



# FIRST CHURCH VISION

FIRST CHURCH UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST LEOMINSTER, MA

*REVEREND DR. SUSAN SUCHOCKI BROWN, MINISTER*

*LAUREN SOUCY, Choir Director JESSE BLACKMAN, Musician*

*December 2015*

Shall we stroll into the holidays in a nice easy fashion and keep it that way? I am ready for a time of reflection and realignment. This past autumn was one of the most gorgeous I can remember in a long while. The leaves were late in changing colors but when they did change the riot of yellows and orange was particularly lovely. November was unseasonably mild and it was nice to get outside and meander around the yard. The two planets, I think they are Venus and Mars, have been aligned in the morning sky. This was a nice way to begin the day when I stepped out for the morning paper and to get a big gulp of fresh air. I was feeling calm.

This calmness stayed with me until the terrorist act in Paris sent me and in fact most of us into a state of sadness, fear, anger and frustration. That is what an act of terrorism does; it overwhelms one's ability to make meaning out of a life and it sets people on edge and against one another. Terrorism is cowardly and divisive and intended to make others scared and off guard. I don't like that state of mind; I bet you don't either. It is a challenge to overcome the sense of being under attack, and to overcome the sense of being on edge. Yet as we approach the holidays of Thanksgiving and of Christmas and even of an approaching New Year, let's think about an alternative way of being and to regaining stability.

First, there is always the danger and risk that a terrorist act will and could take place in our country again. But there are hundreds if not thousands of people who are looking out for our welfare and I trust them to look after me. And, although I remain vigilant, I refuse to let terrorists control my thoughts

or my life. Life is scary and life is uncertain yet if I shut myself off from life and others the terrorists have won. And because we need one another I should develop relationships with people who think, act and believe different than I do. I wish I had more opportunity to do this by being a part of other faith based and culture based groups but I remain open to those chances to engage with others. I also try hard to keep my pre-conceived notions in check when I read or see differences.

The holiday season is an interesting time to remain open to all religious or non-religious ways of being. We recognize and celebrate Hanukkah with our Jewish neighbors and friends and we recognize and celebrate Christmas with those who put the birth of Jesus at the center of the holiday. And we recognize and celebrate the holidays with others who just love to be with family, to decorate, to feed the hungry and clothe the naked and try to make the world a better place even if they have no religious beliefs.

As the holiday season approaches I also want to find ways to be giving and caring. I don't have money to do this but I can volunteer. I am glad that we will be a point of application for the Toys for Tots program. I appreciate those of you who have signed up to be volunteers. The need is great. I remember being in a position when I had little money to provide Christmas presents for my young boys; it was a devastating feeling. Thankfully my folks came through but if there had been a local Toys for Tots, I would have gone to them. We can help and show acts of kindness in a world gone mad. Let's do so.

*Rev Susan*



## Debra's Doodles

I am very happy with the participation in the World Café and other activities related to the Mission Task Force. For those of you who are scratching your heads and saying, "what is she talking about?" I will explain. At the retreat for the Parish committee at the beginning of the year, we came to the consensus that we needed a clear mission statement for the congregation. The mission statement allows us to design our programs and activities as a church around the expressed preferences of the congregation. The mission statement provides the touchstone for all that we do as a faith community. I volunteered to head the task-force, joining me are Paula Murphy, Stephanie Trudel, and Diane O'Hare. Together we have come up with several different events and ways to gather input for the mission statement. The process of gathering information will take about 7 months. After the information is gathered we will spend the remainder of the year refining the information into a good statement which will be brought to the Parish Committee for further refinements and then to a congregational vote. Wish us luck and please put your two cents in.

I had some very interesting results from my survey this past week. I would like to mention two. I am not sure what we should do with this information but I thought it was very interesting.

Number one—I asked, "What are the top priorities of the Pastor's work?" I got many great answers like-- be an example, be a presence in the community, preach, be a role model—all great. But not one person said administration. Not one. However, when I asked Rev. Susan how she spends her time during the week, she told me 50% of her time is spent on building issues and administration. Interesting.

