

Getting to Know Our UUCSC Board of Directors: Nancy Dean

by Natalie Herbermann

Over the last year I have been getting to know our UUCSC Board members, like Bill Rodriguez, who I interviewed last month. It was great to sit down with him and hear his story. This month I sat down with a dear old friend, Nancy Dean, and we had a chance to reconnect.

Nancy has served the UUCSC in many roles over the years. I approached her last spring about returning to serve as a UUCSC Director and am grateful that she agreed. She has been part of the UUCSC since the early days of the congregation and brings a lot of experience to our table.

Nancy and I both relocated to Rhode Island in the early nineties and she was one of the first people I met at UUCSC. Over the years, we have spent a lot of time together, powering through the ups and downs of parenting. I learned a lot from her about nutrition and eating healthy. She introduced me to The Nursery Garden, the beloved preschool that our children attended. We both love to hike and bike and we have had many adventures, sometimes with seven kids in tow.

Nancy grew up in a small town in New Jersey. Her family home doubled as the Norman Dean Funeral Home. Growing up in a funeral home was certainly a unique experience, as death becomes a way of life. I think this experience explains Nancy's great sense of humor. Being surrounded by death so frequently at a young age raises questions that are hard to answer. She wasn't quite satisfied with the teachings at the local Episcopal church. She began her spiritual exploration while attending the University of Delaware. There she also met her husband, Brian Maynard, a lifelong Unitarian Universalist.

Over the years, I have admired Nancy for her creative abilities. She has passed these on to her sons, Tate, Rory and Jens, who are accomplished artists. Nancy's art has always involved repurposing and upcycling. She thinks this came from her grandparents, who lived close by and encouraged her to join them in tinkering and creating. Nancy's grandfather was a clever mechanic who was always looking for a solution to a problem. Her uncle lived with them and had been stricken with polio, leaving him a quadriplegic and unable to breathe on his own. Together they invented several devices to improve his quality of life. Nancy's grandmother was an expert seamstress and good with needlework. Both Nancy and her son Rory can do wonders with textiles.

As her children grew older, Nancy was able to pursue some of her creative interests. She began working with stone and metal. She has several amazing projects on display in Peace Dale. While you

stroll along the bike path near Kingston Pizza, take time to look at Flora Rustica, a nine-foot-tall metal totem. She sculpted this out of recycled bolts, springs, gears and faucets. I have passed it hundreds of times and I always notice something new.

However, after a few years working with metal, Nancy realized the toll it was taking. There are fumes, dust and loud jarring noises, so she is going to leave this type of work to the next generation. Her son Jens took an interest in industrial art and has created many of his own interesting pieces. Nancy started to gravitate back toward softer, quieter work. She returned to sewing and needlework. Nancy's son Tate has also been doing “needle work” of sorts for the past ten years, establishing himself as a tattoo artist in Swansea, Mass. You can see some of his fine work on both Nancy and Brian. Nancy now works as a seamstress, doing alterations. She also refurbishes vintage clothing that she sells in her space at Jules Antiques on Route 138 in Richmond.

I appreciate Nancy taking time out of her busy schedule and creative projects to serve on the UUCSC board this year. Since the very early years, she has helped our congregation grow into a vibrant community. I hope we can continue to work together for many years to keep our community strong.

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