

First Church Vision

January 2017

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

As I approach my last month as the called and settled minister at First Church in Leominster it is impossible not to think of “lasts”. For example: this is my last news-letter column and as I contemplate what to say it is hard. Thank you, I appreciate you all, I have been honored to serve, all seem less than what I want to convey. The warmth, the community, the hard very hard work that we have done together are just part of the thoughts I have as I make this transition.

I think the last that hit me pretty hard was the Thanksgiving corn bread and cider communion. This is a ceremony I wrote and introduced and as far as I know it is uniquely ours. I was sharing with someone from Andover Newton Theological School about this: she asked what the deeper purpose of that ritual was. I told her that because Johnny Chapman, Johnny Appleseed, had been born in Leominster and christened in the second meeting house of First Church, it had a rich meaning for us. Cider was the one food product that could assure the survival of a family during the first years of their homesteading. And corn bread was a staple that could be made with ingredients put aside from the harvest. Thus for me the corn bread and cider communion represents our ability to survive and make due sometimes with just the basics. As I approach the Christmas Eve service, I am reminded of so many of the young people who passed through these doors in my years here. It was back in 1999, that Kirsty Johnson our long time Religious Educator retired. We have struggled with RE since then; having a brief upswing with Eddie Good but I have regrets that we could never get back this part of our church life. However, on Christmas Eve when we decorate the Crèche we all become like little children for a brief moment. This is another last that I will miss dearly.

The Monday before Christmas week, the Ladies Benevolent Society met at my home. We had a wonderful time, singing, laughing and sharing. After they left I went outside and stood in the back yard for a few minutes. As I was standing and looking up, I thought of Rev. John Papandrew, who had lived in the home where I now do. He once wrote about waking up fretful and anxious in the middle of the night, but after walking outside as he looked up and saw all the stars he felt a certain peace and calmness when he realized how vast the universe is and how infinite peace and love are. This was a comforting thought as I reflect back on the past and the future of all the ministers who have served First Church Unitarian Universalist of Leominster and as I come to terms with the infinite love and peace in the universe. It is comforting to know that I serve in a long line of fine and honored ministers stretching back to 1743 and it is comforting to know that I am only one in the line of ministers who will continue to serve this marvelous community. You are and can be the heart of Leominster’s center; don’t lose that. Look up at the stars over the Common and feel the rich history, the warmth of community, the hope for the future and most of all love one another without reservation.

Enjoy life and each other,

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

- ◆ “Notes from Parish Committee”
- ◆ “MLK Celebration”
- ◆ “Invitation From the Members of the Greater Leominster Interfaith Clergy”
- ◆ “Changes in Our Newsletter”

Contacts:

Church Office:
1stchurchoffice@verizon.net (978) 537-0310 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

Jan 1st: "Labyrinth service in rear sanctuary."

Jan 8th: "Keeping our balance in Challenging times."

Jan 15th: "Martin Luther King Jr. – Strength and Courage."

Jan 22nd: "Ceremony of conferring Minister Emerita upon Rev Susan. Worship and Ceremony."

Jan 29th: "Saying So Long – I wish you well."



Notes from the Parish Committee

Our December meeting focused on revising the by-laws of the church, clarifying the language that had been in place for many years. We went line by line, article by article really looking at what we were trying to say in each section. The by-laws needed a lot of updating so be ready to review and vote on them during our May Bi-Annual meeting.

We also touched on the need to update our Building Use Policy and Procedures. We had a number of building use policy examples from other churches of various denominations for reference. We also pulled out all the various policy documents that we had at First Church that will be combined, updated and rewritten. The Parish Committee went home with "homework" to review all the examples and current documents in preparation for the next meeting in January where we will focus on our lovely church building itself.

As you many know, Rev Susan has been looking after our building and knowing the "secret ins and outs" of the building. We need to understand what these are and how to look after them. Therefore on our next Parish Committee meeting, **January 11th** at 6:30 to 7:00pm, we will have a Walk Through to make a list of things that need to be looked after. Please consider coming for the 30 min session. The more of us who are knowledgeable in our building the better off we will be. *Betsy*

