

# First Church Vision

November 2016

**Reverend Dr. Susan Suchocki Brown, Minister**  
**Lauren Soucy, Choir Director**  
**Jesse Blackman, Musician**

*Working toward a peaceful and just world, guided by Love*

## Ministerial Musings

I really like the Thanksgiving season. It is true that gathering to eat till comatose is a delight but more importantly I think this is a season when my thoughts turn to how to center down and become more grateful for all that I have been blessed with.

The foolishness of the election will be behind us, I do pray so. Maybe we can return to civility in our interactions and we can become once again grateful to and for all the other people in our world and life.

I know that the holiday season is looming right ahead of me, and it promises to bring busyness and rushing about in the mad dash toward Christmas but for the month of November I want to focus on how I can develop an attitude of appreciation. I have a lot to appreciate too. I am healthy, except for a few cricks and aches and pains. My family is healthy too and we can usually find a little breathing room in very hectic schedules to connect during November. September and October at church this year have been full of non-stop events, happenings and occurrences. A part of this has been my upcoming retirement but most of it has been because we are a lively and active congregation. Concerts, biannual meetings, planning meetings, festivals and upcoming planning, pledge commitment time, refinishing the entire downstairs floors, cleaning out some clutter, coming together as a new Parish Committee and attending to the needs of members and friends are just some of the things we have done in our first two months back.

A tradition I was recently remembering from my childhood was that we would begin to plan our Thanksgiving meal when we sat down to dinner together. During the time I was growing up my family gathered nightly around the table to share a meal. It was a rare night when we did not do this. The table that is in the office, where many of our evening meetings are held, is that dining table. It is from one of the no longer existent furniture company's in Gardner Mass. My mother and father who worked hard for their money saved up for over two years to be able to buy that table. (this was in the days before credit cards) The opportunity to sit at the table, which we knew would expand to sit many relatives and friends on Thanksgiving day, was made more pleasant when we talked about what food we most loved. Turkey, of course, and my Grampy Fay would also explore his ideas for a new stuffing, tapioca pudding, squash, turnip, peas fresh frozen from our garden, mashed potatoes, cranberry relish and celery sticks stuffed with eggs and cream cheese, my mother's favorite, and one we all turned our noses down on, were talked about with appreciation. Also that we could gather together as a group who pledged to get along for at least that one day with a pleasant anticipation for an upcoming day of gratitude made the month of November special.

What do you remember about your Thanksgiving, about your November month? No matter if is a joyful memory or a time that you remember with discomfort and pain it might be time to reflect on it. It is only by remembering and sometimes returning to old traditions or sometimes tossing out those which no longer work that we can truly be grateful for all that we do have.

So I hope you can enter a time of gratitude and appreciation and that you can hang on to some thoughts and feelings for the next few weeks.

Enjoy Life, *Rev. Susan*



First Church Unitarian Universalist  
15 West Street  
Leominster MA 01453  
(978) 537-0310

1stchurchoffice@verizon.net

www.firstchurchuu.org

### First Church Unitarian Universalist Mission Statement

We are an open and accepting community working for justice and equality for all through nurturing relationships and providing service to each other and in the greater community

### Special points of interest

- ◆ "It's a Sign of the Times"
- ◆ "Notes from the Parish Committee"
- ◆ "More from Rev. Susan"

### Contacts:

Church Office:  
1stchurchoffice@verizon.net (978) 537-0310 [www.firstchurchuu.org](http://www.firstchurchuu.org)

Rev. Susan: RevSusanuu1@verizon.net  
Betsy Moran: bam36uu@gmail.com

**Newsletter:** Chris Uhlig  
cauhlig2002@yahoo.com

**Web/Emailing:** Betsy Moran  
bam36uu@gmail.com

**How do you like our "new" newsletter format? Send your comments and any suggestions to the above emails.**

**Thank-you!!!**

## Upcoming Worship Dates and Sermon Topics



**November 6<sup>th</sup>:** "Pledge Commitment Sunday- It's really not all about the money". **CHANGE YOUR CLOCKS: FALL BACK!** Special collection plate for Veteran's Center.

**November 13<sup>th</sup>:** "All the Gifts of Life".

**November 20<sup>th</sup>:** "Thanksgiving service".

**November 27<sup>th</sup>:** "The UU Response to Global Warming".

### *Notes from the Parish Committee*

The October meeting contained a full agenda. We spent a lot of time discussing the state of our current budget which is healthy and on track for the remainder of the year. We then turned to the proposed 2017 budget to be presented to the congregation at the Bi-Annual meeting on October 23 at a significant deficit. The income is projected to be the same as 2016. We held many of the expenses near to the 2016 level and in some cases decreased them, however some expenses are forecasted to increase in 2017 like building insurance, custodian salary to meet the MA state employment legislative changes and ministerial expense for interim ministry. Please see the Meeting Packet for a detailed line item budget.

