



# COMMENT

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Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Danbury, 24 Clapboard Ridge Road, Danbury, CT 06811 \* 203-798-1994

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JANUARY 2009

## For the Time Being

## Notes from your Interim Minister

Having the *Comment* deadline so early this month gives us the opportunity to highlight the upcoming holiday festivities. Hope to see you there!

The transformation of the Fellowship Hall began in November, when festive lights were strung to celebrate the wedding of Sue and Joe Tarshis' daughter, Kate Bartlett. It continued as the Hall was gotten ready for the Winter Boutique, a lovely Saturday event which brought people together and earned UUCD almost two thousand dollars in the sale of cookies, crafts, and jewelry! A hearty thank you to those who put this event together.

The Hall's transformation was complete this past Sunday (December 14), after the gala tree-trimming party organized by the Junior High group and their advisors. Two Yule trees now grace the front of the sanctuary, trimmed not only with classic decorations, but also with baby picture ornaments of UUCD adults and children, reminding us of Sophia Fahs' declaration that "each night a child is born is a holy night." There's still room on the tree for you to place your baby picture, and I'm sure someone in R.E. would be happy to show you how to turn it into an ornament.

**December 21** marks both the **Winter Solstice** and the first night of **Hanukkah**. The Solstice is in the early morning, while the first candle on the *Hanukkiyah* is lit in the evening. We'll be celebrating both this year: **The Solstice celebration, which includes a pot luck supper, begins at 5:30 the evening before, while Hanukkah is the focus of the Sunday services on the 21<sup>st</sup>.** A minor holiday in the Jewish calendar, Hanukkah is nevertheless a lovely celebration, and one relevant to our own times.

On **December 24**, there will be two **Christmas Eve services, at 5:30 and 7:00**. We'll read the Christmas story from the gospels of Matthew and Luke, and illumine it with stories and poems, carols and candles. Although all are welcome at either service, the early service is planned with young children in mind, while the later one is more appropriate for older children and adults. **We still have room for readers at both services – please e-mail me right away if you'd like to do this.** The special offering will be divided between UUCD's Minister's Discretionary Fund, and the legal fund of the Association of Religious Communities (ARC), which helps Danbury's immigrants.

On **December 28**, the Sunday Services Committee invites you to get ready for the **New Year** with their service on New Year's Resolutions. There is only one service that day, at **10 a.m.** with nursery care only.

This month's festivities have given me one more reminder of how very blessed I am to be your Interim Minister. May you all have a joyful and peaceful holiday season – and one that invigorates you for the New Year ahead!

Love and blessings,  
Sue

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Website	<a href="http://www.uudanbury.org">www.uudanbury.org</a>

The Church Office is typically open on Tuesday from 8:45 - 10:45 and Thursday and Friday from 9:00 - 2:00. Please call ahead for office hours and/or appointments with Rev. Suzanne Spencer, Rev. Peggy Block or DRE Mary Collins.

**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 [SherryUUCD@gmail.com](mailto:SherryUUCD@gmail.com) or dropped off at the church office.

**Deadline for the February Comment - Friday, January 23<sup>rd</sup>.**



**UUCD Cancellation Policy** – During very inclement weather, Sunday Services, Religious Education and any other meetings and/or events will be cancelled. To learn of a cancellation, please check one of the following:

1. Call the Cancellation Line of the UUCD’s office phone: (203) 798-1994, press 1#.
2. Access the UUCD’s website at [www.uudanbury.org](http://www.uudanbury.org).
3. Channel 3, WFSB-TV
4. WLAD 800 AM or WDAQ 98.3 FM Radio

# FIVE to THRIVE!



Look for a user-friendly, on-line survey coming this month which will help YOU to more deeply connect to our Congregation by **GETTING INVOLVED!**



