



COMMENT

Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Danbury, 24 Clapboard Ridge Road, Danbury, CT 06811 * 203-798-1994
Rev. Linda Hansen, Minister

SEPTEMBER 2008

For the Time Being

Notes from the Interim Minister

What a blessing it is to be here! By the time this *Comment* goes to press, it will have been four weeks since I pulled into town, just in time for a Sunday service. Since then I've been awed and humbled, both by the warmth of the welcome I've received from you, and by the depth of talent, experience, and dedication among UUCD members and friends. I'm very excited about the coming year!

I arrived here fresh from Interim Ministry Basic Training (actually, it's called "Fundamentals of Transitional Ministry") organized by the Unitarian Universalist Association, and led by the Interim Ministry Network, an interdenominational group. Although I have 21 years' experience as a *settled* minister in UU congregations, this is my first *interim* assignment. While settled and interim ministries have many things in common, they diverge in important respects. I'll be sharing my thoughts on the differences in a September sermon.

Since arriving, I've been scheduling one-to-one meetings with people in the congregation, starting with board members, committee chairs, and staff. To date I've conducted about 20 of these, and am looking forward to more. You may get a call from me soon about scheduling a "one-on-one" - but do feel free to call me first and request a meeting. These meetings help me begin to get to know you, and to hear your "take" on the congregation; they have no set agenda.

My tentative plan for the year is to hold regular office hours on Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Wednesday is the day I write my sermon, and Monday, when the office is closed, is my "Sabbath." If my office hours don't work for you, I can *always* make appointments at other times, including evenings and weekends. But even if you do plan to see me during the scheduled times, I'd advise making an appointment, since a minister never knows when she might be called out of the office. Please make appointments through Sherry Kyriacou in the office, or by contacting me directly at RevSueSpencer@gmail.com.

I'd like to ask your help with a couple of things. One is to be sure to wear your name tag at UUCD events so that I can learn your names quickly. Although I'm pretty good at learning names, this facility has *not* increased with age! The other is to let you know that I suffer from sciatica, a condition that from time to time makes it difficult for me to stand for extended periods. This has never been a problem when I'm preaching, but after service I often feel it. What this means is that if we're talking during coffee hour, and I suddenly get a pained expression on my face, it has nothing to do with you - it just means that we should pull up a chair and keep talking.

I'm looking forward to meeting you soon!

Blessings,

Sue Spencer

Comment is the newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Danbury, 24 Clapboard Ridge Road, Danbury, CT 06811, (203) 798-1994. Articles (**250 words or less**) may be emailed to Sherry at secretary@uudanbury.org or dropped off at the church office.

**Deadline for the October Comment -
Friday, September 19th.**

Pot Luck Supper

Friday, September 5th at 6:00 p.m. Come join us for a Pot Luck Supper to welcome our new Interim Minister, **Rev. Suzanne Spencer**. All are welcome. Please bring a dish and a beverage to share. There is also a sign-up sheet in the back of Fellowship Hall. We also need a few volunteers to help with set-up and clean-up. If you have any questions, please contact **Darrell or Xin Bradford**.

From the Sunday Services Committee

by Bob Bollinger

During the 11:00 a.m. Sunday services this Fall, we will be trying something new. Before going to the House and breaking into their small groups, all children and youth will hear the theme from their curricula in the Fellowship Hall during the "Children's Focus" portion of the Service.

The benefits:

- It enables *all age groups* to hear about this year's RE curricula which is: "Exploring Jewish and Christian Characters and Themes with a UU Perspective".
- It offers the parents, members and visitors knowledge of the theme the *children* will be discussing in their small groups.
- It gives our children, youth and their group facilitators *more time* for sharing their ideas, reflecting upon the theme in age appropriate discussions and activities, and building their relationships in a small group ministry model.

The Director of Religious Education (DRE), or Minister, or a Group Leader will present the theme of that weeks RE curriculum. Other adults interested in presenting the Children's Focus at 11:00 a.m. should contact the DRE.

At 9:00 a.m. we will continue to have a Children's Focus as in the past. This segment of the service has long been a favorite as it exposes kids to a variety of congregants who use children's literature and real-life experiences to bring the message from the adult service to the kids. Some of these congregants might not volunteer to teach RE, but have a chance to share something special with the kids. If you wish to volunteer to present the 9:00 a.m. Children's Focus please contact the Sunday Services Committee.



President's Letter

By Carl Tichler, President

I hope you have had an enjoyable and rejuvenating summer, as I have. It was a pleasure for me to hear the unique voices and perspectives brought to our summer services, and for me to share my own perspective at the sermon that I gave.

