

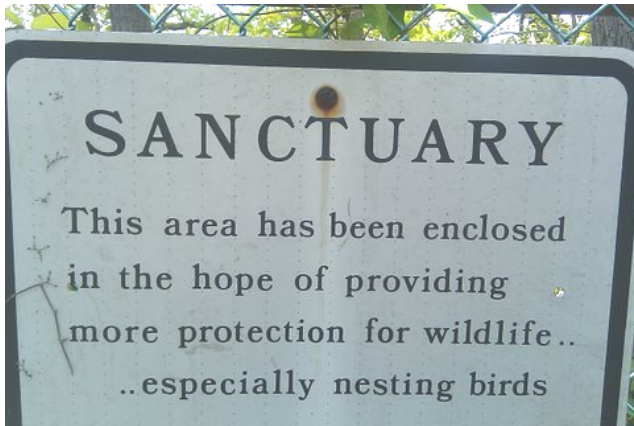


unitarian universalist
CONGREGATION OF DANBURY

COMMENT

24 Clapboard Ridge Road, Danbury, CT 06811 * 203-798-1994
Rev. Barbara Fast, Settled Minister

JUNE 2011



“At the heart of it...”

I love that sign. I recognize a truth in it about why we build and gather in faith communities. It reminds me that we are indebted to those who have come before us, as individuals, a congregation and as a movement. It reminds me to be grateful for all that has gone before, all the work of faithful hands and hearts and minds that have brought us to this place now.

I love that sign because when I attended my first UUCD Annual Meeting and Potluck, I recognized you as a hopeful

community of lively committed people who are living into a new identity since you built this place of sanctuary and strength here on the Ridge. You are becoming the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Danbury.

It was an energizing evening for me. You raised enough funds to authorize a balanced budget and you recognized the work that has taken place this year. It takes intentional gifting of all kinds to keep this place of sanctuary and strength alive. I encourage you to read the Annual Report.

Sincere thanks to Jean Bowen for her leadership as President and welcome to Ben Roberts as new President. Thanks for the dedicated service of Pamela Mitchell and welcome Marcia Brooker and Randy Smith onto the UUCD Board of Trustees. We rely on the good faith leadership of so many to keep the spirit of this community alive.

Sunday we recognized the happy *wild life* of our children and youth. With one candle we honored the children and youth of UUCD, our families and the religious education ministry of the RE Committee, the youth advisors and volunteer leaders, and for the sincere sacred and songful leadership of our DRE Mary Collins on the occasion of her 10th year of service. The staff here at UUCD and the volunteers dedicate themselves to providing a safe place for “wild life, especially nesting birds”, to flourish.

When I candidated here I preached a sermon, “Believe the Bird,” inspired by a quote in an Audubon calendar...*when the book and the bird disagree, believe the bird.* As I conclude my first year here with you, believe me, I believe in you!

In good faith,
Barbara

Our Mission Statement:

The Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Danbury is an open religious community that welcomes a diversity of people, ideas and beliefs.

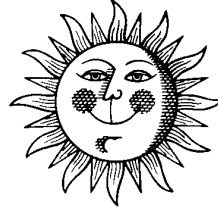
We celebrate together that which is good in life, and offer comfort and care in times of need.

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

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 or dropped off at the church office.



**Deadline for the July/August *Comment* -
Friday, June 17th.**



President's Comment

by Jean N. Bowen, President

Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!

The leaders in this Congregation are intelligent and creative individuals. We are fortunate to have a team of volunteers on the Board of Trustees who are willing to plan for our future, think differently, are wise and trustworthy with our resources.

The leaders of our Committees and Teams are hardworking, dedicated and conscientious. We are a web of ministries that offers our members spiritual pursuits, opportunities for social justice involvement and wonderful community events that allows for deeper connections in fun.

The Executive Committee, the Finance Team and Annual Budget Drive leaders have shown remarkable persistence and have pursued best practice in fundraising, financial management and planning.