## Help wanted

- Cleaning crew for the *first week of each month*; join a team and do as much or as little as you can \*\*
- Help the Finance Committee with clerical tasks that can be done from home
- Join the Sunday Services Committee and coordinate services about every 4-6 weeks \*\*
- Join the Religious Education (R.E.) Committee
- Join the Buildings & Grounds Committee and work on projects as needed
- Help during R.E. or with preparation – sign up for the time commitment that works for you
- Organize R.E. supplies & resources
- Distribute flyers to local libraries, etc. in towns OTHER than New Fairfield, Bethel, and Newtown

**\*\* CURRENT CRITICAL NEEDS**

FOR MORE DETAILS OR TO VOLUNTEER, PLEASE CONTACT DARLENE ANDERSON-ALEXANDER

## Canvass Corner

by Canvass co-chairs Ross Fenster and Bruce Buzby

Our annual UUCD Giving Campaign will be conducted by telephone this year. Telephone canvassing of our congregational leadership will begin on January 5, 2009. All canvassing will be completed by the end of February. Our telephone canvassers will be **Bob Bollinger, Bruce Buzby, Ross Fenster, Carol Huckabee, Anne Krieg, Donna Lawrence, Nancy Tramontana, John Miglietta, and Art Warren**. A big thank you in advance for their willingness to help and all their hard work.

One of the major reasons we will be doing our Canvass by telephone is so we can get your input on a few key issues, like; what activities at our congregation do you most value? And; if you could change one or two things in our congregation what would they be? Your input is important to us so please find a convenient time to speak to our canvassers.

Our Religious Community Provides us with many benefits: Religious Education for our children focusing on providing them with an appreciation of our UU principles and the teachings of all religions; Sunday morning services designed to stimulate us both intellectually and spiritually causing us to reflect on our personal growth; building community through programs like Saturday Morning Breakfasts, Women's and Men's Retreats, Conversations groups such as the monthly book discussion, Potlucks, Round Robin dinners Chalice Circles; Adult RE such as the current bible study course being led by our Interim Minister; assistance to members in need; community outreach through our Social Action Committee, Dorothy Day Soup Kitchen and Dorothy Day Shelter; And much more...

Our UU Congregation's beautiful new home on Clapboard Ridge presents many wonderful opportunities but also requires a budget to support it. Our goal is to raise \$196,000 and we'd like members & friends to seriously consider raising your pledge by 10 to 15% from last year. If you are currently pledging below our average pledge of \$1388, please consider raising your pledge to this level. It might be helpful to know that the cost per day to run the UUCD in 2008-2009 year is about \$658 per day. Our annual Canvass will finance 70% of our congregation's operating budget from July 1, 2009 to June 30, 2010.

If you are a first time pledger, we'd like you to consider pledging either \$115 a month, which equals our average annual pledge, or 2% of your gross income whichever is larger.

Thank you in advance for your generosity and all your support throughout the year.



## President's Letter

By Carl Tichler, President

While writing this letter, I had to remind myself that it is for the start of the new year 2009, even though I am writing it in mid-December, with my mind still on the holiday times and preparations. I think back on the past year for our congregation, and in some ways we were driven by events, taking time away from our focus on longer-term issues and our congregational mission. It was a year ago this month (January) that Linda Hansen let us know that she would be resigning as minister of our congregation, and there was a flurry of events related to the transition, including the search for our interim minister, forming of the Ministerial Search Committee, and the many ways we individually and collectively came to terms with the fact of Linda's leaving that summer. And there was the parallel effort leading up to our decision to join the New Sanctuary Movement.

It has been in the past few months that we on the Board have in some ways begun to "catch our breath" and spend time looking at our longer term issues. It is not a coincidence that one of the tasks during the time of interim ministry is to come to an understanding of who we are as a congregation and how we see ourselves in the larger community. We have been regularly devoting time to discussing these issues at our Board meetings, and we are also in the process of implementing the next steps in our Vision 2020 process with our committees.

In the coming year, with the many changes and uncertainty in the larger world, I hope that we can find the ability to take a fresh look at ourselves and our shared vision and values, and bring our UU message to more people in the Danbury area. It is a message that is needed.