By the time you read this we will probably have moved to our new website. Much of the work done was not so much in the enhanced appearance and navigation, but "under the hood", in the technology which will allow the staff and committees to more easily maintain their sections of the site and keep information up to date. Many thanks to **Charlie Schott** for his leadership and hard work in this effort, as well as the other members of the web design committee.

I am also very grateful to **Darlene Anderson-Alexander** for taking on the role of volunteer coordinator, which will be a great help in keeping the day-to-day operations of the congregation going.

You have probably heard about the tragic shooting at the Tennessee Valley Unitarian Universalist Church in Knoxville, Tennessee. Many individuals and congregations have expressed their love, concern, and support to the members and friends there. We will be placing a large card in the back of the fellowship hall where you can place your own message to the congregation. We will be mailing this card out to the Knoxville congregation. Also, the board will be reviewing our own safety procedures and preparations to insure they are up to date and complete.

Call for a Special Congregational Meeting

September 21, 2008, 1:00 p.m.

Purpose: Approve the spending of up to \$10,000 from our Reserves to fund the Settled Minister Search Process.

Background:

The approved budget for 2008-2009 did not include funding for the Settled Minister Search Process. At the time, the hope was to fund this process through special fund raising. However, some immediate funding and a congregation-wide commitment to the Search Committee is necessary before the Search Committee can proceed with its appointed task of hiring a permanent minister.

Roberts Rules of Order prevail at all Congregational Meetings. Our Bylaws also state that there must be a quorum of at least 15% of the membership. At an official membership of 145, this means there must be at least 22 members present for the meeting to proceed. Voting rights extend only to those who have been members for at least 60 days, which, for this meeting means anyone who signed the membership book prior to July 24, 2008.

Welcome Sue Spencer

by Barbara Myers, Interim Search Committee

Sue Spencer, our Interim Minister, joined us in August, although she has no preaching responsibilities until our opening service on September 7th. Many thanks to Sue for coming to our August 3rd service immediately on her arrival in Danbury, to help us process the sad events in Tennessee the week before.

Getting to Know Sue

There will be many opportunities to get to know our new minister. The first will be a "Welcome Potluck" on September 5th at 6:00 p.m. If you can RSVP to our secretary or sign up in the back of the sanctuary ahead of time, that will help with the planning. But...all are welcome, whether you have signed up or not! Thank you to the Bradford's for organizing this special event.

Conversations with the Minister

Sue will hold informal chats three of the September Sundays. Come and sit in an informal circle, and chat with a small group to get to know Sue better. The schedule for "Conversations with the Minister" will be:

- September 7th: after the 11:00 service
- September 14th: between the two services
- September 28th: between the two services

Recommendations Notebook

There is a notebook in the back of the sanctuary where you can add recommendations for local services. If you have a great doctor, dentist, auto mechanic, restaurant, etc., you'd like to recommend for Sue, add it to the book. The book will be on the table through the month of September.

Thank You Summer Service Leaders!



Thanks to an amazing group of lay leaders and service participants, we had another successful summer at the UUUCD! Thank you **Judy Lacker, Gale Alexander, Evan Smith, Carl Tichler, Susan Shaner, Doris Henderson, Charlie Schott, Veronica Swain, Joe Gillotti, Gina Cassetta, Sue Tarshis, and Lynn Taborsak** for putting so much time, effort, and care into creating your services. We were very fortunate to have such a variety of topics, viewpoints, and presentation styles expressed from our pulpit this summer... it's great to be a UU!

We would also like to thank all of the people who brought refreshments for "casual coffee hour" and those who helped to set up and clean up for services.

If you have comments about this year's summer services, suggestions for the future, or - better yet - an interest in leading a summer (or regular-year) service, please contact Sunday Services Committee Co-Chairs **Ross Fenster** and **Bob Bollinger**.



Please don't forget to bring water from your travels - near and far - this summer for inclusion in our traditional Intergenerational Water Communion Service on September 7th!

**Treasurer's
\$\$ Report \$\$**

The summary statistics for May and June of the 2007-08 budget year, and July is recorded below.

	<u>May</u>	<u>June</u>	<u>Budget</u>	<u>July</u>
% Annual Canvass pledge return	77.1%	88.1%	100.0%	16.4%
Operating Income Year-to-date	\$214,442	\$239,879	\$236,600	\$28,093
Operating Expenses Year-to-date	\$223,224	\$245,593	\$242,669	\$15,625
Operating Income – Expense YTD	\$ -8,781	\$ -5,713	\$ -6,009	\$12,468

Analysis for July:

The July Operating income (\$28,093) was the sum of prepaid pledge receipts (\$17,526), the July pledge receipts (\$9,774) plus miscellaneous income (\$793.) Thanks to the prepaid pledge receipts UUCD is in a fine position to weather the usual low summer receipts. The July operating expenses were, as expected (summer), lower than the average monthly expenses.

