you have. Don't hesitate to say 'no' when you know that's the right answer for you.

All I'm saying is that volunteers are always appreciated, and if there is something you'd enjoy doing, don't wait to be asked!

Upcoming Events



MUSTARD'S RETREAT

in
CONCERT

Sunday, September 8, 2024
4pm

Mustard's Retreat performances are always joyful and uplifting, as well as intelligent, thought-provoking and insightful. A reviewer early in their career described their performance as "Music to cure what ails you." In the past few years, they have described their shows as "Defiantly Hopeful," partly in terms of their long career, but more as a statement of what the music, and the folk community, has meant to them.

"Defiantly Hopeful," explains David Tamulevich, "we feel that that is what folk music is about.... Yes, it is joyful and fun, mystery and wonder, the heartbreaks and resiliency, celebrating life. Beneath all of that, it is community and finding common ground beyond the politics and differences... helping each other chart our way through our times. We celebrate all of that...and that, is Defiantly Hopeful."

Mustard's Retreat has traveled more than a million miles and performed more than 7,000 shows, from pool parties and pig roasts, concerts, and festivals, to Lincoln Center Out of Doors, The Barns at Wolftap, and the Kennedy Center's Millennium Stage. People locally might know them also from their appearances at The Eighth Step, the Falcon Ridge Folk Festival, the Great Hudson River Revival, and from airplay on WAMC, WWUH, WPKN and WYBC, among others. They have 14 highly acclaimed recordings of mostly original material.



www.musicattheridge.org

24 Clapboard Ridge Road

Danbury, CT



In-person and live-streaming
Tickets at [Eventbrite.com](https://www.eventbrite.com)



Movies with a Message returns the second Saturday of the month from 6:30 – 8:30 p.m.

Saturday, September 14th: We have rented a movie for this month called Unseen.

"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.

For more information, contact **Suze Shaner** or **Dan Brodax**.



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.

Spiritually Speaking will beginning meeting again on Tuesday evenings at 7:00 p.m. via Zoom. Please contact **Joe Gillotti** with any questions or for more information.

Ministry/Team News

From the *Social Action Council*

Soup Kitchen Corner

by Judy Lacker

On Saturday, September 7, some members of Soup Kitchen Team C (Team Leaders **Judy Lacker and Rose Schlemmer, John Miglietta, Jane Leff, Randy Becker and Gary Winn**) 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.



From the *Sunday Services Ministry Team*

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to participate in our Sunday worship services? To deliver the welcome and greeting? Or perhaps give a reading? Or even serve as a service coordinator? The Sunday Services team is looking for more hands to help make light work of our weekly programming. If you're interested in supporting the Sunday Services team, please contact **Sam McCoy**.

Additionally, we received 31 responses to the survey we offered in July. Thanks to those of you who took the time to share your thoughtful responses. We are in the process of analyzing the feedback, and you may notice some changes in the coming weeks and months. In the October *Comment*, we will share more about what we learned.

From the *Tech Team*



Looking for a way to give back to UUCD that DOESN'T involve committee meetings, AND allows you to try something different?

We have an amazing hybrid system which allows us to offer our services both in-person and online. BUT... more helpers are needed to make it happen every Sunday.

This is something you can do from **home** (yes, even from across the US!) or from the **back of church** - either **by yourself** or **with a partner**. You don't have to be "tech-savvy;" and team support and training is always available. It's a simple (flexible) once-a-month commitment.

Want to find out more? Email **Sherry** at officemanager@uudanbury.org, **Keith Henderson** or **Barbara Myers**. Come join the team!

Notes on Two Hundred Years (and More)

by Douglas H. Parkhurst

Continued from August 2024...

Special parish meetings were held at First Universalist Church on May 12 and June 30, 1957. Agendas for each meeting included discussion of the congregation's search for a new minister to follow Rev. Frederick Harrison, who departed Danbury on May 1. At the June 30 meeting a call was extended to Rev. Gaston Carrier, then ministering to First Grace Universalist Church in Lowell, Massachusetts. Mr. Carrier accepted the call; he, with wife Mary and their four daughters, would move to Danbury in mid-August.

Gaston M. Carrier was born in Montreal, Quebec, Canada, in 1920, to a French-speaking, Roman Catholic family. His forebears were early settlers in what was first known as New France; Gaston was of the thirteenth generation of his family in Quebec. When Gaston was a small child his family began attending a French-language Protestant church, a significant cultural and religious switch for that time. Gaston's early education was in a small school in the church basement. Later, as a scholarship and boarding student, he attended secondary school and graduated from Institut Feller in Grande-Ligne, Quebec, southeast of Montreal, as valedictorian. Gaston was the first in his family to graduate from high school. He later said his experience at Feller "saved my life" as it started him on the path to higher education and a fulfilling career as a minister and scholar.