## Denominational Affairs

by Mary Alice Kimball

The Delegates from the UU Congregation of Danbury will be voting for a new President (as well as other officers) for the UUA at the General Assembly in June 2009. Check out the official website for more information, <http://www.uua.org/aboutus/governance/elections/president/index.shtml>

Metro District News: Be sure to check out the article about the UU Congregation of Danbury in the Metro NY Minute – December 2008 at <http://uumetrony.org/g/metronyminute/index.htm>

### Save The Date: February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2009

The UU Congregation at Shelter Rock and the UU Fellowship of Huntington are sponsoring a Peacemaking Forum in preparation for the vote on the draft Statement of Conscience on Peacemaking taking place at General Assembly next June. Let's start planning a UU Road Trip to hear the Rev. Dr. Paul Rasor speak and have opportunities for discussions with other UUs.

## Treasurer's \$\$ Report \$\$

The summary statistics for August, September, October and November 2007-08 year are recorded below:

	<b>August</b>	<b>September</b>	<b>October</b>	<b>November</b>
% Annual Canvass pledge return	21.5%	28.2%	34.5%	42.9%
Operating Income Year-to-date	\$37,072	\$51,718	\$63,337	\$80,126
Operating Expenses Year-to-date	\$36,550	\$56,040	\$75,542	\$93,282
Operating Income – Expense YTD	<u>\$ 522</u>	<u>\$ -4,322</u>	<u>\$ -12,205</u>	<u>\$ -13,156</u>

**Analysis for October:**

The Pledge returns to date (42.9%) are excellent. It is the largest November to date % over the last 7 years. The 2005-06 came close at 41.8%. Thank you. This achievement helped avoid the normal large bulge in the use of reserves during November and early December. The Operating income YTD (\$80,126) continues to be behind the Operating Expenses YTD (\$93,282) causing the use of reserve funds (\$ 13,156.) The Operating Income normally falls behind the Operating Expenses during the months of September through November. Both are following seasonal trends. The expected larger December Pledge payments often bring the Operating Income YTD up to the Operating Expense YTD.

The annual Canvass process will begin in early January. It may be of interest to review where our income comes from and how we spend that income. The table below outlines the expense profile and next month we will present the income situation.

**2008-09 Projected Expense Profile**

<b><u>Categories</u></b>	<b><u>Percent</u></b>	<b><u>Dollars</u></b>
Minister's Salary, housing & benefits	37%	\$ 87,662
Staff's Salaries	22%	\$ 53,579
<b>Minister + Staff</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>\$141,241</b>
Office Expenses	4%	\$ 9,420
Mortgage	17%	\$ 39,816
Building & Grounds Costs	11%	\$ 26,465
<b>Mortgage +B&amp;G</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>\$ 66,281</b>
Denominational & Community Contributions	7%	\$ 16,106
Committees Expenses	3%	\$ 6,995
 Total Expenses		<b>\$240,043</b>

Bruce Buzby, Finance Committee Chair  
Marie Dupree, Treasurer

# Welcome to New Members

These new members of UUCD were welcomed at the Sunday service on November 23<sup>rd</sup>. If you are interested in becoming a member of the congregation, please speak to someone on the Membership Committee, or to Interim Minister Sue Spencer.

**Scot Michael Fritz** (and he wants to stress that it's "Scot" with one "T") was born in Allentown, PA, in 1961. (He'll appreciate it if you refrain from referring to BILLY JOEL in his presence.)

The youngest of three (and the only son) he was born into a very religious community – think Amish. This was the beginning of his lifelong search and fascination with all things spiritual.

Scot studied to be a minister...then a psychologist...and finally a social worker, before he contracted MS in 1988. Since then he has been seriously researching his career options.