Our Religious Educators are spirited, knowledgeable and give every Sunday to teaching and supporting our children and young adults. Thank you.

Rev. Barbara Fast and Mary Collins have inspired me and helped me to understand that Congregational life is a deeper community experience than just membership. Sherry Kyriacou offered her expertise and steadiness as administrator anticipating the Board's needs before I did. Thank you.

Many of you have been quiet advisors ready with constructive feedback and suggestions on where I could identify the next resource or volunteer. Thank you Barb, Pam, Marie, Shawn, Carol, Val and Susan, your wisdom, support and friendship have been important to me.

I have thought about growth a great deal while President; in all that it has become, a strategic process, an increase in membership numbers and a larger budget. We have the obvious signs of a congregation in growth, too few parking spaces, not enough seats, a crowded RE building and huge enthusiasm and love for this community. Our programs and ministries are abundant, we agree that enjoying them and maintaining them is good practice.

We have dreams for expansion. We acted on our vision ten years ago to move back to the City of Danbury. I suggest that we begin to study and examine our own land use and what and where our footprint should be at 24 Clapboard Ridge Road. Is it a separate building? Or an attached structure to Fellowship Hall that builds out of the lower level? Where and what will the parking look like for a membership of 250 people? We have amazing members who can lead us in this conversation, research and planning. What do you think?

In Community,
Jean



Religious Education plans for June 2011:

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

Beginning in June, RE will be weighing the food offering each Sunday. Don't forget to bring some food!

June 5th - Multigenerational Flower Service. Bring one flower for each member of your family to put into our common vases. Each flower represents our beauty individually, and as a bouquet that of our community. Possible planting of the Butterfly plants and bird habitat by the 3rd – 5th Grade group and volunteers (after the service – contact **Brad and Lisa Greene** for more information.)

It is likely that the Senior High Youth Group will meet again in early June to prepare for:

Friday, June 10th – Sunday, June 12th – We are hosting a Metro NY *Senior High Youth Conference* here from Friday evening to early Sunday morning. Our youth are planning the activities but they would really appreciate the support of the community to help feed the multitudes.

- If you can help make a dish or by purchasing food for approximately 85 youth please contact: **Conor Collins, Maddie Alexander**, advisor **John Miglietta**, or **Mary Collins**. (Reimbursements for food purchases are available.) And/or
- Come help set up and serve the food, and see their great spirit and how much they love these opportunities for time together! It will give you hope for the future.

For the following **Seeking children and youth to lead music, readings** – Contact **Mary Collins**:

June 12th – We will start in Fellowship Hall to hear a little jazz and about the Morris Street School Project. The children's worship will highlight UU Principle #3 "We are free to learn together" and a prophetic educator in CT history: Prudence Crandall. She was a courageous person! Even though schools will be letting out soon, learning never ends.

June 19th - (Father's Day weekend) We will start in Fellowship Hall to hear Jean Bowen's goodbye as our Board President. This brief children's worship will share the story of the origins of T'ai Chi (it will also touch on expectations people had for one young man. Contact Mary Collins if you can show/lead participants in a sample experience this day.

June 26th - Children's Chapel to parallel the Social Action topic and Celebrate Gay Pride.

Summer Programming will continue in a relaxed manner from July 4th weekend through Labor Day weekend.

We need additional volunteers to assist in the following topic areas:

- Gymnastics with Suzanne Perry,
- Learning about compost with Barbara Myers,
- Creation stories with Nancy Tramontana,
- Fiber art with Meredith Spector.

If you can share something of interest one Sunday, contact Mary Collins ASAP.

The Director of Religious Education's last day in the office for the summer will be Thursday, June 23rd (she will resume the week of August 1st to set up for the 2011-2012 year.

