



FIRST CHURCH VISION

FIRST CHURCH UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST LEOMINSTER, MA

REVEREND DR. SUSAN SUCHOCKI BROWN, MINISTER

LAUREN SOUCY, *Choir Director*, JESSE BLACKMAN, *Musician*, DEBRA GUTHRIE, *Ministerial Intern*
FEBRUARY 2016

Ministerial Musings

At the most recent Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration and Event, a question and a comment was made about our United States culture being a culture of violence. The Mayor was asked what he thought about these issues. His answer was that one of the problems that kept him up at night was the rampant violence that seems to be prevalent in the United States. He further went on to say that it is churches that could help to change this culture. He made me stop and think. And at least one other member of our congregation who heard this asked me what I thought. As you can imagine there are a great number of responses I could have. First, yes he is correct; churches can speak out against violence and we should. And, then I was wondering about how and what are the limits. I am no way wandering into the issues of gun legislation other than I want only law abiding citizens to be able to apply for gun permits.

But there are other types of violence that appear to me more able to be addressed by the churches. Mark Moran called it a culture of revenge, or that we are a revenge based society. I think this is probably the most significant cultural phenomena that creates violence. Another person in our group also tied this to not treating all people equally. As we began to discuss this it all rolled back to economic inequality and the disproportionate political, economic injustices that effect most people. Those sitting around our table and in the room

felt that these injustices set up barriers between people and forced some to take sides and respond from a sense of scarcity and want. Violence, a few thought grew out of the sense of frustration, a sense that when someone feels they are being disrespected, diminished, or treated without regard for the basic human dignity and inherent worth, they fall into a revenge mindset that leads to violence.

This is where I believe church can step in and assist to shift the culture. Martin Luther King Jr. stated, "We as a nation must undergo a radical revolution of values. We must rapidly begin to shift from a 'thing-oriented' society to a 'person-oriented-society.'" I think that we UU's are in a perfect place to teach a 'person-oriented' way of being. A person-oriented way of being could teach all how to treat others more equitably. It could teach us to not respond to violence with more violence. It could even teach us how to be non-violent warriors of compassion, strength and wisdom and most of all LOVE.

Can and is it the churches responsibility to teach basic kindness and respect for one another? I suppose at its simplest it is? Is it the churches place to teach other ways of settling differences and how to turn the other cheek? I suppose it is. Yet with the decrease in respect for church life and the decrease in church attendance it can't be our role alone. What do you think?

I am curious, *Rev. Susan*



Debra's Doodles

It is almost February and I just came back from two weeks in North Carolina. I enjoyed the weather and was able to wear shorts up until 2 days before my return. Otherwise, my trip was a bit stressful, a working trip. And now I am looking forward to turning 50 in less than two weeks—Yay me!

One of the high-lights of my return was touching base with Rev. Susan and jumping back in at First Church. I am so looking forward to continuing my work with you all. We are starting our annual pledge drive and I am helping in the same ways I did last year.

The Mission Task Force will be meeting to determine our course of action from completing the mission statement. We have had three events to gather information for the statement. Everyone was very forthcoming and we had great participation. So the team will be meeting to discern if we need to gather more information or proceed in disseminating the information we have. Should we choose to begin dissemination we will plan a course of action for doing that. Does that make you all warm and excited? Yes me too.

I can't believe we are starting the last leg of our trip together. I am having mixed feelings. I am excited about the work we still have to do together and I am sad as I see the end nearing. Let's get some work done, make the world better and change lives!

See ya in church, Debra



Sermons

Feb. 7th: "Dark Night of the Soul; times of bleakness"

Feb 14th: "on Marriage and all that"

Feb 21st: "Science and Religion" Much has been written about the intersection of the two worlds of science and religion. Many people today still find the two incompatible. Some scientists steer clear of religious talk and many people of faith attribute no practical relevance to scientific inquiry. This Sunday morning, Debra Guthrie will take an anecdotal look at the collision. We UUs have always relied on reason and valued the contribution of science in our lives. Let's look at some ways science informs our spiritual lives.

Feb 28th: "Embodied Holiness"



Loose Collection Donation

Loose offering collection will be accepted for the "Spanish American Center" on **January 31st** and for "Help for Our Community" on **February 28th**.



Small Group Ministry

Small group began on January 3rd and it was greatly enjoyed. The next one will be held on **February 7th** after service. See Betsy Moran with any ?



On **Feb 20th** from 12 to 2:00, Martin Luther King Jr Coalition invites you to a round table discussion at the church. Food and beverages will be served.



Committee Meeting Dates

At FCUU:

Feb. 10th: Committee on Worship at 4:00-4:30 pm.

Feb. 10th: Membership Committee at 5:30 pm.

Feb. 10th: Parish Committee at 6:00 gathering for food and meeting at 6:30 pm.



Lady's Benevolent Society

The February meeting for the Lady Bee's will be held on Monday, **February 8th** in the Lady Bee's room at FCUU. We will be making Valentine's to distribute to some area Nursing Homes. Come and join us. QUESTIONS? See Claire at church.

