



First Church Vision

March 2018

Reverend Bruce Taylor, Minister
Lauren Soucy, Choir Director
Jesse Blackman, Musician
Reverend Dr. Susan Suchocki Brown, Minister Emerita

Working toward a peaceful and just world, guided by Love

From Our Minister

Love Resists is an initiative by the Unitarian Universalist Association and the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee to join in solidarity with communities at risk: immigrant families facing separation by deportation; religious and ethnic groups threatened by a political and cultural climate of fear and bigotry. Over the past few months, *Love Resists* has held a series of webinars to explore ways in which congregations can reach out to form effective partnerships with such communities. Several of our members have attended these webinars, which offer a useful model for planning and implementing social action of many kinds.

In putting partnership ahead of problem-fixing, *Love Resists* inverts the traditional liberal strategy of talking amongst ourselves, identifying a solution, and bringing our agenda to the affected group. Instead, we take our cues from the people who have been at the receiving end of injustice, who have been working from day to day and year to year to change the situation. They, not we, are the experts. As a congregation living into our purpose, we seek to establish connections with local groups in order to discern *with them* how we can be of good use.

Collaborations like this don't just happen overnight. They are based on mutual trust which develops as we gain experience working together, starting perhaps with modest goals. So that when push comes to shove, our partners will know that they can depend on us, and in what ways. Over time, we become part of a larger network with a much greater capacity to effect change than we could ever hope to accomplish on our own.

Impetus for social action is not handed down by the UUA or by our Parish Committee. It comes from congregation members. We begin by developing our awareness of the injustices and unmet needs in our local area. We consider who we may be willing to stand with, and the gifts and capabilities we have to offer. We identify a core team willing to commit to the work. In effect, the congregation commissions this team for a specific purpose, and provides needed support (in terms of finances, logistics, public relations, and volunteers).

One important aspect of the process is its accountability, both to the congregation and to the group(s) we partner with. On a regular basis, we evaluate our progress. We ask our partners for feedback on the effectiveness of our partnership with them. The work never proceeds auto-pilot: after an agreed length of time we evaluate: should this project continue? Be discontinued? Or evolve into something different? The world changes quickly; we don't have the luxury of becoming entrenched.

Love Resists addresses multiple dimensions of social action – service, education and advocacy – providing different ways for church members to participate according to their abilities and desires. Each of these dimensions provides an avenue for spiritual growth. At the end of the day, it's our fusion of spirituality with action that distinguishes us from a social club or a service organization.

You are invited to participate in a brunch and congregational discussion on March 11, following the Sunday service. The purpose of this gathering will be to brainstorm ways in which we can helpfully engage the surrounding community, and to identify at least one specific issue to direct our focus. We will consider questions such as the following: What do we see happening in our community that demands a response from us? Who is being pushed out, marginalized, even criminalized? What sacrifices would we make, what risks would we take, to stand with them? Are there existing advocacy or service organizations we can partner with? Are there members in our congregation who already have connections with these groups?

This is deeply theological work: to discern what we are called to do, and why. Our conversation on March 11 will provide a starting point for focused, covenanted action at the nexus of spiritual development and social action.

In faith,

Rev. Bruce Taylor



Upcoming Worship Dates and Sermon Topics



March 4th: “Famous UU Women”, Worship Team

March 11th: “The Necessity of Friendship”, Rev. Bruce Taylor

March 18th: Guest Minister, Rev. Lisa Perry-Wood “A Revolution of Tenderness”

March 25th: “Easter, Passover and the Memory of Liberation”, Rev. Bruce Taylor

Notes from the Parish Committee



The Parish Committee has been spending some time looking inward to look outward into the Leominster Community. We, as a congregation, are a vibrant group of people who have so much to give to others and so much desire to get “out there” and become involved. The questions we are examining are what our goals are in this outward focused effort and where to concentrate our energies.