Analysis for the fiscal year 2007-2008:

The Operating Income exceeded the budgeted amount by (\$3,279) even in the face of % annual pledge returns being 3% below the previous five years. This drop is primarily due to the poor economic climate that has dealt some of our member’s serious blows. We thank the members and friends for their generous efforts and contributions that supplied the additional monies to cover the loss in pledge returns.

While the Operating Expenses exceeded the budgeted amount by (\$2,924) it did show a strong restraint in spending by our operating personal in the face of many new expenses.

As a result the reserves (\$5,713) used to support the UUCD during the fiscal year 2007-08 amounted to slightly less than the budgeted amount (\$6,009.)

Bruce Buzby, Finance Committee Chair
Marie Dupree, Treasurer

Guidelines for Milestones

Every Sunday this year, new faces will come through our doors looking for a spiritual home that provides them with support, comfort and inspiration. Both the Sunday Services and Membership Committees strive to make people feel welcome with greeters in the foyer and a personal welcome at the beginning of each service. As members and friends of the congregation we can all help make newcomers feel more comfortable by observing the guidelines for milestones that were adopted at a special congregational meeting in 2006.

- Please give your name, and then, in a sentence or two, tell us your joy or concern. You will have time to give additional details to others after the service.
- Shared milestones should be of great significance to you, and, in sharing, please be respectful of the spiritual nature of the service.
- Political statements are not appropriate, even in a Presidential election year.
- Please remember that if you give information about someone other than yourself, you should have that person’s consent.

When milestones don’t follow these simple guidelines and go on for too long, visitors often feel like they are intruding in private congregational matters. Let’s make an effort this year to be more inclusive of visitors by observing the guidelines we have established.

Religious Education Update

by Mary B. Collins, Director of Religious Exploration (DRE)

My Thanks To:

- **Cathy Pings** and **Jackie Alexander** and *all the volunteer Summer Leaders* who made sure our doors were open to families and guests over the summer!
- **Lisa Greene** and **Christine Bonansinga** who both offered to help clean up and organize RE materials.
- **Joni Lowe** and **Yvonne Ruddy-Stein** who offered to purchase supplies when needed.
- **RE Committee Members:** **Sam McCoy** for taking great notes and chairing the RE Committee as well as working on the brochure, class lists and website info; **Suzanne Perry** for volunteering to help run the Leader Orientation on September 6th; **Fern Paes** for volunteering to print color brochures and training to become one of our “Our Whole Lives” leaders; and **David Payne** for his big picture ideas and helping to welcome Rev. Sue to our August meeting.

Seeking New Members for the RE Committee

Our next meeting is Thursday, September 11th at 7:00 p.m. *Last year* the RE Committee began the work of visioning and planning for this fall, as well as supporting the DRE and RE leaders during the year. If you have an opinion or are interested in surveying families, visioning, or doing small tasks as you can, there is a place for you on the RE Committee. Join in the exciting and important spiritual work of helping us be the best we can be, true to our values of love and service, exploration and evolution!

Websites to check out:

- OURS www.uudanbury.org - Thanks to **Charlie Schott's** amazing work we are moving to another level of website information for both potential visitors and also members and Religious Education Leaders. You may check out the “Weekly” updates and “Monthly” updates about Religious Education activities at this site. The plan is to update RE information by Friday each week. Also becoming available will be resources for leaders and families (calendars, forms, events, information.)
- www.uumetrony.org - This website has “Calendar & Event’s” with a **Summary of Events for Youth** (*Senior High and Junior High Conferences*) and district-wide workshops for adults, too!) We are part of something bigger!

2008-2009 PROGRAMMING for CHILDREN & YOUTH

There will be a materials fee for 2008-09 for our Religious Education Program, \$20.00 per child with a \$50.00 maximum per family payable upon registration. Waivers are available if needed (contact Mary Collins).

In the curricula this year we will be exploring one of Unitarian Universalism’s six sources of inspiration and exploration: our Jewish and Christian heritage, *but do not be fooled that this is all we will talk about*. Expect activities (social action projects, social events, etc.) that the children and youth generate. Expect comparison with other myths and religious stories/practices to be brought out!

You can participate in this if you have grown up Jewish, Christian, Hindu, Pagan, Hindu, Buddhist or un-churched with an interest in mythology...

Consider being a RESOURCE for the DRE and RE Leaders to ask how the Jewish and Christian themes might resonate with other religious traditions and people’s experiences. Contact dre@uudanbury.org

9:00 a.m. Groups

Preschool (ages 3 & 4 years): “*Celebrating Me & My World*” and a basic introduction to a biblical story or character.