The Parish Committee voted to propose to the congregation that Rev. Susan be honored with the title of Minister Emerita for her time spent with us at First Church. The UUA requires a vote of the Congregation to approve this proposal and it was a resounding "YES". We will be planning a more formal celebration to bestow this honor and details will follow.

We discussed the search for interim ministry and progress we've made to date. A committee was formed to examine the needs and wants of our congregation around interim ministry. The committee started to prepare a demographic description of First Church and community and a job description which will be finalized shortly and posted on the UUA job boards. We propose filling the position at a half-time level to meet the compensation guidelines set by the UUA. We also propose that this interim period be 2 - 2.5 years in order to prepare for calling a new minister. We are getting considerable help and advice from the New England Region of the UUA in our search and for this we are grateful.

We are planning to run our annual pledge drive this fall during the month of November into early December so please be on the lookout for more information in the coming weeks.

Our next meeting is Wednesday **November 9<sup>th</sup>** at 6:30 pm and all are invited to attend.

***Bright Blessings to all - Betsy***



### After Church Services Please Join Us

On **November 6<sup>th</sup>** following church a public forum organized by Alternatives Health Care Center will be offered to discuss issues facing both individuals and community of mental health access to treatment, addictions, family support, etc.

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A meeting of the Martin Luther King Jr. Coalition will be held on **November 9<sup>th</sup>** at 3:30 at the church. You are always welcome.



### We're Sprucing Up!

The downstairs fellowship hall is being refinished and carpet tiles will be placed at the Access door entrance. From **November 1-5** no one can be on the floor. Thank you to the Endowment Committee Trustees who approved our request to pay for this. Interesting tidbit for you all, those floors are nearly 60 years old. The upstairs carpet, the red one in the rear of the Chapel, the sitting room and front entrance hall, was installed in 1968. They are slated to be cleaned when a time can be arranged.



**Soup with Susan** on **November 9<sup>th</sup>** with time during Soup to discuss with Susan and others present her upcoming retirement and issues facing the church. Please join us from 12:00 to 1:00. All are welcome!

### **Building Use**

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.

## More From Rev. Susan

**Nov 3-6<sup>th</sup>** the 'Wall that Heals' will be at Carter Park. This wall is a moveable replica of the Vietnam Remembrance Wall. Events begin on Friday and on Saturday at 6:30 during the closing ceremony I will be offering an invocation. If you have not been able to see this yet I highly recommend it. The wall once set up will be open on a continuous basis with periodic ceremonies such as the one I will be part of. On Thursday beginning at 10:30 the wall will be moved from Worcester to Carter Park accompanied by motorcyclists who are Veterans, Fire Fighter, etc. if you get a chance to be in town near Carter Park as they come in you will be deeply moved. I am going to try to but I have an appointment away at 1:30 and may miss it.

I have been asked to write an endorsement for a book to be published by Skinner House about Unitarian Universalist ministers who are Chaplains in various settings, prisons, hospice, hospitals, treatment facilities, to police officers. I guess my years with the Mass Corps of Fire Chaplains, Leominster Fire Department have not gone unnoticed in the UU world.

### Growth & Vitality/Membership

The next meeting of the Membership committee will be at 5:00 PM on Tuesday, **November 1st**. The development of a current church directory is ongoing. Please see Claire Griffiths at church on Sunday morning to edit your listing in the directory or to add your name to our list. We all like to be able to stay in touch with one another. Both friends and members of First Church are welcome to the listing. The ongoing goals of this committee were listed in the October 23rd Congregational Meeting packet. If you were not at the meeting you can pick up a packet at church on Sunday or in the office during the week. Tuesday - Thursday, 10AM - 2:00 PM. Our committee is small and new members are welcome to join us. Questions? See Claire after Sunday.



### Ladies Benevolent Society

The next meeting of the Lady Bee's will be held at a new time for the November meeting only. We will meet at 6:00 pm on **Monday, November 14th** in the Lady Bee's room at First Church. We are meeting early in order to make candy (lollipops) to sell at the Winter Holiday Stroll which is to be held on December 3rd. I understand that the work schedule of our members may make it difficult to be at the meeting at 6:00 PM. Please come when you can to help make the candy. There will be a short business meeting and the usual refreshments available for all.

The new shades have been installed in the church office which the Lady Bee's financed as a gift to the church. Please notice them as you enter the office.

The book shelf in the upstairs coffee room has new additions. The sale of these books helps the church's budget.

This meeting is open to all women who attend First Church. Questions? See Claire at Sunday service.