Transitional Ministry Update

We have communicated with 3 interested individuals for our transitional ministry position. All have asked for a package of information about our congregation, our goals we want to accomplish, our worship services and our budget as well as information on the surrounding community of Leominster. The Transitional Ministry Committee met in late December to go over terms of a contract showing the salary and benefits package we are offering and to design a memo of understanding between a transitional minister and the Congregation of the duties to be performed. The packages are currently being finalized and will be sent out early January. We are also asking for copies of sermons from the interested individuals to review. We are excited about what we know about the applicants, their credentials and experience. If you have any specific questions, please let Betsy Moran (bam36uu@gmail.com), Lynn Radford, Stephanie Trudel or Claire Griffith know. If you would like to ask a question anonymously, please drop your question in the collection plate at church on any Sunday morning or send a note to the office at 15 West St, Leominster MA 01453

Building Use

After January 29th be sure to notify Lenore Scully if you are using the building for any purpose. She is responsible for the building usage management and needs to know when and if the building is being used. The Parish Committee, with Rev Susan and Lenore are revamping building use policies and procedures. If you have any questions or issues you wish to have addressed about the building be in touch with Betsy Moran and or any member of the Parish Committee and Lenore Scully in the office. If there are maintenance issues that need to be addressed put a note in the office or communicate with Betsy. One of the tasks that I have taken on over the last years has been building management. Once I am retired it will be crucial that the office be informed of **any and all needs**. They should be in writing to Lenore Scully she will then make decisions and be in communication with Betsy Moran as determined.

Toys for Tots 2016

Thank you to all for your generosity and help with Toys for Tots we were able to give over 165 families gifts and food for the holidays. Many hands made light work and the need is great and we helped in meaningful ways.

On **January 3rd** at 6:00 Rev Susan will be going to City Hall to offer benediction words at the Inauguration ceremony for all elected city officers and the Mayor.

On **January 4th** the Committee on Worship will meet at 5:00 to plan the next few weeks of services and to think beyond January 29th.

We have been having a rash of petty thefts lately, food from the refrigerator and freezer, toys from Grains and Greens, paper goods and a handbag. I am not really sure what else has gone missing but please be vigilant when you are in the building and make sure you lock all the doors and do a quick building check before you leave.

If you have not returned your pledge form please do so as soon as possible so that the Parish Committee can have an accurate record for the new year.

Soup with Susan

Jan. 18, 2017

In September of 1993 I initiated the Soup with Susan monthly gatherings. Most often Ron makes a homemade vegetarian soup and I make bread and a dessert. I hope you will find time to join us for the final one of my ministry with you in January 2017.



You are cordially invited to attend the:

18th Annual Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration Monday, January 16, 2017 First Church Unitarian Universalist 15 West Street, Leominster, MA 11am ~ 2pm

Brunch 11:00am ~ 12:00pm \$12 in advance, \$15 at the door, \$40 max per family

Civil Rights landmarks and losses of 2016 will be recognized during the brunch. Please join us in fellowship!

Program 12:00pm ~ 2:00pm (free)

Throughout the free commemorative program local musicians will pay tribute through their music, to the tone and tenor of the time.

Welcome / Remarks : United States Congressman Jim McGovern; City of Leominster Mayor Dean Mazzarella; City of Fitchburg Mayor Steve DiNatale

Keynote Speaker: Rev. Dr. Sandras M. Barnes Educator, Activist, Theologian Rev. Dr. Sandras Barnes has a background in education as a teacher and teacher educator focusing on racism in education. Dr. Barnes holds a Bachelor's degree in Black Studies/Psychology from UMass/Boston, a Master's Degree in Counseling Education from Lesley College and a Ph.D. in Educational Studies from Lesley University. Rev. Dr. Barnes, an ordained minister, also holds a Master of Divinity from Andover Newton Theological Seminary in Newton, MA.

Angelita Santiago, a local civil rights activist, advocate and educator for more than 30 years, will be honored for her work on behalf of children, families and others needing assistance navigating school and community resources. A Leominster Spanish American board member, she has used her fluency in multiple Spanish dialects and English to help bridge communities.

Performance by: Leominster High School Hip Hop Culture Class members



Ladies Benevolent Society

Our first meeting of the Lady Bee's in the new year will be held on January 9th at 7:00 PM in the Lady Bee's room. We will discuss the success of the Holiday Stroll and the gifts given the youth of the 15 West Coffee House. The activity of the evening will be creating valentines to send out to veterans and others. All women members and friends of First Church are welcome. Refreshments will be served. Questions? See Claire on Sundays after church.

Growth & Vitality/Membership

The January Growth and Vitality/Membership Committee meeting will be held on Tuesday, January 3rd at 5:00 PM in the church office. This will be our last time to meet with Rev. Susan for this committee. I hope all members of this committee will make a special effort to attend. Friends and members of First Church are always welcome to attend. Questions? See Claire after church on Sunday.