K-2nd Graders: “*Super Heroes of the Bible*” (plus sessions on Jewish and Christian Holidays/Seasons from “*Special Times*”).

3rd-5th Graders: “*Timeless Themes*”.

7th-9th Graders: “Our Whole Lives Sexuality and Values Training.” This is an intensive course. Attendance is critical if you wish to be a part of this program. **Required Parent Orientation:** September 13th at 7:00 p.m.; First Session with youth: September 28th; closed group after the second session on October 5th.

11:00 a.m. Groups

All will start with the same story/message from “*Our Roots and Perennial Questions*” but the questions, sharing, activities will be developmentally appropriate. The goal is a **small group ministry model** where there will be a safe, interesting and fun environment to discuss ideas, concerns, and important Jewish and Christian themes with caring peers and adults.

2nd Grader and under

3rd-5th Graders

6th-8th Graders: THREE times a month “*Roots & Questions*” small group and ONE Sunday per month Junior High Youth Group at 11:00 a.m. This group may be occasionally off-site for youth group and may have other additional activities - to be determined.

Join other UU 6th-8th Youth –Contact Advisors **Veronica Swain** or **Greg Pings** for carpool information for those youth who will attend the Metro NY Junior High Retreat. This is one of two retreats for youth this age to get to know other UU Junior youth and is a great experience!

Junior Youth Retreat at Camp Ma-Kee-Ya, Harriman State Park, NY, beginning at 9:00 a.m. on Saturday, September 20th - 9:00 a.m. on Sunday, September 21st. For flyer:

http://uumetrony.org/events/JYR_2008Flyer.pdf; or to register online:

<https://www.formdesk.com/uiforms/JrRetreatSept08> (you will need to add to the form dre@uudanbury.org for confirmation to get to the DRE.

NOTE: We offer Nursery Care *at both* services by Allison Tozzoli.

4:00 to 5:30 p.m. - Senior High Youth

10th-12th Grade: “Our Whole Lives Sexuality and Values” meets on the first Sunday of each month. Required Parent Orientation on September 6th at 1:00 p.m. First Session with youth will be October 5th, closed group after the second session on November 2nd.

Senior High Youth Group: Will participate in spiritual, social and service activities THREE Sundays per month. Interested 9th – 12th grade youth may attend Senior High Youth Conferences with other UU Youth around the New York Metropolitan area (see www.uumetrony.org website for scheduled dates and locations).

This Time in History

by Douglas Parkhurst



Our generation at the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Danbury has known the challenge and satisfaction of planning and building a new home for the Congregation. It was just five years ago this month that we said goodbye to "the Barn," our home for thirty-three years, at 9 Picketts Ridge Road in West Redding. And three years ago this fall we dedicated our newly renovated and constructed space at 24 Clapboard Ridge Road, Danbury. It is interesting to note that previous generations of the UUCD went through the same process. Of particular interest was the building program and move which took place between 1891 and 1893.

During these years the UUCD was called the First Universalist Church. In 1891 the church voted to sell its existing building and property on Liberty Street in downtown Danbury and begin arrangements for the design and construction of a new building on a lot the church had purchased at 347 Main Street. Two church members made sizeable monetary donations to the project and additional fundraising began. This same year a new minister, the Reverend James H. Vincent, was called to the Danbury pulpit.

The project continued for two years. It culminated on September 10, 1893, when the new home of the Universalist church was dedicated. The two story building was constructed of brick and brownstone with a granite foundation and a 125 foot tall tower and spire. The large sanctuary contained oak pews and furnishings and the windows were of stained glass. There was a pulpit and platform, a choir loft, and Harrison organ. A communion table graced the front of the sanctuary; it is the same table we use today in our Fellowship Hall. Elsewhere in the building were a large Sunday school room, two parlors, a banquet hall finished in cypress wood, and a kitchen.

This building was our church home until 1966. It was our last permanent home in Danbury until we occupied our present location at 24 Clapboard Ridge Road. Today our old site at 347 Main Street is a commercial building. Several pictures of this old church are part of a framed display which can be found in the "fireplace" meeting room downstairs in the religious education building.

Adult Programming News

by Barbara Myers, Adult Programming Chair

The Adult Programming Committee will be publishing a brochure with a listing of all classes and groups being offered for adults this fall. We have some exciting new classes in the works. Look for the fall brochure in the sanctuary by September 7th. A copy of the brochure will also be published on our website.

In this year of a tight budget, there will be a donation basket at each Adult Programming class. Attendees are asked to donate something to help offset the costs of providing the programming (i.e., extra energy cost, materials).

The Adult Programming Committee is also looking for new members. It's a light commitment, but very important! We meet every couple of months. See us at the Volunteer Fair, or email **Barbara Myers**.