Several members of First Church are asking for a social justice effort on the part of the church. We are, as a group, quite skilled in supporting one another within the congregation. We need and want to now look beyond our walls and see what we can do in our community. The Parish Committee can probably come up with some ideas, but we feel the real ideas and drive to make a difference comes from all of us. To this end, we would like to have a brunch on **March 11th** after the service to discuss what kind of outreach opportunities we would like to investigate and become involved in. Rev. Bruce’s opening words in this newsletter eloquently describe the *Love Resists* initiative happening now in several communities served by UU churches. The model is to partner with an existing group or groups, to become an active, willing participant in their work. So, we ask to come to the **March 11th Sunday Brunch** with pot-luck food and, more importantly, suggestions about groups in the greater Leominster community that we may become involved with. We’ll brainstorm to list our ideas and then select one or two who we can contact to ask how we can support their own goals and mission with our efforts and our energies. So, **March 11th**, come with ideas and your appetite!

On February 25th the Parish Committee along with the Membership-Growth and Vitality Committee welcomed Eddie Goodwin as a new member of First Church. It is such a joy to have Eddie join us with his energy and great ideas. We look forward to hearing his thoughts as we all travel our journeys together.

On the operational side of things, the Parish and Buildings and Grounds Committee have formed a working group to re-evaluate and update our building use policies to care for our lovely building and still open our doors to the community. A policy will let those who use our building know how we wish to have our building and facilities treated and maintained. If anyone has any comments or questions around a building use policy or wish to serve on the working group, please contact Betsy at bam36uu@gmail.com.

Until next time..... Betsy

“The Necessity of Friendship”

March 11th

Rev. Bruce Taylor

The word ‘friend’ covers a multitude of meanings, ranging from a connection in social media (just a screen tap or mouse-click away) to a lifelong union of kindred souls. This Sunday, we consider the significance of friendship in its many forms, and how the virtues of friendship can inform all of our relationships, including with ourselves.

“A Revolution of Tenderness”

March 18th

Rev. Lisa Perry-Wood

Last Spring, in a surprise TED2017 talk, Pope Francis called on his audience, some of the most powerful science and technology innovation leaders, for a “revolution of tenderness” to sweep through all countries, changing workplaces and communities, and shifting the balance of power in the world. What might this revolution even look like? How might our lives, relationships and institutions look different with more tenderness, for ourselves and for everyone?

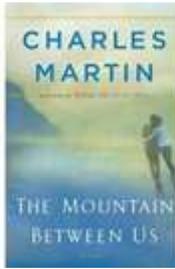
“Easter, Passover and the Memory of Liberation”

March 25th

Rev. Bruce Taylor

Easter and Passover draw attention to the connections between Christianity and Judaism, two faiths that represent a significant part of our Unitarian Universalist heritage. Today’s sermon considers liberation as a common thread that sustains faith communities in the present and fuels a powerful vision of the future.

**March Book Group meeting Friday March 23, 2018 at
7:30pm in church office**



**The Mountain Between Us
by Charles Martin**

Stranded in a frigid mountain wilderness after a plane crash, a gifted surgeon and a young magazine writer are forced to rely on each other for survival while confronting painful truths about their personal lives.



**March 11th, Don't Forget !!
Daylight Savings time, Set your clocks ahead!!**



**March 11th Sunday Brunch
For Social Action**

On **March 11th** there will be a Potluck brunch after the service. Please bring a favorite dish to share and also some suggestions about groups in the greater Leominster community that we may become involved with. We'll brainstorm to list our ideas and then select one or two who we can contact to ask how we can support their own goals and mission with our efforts and our energies. Hope to see you there!!

Ladies Benevolent Society



The Lady Bee's will be meeting on Monday **March 12th** at 7:00 pm at First Church. We have decided we would like to do something for the community. So we will be making care packages consisting of foods that don't require cooking for those individuals who do not have access to a kitchen. We will also make packages with personal body care products. We will be celebrating March birthdays of our members. Questions? Please contact Chris at (978) 534-6488 or see Betsy at church on Sunday.

**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

Contacts:

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

Minister: Rev. Bruce C. Taylor
minister@firstchurchuu.org

Administrator: Lenore Scully
1stchurchoffice@verizon.net

Newsletter: Chris Uhlig
cauhlig2002@yahoo.com

Web/Emailing: Betsy Moran
bam36uu@gmail.com

Attention!!