Number two—I asked, "What are the responsibilities of the laity?" Many people said—participate, give money and time, a few said live out the principles in the world (nice, I like that one) greet people, show up, engage in conversation—all great answers. But only one person said serve on a committee. Interesting. I am thinking, "But that is how we get stuff done, by committee, that is how congregational polity works!" If people don't think it is important to serve on committees and some people even express distain for it, how are we going to do this? We have to re-imagine the whole thing. But how do we do that without a committee. Interesting dilemma. Let's talk about it.

***See ya in church, Debra***



## Sermons

**December 6<sup>th</sup>:** "Being Ready for the Holidays". Special guest musician: Judy Gordon

**December 13<sup>th</sup>:** "Sock it to me Sunday". We will be collecting socks and other outer wear for the homeless population; 15 West youth will have first choice.

**December 20<sup>th</sup>:** "To Enjoy this Season with Solstice Celebration". Guest musician: Judy Gordon.

**December 24<sup>th</sup>:** "Christmas Eve service with traditional biblical readings and carol singing at 6 pm"

**December 27<sup>th</sup>:** "New Year's Coming poems, readings and music". (Please let Lauren or Rev Susan know if you have any special music request)

If you want to use the church for any purpose, committee or event please be in contact with Lenore at First Church email to coordinate schedules.



## Membership Committee Meeting

The membership committee will meet on Wednesday **Dec. 9<sup>th</sup>** at 6:00pm. Come early to change the sidewalk pulpit sign. Our meetings are all held at FCUU. People are welcome to join us if interested.

On **Dec. 9<sup>th</sup>** the Committee on Worship will meet at FCUU at 4:30 pm.

## Pledge Committee

Pledge Committee gathering will be held on **Dec. 2<sup>nd</sup>** at 4:30pm. If you are interested in participating in any capacity during this year's pledge drive, please feel welcome to attend.



## Lady's Benevolent Society

The Lady Bees will gather on **Dec. 14<sup>th</sup>** for their annual Holiday pot luck. Please bring a \$10.00 gift for the Yankee swap. This is for all dues paying women from FCUU. Tell Claire what dish you are bringing. It starts at 6:00pm but not at the church.



## Needs for Homeless/Less Privileged Youth

Socks  
Sweat shirts- hooded preferred L, XXL  
Sketch pads and colored pencils  
Toiletries male and female  
Hand warmers  
Gloves one size  
Scarves, hats, skull caps



## Adult R.E.

All women are welcome to attend the Cakes for the Queen of Heaven Adult Re program from 10am to 12:30pm on Wednesday, **Dec. 16<sup>th</sup>**. We will be focusing on the book, Ancient Mirrors of Womanhood by Merlin Stone.



## Birthdays

Connor Greene.....Dec. 8  
Mary Pariseau.....Dec.9  
Rick Flammia.....Dec.10  
Wendy Aldrich.....Dec. 15  
Pat Robinson.....Dec. 20  
Page Winterberg.....Dec. 27  
Lynn Radford.....Dec.29

One of our Big Joys this month is that Emilee Scully's 1<sup>st</sup> birthday is on **Dec 13<sup>th</sup>**.



## Book Discussion Group

**No book discussion group this month.** Have a wonderful holiday season and please join us January 22, 2016 when we will discuss Without a Map by Meredith Hall.



## Soup with Susan Dec. 9<sup>th</sup>

Please join us from 12:00 to 1:00 for a warm, friendly gathering of soup made by Ron, bread and dessert made by Rev. Susan and fellowship made by all. All are welcome. Invite your neighbors and friends to come with you.



## Grains and Greens

Grains and Greens is in need of food or money to purchase food and someone to come in to clean the room. Call the church or Rev Susan to find a time to come in and volunteer.



