



First Church Vision

April 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

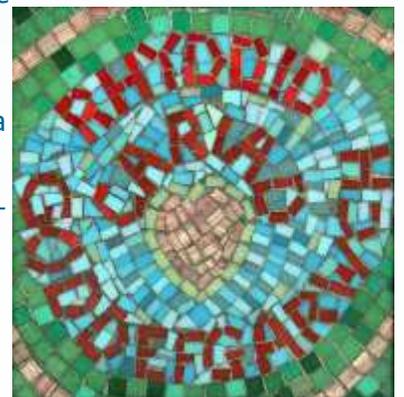
From Our Minister



Several years ago, Loretta and I traveled to Wales, a country of unsurpassed natural beauty: rolling green hills that never stop; high cliffs overlooking churning waves; mountains reaching down to the sea. The country is rich with historical sites ancient, medieval and modern. We visited burial chambers and sacred stones erected in Neolithic times. We saw the “Iron Ring” of English castles built by Edward I to exert his control over the rugged landscape. We stood on the battlements of Dolwyddelan Castle, stronghold of Llewellyn, last in the line of sovereign princes of Wales who resisted English domination. We descended deep into the “Big Pit” at Blaenavon, one of the historic coal mines which yielded wealth to its owners and a meager living to the men, women and children who worked long hours under dangerous conditions at the cost of their health and longevity, but never gave up their essential sense of worth and dignity. It was this consciousness which made Wales a hotbed of religious dissent against the established Church.

Traveling in Wales, I didn’t expect to be thinking about church. Then, in the coastal town of Aberaeron in Ceredigion, I just happened to pick up a flyer titled “The Unitarian Trail”. To my surprise, I learned that this region has had a strong Unitarian presence for centuries. Beginning in the late 1600s, it was settled by dissenting Protestants who stood for religious freedom, resisting control by the Church of England. Some of their ministers came to preach ideas which we now understand as Unitarian, speaking out against doctrines of predestination and the Trinity, in favor of free will and the idea that truth is one.

Eventually, thirteen Unitarian chapels were established and continue to the present day. The area was called *Y Smotyn Du* (the Black Spot) by 19th-century Methodist leaders because its people were so resistant to conventional Christian teaching. Loretta and I visited several of these chapels. My favorite is Capel y Groes which was built in 1802. Although its architecture resembles any number of local Protestant churches, there are details that strike a familiar chord with this American UU. The flaming chalice is conspicuously displayed, along with colorful mosaics expressing liberal religious themes of *rhyddid, cariad, goddefgarwch* - freedom, love, tolerance.



It is good to know that we are not alone. Free faith has arisen and will continue to rise in diverse places and historical moments. Sometimes the connections between these faith communities are visible. Often they are hidden underground. Whether we know it or not, we draw strength from these connections which extend across national boundaries and across centuries. We take part in this larger religious movement whenever we take up the perennial ideals of freedom, love and tolerance, and strive to make them real in our time and place.

In faith, Rev. Bruce Taylor

Upcoming Worship Dates and Sermon Topics



April 1st: “The Fool’s Journey “, Rabbi Yaakov “Trek” Reef

April 8th: “The Transient and the Permanent ”, Rev. Bruce Taylor

April 15th: Safari Sunday; no service at First Church

April 22nd: “The Black Spot ”, Rev. Bruce Taylor

April 29th: “A young woman’s story of ending the cycle of trauma and reclaiming her voice“, Stephanie Valente

Notes from the Parish Committee



In separate meetings, both the Parish Committee and the Membership/Growth and Vitality Committee have been engaged in discussions about forming a Social Justice Team. I use the word “Team” here because it signifies action and cohesiveness. I sincerely believe that team is the best word to describe us and our efforts. One thing that we are is cohesive and the second thing is that once we make up our mind to do something, we mobilize and act. We have so much energy and the desire to give to the community and help those in need. To be effective we need to examine our strengths and to narrow our focus.

At our congregational brunch in March we talked about how we can participate in the *Love Resists* movement of social action and we discussed a couple of ideas for a Social Justice Team to think about. Mickey Guzman talked to us about the Spanish American Center and all the great activities and services offered to Leominster and surrounding towns whether one is of Spanish heritage or not. Those of us gathered for the brunch talked about what a relationship with the Spanish American Center would look like and what can we members of First Church bring to the relationship. We went around the table and talked about our strengths and personal gifts we can offer. These included plain old elbow grease and people power to help accomplish tasks, social media and web help (posting events and information on each other’s websites), helping with job skills and writing, public speaking and working with senior citizens. Again, this is a short list of things we can bring to the table.