Social Action Committee

by Jean Hislop

Greetings!

Welcome Back from Summer! The Social Action Committee is back from its summer break and is eager to get to work. The first meeting of the year will be on Tuesday, September 9th, at 7:30 p.m. It is going to be a very full and active year with great opportunities for involvement.

Over the summer, committee members have been monitoring the immigration situation locally and nationally, to assess how we can best implement our congregational commitment to the New Sanctuary Movement. We are actively looking for families in our area who are possible candidates for our support. We have begun to lobby our representatives in Washington to co-sponsor two current bills which are immediate steps in the path to a more compassionate immigration process. They are HR 1176, the Child Citizens Protection Act, and HR 5950, the Detainee Basic Medical Care Act. Other ideas are for Sunday Services, fundraisers, educational forums, study circles and more!

On other fronts, the committee will continue to promote LBGT rights and to stand for an end to the war in Iraq. We will also support our congregations' ongoing commitment to the Dorothy Day Soup Kitchen and Overnight Shelter, as well as our food pantry donations. We are also dedicated to further study of Environmental Justice issues, and the possibility of becoming a UU Green Sanctuary Congregation.

Please join us on Tuesday, September 9th at 7:30 pm, and become part of the Social Action Committee. Come and see how you can contribute your talents and skills to an exciting agenda! And please don't hesitate to contact members of the Social Action Committee with any questions or concerns as we work for a better world together.



Jim Scott Returning to the UUCD!

~ *IN CONCERT* ~

Saturday, October 4, 2008

7:00 p.m., UUCD Fellowship Hall

All Advance Sale Tickets - \$8.00; \$12.00 at the Door

For more than two decades, Jim Scott has made it his business to create and perform music that celebrates the earth. His songs and poetry have inspired and educated audiences around the world. He has developed presentations for every age group and crafted songs that sensitize his listeners to the beauty of the earth, teaching principles of ecology in memorable verses. Jim has a long connection with UUs and has visited our congregation two times before to lead us in worship. THIS TIME, however, in addition to leading our Sunday services, Jim will be performing a concert, open to all, the night before!

Many people know Jim as a member of the Paul Winter Consort. His hymn, "Gather the Spirit" has become a staple for many congregations - one of three he has in our hymnbook. Jim was the Co-Chair of the Seventh Principle Project, the UU ecological group, and helped develop the "Green Sanctuary" program for churches to follow to become more ecologically sound. He composed many pieces recorded by the Winter Consort and is known for his lyrical songs of nature, peace, and other positive values. Pete Seeger has called Jim "... some kind of a magician." There's also lots of good humor in his songs; kids and adults will all find something to laugh as well as sing about.

So MARK YOUR CALENDARS now and invite your friends to an amazing concert on October 4th! Additional information will be posted around the UUCD and emailed to congregants. Tickets will be on sale between services beginning September 14th. Contact **Darlene Anderson-Alexander** or **Val Cochrane** for more information.

From Your Community Minister

Dear UUCD Members and Friends:

Here we go! A new church year – and a new minister, The Rev. Suzanne Spencer. We had had lunch together, shared stories from the past, and plans for the future. I look forward to our months and Sundays ahead, and this new chapter in UUCD history.

Welcome Sue! May you – and we – be blessed by your ministry among us.

Faithfully yours,

Rev. Peggy S. Block

Right to Flourish Accomplishments

by Jean Bowen

Our UUCD Right to Flourish Network includes congregants who live alone or who may live alone in the near future and seek social, practical or personal support. Individuals have come together to discuss issues of aging and disability, concerns about living alone and how we can support one another and added programs of interest.

In November 2007, we held our first program and forum with **Tom Nerney** speaking on Medicare gaps and limitations. A survey of the 30 plus participants indicated concerns of living in our own home and managing to live independently.

In February 2008, congregants discussed concerns about Medicare, Medicaid, long-term care insurance and insurance concerns. Discussion shaped strategies that included a phone network, clarifying the differences between the Caring Committee and this group, exchanging handyman service and identified a core committee to pursue detail.

March 2008, we identified and matched individuals who wished to have a telephone buddy and individuals to call if there is an emergency. This process of matching is open at any time for a congregant who would like to have regular phone contact or who wishes to have another individual for emergency contact.

Meredith Spector presented a program to members on March 16th on living safely at home.

April/May 2008, discussions with members and volunteers in the congregation who are ready to assist with air conditioner placement and difficult light fixtures.

July 2008, Core Committee met to plan programs for 2008-09 including elder law, medicare pharmacy programs and long distance caregiving.

The next program: Sunday, September 28th at 12:45 (after 11:00 a.m. service) with Attorney Barbara Reynolds, specializing in elder law; Attorney Reynolds will focus on developing your legal planning and long term care programs to remain at home. This event is open to the public.