From Your Community Minister, Rev. Peggy Block

Green Chimneys Revisited

Dear Members and Friends of UUCD:

We, UUCD, as a “Member Congregation of the Unitarian Universalist Association” affirm and promote, among our “Principles and Purposes”:

- *The inherent worth and dignity of every person;*
- *Justice, equity and compassion in human relations;*
- *Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations;*
- *Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.*
- *Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder...which moves us to a renewal of the spirit...*

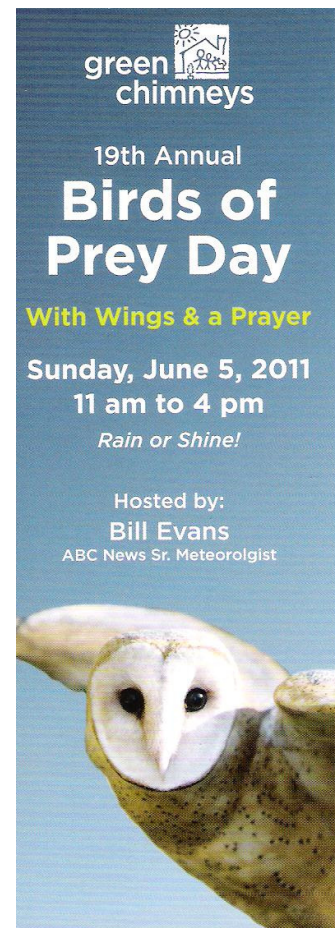
The mission of GREEN CHIMNEYS CHILDREN’S SERVICE AND WILDLIFE CENTER is the same! Next to Danbury is Brewster, New York, the location of the main campus of Green Chimneys, a fun place to visit any weekend and family-friendly. In fact it is “family” for 82 resident children and youth from various backgrounds, and for over 300 birds and animals on which was originally a large farm with “green chimneys” on all the buildings. Some of the old farm buildings remain surrounded by the:

- New school complex (“Newman’s Own Education Center”, yes, Paul’s “All-profits-to-charity” Foundation;
- New Health and Wellness Center;
- Newly renovated indoor pool and gymnasium;
- New horse barn/farm classroom;
- New paved pathways and landscaping throughout – for easily “self-guided” tours.

Visible nearby are the old horse barns and indoor riding ring; paddocks filled with various farm animals, usual and unusual; the “Children’s Garden” where the students learn to raise vegetables and flowers organically; and, most importantly, the GREEN CHIMNEYS WILDLIFE CENTER, always “open” for self-guided tours on the wooded paths. Children and adults love the Wildlife Center, where large wild birds in safe cages look at you while you look at them. Sometimes they “sing” to you too!

Many of the animals and birds at Green Chimneys have been rescued from neglect and/or injuries, emotional and physical, and are being rehabilitated and educated. Best of all, many of the students are directly involved in the care of these birds and animals, learning first-hand about “*the inherent worth and dignity*” of every animal, of every person, and of themselves.

Before coming to UUCD as your Community Minister, I served as Campus Chaplain at Green Chimneys, and also as a Counselor in their unmarked shelter, “Arbor House” for local runaway and abused teens.





Friday, May 20, 2011, I was called back to active Chaplain service to offer “The Prayer of Dedication and Blessing” for the newly opening “Donnelly Family Student Residences” dormitories clustered like a village near the school and dining hall. It’s a beautiful campus!

Albert Schweitzer wrote in Reverence for Life:

*“Reverence for life...
It is the source of constant renewal
for the individual and for mankind.”*

Dr. Samuel “Rollo” Ross, Jr., the Founder of Green Chimneys in 1947 – yes! 1947 – wrote in his recent book, The Extraordinary Spirit of Green Chimneys: Connecting Children and Animals to Create Hope:

“Three groups love us: those who love children, those who love animals, and those who love children and animals.”

May your summer be filled with children, animals, adventure, challenge, peace, health, joy, and renewed reverence for life.