So, our next step is to set up an introductory meeting with the leadership of the Spanish American Center to share some ideas of the kinds of things we could do together to further the missions and visions of both our organizations. We hope to arrange this meeting in early April. I urge you to visit the Center’s website at <http://www.spanishamericancenter.org/>.

Until next time..... Betsy

“The Fool’s Journey ”

April 1st

Rabbi Yaakov “Trek” Reef

What do Easter, Passover, and April Fool’s Day have to teach us about this pilgrims’ sojourn we call life? Join us as we turn the world upside down to seek some bit of truth along our way.

“The Transient and the Permanent”

April 8th

Rev. Bruce Taylor

Most Americans know Theodore Parker’s words, even if they don’t know his name, through the speeches of Lincoln, King, and Obama. As Unitarian Universalists we honor Parker as one of our major prophets, a passionate abolitionist and a public intellectual in the Transcendentalist movement. Today, we will use Parker’s disruptive sermon titled “The Transient and the Permanent in Christianity” as a starting point to consider what is of lasting value in our faith tradition, as distinguished from its time-bound expressions.

“The Black Spot ”

April 22nd

Rev. Bruce Taylor

Traveling in Wales, I was surprised to learn that there are 13 Unitarian chapels clustered within a 20-mile radius in the county of Ceredigion. Today’s sermon will trace the development of Unitarianism in Wales, and explore connections with the Unitarian Universalist movement in our own country.

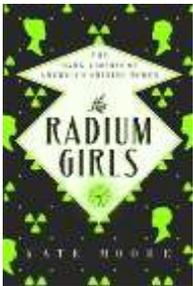
Biography of Rabbi Yaakov "Trek" Reef

Rabbi Yaakov "Trek" Reef walks in the world as a spiritual teacher and is a regionally recognized speaker, serving as a frequent guest in the pulpit at synagogues, churches, and meeting houses throughout the Northeast.

He has also led workshops and classes for the Adamah Farm Fellowship, Star Island Natural History Conference, Elat Chayyim Center for Jewish Spirituality, Keshet Boston, Hillel House at Boston University, and Seaside Yoga Retreat Center in Oregon.

For three years, Trek served as a retreat director and the program manager at the Isabella Freedman Jewish Retreat Center in Falls Village, Connecticut. In 2016, he completed a pilgrimage along the storied Appalachian Trail, taking approximately five million steps over 2,189.1 miles between Georgia and Maine to find a deeper connection to the awe-inspiring natural world.

April Book Group meeting Friday April 27, 2018 at 7:30pm in church office



The Radium Girls: The Dark Story of America's Shining Women by Kate Moore

As World War I raged across the globe, hundreds of young women toiled away at the radium-dial factories, where they painted clock faces with a mysterious new substance called radium. Assured by their bosses that the luminous material was safe, the women themselves shone brightly in the dark, covered from head to toe with the glowing dust. With such a coveted job, these "shining girls" were considered the luckiest alive--until they began to fall mysteriously ill. As the fatal poison of the radium took hold, they found themselves embroiled in one of America's biggest scandals and a groundbreaking battle for workers' rights. The Radium Girls explores the strength of extraordinary women in the face of almost impossible circumstances and the astonishing legacy they left behind.

Grains and Greens

Thanks to the Lady Benevolent Society, we now have food care packages for those people who do not have access to a kitchen. We also have packages of personal care products. Both of these are located in a black bin in the office.

Ladies Benevolent Society



The Lady Bee's will be meeting on Monday **April 9th** at 7:00 pm at First Church. During February's meeting, we decided to work on community projects and also on making our church beautiful. This next meeting, we will be organizing our two storage cabinets and the altar-cloths closet to help determine what we need to beautify the church. We will be celebrating April 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

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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 May's newsletter, please send it to cauhlig2002@yahoo.com by **April 18th**.