Any questions, contact **Jean Bowen**.

“FIVE to THRIVE” ... INVITATIONS, OPPORTUNITIES, and BENEFITS

by Darlene Anderson-Alexander, Volunteer Committee Chair

You are **INVITED** to fully participate in the life of the UUCD by contributing **FIVE** (or five additional) active hours of service to this congregation in 2008-09. Just **FIVE** hours in a year, you say? What difference could that possibly make? If *each* of us gives “just” **FIVE** hours to the UUCD this year, that will be about 900 hours all together ... we will truly be able to **THRIVE** as a congregation!

You will have the **OPPORTUNITY** later this month to fill out an on-line interest survey so that we may better match your skills and interests with congregational needs. If computers aren't your thing, you will have the **OPPORTUNITY** to sit down with a member of the Volunteer Committee to discuss your interests in person.

You are **INVITED** to attend the “**FIVE TO THRIVE VOLUNTEER/COMMITTEE FAIR**” on Sunday, September 21st between services and immediately following the 11:00 service. Committee Chairs will be available in the Fellowship Hall to explain what function their committees serve. There are a lot of behind-the-scenes, as well as more visible, activities that keep the UUCD functioning. Join us on the 21st to see where you might join the quest to help us survive – and **THRIVE** – in the future!

If you don't find your niche at the Fair, you will be offered many other **OPPORTUNITIES** via the new classified section of the monthly Comment, the bulletin board in the Fellowship Hall, and the newly up-dated UUCD website.

This may seem overwhelming – sometimes even just **FIVE** hours in a year can seem too much in our already over-committed lives - but consider the **BENEFITS**:

- ~ You will gain a sense of ownership of the UUCD by actively participating in its workings.
- ~ If you are a member, or are considering membership, these opportunities will help you to fulfill your “pledge to contribute volunteer efforts to the functions of the Congregation” (something all members commit to when they join).

So, accept the **INVITATIONS**, explore the **OPPORTUNITIES**, and reap the **BENEFITS**. Together – with each of us giving just **FIVE HOURS** to the UUCD - we can **THRIVE** as a congregation in '08-'09!

Spiritual Circle Cinema

by Keith Dupree



This fall we are moving our Spiritual Circle Cinema presentations to the second Friday of the month. Our objective is to provide a chance to see a movie of substance in a living room setting, and an opportunity to discuss it with friends. Please join us on **Friday, September 12th, at 7:00 p.m.** in the UUCD Conference room.

We lead off our fall presentations with *If I Never See You Again*, winner of 6 Ariel awards (the Mexican equivalent of Academy Awards). Reminding us to live life to the fullest, this film tells the story of a group of runaways from a retirement home. Both raw and tender, this film contains adult themes and is not recommended for children. We

will begin our evening with a selected short, *Mira*, a beautiful metaphor about human commonality and kindness. As usual, all are welcome. Pizza will be provided for those who wish to chip in. Bring your own beverage. Popcorn optional!

Theater Enthusiasts

by Keith Dupree

Please mark your calendars for the next Theatreworks presentation. Thursday, October 2nd, is "Pay What You Want" night for *A Little Night Music*, music and lyrics by Stephen Sondheim. Go to www.theatreworks.us for more information. Newcomers, please feel free to join us. Contact Keith Dupree for more information.

General Assembly 2008

by Charles Stark

It was my privilege, along with **Mike and Barbara Searing**, to be your delegate to GA 2008 in Fort Lauderdale in late June. I only wish more of you could have been there. (Note: you can see streaming video on uua.org) As one person put it, the sound of “Spirit of Life,” sung in both English and Spanish, by 3000 voices washing up over you, is quite something.

Days at GA are made up of plenary sessions, at which the business of the association and social justice issues are taken up, and workshops on a myriad of topics. There was a strong emphasis this year on immigration, including a featured workshop on “Welcoming the Stranger.” A highlight of GA is the Ware lecture, which in past years has featured the likes of the Rev. Martin Luther King, Mary Oliver, Norman Lear, Julian Bond, Kurt Vonnegut and Marion Wright Edelman, and was given this year by human rights and environmental advocate Van Jones. His lecture was electric. I commend it to your viewing on the website. Another highlight was the Sunday morning worship service, featuring a sermon by Rev. Marlin Lavanhar of All Souls, Tulsa, OK, joined by Rev. William Sinkford, UUA President and others. Another good watch. There was a great deal of music and hymn singing throughout the five days. Many hymns from the new hymnal were a great addition to the repertoire. Evening entertainment was also on offer.