Faithfully yours,
Peggy

P.S. For “Birds of Prey Day, Sunday, June 5, 2011, information and all Green Chimneys public programs: www.greenchimneys.org. Address: 400 Doansburg Road, Brewster, NY 10509

Committee News

From the *Building and Grounds Committee*



Spring Clean Up - Saturday, June 4TH, 8:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Help needed: moving gravel in parking lot, washing windows, sanding and painting fire escape railing in back of Fellowship Hall, install air conditioning units, grounds clean-up, repair gutters and siding, check/repair light in parking lot, check light sensor on outside of house, cut back tree limbs. Equipment/supplies needed: iron rakes and metal shovels (for moving gravel), leaf rake, clippers, leaf blower, sanding material, sander, wheel barrow.

From the *Sunday Services Committee*

Our summer lay-led Sunday services start on July 3rd. **One 10:00 a.m. service.** We have a stellar line up of UUCD talent willing to expound their thoughts, feelings and viewpoints from our pulpit. Sound like fun? The weekly schedule is below. Toddler care provided.

July 3, 2011 Coming Full Circle Carl Tichler
Touching on themes of torture, human rights, language, euphemism in wartime, music and spirituality --- Carl will bring together his perspectives and new insights.

July 10, 2011 'BUSY'NESS' When Does it Slow Down? Marcia Brooker
We will take a look at the pace of our lives and see if there are ways to have more time for ourselves

July 17, 2011 Magic In A Modern World Gale Alexander
Does magic exist? And if so, what is its place in the modern world. Come join our resident conjurer as he explores (and exhibits?) the place of magic in a world of science and extremism.

July 24, 2011 The Benefits of Practicing Mindfulness David Parr
To be Mindful is to pay attention, on purpose, in the present moment, non-judgmentally. Practicing Mindfulness can transform your life. David Parr, a clinical psychologist, will provide a brief overview of Mindfulness and it's benefits, and engage congregants in several practical and fun Mindfulness exercises.

July 21, 2011 Love and Sacrifice Susan Shaner
Can you have one without the other? Please join Susan as she explores these words from a universal kabbalah perspective.

August 7, 2011 Laughter Buddha Joe Gillotti
Laughter can be self-produced, spontaneous, stimulating and most importantly lots of fun. The health benefits of Laughter Yoga are profound. Bring your spouse, bring a friend, bring anyone who would like to experience an all-natural, low calorie pick-me-up.

August 14, 2011 The Heart of Conflict Resolution Eva DeFranco
Why getting to the heart of conflict can bring about peace and some strategies for peacemakers

August 21, 2011 UUvangelism: A Moral Imperative Shawn Sweeney
Belief in our UU principles makes it necessary, even our moral imperative to share the joy, love and opportunities our UU faith and spiritual practices offer people. This sounds like evangelism. In this sermon Shawn will discuss how we can move forward with our own way of telling the world about our faith, something we'll perhaps call UUvangelism.

August 28, 2011 An Eyewitness Report from Palestine Barbara Love
Barbara will speak about fulfilling her covenant to the Christian peace group, The Tree of Life, by sharing what she has seen and heard with others in the interest of a just peace.

September 4, 2011 A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to Retirement Pat Coulston
A view of work, love and focusing. A one-way journey through life.

From *Team Green*



Heirloom Plant Sale

The 2011 Heirloom Plant Sale was a great success, realizing a total profit of \$1012.00. A big thanks to everyone on the team who helped to raise the seedlings: **Suzanne Perry, Lisa Austin-Smith, Janet Cory, Chris Schmitt, and Joanne Wells**; as well as our plant sellers the weekend of May 21st: **Cheryl Edelan, Shawn Sweeney, and Elisabeth Levy**. And thanks to all who purchased our organically raised plants – may you have abundant yields of tomatoes and peppers this summer!

Barbara Myers

From the *Women's Retreat*

Women of the UUCD community gathered again for the 12th year to celebrate community, connection, and friendship. We shared our thoughts, stories, voices, laughter, and caring. When we left we took with us closer ties to other women, new friendships, new ideas to use in our own lives, fond memories and the need for sleep.