He comes to us via Quakerism, Buddhism, Mormonism, Scientology, and most recently Walnut Hill in Bethel – but he assures us that he's found his spiritual and intellectual home and isn't going anywhere...any time soon!

**Susan Gyaben** grew up in Herman, Missouri, a town of about 2500 people, about an hour from the St. Louis airport. Her family belonged to a UCC church. After receiving a Master's degree in Public Health, Susan joined the Peace Corps, and was sent to Ghana to do forestry in a rural northern part of the country. While there, she met John, who hails from Accra, the capital city, but who was doing national service up north. They have been married for about ten years.

When Susan came home from Ghana, she served as a social worker in Columbia, MO, concentrating on issues of child abuse and neglect. Through this work, she discovered that she loves gathering information, investigating cases, and "putting out fires." When their son Elliott was born, Susan said it ushered in "a new era in our family," as John's work as an accountant enables her to be a stay-at-home mom. Elliot is now 3 years old.

While in Columbia, Susan discovered Unitarian Universalism through a television program. She has been part of four different UU congregations – Columbia, Birmingham (AL), Minneapolis, and now Danbury – and has served in various capacities including Hospitality and Membership Committees. While in Birmingham, she served on the Board of Trustees. She also has used her social work skills to train R.E. teachers in recognizing child abuse and neglect.

John, a Catholic, is a member of St. Gregory the Great church in Danbury. For ten years now, he and Susan have shared churches, alternating between Catholic and UU congregations. We're fortunate to see Susan, John, and Elliott every second week, and at many social events.

(continued)

**Hannah Vining** grew up in Malden, Massachusetts, a town north of Boston, where her family belonged to a Reform synagogue. She started college in 1960 at the very beginning of what would become “the turbulent sixties,” beginning at Boston University, and finishing at the New School in New York.

After college, Hannah worked first as a social worker, then as a GED teacher, finding particular satisfaction in helping welfare mothers prepare for college. She left this work when her own daughter was born; Miriam is now 37 and studying Expressive Arts Therapy in San Francisco.

When Hannah was widowed at age 37, she needed to find a way to make a living, and decided to become a paralegal. This work enabled her to put herself through law school in Brooklyn, which in turn enabled her to become a real estate attorney (though her dream would be to work for the ACLU). Even after she moved to Danbury in 1989, Hannah continued to commute to her law practice in Brooklyn, a practice from which she recently retired.

Hannah learned about Unitarian Universalism through her sister-in-law in Georgia; an on-line search led her to UUCD. From the day she first walked in the door here, she has felt completely at home. She has joined a Chalice Circle, is a member of Social Action and Membership, and has dazzled us with her cooking at various pot luck suppers.

## Religious Education Update

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

**Note: There are no RE groups on December 28<sup>th</sup>! There will be nursery care only.**

### **PARENTS - Please NOTE this Sunday Morning Change:**

Beginning in January the children will no longer be walked to the Fellowship Hall after the service. **PLEASE PICK UP YOUR CHILD IN THE HOUSE AFTER THE SERVICE is over.** Reasons? To allow you to see what your child has done and talk to the leaders and they to you. Feedback was that some communication was missed (mentioned by both parents and leaders), and that leaders were stressed in getting running children matched to parents at busy refreshment time and getting back to clean up their space...

**The Future is Now!** You are invited to the next RE Committee meeting on Thursday, January 8<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m. in the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor Conference room. This is an open request, *whether you have children or not*, for your input on the shape of Religious Education in 2009 and beyond. RSVP if you plan to attend to **Mary Collins**, or a member of the RE Committee (**Sam McCoy, Suzanne Perry, Fern Paes, David Payne** or e-mail member: **Jurinha Fallon**).

At the December Religious Education meeting we thought that to work on planning 2009-10 programming next month, we needed to be sure we will be meeting the needs of our current families, with an eye toward welcoming new families. We also reviewed the Registration forms where parents wrote what they hoped their children would gain from participating in UUCD RE programming.