On **Dec. 6<sup>th</sup>**, we wish *Happy Hanukkah* to all our Jewish friends.



## Can you knit, crochet, or quilt?

Hello Knitters, crocheters and quilters everywhere. We need to make some blankets for ill children undergoing medical treatments. Lady B's need both yarn and knitters. This is an ongoing project for the Worcester Area Chapter of Project Linus. Can you help us? If so, contact Claire Griffiths.



## **Toys for Tots**

We have partnered with Toys for Tots, a collaborative project between Leominster and Fitchburg Marine Detachment 1076 and the local Salvation Army. Toys for Tots help is needed; call or email Rev Susan if you think you can help with applications, bagging or distribution.

Applications will be taken on **Dec 2<sup>nd</sup>** 10-4 and on **Dec 9<sup>th</sup>** 1:30-5:00 at FCUU. Another way to get involved is to join us on **Dec 16<sup>th</sup>** at Rollstone church in Fitchburg to sort through toys and make up "bags" for families which will then be brought back to FCUU. The hand out to approved families will take place on **Dec. 20<sup>th</sup>** here from 11:30- 6:30.

Also on **Dec 5<sup>th</sup>** during the Stroll if you want, you could volunteer to stand outside to collect money or toys. A Toy collection box will be set up after November 16<sup>th</sup> here to accept donations. You can drop off toys for kids ages birth – 12.

Thanks to those who have already signed up to help.

If you want information in an order of service please get that information to the office @ [1stchurchoffice@verizon.net](mailto:1stchurchoffice@verizon.net) by Tuesday of the week that you want something post



## **Become a Host Home**

Every young person deserves a warm, safe place to lay their head at night. We are in great need of welcoming homes to provide short-term support for unaccompanied homeless young people! Homes receive ongoing training & support along with a monthly stipend. Young people up to age 17 need host homes just like younger children!

Become a Host Home for an older youth today! Please contact LUK's Basic Center Program for more information! 1-800-579-0000 or [www.LUK.org](http://www.LUK.org) [RHY@LUK.org](mailto:RHY@LUK.org).

An alkathon will be held here from 8:00 am **Dec 24<sup>th</sup>** until 9:00 pm **Dec 25<sup>th</sup>**.



## **FCUU Website**

We are working on a new website for FCUU! Writers, editors and proofreaders are needed. People can contact Betsy Moran at church or at [bam36uu@gmail.com](mailto:bam36uu@gmail.com) (her website stuff contact address).

If you want to submit to the January newsletter, please do so before **Dec. 15<sup>th</sup>**. Email Chris at [cauhlig2002@yahoo.com](mailto:cauhlig2002@yahoo.com) or Lenore at [1stchurchoffice@verizon.net](mailto:1stchurchoffice@verizon.net).



## **The Most Peaceful Night of the Year**

Mark Marquis and friends, the Most Peaceful Night of the Year concert will be on **Dec. 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>** with the snow date on **Dec. 13<sup>th</sup>**. Tickets are \$10 at the door. Help is needed for set up, clean up and providing some baked goodies and drinks to the musicians. See Rev Susan if you can help.



## **Winter Stroll**

The Winter Stroll is being held in downtown Leominster on Sat., **Dec. 5<sup>th</sup>** from 2p-5p. FCUU will be having vendors in the hall; anyone interested in vending should get in touch with Lauren Soucy. The cost is \$25 and registration is due by Nov. 25<sup>th</sup>.

We are looking for people to donate cookies which we will be giving out during the event. The church will be open for setup from about 11:30-12:00 and we will be there till about 6:00 cleaning up after the event. Anyone looking to help out should see Bill Coulter or Christa DiSilva. If anyone has any kid friendly Christmas movies on a DVD that they purchased that they are willing to lend to us to show for the children please let either Bill Coulter or Christa DiSilva know. We will be giving out free cocoa and cookies and will be asking for donations as people come through. The Lady B's will have a table there also.