Book Discussion Group

What: The Little Paris Bookshop by Nina George

Monsieur Perdu calls himself a literary apothecary. From his floating bookstore in a barge on the Seine, he prescribes novels for the hardships of life. Using his intuitive feel for the exact book a reader needs, Perdu mends broken hearts and souls. The only person he can't seem to heal through literature is himself; he's still haunted by heartbreak after his great love disappeared. She left him with only a letter, which he has never opened. After Perdu is finally tempted to read the letter, he hauls anchor and departs on a mission to the south of France, hoping to make peace with his loss and discover the end of the story.

When: Friday, January 27th at 7:30 pm

Where: First Church office



Birthdays

- Kayla Woodward.....Jan. 7
Hope Cordio.....Jan. 22
Jenny Flammia.....Jan. 24
Natalia Giordano.....Jan. 13
Marilyn Murphy.....Jan. 13
D'nece Lashley.....Jan. 16
Chris Uhlig.....Jan.16
Jennifer Scott.....Jan.18
Paula Murphy.....Jan. 21

Dates to Remember at a Glance

January

Jan 3rd: Growth and Vitality/Membership Committee at church at 5:00.

Jan 3rd: Inauguration ceremony at 6:00

Jan 4th: Committee on Worship at 5:00

Jan 9th: Lady Bee's meeting at 7 pm at Church

Jan 11th: Parish Committee meet at 6:00 for food and 6:30 for meeting

Jan 16th: MLK Jr. Day celebration

Jan 18th: Cakes for the Queen of Heaven

Jan 18th: Soup with Susan at noon

Jan 20th: Interfaith Community Gathering at 7 pm. Gather first at First Church at 6

Jan 27th: Book Discussion Group at 7:30

Changes in Our Newsletter

In the interest of Going Green and reducing our dependency on paper we would like to transfer over to a primarily emailed newsletter. Many people currently receive a paper copy and an emailed version. We realize that several current newsletter recipients do not have or are uncomfortable with email. For these people, we will print a limited number of hardcopies for postal mail. Right now we physically print and mail several hundred paper copies. We could reduce our carbon footprint and save money by going to an electronic version. In addition, we could enhance our recently revamped newsletter with more color pictures and photos. We would also not be constrained by size of the newsletter and be able to offer more relevant content. There are many benefits of going primarily to email. We are targeting April's newsletter to be delivered primarily by email.

If you need to receive a hardcopy of the newsletter, please call the office (978 537-0310) and let us know. If you wish to receive the newsletter via email and don't already, please email the office at 1stchurchoffice@verizon.net to let us know.



Interfaith Community Gathering

A time of reflection and prayer on Inauguration evening

January 20, Friday 7:00 p.m.

At the Congregation Agudat Achim
268 Washington St., Leominster, MA 01453
978-534-6121

**Unity ☑ Love ☑ Respect ☑ Diversity
Healing ☑ Hope ☑ Safety ☑ Connection**

In response to the proliferation of hate, divisiveness and fear of differences in our country and in our state, the Leominster Area Interfaith Clergy invites you to a special evening of Prayer and Reflection. We are coming together at this pivotal moment in our country to demonstrate and communicate our shared values and ideals.

We will gather at 7:00 for fellowship and at 7:30 to approx. 8:30 we will go into sanctuary for a program of readings, meditation, music dialogue messages, and the creation of a love scroll.

Clergy will include Rabba Kaya Stern-Kaufman, Rev. Karen Nell Smith, Rev. Keith Alderman, Father Bob Bruso, Rev. Susan Suchocki Brown, Bashir Mahmud and family. Other clergy are being invited and will be announced as we get confirmation. All they need for fellowship is for us to bring coffee. We may even bring a can or bag of coffee for them to use and make there.

ALL ARE WELCOME

In addition to the above, on Jan 20th members of FCUU will gather at 6:00 at the church, share food and time of being together in our community before we go over to the synagogue for a time of music, prayers, sharing and words of hope and support. Upstairs in fellowship room.

Adult Religious Education

Cakes for the Queen of Heaven will have its next monthly gathering on Wed. Jan 18 from 10:00-noon. Discussion of the 1987 classic, *The Chalice and the Blade* by Riane Eisler will continue (chapters 3 *&4).

*Spoiler alert: it looks like the peaceful "partnership" culture of Crete may very well fall!