



First Church Vision

June 2018

Reverend Bruce Taylor, Minister
Reverend Dr. Susan Suchocki Brown, Minister Emerita

Working toward a peaceful and just world, guided by Love

From Our Minister

Metaphors provide a way to speak about the unknown in terms of what we do know. They provide a powerful alternative to the abstract concepts of theology or doctrine, rooted in what we can see and touch. For me the most instructive metaphors have to do with the natural world. They provide language to speak about an immanent God: a creative force that comes from within, or within which we are embodied. As Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote, “The noblest ministry of nature is to stand as the apparition of God. It is the great organ through which the universal spirit speaks to the individual, and strives to lead the individual back to it”. (*Nature*, 1844).

The Interdependent Web is a powerful name for God. We can read the seventh principle as affirming the natural world which we are “part” of, but it goes deeper than that. It is within the interdependent web that we live and move and have our being. There is no distinction between nature and human nature unless we choose to create one, in our own minds.

The division between heaven and earth becomes less stark when envisioned as earth and sky: two worlds that touch and interpenetrate. We thrive on the edge of this rich boundary. As individuals we live in the world of light, a world of apparent separation and discontinuity. Meanwhile, below, we are always connected, where the life that gives rise to us is continually renewing itself.

Consider the lineage of our faith tradition. There are so many apparent gaps. Universalism and Unitarianism can be traced back to leaders in the early Christian church, often rejected as heretics. Unitarianism surfaced in Eastern Europe during the Reformation era, and later again in Great Britain, and later again in North America. I’m reminded of mushrooms in the forest: the mushrooms we see on the forest floor are not individual beings. They are the fruiting bodies of countless single-celled organisms (mycelia) that dwell beneath the ground creating, in effect, one large organism. The largest one discovered so far, in Oregon, covers 2,385 acres.

Mushrooms rise up overnight and shed their spores which scatter and grow. Individuals meet and fuse into long filaments (hyphae) that can exchange nutrients and chemical signals. Through this communication, the (collective) organism decides where to extend itself, or not; where and when to reproduce by sending up some fruiting bodies. The network as a whole adapts to the current situation, sending water and food where they are needed most, responding to attacks by predators, rebuilding injured sections, and strengthening pathways of communication.

A story like this is fascinating not only on its own terms, but as an intimation of what it is like to be (or to be part of) an immanent, relational God. It speaks of life’s continuity, ingenuity and strength.

As it turns out, there is a word in the Potawatomi language for this quality of resurgence: *Puhpowee* means, literally, “the force that causes mushrooms to push up from the earth overnight”. May this rising be strong in us, as part of an adaptive, resilient faith tradition.

In faith,

Rev. Bruce Taylor





Upcoming Worship Dates and Sermon Topics

June 3rd: “Mind the Gap”, Rev. Bruce Taylor

June 10th: “The Fire of Commitment”, Stephanie Trudel

June 17th: “Prayers for Today and for Tomorrow” and Flower Communion, Rev. Bruce Taylor

Notes from the Parish Committee

Hello and happy June! Summer break is almost here..... I'll miss seeing everyone, but I think we need a much-deserved break to rest and reflect on the past year.



The Parish Committee is working on how to manage the needed repairs and maintenance of our lovely church building. It is heavily used and sees its fair share of wear and tear. Several meetings have been taking place with the Buildings & Grounds Committee and groups of building users to come to some common ground. A great example of sitting down and talking to understand each other's perspective.

At our last PC meeting in May, before our Spring Biannual Congregational meeting, we talked at length about the upcoming meeting and plans for the discussion portion of the meeting. We listed several questions we hoped to address during the exchange of views. We talked about questions such as how increasing membership, what that would look like and how to engage prospective interested people. We talked about the concept of shared ministry as opposed to the minister led model we've experienced in the past. We talked about asking what makes people come to church, what they like about it and what keeps them coming. Also, framing questions about our future, what do we want it to look like and how do we get there.