Rev. Carrier, who was bi-lingual, had perhaps the most interesting background and education of any minister who has served the Danbury church, now called the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Danbury (UUCD). Receiving a scholarship to McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario (with a year at Acadia University in Wolfville, Nova Scotia), he graduated from McMaster in 1941. At first planning to study law, Gaston instead pursued theology at United Theological College (affiliated with McGill University, Montreal) and Emmanuel College (University of Toronto), receiving a diploma in 1943. In 1947 Rev. Carrier earned a bachelor of divinity degree from Meadville Lombard Theological School (in cooperation with the University of Chicago). While ministering in Danbury he received a master's in education from the University of Bridgeport. Later, after moving to Burlington, Vermont, he earned master's degrees in counseling and in French literature from the University of Vermont. Rev. Carrier was a member of the first Clinical Pastoral Education class in Vermont. In 1973 Gaston Carrier was awarded an honorary doctorate of divinity from Meadville Lombard.

Ordained by the United Church of Canada in September 1943, Rev. Carrier began his ministerial career in Montreal, serving two French-speaking congregations of the United Church. He moved to the Unitarian church in Ottawa, Ontario, in 1947, and to Cohasset, Massachusetts, in 1950. In 1952, Mr. Carrier accepted a call to the Universalist church in Lowell, Massachusetts (see above), where he ministered for five years before coming to Danbury. Early in his career, to earn extra money, he took summer jobs packing crates in a beer factory and as a laborer for New England Power Company. He also taught French and Latin part-time at a private school in Lowell.

The trustees of First Universalist met in late August, 1957, a special meeting to consider Rev. Carrier's suggestions for the growth and improvement of his new congregation and church. His primary goals for his new pastorate were:

(continued)

1. Make First Universalist a recognized leader in liberal religion in the community. Community would come to include not just Danbury but the Greater Danbury area;
2. Make the venerable church building and grounds at 347 Main Street more physically attractive;
3. Provide the finest religious education program in the church's power to deliver.

Among Rev. Carrier's immediate working proposals, made at the August board meeting and another in September, were the following.

1. Begin the Sunday morning adult service at 11 am, with a children's worship service to be conducted at 10:30 am.
2. Welcome parents to a 10:30 am coffee (half) hour.
3. Develop advertising for the Sunday school, to acquaint the public with what the church school program offered.
4. Spruce up the church lawn and repaint the Wayside Pulpit sign in front.
5. Clean out the church attic, basement, and closets and dispose of surplus and unwanted items.
6. Paint and redecorate the church interior where needed, including the vestibule. Install several new lighting fixtures.
7. Purchase fifty folding chairs to be used in church meeting rooms.
8. Perform renovations in the building to meet current fire codes.

Some of these projects required funding beyond what was already in the 1957 church budget. It was estimated that a minimum of \$1,000 would be needed to complete this work. The MMT (Meet Me There) couples club offered to pay for materials needed to redecorate the upstairs rooms and church entrance halls. Likewise, the local AUW (Association of Universalist Women) group contributed \$200. The board discussed using invested money to pay for other improvements and a special parish meeting was called for October 10 to allow church members to weigh in on these proposals. This resulted in pledges of an additional \$335 for the renovation projects.

Danbury radio station WLAD, at this time and in cooperation with the local ministerial association, allotted air time for various houses of worship to broadcast religious services. Rev. Carrier suggested that First Universalist Church apply for Sunday morning air time, perhaps four broadcasts per year. Cabling and related equipment would need to be purchased and installed in the building. This work was accomplished and First Universalist's initial broadcast was scheduled for Sunday morning, February 23, 1958.

Gaston Carrier hit the ground running upon his arrival in Danbury. For August, September, and October he reported the following activities, in addition to preparing and delivering Sunday morning services: 57 parish calls; five hospital calls; one christening; one funeral service (in Lowell); a devotional service on WLAD radio; two prison visits; attended an out-of-town ordination; attended board of trustees meetings; met with the choir; met with each committee chair; met with leaders of church clubs; attended meetings of small groups of parishioners regarding proposed redecoration and renovation of the church building; assisted with painting in the church; attended meetings of the AUW and MMT groups; and was accepted for ministerial fellowship with the Connecticut Universalist Convention.

To be continued in October 2024...



Our Caring Circle is Available

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

Joan Stapleton is the contact person for September and October.

Bob Bollinger 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.

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 October Comment –
Friday, September 20th.