One thing that struck me, as it had at the one previous GA I attended, was the influence of the national organization of UU youth. At this GA they introduced a business resolution calling for the UUA and member congregations and districts to (1) invite ministerial support to youth and young adults through inclusive worship intentional presence; (2) invest financial support in youth and young adult leadership bodies and programs when viable; (3) provide support for youth and young adult staff and volunteers to receive suitable training and resources, including self-directed anti-racism and anti-oppression trainings; and (4) attend to the needs of youth and young adult constituents with marginalized identities by providing resources and opportunities within the congregation and at the district and continental levels. The resolution passed overwhelmingly. We should keep our eye on developments.

A Congregational Study Action Issue (CSAI) passed. The CSAI is a four-year process in which congregations are called upon to examine and study an issue with an eye toward passing a Statement of Conscience, officially making it a position of our national body. This year’s winning CSAI is “Ethical Eating: Food and Environmental Justice,” which prevailed over a competing entry on nuclear disarmament. “Congregations can develop effective strategies to address two of the world’s biggest problems: social inequality and environmental destruction.”

Six actions of immediate witness were adopted on single payer health care, opposing an attack on Iran, ending slavery by workers in the fields, raising the minimum wage to \$10 by 2010, extending the tax credit for wind and solar power, and opposing the Florida, California and Arizona marriage protection initiatives.

Another highlight of the GA was a public witness. Busloads of us descended on Stranahan Park, in front of Ft. Lauderdale’s City Hall, to hear speakers and demonstrate for the rights of families, including gay, lesbian and transgendered and those of undocumented immigrants. The rally opposed the anti-marriage initiatives and the abuses of Immigration Control and Enforcement (ICE) in conducting raids that have led to family separations.

At the plenary sessions four “Breakthrough Congregations” were featured with the showing of self-made DVDs by each. These are congregations recognized by the UUA for exceptional growth. These DVDs are available free and should be viewed by all, especially members of our Board and Membership Committee. Some of the common threads amongst these congregations were strong volunteer activity, radical hospitality and risk taking. As one person said on the DVD, “no one says do it this way, we’ve always done it this way.” Youth participation in all phases of congregational life and social justice outreach were other common threads. The Bull Run U-U Congregation of Manassas, Virginia grew from 159 to 240 members in five years. They started by hiring full time RE and Music Directors. They used their interim ministerial process as a time to reflect, look

back, and look ahead. They hold regular committee job fairs and give out volunteer interest forms to all members. They re-organized their web site and their newsletter, emphasizing an interesting layout utilizing color.

The Unity Temple of Oak Park, Illinois voted to hire a full time RE Director although their budget only could pay for a part-time. They had faith that the budgetary shortfall would be made up by pledges of anticipated new members and they weren't disappointed. They made an intentional cultural shift from "what we can do for ourselves to what we can do for others." They took the bold step of giving away the collection plate every Sunday to a different local charity. This has apparently become a trend in many other congregations as well. They say that this shifted their thinking from a mindset of poverty to abundance. They experienced an increase in annual pledges from \$144,000 to \$740,000 in ten years.

In summary, there was much to learn and much to draw inspiration from at GA 2008. I'm very glad I could attend. Next year's GA will be in Salt Lake City and 2010 in Minneapolis. Do try to go if you possibly can.

Soup Kitchen Corner

by Lynn Taborsak, Coordinator



Happy New Year! It's time for volunteers to sign up for a UU Soup Kitchen team! On the first Saturday of every month, we provide a hot, nutritious meal at the Dorothy Day House of Hospitality on Spring Street in Danbury but we are not asking you to give up twelve Saturdays a year! We will put four teams together so you'll only have to give up one Saturday afternoon every four months. Please sign-up between services with **Lynn Taborsak** or add your name and contact information to the Soup Kitchen Roster on the table in the rear of the sanctuary.

Everyone is invited to join in this effort. You can volunteer to LEAD a team; you can participate as a REGULAR TEAM MEMBER; you can serve as an occasional ALTERNATE when extra hands are needed; you can help us feed our neighbors with a GIFT CARD in any amount from any local supermarket; and, finally, you can bring in donations of NON-PERISHABLE FOOD ITEMS for the basket in the foyer to help replenish local food pantries.

On Saturday, September 6th, Soup Kitchen Team #3 will be lead by **Lynn Taborsak** and includes **Jim Wruck, Anne Eigen, Sue Sherman, Darlene and Maddie Alexander, Julie Gordon, Bob Taborsak and Mike Toto**. It is the "Taste of Danbury" weekend so stick around after the Soup Kitchen closes at 5:00 pm and take in the tastes and sounds of Danbury's Dining and Entertainment district. If you cannot come on your assigned date, please find a substitute from the alternates list. Remember, the show must go on!