We opened our meeting on Sunday May 20th with a welcome and a covenant of how we were going to be with and relate to each other. We started by electing the slate of officers. I am happy to announce that we will be welcoming Christi Grausam to the Parish Committee at our June meeting. We will also be saying goodbye to Bob Soucy at the next meeting as Bob's term runs through the end of June. We thank him and greatly appreciate his many years of service on the Parish Committee. Bob, your sage wisdom will be missed. After the business portion of the meeting, we then got to our discussion. So many ideas came out of this meeting! I believe we were all impressed with the participation and the connection we all felt because of the discussion. Many people voiced concerns which they found were echoed by several others. I think we were all very honest with each other and listened deeply to everyone. I personally learned a lot about the needs and wishes of the congregational members who attended. We have had a challenging year from several perspectives and we had a chance to address what worked, what didn't work and what we want to see in the future. I think we all came away from the meeting with a lot to think about but also came away energized with new possibilities and potential. One idea that came out was to have a team of people who will meet to be a sort of "steering committee" made up of members of the congregation who will be tasked with working on our future image and direction. Please stay tuned for more information about this. If you are interested in participating on this team, please email me at bam36uu@gmail.com or betsy@firstchurchuu.org.

We need to keep the conversations flowing. We will continue to have frequent "circle discussions" so we can be sharing our goals and visions for the future of First Church; how can we get there; and what help and guidance we need along the way. We hope to keep the discussions going over the summer so as not to lose our momentum. We are not sure how this will take place. It will most likely involve food of some kind such as a Sunday brunch. We will be in touch by phone, text, email and our Facebook group to get the word out for summer brunches.

Have a wonderful summer everyone!

**“Mind the Gap”
June 3rd
Rev. Bruce Taylor**

Today's sermon develops a theology of what I call "the gap": that generative space between thought and action, between you and me, between the status quo and what will be. The gap is risky to cross, even riskier to ignore. For those willing to enter, it becomes the site of new life and new possibilities. Life is full of necessary gaps!

**“Prayers for Today and for
Tomorrow”
June 17th
Rev. Bruce Taylor**

For Unitarian Universalists, what is prayer? Given our theological diversity, this question could be the starting point for many sermons. Today we will focus on ways in which prayer can ground us deeply in the present, give voice to our struggles and hopes, and help us to embrace the future with open hearts. We will also mark the transition to summer with a Flower Communion.

Help Needed!

If you enjoy walking into a clean, tidy church every Sunday, please think carefully about how this comes to be. We no longer have a paid staff janitorial position as of the end of last calendar year. Since that time, the majority of janitorial work has been done by two extremely hard working volunteers, aided at times by the efforts of one or two other individuals. This is a bigger task than it appears because our building is host to groups that hold 22 weekly meetings at the church. The foot traffic through the building is high!

WE NEED YOUR HELP EVEN DURING THE SUMMER! If you could spare even 1-2 hours per week, at a time that suits you best to help with routine cleanup and checking, it would be extremely helpful. Helping in this way shows that the congregation cares about First Church, and is willing to do what it takes to keep things going. We are a community, and as such we must take responsibility to each other to help when needed. It is not fair that a few should shoulder a responsibility when the benefits are joined by the many. Stewardship of the church and its facilities is the shared responsibility of all members. Please consider helping out. If you can do so, please speak with Stephanie Trudel or Marilyn Murphy.

Charity Fundraiser "Hearts and Minds 4 Flora" running through July 25, 2018

Contact Lynn Radford for more info @ (978) 230-3809 or email to heartsandminds4flora@gmail.com

Hearts and Minds 4 Flora is an international fundraiser for Hearts and Minds UK, which provides care and entertainment for patients with dementia and also for gravely ill children.

Phyllis Logan (*Downton Abbey's* "Mrs. Hughes") is a celebrity spokesperson for Hearts and Minds UK and has graciously signed six items (DVDs, books, and a wine bag) to be raffled off. Six winners will be chosen from tickets earned through donations and purchases.