Many thanks are due to the folks that helped to make the retreat possible. Finding a new and handicapped accessible venue was a major undertaking in itself, and we all are so grateful for the work of **Karen Romanelli, Claudia Volano, Carol Huckabee, Anne Krieg, Judy Lacker, and Barb Myers**. The Planning Committee put in a lot of time and effort during the past months. I am so thankful for the creativity, time and effort of **Marie Dupree, Barbara Myers, Claudia Volano, Jane Leff, Joni Lowe, Donna Roscoe, Dara O'Toole, and Renee Simon**. The workshops this year were amazing and we thank the talented women who led them: **Renee Simon, Valerie Cochrane, Jane Leff, Cynthia Clark, Judy Lacker, Joni Lowe, and Susan Shaner**. Our full schedule also included many activities and we are so grateful for the time and expertise these women shared: **Karen Gillotti, Janet Swift, Barb Myers, Nancy Hershatter, and Marcia Brooker**. I cannot list all of us, but the retreat happens only because of the amazing, caring, cohesive community of women of the UUCD!! Thanks to all for your enthusiastic interest and participation.

The evaluations are in, and the overwhelming majority of women are very happy with our new venue, The Guest House. We will be returning to the Guest House next year from May 3rd to May 5th, 2012. Put these dates on your calendar. Look for a women's gathering in the fall and more information about next year's retreat in future Comment issues.



UUCD Morris Street School Project



Project Kickoff – June 12 - 10:00 Service at the Ridge

Sunday, June 12th will be a Share-the-Plate Sunday with the Danbury Morris Street Elementary School. We will then introduce the UUCD Morris Street School Project (MSSP). Bill Santarsiero, the Principal and member of UUCD, will be there to briefly introduce the school, its challenges and needs, and to invite us all to an informational meeting following the service. The music teacher at the school, Tom Imre, will be playing sax in the jazz quintet providing the morning's music.

Project Overview

The goal of the MSSP is to enhance the educational experience of the children by supporting the teachers and the staff and other contributing organizations in their efforts. A solid educational foundation in elementary school is critical to success in higher education, career and life. The Danbury school system, like many others around the country, is experiencing financial challenges and, as a result, some teacher and many aid and assistant positions have been eliminated.

Direct assistance in the classroom, particularly in kindergarten, is badly needed. Working with individual children with flash cards, reading and classroom projects is very helpful. The one-to-one interaction that volunteers can provide, and that the teachers don't have time for, pays great dividends toward a child's learning.

Other areas of need include after-school programs and with other organizations, such as the Family Resource Center, that support the school. Special events recognizing students (e.g. writing contests prizes) and teachers are very much appreciated. Family assistance efforts can be so positive for the children involved (e.g. Santa letters for families in need, coat drives, etc.). Book drives for the school and classrooms can provide needed new reading material.....

Come to the meeting after the service to find out more.

Project Opportunities

We can all agree on the vital importance of education for the children of our community, our country and our world. The MSSP offers a special opportunity to "Think Globally and Act Locally."

Given the diversity of needs there are a variety of ways to help. The days, times, hours are up to you. To assist those interested in getting started, there will be an orientation in September with an option to observe volunteering in action in one of the classrooms at the school.

Please add your name to the signup sheet if you are interested in further exploring how you might contribute. For more information contact Charlie Schott, project chair.

Discover how you can make a difference!

Upcoming Events

June 2011						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

For a complete list of upcoming events go to the calendar on our website, www.uudanbury.org

Women out to Breakfast will meet on June 11th, July 9th, and August 13th for informal coffee and conversation at Elmer's Diner. Everyone is welcome. If you would like to attend, please contact **Karen Gillotti**.