Minister Availability and Office Hours

Dates to Remember at a Glance

April

- April 3:** Worship Committee at 7:00pm
 - April 4:** Membership Committee at 6:00pm
 - April 8:** Lay-Led Worship Training, part two at 12:15pm
 - April 9:** Lady B's meeting at 7:00pm
 - April 18:** LUUnch Box at 12:00pm
 - April 19:** Parish Committee at 6:30pm
 - April 27:** Book Discussion Group at 7:30pm
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Sharing the Collection Plate For April

On **April 8th**, any cash that is collected separate of designated pledge money goes towards the *Promise and Practice* Campaign goal of \$370 by June 30 2018



April Birthdays

- Jennifer Guiry.....April 2
- Rev. Tom Wintle....April 2
- Derek Kerswill.....April 5
- Donna Caruso.....April 5
- Lauren Soucy.....April 7
- Patty Lancey.....April 7
- Rorie Good.....April 9
- Joan Damon.....April 13
- Sarah Paquette.....April 14
- Rev. Susan.....April 21
- Eddie Good.....April 22



Community LUUnch Box April 18, 2018

Please join us on **April 18th** 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.

I respond promptly to emails and cell phone messages (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. From Tuesday 4/10 through Thursday 4/12, I will be on retreat with the Clara Barton and Massachusetts Bay chapters of the UU Ministers Association. From Sunday afternoon 4/22 through Friday 4/27, I will be attending the final intensive session of the Spiritual Guidance program at Rowe Center. During these times, I will check my email and phone messages frequently and respond to urgent matters.

I will be in the office on the following days:

Wednesdays 4/4 and 4/18 from 10:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M.

Thursdays 4/5 and 4/19 from 3:00 P.M. to 6:00 P.M.

Since these hours may change due to unforeseen circumstances, I encourage you to call ahead.



Thanks to June Cardone and friends who made seven blankets for the Linus Project

Creating Vibrant, Lay-Led Worship Services – Part Two Sunday, April 8 at 12:15 in the Sanctuary

“The true preacher can be known by this, that he deals out to the people his life – life passed through the fire of thought”. – Ralph Waldo Emerson



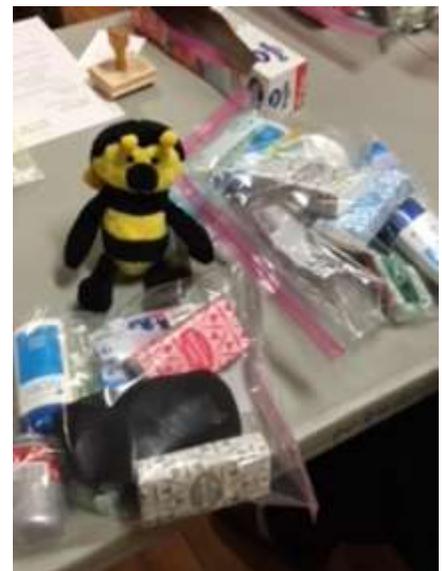
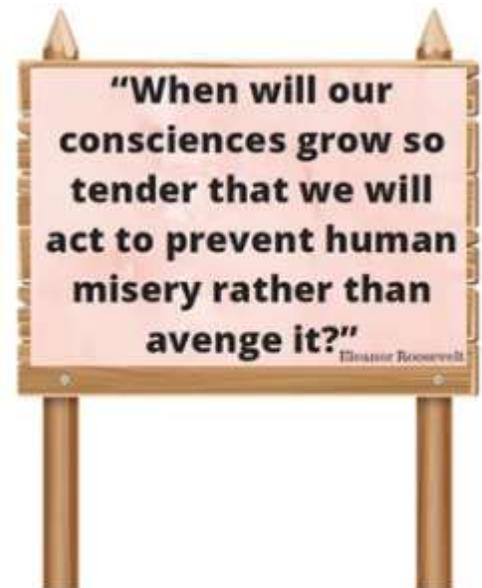
Please attend this training if you're interested in leading a worship service, solo or in collaboration with other church members, or if you're just plain curious! This April 8 session will focus on the process of crafting a sermon, in ways that can be spiritually enriching for you as well as the people who hear you. We will discuss ways of choosing a topic, finding relevant information, the uses of an outline or performance script, and – most important – the work of theological reflection by which we transform facts and ideas into meaning.

Future sessions of this series (to be scheduled in May and June) will concern focus on sermon delivery and public speaking.



Spring has arrived at First Church

First Church Vision
Wayside Pulpit



Lady B's making care packages of non-kitchen food and personal care products during March's meeting.