January is usually the month the RE committee splits up the initial task of reviewing curriculum options for each of the age groups. But we feel we need your input on the program, in a global sense, before we tackle the specific work of organizing the programming and reviewing curriculum in light of the children attending.

For the past several years we have had a cycle of three pillars based on our six sources. Curricula that fit the yearly theme were chosen for all ages (with social action projects and holidays sprinkled in, and May/June programming that was of a different topic for variety). Topics for the three-year cycle:

- UU Identity (youth “Coming of Age” last held - year 2007-08),
- Jewish & Christian heritage (youth Sexuality and Values course “Our Whole Lives” (current year).
- World Religions (scheduled for 09-10).

Some ideas kicking around are for next year:

- Doing *all three* themes in a trimester format (utilizing curricula we have), or in a semester format.
- Shortening the yearlong Coming of Age program to offer a modified program more frequently.
- Basing the program on ethics and real life issues and choosing from all six sources that illuminate the topic (we have a Small group ministry curriculum for a “World Religions year” available for elementary through 8<sup>th</sup> grade).

We seek discussion and consensus on a global view of our program into the future. We hope to tweak our format to meet our ideas, vision and learnings. We plan to continue to provide a space for caring friendships with people of all ages, and experiential spirituality - stories, music, meditation, and social justice – to create and celebrate an ethical and vibrant community.

### **What about 08-09 Year End Programming?**

Beginning Memorial Day Weekend through the end of June (excluding the Intergenerational Flower Communion), we have often had Children’s Chapels or programming different from the yearlong topic. In the past, the DRE and RE Committee decide on the topic. The DRE writes up the plan. Volunteers come to help make it happen on Sunday.

In the past we have:

- Made quilts for babies /children with AIDS,
- Learned about the impact of parents in prison upon their children and created seasonal activity packets for children and mothers in prison to enjoy during visits,
- A hodgepodge of things – from current events, or a principle or source we want to highlight that wasn’t covered in the yearly theme...

This year it will be **just four Sundays** at a beautiful time of year. Do you have a passion, a spiritual practice or project that needs more than one Sunday to share? Contact Mary Collins if you have an idea, or to assist during this time.

### **Summer ‘09 Programming for Children**

Committee Member, **Barbara Searing** is seeking input for ideas for summer programming and someone(s) to co-ordinate the 4<sup>th</sup> of July through Labor Day weekend for a single service (10:00 a.m.) program.

In the past the DRE and RE Committee helped brainstorm ideas, help with forms and building information needed by the summer volunteers. Last year we had a Peace and Justice programming (thanks to **Cathy Pings** and **Jackie Alexander**). One year we had a garden (thanks to the **Brad & Lisa Greene**) and Arts for middle-schoolers (thanks to **Samantha McCoy**), UU Principles in Dr. Seuss stories (thanks to **Darlene Anderson-Alexander**), 10 amazing stories and fun (thanks to **Catie Berg**) and **many volunteers over the years**.

Do *you* have an idea to bring to life during those single 10:00 a.m. Summer Sundays to keep our doors open to visitors with children?

## Welcome Newcomers!!

Please join us at our next Coffee Connection  
January 11, 2009 after the 11:00 a.m. service.  
More details to follow.

## Greetings from the Social Action Committee

by Jean Hislop, Chair

The old year has passed, and a new year has begun. The dawn of new leadership for our nation is upon us with the coming inauguration of President-elect Barack Obama, and the appointment of his cabinet. The Social Action Committee is planning to lobby many of the incoming Senators and local representatives for important policy issues, and are circulating petitions throughout the congregation that we hope you will sign, regarding our platform on Immigration Reform. We are also working hard to preserve marriage equality in the state of Connecticut, and lobbying for a repeal of the defense of marriage act (DOMA). To help us with this, please visit [www.dumpdoma.com](http://www.dumpdoma.com) and sign the petition you will find there.