Newsletter via E-Mail

We are no longer doing a hardcopy bulk mailing. If you would like to continue receiving a copy or know someone who would like a copy, please contact the office and let us know your email address. Contact Lenore at 1stchurchoffice@verizon.net Subject: add to newsletter email

If you need a hard copy please call the office and give Lenore your address.

Newsletter Contributions

If you want to contribute anything for April's newsletter, please send it to cauhlig2002@yahoo.com by **March 18th.**

Update on the Promise and Practice Campaign

In October 2016, the UUA Board of Trustees made a commitment to build a \$5.3 million endowment for Black Lives of Unitarian Universalism (BLUU), an organizing collective by leaders of color who are leveraging their experience with Black Lives Matter and anti-racism work within our Association to uproot racism and strengthen the leadership and participation of people of color.

The Promise and Practice campaign has invited congregations to be part of this historic commitment by holding a special worship service and raising funds. BLUU's endowment will be created over a period of several years, drawing on funds from the UUA endowment (with \$1.3 million provided to date) and funds raised by congregations. In the current year, two long-time UUs, Brad and Julie Bradburd, have pledged \$1 million to match congregations which raise at least \$10 per member. For our congregation this represents \$370, in addition to our budgeted contribution to the Annual Program Fund.

Our Parish Committee and Rev. Taylor agreed to take part in the campaign, designating February 18 as Practice and Promise Sunday. Paula Murphy, Stephanie Trudel and Betsy Moran led the Sunday service, giving a central place to the voices and perspectives of people of color within our progressive movement. The offering that was received (unless designated otherwise) was earmarked for the Promise and Practice Campaign.

We raised \$50 on Promise and Practice Sunday. Our goal is to meet or exceed the congregational pledge of \$370 no later than June 30, 2018. During Sunday services in March through June, we will continue to receive donations from those who wish to contribute. On one Sunday in each of those months, we will donate the undesignated collection to the Promise and Practice Campaign towards reaching our goal.

Message from Rev. Bruce on Availability and Office Hours

I respond promptly to email and messages on my cell phone (603-233-3554) between 9:00am and 9:00pm, Tuesday through Sunday. (Monday is my Sabbath). For pastoral emergencies, please call me anytime and I will respond as soon as I can. In March, I plan to be in the office on the following days.

Wednesdays 3/7, 3/14, 3/21 and 3/28 from 10:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M.

Thursdays 3/1, 3/8, 3/15 and 3/22 from 3:00 P.M. to 6:00 P.M.;

available for Thursday evening meetings as scheduled

Creating Vibrant, Lay-Led Worship Services – Part One Sunday, March 25 at 12:15 in the Sanctuary

Please attend this training if you're interested in leading a worship service, solo or in collaboration with other church members, or if you're just plain curious! We will explore:

The emotional arc of an effective worship service, the significance of its different parts, and the transitions between them.

Strategies for selecting music and readings to support (or stand in tension with) the theme and mood of the service.

Basic mechanics of microphones, candles, and congregational participation.

This is the first in a series of training sessions for lay worship leaders at First Church Leominster and neighboring UU churches. Subsequent sessions (to be scheduled in coming months) will focus on the process of creating a sermon, and the arts of public speaking and sermon delivery.



Dates to Remember at a Glance

March

March 1: Membership Committee at 6:30pm

March 6: Worship Committee at 7:00pm

March 11: *Special Potluck* after service.

March 12: Lady B's meeting at 7:00pm

March 15: Parish Committee at 6:30pm

March 21: LUUnch Box at 12:00pm

March 23: Book Discussion Group at

7:30pm

March 25: Lay-Led Worship Training, part one at 12:15pm



Sharing the Collection Plate For March

On **March 11th**, any cash that is collected separate of designated pledge money goes towards the *Promise and Practice Campaign* goal of \$370 by June 30 2018



March Birthdays

David Vaillette.....March 9

Cicely Carter.....March 14

Rachel Ardinger.....March 24

Tristan Shapiro.....March 29



Community LUUnch Box March 21, 2018

Please join us on **March 21st** for the LUUnchBox from 12 – 1pm. There will be soup, bread, dessert and plenty of conversation and friendly fellowship. All are welcome. Invite your neighbors and friends to come with you.