Conversations

Conversations meets on the second Thursday of each month from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. in the Conference Room. All are welcome. The group chooses current topics of interest and their sources. Questions designed to stimulate conversation are emailed to all members. If you wish to receive our announcements and questions, please email at **Bruce Buzby**. Recently published books of interest are selected to stimulate and support discussions; reading the book is not mandatory in order to participate and enjoy the gathering. Recent topics have related to Ethics, Brain Function Research, Evolution, God, Iraq, Islamic Culture, Civil Strife, History, Science and Religion, DNA Research, Women's Liberation, Military Industrial Threat, China, Nation Building, Economics, Science, Art, and so on. Upcoming Conversations:

June 9, 2011: Unified Theory of State Formation. Facilitator: Bob Bollinger. Source: "*The Origins of Political Order*" by Francis Fukuyama, 2011, 608 pages, \$19.49. Political theorist Fukuyama presents nothing less than a unified theory of state formation, a comparative study of how tribally organized societies in various parts of the world and various moments in history have transformed into societies with political systems and institutions and, in some cases, political accountability. Drawing upon a diverse range of sources—sociobiology and anthropology as well as macroeconomics and legal history—and paying particular attention to political development in Asia, Fukuyama describes a somewhat evolutionary mechanism wherein political systems develop in response to certain societal conditions and become institutionalized because of, among other things, their ability to adapt.



Special Note: so as not to interfere with the youth event scheduled for June 10-12, we've reschedule Movies with a Message to the third Friday, June 17th.

So, what is a "preview" night, you ask. Each month when our subscription disc comes in from *Spiritual Circle Cinema*, Marie and I sit down to preview the films, watching the introduction, the films, and each discussion session which follows. Following this preview session, we categorize each film on the disc as (a) Film to show, (b) Maybe – put on shelf for now, or (c) Limited interest only. It is from the (a) category, with an occasional (b) film thrown in, that we select films for Movies with a Message.

In a preview session, we watch the films in a somewhat different way from the way we normally present them on a Friday night. A couple of months ago, I mentioned that I was thinking of trying the preview process on one of our regular movie nights, and those attending seemed most agreeable. It normally requires two evenings for Marie and me to preview a complete disc, so we will limit our evening a bit but go as far as we can, starting at 7:00 p.m. and planning to end at 9:30 p.m. We will vote after each film and assign each to an a, b, or c category – majority rules!

Oh, what films are we to review, you ask. You see, each month Marie and I really don't know. And this month, neither will you! See you at the movies!

We believe that good experiences are even more fulfilling when shared with others. To this end, our objective each month is to present films of substance in a living room setting and to provide an opportunity to discuss with friends. Please join us on **Friday, June 17th, 7:00 p.m.** in the Conference Room. As usual, all are welcome. Pizza is provided, bring your own beverage. Popcorn optional! Contributions will be gratefully accepted, all of which will go to the UUCD to encourage continuation of UUCD programs.



Dear Friends,

Thank you for your most generous contribution. We are so grateful that you will help to improve the quality of life for many neighbors in need. It is especially meaningful given that this 24th year of continuing a treasured tradition is also the very first season for the independent HomeFront program. Your generous financial support – in combination with the "hands on" assistance of volunteers – ensures that our program can continue to keep people in their homes with an improved quality of life.

With best wishes,
Sean C. O'Brien, Executive Director

One Service at 10:00 a.m.**June 5, 2011****Flower Communion Celebration**

Rev. Barbara Fast

It is our Flower Communion Service and our Congregational Welcome to our New Members. Please come with a flower ready to give and be ready to receive a flower and so much more! Please stay and enjoy some cake as we celebrate our new members!

June 12, 2011**The Snake, the Lake and Life**

Rev. Barbara Fast & Charlie Schott

The sermon is my last for this year. There will be fabulous jazz and our Share the Plate will be for the Morris Street School. Bill Santarsiero, Principal of Morris Street School, will be here to speak to us about the plans for next year. Please stay for the information session afterwards.

June 19, 2011**Sabbath Keeping**

Rev. Barbara Fast

We began the year with gratitude and we close with gratitude for all those who have served the life of the congregation. Jean Bowen will share her perspective as she leaves office and we will celebrate the coming of the summer solstice and thank our fathers.

June 25, 2011**Gay Pride Sunday**

Social Action Committee



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