In green news, **Anne Krieg** continues to host a subcommittee on the issue of helping our congregation to become a "Green Congregation". She could use your help and ideas. The second gathering of the Green Team will be at 11:00 a.m. in the Conference Room on Saturday, January 10<sup>th</sup>. Come at 10:45 for coffee and bagels. For more information please contact Anne to discuss how you can become involved with this process, and help our church to protect the environment, and work for environmental justice.

Our New Sanctuary Congregation work is a constant process, as we are still searching for the right family to host. We have had some interviews with individuals, but thus far, we have not met a family who (a) meets the NSM criteria, and (b) feels they can go public with their struggle. In the meantime, please sign a petition at the back of the sanctuary which asks our elected leaders to support upcoming fair immigration legislation.

The SAC would like to thank the congregation for their generous food donations to Dorothy Day Soup Kitchen, and other local food pantries this winter, and also for the wonderful gifts and food purchased for our adopted Interfaith AIDS Ministry family. We are sure that your generosity has helped to make a family's holiday season very bright, and we trust that the act of giving has helped to make your own holiday season a little brighter as well.

In a final note, the December meeting of the SAC saw three new faces in our midst, as well as one returning face. We are very grateful and happy to have them aboard, and hope that anyone who has any interest in our social justice work will feel free to drop by and see what we're all about!

## This Time in History

by Douglas Parkhurst



In the late 1940's the Universalist Church was located at 347 Main Street, just south of the railroad crossing, in downtown Danbury. Having survived the shortages of the Great Depression and the difficult years of the Second World War, the church and its leadership were attempting to establish an ordinary peacetime routine. Our minister, then nearing the end of his career, was the Rev. Dr. Harry Adams Hersey, an experienced clergyman who had served the Danbury congregation since 1930. Miss Adelaide Grabert was organist and choir director; she began playing the Harrison organ at the church in the 1890's when both the organ and building were new. During these post-war years Danbury was still an important hat manufacturing center, the Danbury Fair had its run each autumn, and the commercial and social life of the town were centered around Main and adjacent streets and neighborhoods.

Taken from records in our church archives are the minutes of a Board of Trustees meeting held in January of 1948, sixty-one years ago:

“A meeting of the Board of Trustees was held at the church with Mr. Edwin Grimes, Universalist Field worker, present. Those present were Wallace Parkhurst chairman, Mr. and Mrs. Frank P. Rollins, Edith Ritton, Clifford Taylor, Harry Lincoln and Mr. Grimes.

First in order were Mr. Grimes' conclusions and recommendations as to the ills of our church and the methods, in his mind, as to how we would have to combat them as to the future.

A motion was made and seconded to purchase a copy of Parish Practice in the Universalist Church at a price of \$2.50 a copy.

It was voted to avail ourselves of semi-annual organ inspection service offered by [name of the inspection service was left out of the minutes] at a cost of \$60 per year. Mr. Parkhurst was authorized to sign the contract for such service.

It was voted to have the church envelope service as usual for the coming year and that an every member canvass be undertaken after the expected resignation of Mr. Hersey as minister to take place presumably in April of 1948.

The meeting adjourned at 5:00 P.M.

Harry R. Lincoln  
(Clerk)”

### Weekly Buddhist Meditation Service

On Thursdays, the Middle-Way Meditation Center meets here at 7:00 p.m. for their Buddhist Meditation Services. All are welcome. It is suggested if you are new that you arrive about 6:45 for an introduction to meditation.

**Monthly Schedule:** 1st Thursday - Precepts Service and Board Meeting; 2nd Thursday - Service and Private Interviews; 3rd Thursday - Public Talk without the Service; 4th Thursday - "Deep Meditation" Practice. Services are followed by community time – tea and conversation. For more information, please call Rev. Wisdom at 203-791-8611.