### Book Group

**What:** The Girl on the Train by Paula Hawkins

Rachel takes the same commuter train every morning, flashing past a stretch of cozy suburban homes, and stopping at the signal that allows her to daily watch the same couple breakfasting on their deck. Their life, as she sees it, is perfect ... until she sees something shocking. It's only a minute until the train moves on, but now everything is changed. Rachel goes to the police, and becomes inextricably entwined in the lives of everyone involved. Has she done more harm than good?

**When:** **Friday, Nov. 18<sup>th</sup>** at 7:30 pm

**Where:** First Church office



### Birthdays

Kevin Cormier.....	Nov.3
Noah Schultz.....	Nov. 7
Jaden Doher.....	Nov.16
Lilith Ardinger.....	Nov.18
Amanda Woodward.....	Nov.18

The results of the Nominating Committee vote at the bi-annual congregational meeting was:

**Norman St. Denis**

**Stephanie Trudel, re elected**

**Lynn Radford, new term**

## Dates to Remember at a Glance

### November

**Nov 1:** Growth, vitality and membership at 5pm.

**Nov 1-5:** No access to downstairs fellowship hall.

**Nov 3:** Committee on Worship at 5pm.

**Nov 3-6:** The 'Wall that Heals' at Carter Park.

**Nov 6:** A public forum organized by Alternatives Health Care Center after church.

**Nov 9:** Soup with Susan at 12 pm

**Nov 9:** Martin Luther King Jr. Coalition at 3:30pm

**Nov 9:** Parish Committee at 6pm for supper and 6:30 for mtg.

**Nov. 18:** Book Group at 7:30 pm

**Nov 19:** NE Region Conference: see Betsy for info and if you want to attend. We could use help at 8:00 to set up for our guests.

### Wish List

Socks, gloves, hats and scarfs  
Wooden chairs for meeting room

The lighted window for October was  
in Memory of  
**Mr. Robert Holforty**  
given by **Ruth Weeks**

## "It's a Sign of the Times"

Did you know the sign that is located at the front street side of our church is known as the "Wayside Pulpit"? The concept of the wayside pulpit has quite a history and tradition within the UU church.

More than forty years ago, a despondent Korean War veteran stood on the Brooklyn Bridge ready to jump. His suicidal mood was brought up short when he remembered a message he had seen posted outside his neighborhood church. It read: "When you come to the end of your rope—tie a knot in it and hang on." The man decided to hang on to life because of hope offered by a bulletin board. Roadside messages like the one he remembered once dotted church grounds in 500 cities on four continents.

The roadside bulletin board was first introduced to North American churches in 1919 by Henry Hallam Saunderson, minister of the First Parish Church (Unitarian) of Brighton, Massachusetts, and secretary of the American Unitarian Association's publicity department from 1915 to 1921. Saunderson noticed that "many bulletin boards in front of churches were ineffectual because they were either kept empty or held notices which had outlived their usefulness." Inspired by the local wayside shrines he had seen in Europe, he decided to create "wayside sermons," liberal messages that would make people stop, read, and search their conscience. Saunderson started by posting brief quotations each Sunday night on the bulletin board outside his church. When hundreds of people stopped to read the messages, he decided the idea might have a wider usefulness. After Saunderson polled various clergy in the area, one hundred ministers agreed to subscribe to his wayside sermons. Subscribers would erect bulletin boards of the same size and proportion on their church grounds and share the expense of having weekly messages printed on 32 x 44 inch sheets that would be readable from across the street. At one point, twelve different denominations subscribed to the service, including Presbyterian, Baptist, United Church of Christ, and Episcopal churches.

These message boards became known as the Wayside Community Pulpit, reaching as many as three million readers, according to a 1924 poll. During the subscription's early conception, Saunderson composed each weekly message. When the American Unitarian Association picked up on Saunderson's idea, it culled quotations from the world's literature, and, in 1956, expanded their scope to include contributions from ministers and laypersons.

Up to just recently, our Leominster church has been utilizing wayside sayings collected and printed up by the UU Association. They are inspirational and thought provoking and most are quotes from well known figures. In the last half year or so, our Growth and Vitality Committee has been experimenting with creating our own signs, using sayings we find on the internet or other sources, including those that are self-created. We hoped that using messages that might be more timely and culturally relevant to our community might draw more attention and foster more of a community presence for our church.

So we are now reaching out to our congregation and asking you to come up with some short catchy sayings that we can have printed out and displayed (the committee will take care of printing up your sayings). The sayings can be humorous, thought-provoking, seasonal in nature, relevant to current world or community issues, etc. etc. but they must be relatively short and in keeping with our UU principles and values.

Please submit your ideas to Diane O'Hare or any member of the Growth and Vitality committee.