Please consider contributing to our cause! We accept outright donations, but are also selling a variety of handicrafts (including custom pet portraits, jewelry, coasters, scarves, and more) on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/heartsandminds4flora/>



RAFFLE ITEM
"Mrs. Hughes Faroese Adventure" shawl
(from a series of Downton Abbey inspired patterns)

Crochet; 50/50 cotton/acrylic

Entries are \$5 each or 5 for \$20!!

Approx. \$120 value

****ONLY 200 TICKETS AVAILABLE****

Drawing on June 30, 2018

50% of amount raised in ticket sales and donations will be matched and donated to Grains and Greens as a cash donation."

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:

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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 September's newsletter, please send it to cauhlig2002@yahoo.com by

August 18th.

Dates to Remember

June

June 14: Parish Committee at 6:30pm

August

August 5: Area UU Church Service 10am at the Lancaster UU Church

September

September 9: Ingathering Sunday and Water Communion



Sharing the Collection Plate

On **June 17th**, any cash that is collected separate of designated pledge money goes towards the *Promise and Practice Campaign* goal of \$370 by June 30 2018



Summer Birthdays

Benjamin Summers.....June 2
John McBee.....June 5
Judy Sacco.....June 9
June Cardone June 17
Noah Giordano.....June 18
Susan Hardenbrook.....June 19
Mary Jo Wojtusik.....June 29
Mark Moran.....June 30
Lynne Lockhart.....Aug.25

Ladies Benevolent Society



The Lady Bee's will enjoy some fun and sun at their summer pot-

luck party on Sunday, **July 29th**. During the summer we will gather items for our Johnny Appleseed Fair Raffle Baskets. Basket themes are children's and sports "Red Sox" and "Patriots". We will also be celebrating any summer birthdays of our members. Questions? Please contact Chris at cauhlig2002@yahoo.com or see Betsy at church on Sunday

Rev. Bruce's Availability and Office Hours

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.

I will be in the office on the following days this month:

Tuesday 6/5 from 3:00 to 6:00 P.M.

Thursday 6/7 from 3:00 to 6:00 P.M.

Wednesday 6/13 from 10:00 to 5:00 P.M.

Thursday 6/14 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.

I will be in Kansas City for General Assembly from June 19 through 24. My summer leave begins on **June 25 and ends on August 19**. For pastoral emergencies, please contact any member of the Parish Committee during this time. I have provided them with an emergency pastoral contact.



Church Checking Over The Summer

During the summer months, we normally conduct walk throughs of the church in the evenings to make sure all is well. We are typically looking for things like lights left on, unlocked doors etc. In the past, this has been almost the exclusive province of the Parish Committee. As the committee is somewhat smaller this year, we could use some help in this activity. If you feel that you are willing and able to help, please contact any member of the parish committee on or before our final meeting on Thursday, **June 14th**.

Joint Summer Service in Lancaster on Sunday, August 5 at 10:00 am

First Church Leominster UU has been invited to participate in an annual joint summer service of the Bolton, Harvard, Littleton, Lancaster, and Stow/Acton UU churches. The service will be in Lancaster at the First Church of Christ Unitarian, 725 Main Street (on the town green). The service is at 10:00AM on Sunday morning **August 5th**. Rev. Bob Johansen of Lancaster will lead worship with help from participating clergy on the theme "*Stronger Together: Finding Mutual Support, Inspiration and Common Purpose in These Challenging Times.*"

Kallin Johnson, Music Director of Lancaster, will direct the pick-up choir. All singers are welcome. Rehearsal begins at 8:30AM. The choir will sing a choral introit and anthem.

Children are welcome. Child care is available. However, in the summer, there are no Religious Education programs. Refreshments will be served after the service.



Lady B's Celebrating May Birthdays



Lady B's Working Hard on Linus Project Blankets!



"The thing to do, it seems to me, is to prepare yourself so you can be a rainbow in somebody else's cloud. Somebody who may not look like you. May not call God the same name you call God — if they call God at all. I may not dance your dances or speak your language. But be a blessing to somebody."
—Maya Angelou

First Church Vision Wayside Pulpit