The Events Committee the Thrive to Five Committee invite you to join us in the second of a series of Pot Lucks on Saturday, January 10<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 p.m. Come take off the chill of a cold January night with a bowl of chili. We are looking forward to sampling your best recipe. If you don't "do" chili, please bring another dish. This is an intergenerational event. Sign up for an appetizer, salad, chili or main entry to serve 8 – 10 people. The sign-up sheet will be on the back table in the sanctuary. We ask that you bring your own beverage. If you have any questions, contact **Donna Lawrence** or **Donna Roscoe**.

### Men out to Breakfast

**Men Out to Breakfast** is an organization of men seeking fellowship and spirituality and meets 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. January dates are the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>. All are welcome. Please notify **Mike Searing** if you plan to attend.



### Women out to Breakfast

**Women out to Breakfast** meets on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Saturday of every month at 9:00 a.m. for informal coffee and conversation at Elmer's Diner. Everyone is welcome. If you would like to attend, please contact **Karen Gillotti**. January dates are the 10<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>.



### Imbolc and Ice Cream!

Come celebrate this holiday of initiation, creative fire, and general goodwill! Delight your senses with an ice cream social (bring your favorite fixings!), good music, a light atmosphere, and plenty of fun and interesting people. Date is to be announced.

If you'd like to take part or would like to know more, please contact **Veronica Swain** or **Jean Hislop**.



## 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 January, February and March follow:

January 8, 2009: The Paradox of Race. Facilitator: Bruce Buzby. Source: "Seeing a Color-Blind Future: The Paradox of Race" by Patricia Williams, 1997, 80 pages, \$8.80. Written with an unerring eye for the thought-provoking and fresh metaphor, and with a skillful blending of personal and professional observation, this is one of the most intelligent commentaries on the vexed subject of race in many years.

February 12, 2009: Social History. Facilitator: Jan Galloway. Source: "A Midwife's Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard, Based on Her Diary, 1785-1812" by Laurel Thatcher Ulrich. This book is a model of social history at its best. An exegesis of Ballard's diary, it recounts the life and times of this obscure Maine housewife and midwife. Using passages from the diary as a starting point for each chapter division, Ulrich, a professor at the University of New Hampshire, demonstrates how the seemingly trivial details of Ballard's daily life reflect and relate to prominent themes in the history of the early republic: the role of women in the economic life of the community, the nature of marriage and sexual relations, the scope of medical knowledge and practice.

March 12, 2009: The Rise and Fall of Empires. Facilitator: Bill McWilliams. Source: "Evil Genes: Why Rome Fell, Hitler Rose, Enron Failed, and My Sister Stole My Mother's Boyfriend" by Barbara Oakley, 2008, 473 pages, \$12.91. A highly-readable, entertaining, ground-breaking, must-read study with notable insights on the rise and fall of empires; but more importantly, it offers, perhaps for the first time, a distinctly plausible mechanism for explaining the origin and persistence of social inequality."



## Movies with a Message – The Second Friday in January

by Keith Dupree

As was true both in November and December, our theme this month concerns family issues. Both our short and our feature film center around the unexpected demands of aging parents.

Selected short – *Monsoon* (7:00 – 7:25): Beautifully set in Mumbai, India, an Americanized doctor returns to his homeland to attend his dying father, who as a devout Hindu has a concept of healing quite different from his pragmatic son. *Monsoon* has won 16 awards at film festivals across the country.

Feature film – *King of California* (7:30 – 9:00): Sixteen-year-old Miranda (Evan Rachel Wood) struggles to have a relationship with Charlie, her mentally ill father (Michael Douglas). Charlie's compulsion to find ancient Spanish treasure, which he believes is buried beneath the local Costco, alternates between being charismatic and absurd. How far does one go to honor another's wishes, especially when they are contrary to one's own?

Our objective is to present a movie of substance in a living room setting and to provide an opportunity to discuss it with friends. Please join us on **Friday, January 9<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m.** in the UUCD conference room. As usual, all are welcome. Pizza is provided for those who wish to chip in. Bring your own beverage. Popcorn optional!