"Guest at our Table" boxes filled with coins are due on **February 7th** so we can help support UUSC projects.



2016 Pledge Drive and Sundae Sunday/Potluck

The 2016 pledge drive for First Church UU Leominster began on Jan. 24th with the Sunday service and brunch. We will be celebrating the end of the drive on **Feb 14th** with Sundae Sunday, so come to church that day with an appetite for ice cream. We are conducting the pledge drive similar to last year's drive. Be on the lookout for the pledge brochure and your pledge material. We appreciate your generosity in advance. We feel it is more important than ever that we remain a visible and vital voice of progressive religion in Leominster and your contributions of time and money are essential for that to continue to happen.

If you have not completed your pledge for the fiscal year 2015, it is not too late as the books have not been closed yet.



Birthdays

Deb Guthrie.....Feb. 2
Amy Kerswill.....Feb. 12
Greg Aldrich.....Feb. 13
Greely Summers.....Feb. 14
Edward Summers.....Feb. 19
Ron BrownFeb. 21
Adam Goodwin.....Feb. 21
Donna Normile.....Feb.29



Book Discussion Group

What: **The Husband's Secret** by Liane Moriarty

Liane Moriarty puts three women in an impossible situation and doesn't cut them any slack. This is a comedy of manners and one with a serious undertone. Moriarty here wittily and observantly chronicles the life of middle aged, middle class Australian women, suburbanites who grapple with prosaic issues like marital fidelity and torturous ones like moral guilt and responsibility.

When: Friday, February 26, 2016 at 7:30 pm

Where: First Church



Soup with Susan **Feb. 24th**

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.



FCUU Website

"I want the world to know this about us!"

We are working on the new website and it can be seen in development at www.firstchurchuu.org/betsy to get a look at how it is coming. We need people to submit pictures and text that they would like the greater community to know about us as a church. This is our website and represents us. What do we want to say about ourselves?

Questions, comments and pictures can be sent to me at bam36uu@gmail.com

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.

Joys and Concerns

Thanks to Hannaford for the generous donation of boxes of food. It is amazing how many people are in need of food. Thank you to Lynn and Judy for organizing the pantry.

Thank you to the youth for bagging up left over toys to be used for next year.



Membership Committee Meeting

Membership will be meeting at FCUU on Wednesday **February 10th** at 5:30 pm. We will continue to work on creating new methods to attract new members to our church. Everyone is welcome to attend. Bring any suggestions. Questions? See Claire



Adult R.E.

All women are welcome to attend the Cakes for the Queen of Heaven Adult Re program from 10 to 11:30 am on **Feb. 24th**. We will be focusing on the book, *Ancient Mirrors of Womanhood* by Merlin Stone.

If you want to submit to the March newsletter, please do so before **Feb. 15th**. Email Chris at cauhlig2002@yahoo.com or Lenore at 1stchurchoffice@verizon.net.



Parish Committee

The Parish Committee met on Wednesday, January 20.

We addressed a number of issues, including winter building and grounds issues (i.e. shoveling, heating, etc.) and building usage. We continued our ongoing job of formulating a list of policies and procedures for FCUU to facilitate things such as fundraising events.

It is currently Pledge Commitment season. Last year's Pledge Drive was an enormous success, and we hope to see that continue. Please take some time to review the packets that will be mailed to you shortly, and discuss with your families what you value about First Church, and how you might be able to continue (or begin) to support us financially.

Blessings to all - STAY WARM!
Lynn Radford, PC Chairperson



Can you knit, crochet, or quilt?

The snow is flying and the winter cold is here! Now is the best time to snuggle up with your favorite color of yarn and make some blankets for ill children undergoing medical treatments. Hello knitters, crocheters and quilters everywhere! 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.

Community Outreach

The Mayor of Leominster is pulling together a group to discuss homelessness in Leominster. If anyone has any interest on being on that committee, please be in touch and I will see that you get minutes and notification of the meetings.



Inclement Weather Policy

The first thing is *do not* attempt to drive to church if you feel unsure or uncomfortable with driving conditions. *Your safety is our primary concern.* Any decision to not hold church will be posted on the church answering machine by 7:00 am on the morning before service. Other social media may be used to post the message. Rev. Susan will in most cases be at church even if church is cancelled to greet any visitors or those who did not get the message but in most cases a "normal" service will not be held.



Wish List

- Plastic tables, 6-8 foot
- Sponges
- Cleaning Cloths
- 8" Taper Candles-colors for Spring
- Disposable Razors
- Electronic Mice Repellent
- D Cell Batteries
- Air Deodorizer (plug-in or spray)
- Cases of Water
- Murphy's Oil Soap
- Dust Polish and Dust Rags
- Pledge Wood Floor Cleaner (gallon size)
- Liquid Dish Soap
- Rubber Gloves for Dishwashing

All Donations Are Greatly Appreciated!!!

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