Calling All Musicians

For most of us in the congregation, music is integral, spiritual and uplifting component of our Sunday services. Contributing to a service through our music is wonderful way for us amateur (from the French 'one who loves') musicians to give back to the congregation. There are limitless possibilities for music within our services. We just need to know who you are and how you would like to contribute - so please email Charlie Schott.



UUCD Conversations (formerly the Nonfiction Book Discussion Group)

UUCD Conversations meets on the second Thursday of each month from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. in the Conference Room. All are welcome. Please contact **Bruce Buzby** if you have any questions. The schedule for September through December follows:

September 11, 2008 – Topic: Science of the Brain. Facilitator: to be determined. Source: “The Black Swan” by C. Taleb, and Nicholas Nassim, 2007, 400 pages, \$16.17. The Impact of the Highly Improbable Nassim argues that most of the really big events in our world are rare and unpredictable, and thus trying to extract generalizable stories to explain them may be emotionally satisfying, but it's practically useless. September 11th is one such example, and stock market crashes are another. Or, as he puts it, "History does not crawl, it jumps." Our assumptions grow out of the bell-curve predictability of what he calls "Mediocristan," while our world is really shaped by the wild powerlaw swings of "Extremistan."

October 9, 2008 - Topic: Battle of Faiths. Facilitator: to be determined. Source: “I Don’t Believe in Atheists” by Chris Hedges, 2008, 224 pages, \$16.50. Hedges shatters the new atheists' assault against religion in America, and in doing so, makes way for new, moderate voices to join the debate. This is a book that must be read to understand the state of the battle about faith.

November 13, 2008 - Topic: History of Language. Facilitator: to be determined. Source: “The Horse, the Wheel, and Language” by David W. Anthony, 2007, 566 pages, \$25.20. A thorough look at the cutting edge of anthropology, Anthony's book is a fascinating look into the origins of modern man.

December 11, 2008 - Topic: History of Liberalism. Facilitator: to be determined. Source: “The Conscious of a Liberal” by Paul Krugman, 2007, 352 pages, \$17.13 2007. Paul Krugman, today's most widely read economist, studies the past eighty years of American history, from the reforms that tamed the harsh inequality of the Gilded Age to the unraveling of that achievement and the reemergence of immense economic and political inequality since the 1970s.

Second Annual Winter Boutique Saturday, December 6th

We are looking for UUCD folks who make high quality crafts. Ten tables are available at \$30 each. If you wish to participate, please contact **Val Cochrane**. Cookies and jewelry contributions are needed again this year.

Men Out to Breakfast

Men Out to Breakfast is an organization of men seeking fellowship and spirituality and meeting for breakfast and discussion on the first and third Saturdays of each month, at the Windmill Diner, Mill Plain Road in Danbury, convenient to exits two and four. Meeting time: 9:00 a.m. All are welcome. September dates are the 6th and 20th.



Women out to Breakfast

Women out to Breakfast meets on the 2nd and 4th Saturday of every month at 9:00 a.m. for informal coffee and conversation at Elmer's Diner located on Padanaram Road across from North Street Shopping Center. Everyone is welcome. If you would like to attend, please contact **Karen Gillotti**. September dates are the 13th and 27th.

Services at 9 and 11 a.m.

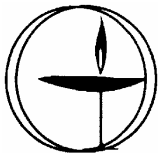
September 7, 2008. **Intergenerational Water Communion Service.** Bring water from wherever you have been this summer (or from your tap if you forgot) to symbolize the diverse places – literally and spiritually – from which we come to create our rich religious community. Together, children, youth, and adults will celebrate the beginning of the congregation’s new year, with stories and special music. Service led by DRE Mary Collins and the Rev. Sue Spencer.

September 14, 2008. **What I Learned from the Sisters.** After 21 years as a UU parish minister, Sue Spencer took a break from ministry and went to live with a women’s religious community known as the Community of the Holy Spirit. Her interim ministry with UUCD marks her return, after 20 months with the sisters. What does she bring back from this adventure? Service led by the Rev. Sue Spencer.

September 21, 2008. **For the Time Being: Notes on the Interim Journey.**

UUCD is between settled ministers – a time of transition that will last at least two years. It used to be that the interim period was considered a holding pattern, and the interim minister a placeholder, minding the store until the new minister was called. How has this view changed in recent years? What opportunities and challenges face us now? Service led by the Rev. Sue Spencer.

September 28, 2008. **What do I mean when I say “God?”** Simone Weil has written that “there are two forms of atheism, and one is a refinement of the concept of God.” This suggests that the question of “atheism vs. theism” is more complex than might appear at first glance. This sermon is in part a lead-in to the Book Group’s October 9th discussion of Chris Hedges’ *I Don’t Believe in Atheists*. Service led by the Rev. Sue Spencer.



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