## Search Committee Update

by Charley Stark

Hello from your Search Committee. This is the second in a series of updates that we will be posting on an ongoing basis during the ministerial search process. Your search committee wants you to know that we are committed to keeping you informed about, and involved in, the search process from now until we present a candidate for your approval in the Spring of 2010. Please look for the bulletin board in the Fellowship Hall, on the members page at UUDanbury.org and here in Comment for the latest skinny.

Let us pose a question. *Who do you think decides what qualities we should look for in our new settled minister?* The Board of Trustees? The Search Committee? A few “old-timers”?

The answer is none of the above. *You will decide what qualities we should look for in a new settled minister.* That’s right! You decide!

How does that work? There will be several ways for you to participate and have your voice heard. And that process has already begun.

One of the things the Search Committee is doing is interviewing some lay leaders in the congregation. We want to get the perspectives of people who have been leaders in religious education, membership, social action, buildings and grounds, etc.

But remember, we said this is not up to a few “old-timers.” In the coming months you can look forward to participating in an on-line survey, cottage meetings and a Beyond Categorical Thinking service and workshop.

Let us talk about the last one first. Close your eyes and picture the next settled minister. Who do you see? The Beyond Categorical Thinking process is designed to open up our eyes to potential ministers we may not have imagined when our eyes were closed. This March (exact date to be announced soon) we will be joined by one or more specially trained facilitator(s) who will lead a Sunday service. The service will be followed, after a lunch, by a workshop. Everyone is invited and strongly encouraged to attend. Through this inter-active process we will enlarge the possible in our thinking about a new minister. It might just be fun!

Secondly, and in the same time period, you will be hearing about various venues for you to attend a cottage meeting. One or more of the Search Committee members will be present. We will be seeking your input on the future of our congregation and who you see leading us from the pulpit.

Finally, you will be hearing about an on-line survey. We are working on devising a survey that will allow you to express your views and feelings and allow us to hear them, both from a quantitative and a qualitative perspective. **IT IS VITAL THAT EVERYONE PARTICIPATES.** For those who may not have easy access to the Internet, arrangements will be made.

We think you will agree that there are very few decisions more vital to the life, health and growth of this congregation of ours than the choice of our new settled minister. We hope you are looking forward to getting involved.

To see the latest and past Search Committee reports, you may go to our website, [www.uudanbury.org](http://www.uudanbury.org), logon, select the **Member's Page** from the menu and select **Search Committee Reports**.

**If you have any questions for the Search Committee,  
please email them to [search@uudanbury.org](mailto:search@uudanbury.org).**

## Wheel of Life



Our thoughts go out to **Karen Meyer** and **Jeff Seckendorf**. Karen's mother recently suffered a massive stroke.

*If there are major milestones you wish to share in this section, please e-mail Sherry Kyriacou or write them in the Milestones book at a Sunday service.*

### Current Board of Trustees

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**Services at 9:00 and 11:00 a.m.**

January 4, 2009: **“What is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?”** Although this urgent question comes from a Mary Oliver poem entitled “The Summer Day,” winter seems a good time to consider it, as the New Year begins. Service led by Interim Minister Sue Spencer.

January 11, 2009: **Your Money *and* Your Life.** If we think of “money” as simply another form of life energy, then Mary Oliver’s question extends to thoughts of how we use our financial resources. Service led by Interim Minister Sue Spencer.

January 18, 2009: **Cautious Optimism, Wild Hope.** This is not only Martin Luther King Sunday, it’s the Sunday before the inauguration of this country’s first African American president. Where do we stand, forty years after the assassination of Dr. King? What does Barack Obama’s inauguration evoke for us? Service led by Interim Minister Sue Spencer. (Return your Guest at your Table boxes today.)

January 25, 2009: **A Sense of Mission.** Church consultants say that a strong sense of mission is the key to congregational vitality. What might this mean in a Unitarian Universalist context? Service led by Interim Minister Sue Spencer.