



First Church Vision

November 2018

Working toward a peaceful and just world, guided by Love

From Our Minister

As you may know, this congregation has voted to accept a recommendation by the Parish Committee that First Church should make the transition to a lay-led model when my contract with you expires this coming August. If you attended the congregational meeting on October 14, you took part in this vote. I consider it a wise decision, financially first and foremost: First Church cannot continue spending down its endowment and hope to survive.

It's a wise decision, and a radical one. The word "radical" comes from *radix*, Latin for root. A lay-led church is totally consistent with the *root* assumption in Unitarian Universalism that the church *is* the congregation, and the congregation is *you*.

In recent months, I've spoken about "shared ministry" with the Parish Committee. Ministry is not simply what the minister does; it's what the congregation does, day in and day out, to live out its vision and espoused purpose. A preliminary step in shared ministry would be to divide and share the work and authority of ministry between the minister and elected lay leaders.

Ministry includes much more than leading Sunday services. It involves steering the boat, and everything it takes to keep the boat afloat. As the expression goes, it's time to "fish or cut bait" – not only within the Parish Committee but within the congregation's membership as a whole. Some of you have articulated the basic (and admirable) desire to come to church on Sunday. Others have voiced aspirations towards social justice or simple outreach toward the local community. The work of shared ministry is to prioritize and collaborate on these goals together.

My role towards you is clear, now. This current church year will be devoted to transitional work. We need, rather quickly, to define the steps that will take you from where you were before – a minister-led congregation with a settled minister for a quarter-century – to a shared ministry that includes not only elected lay leaders, but all members. Each one of you has a role to play as a volunteer, or follower, or leader-in-training. We cannot let the work of leadership fall on the shoulders of just a few people, again and again.

I encourage you to speak with me, or with any member of the Parish Committee, to share your thoughts on how to make this transition happen with results that will be sustainable over time.

A key step in the process will surely be to create a new covenant: not simply a verbal formula to recite on a Sunday morning, but a set of promises which the members of First Church sign on to. And continue to affirm, again and again, by living them out. Now is the time to consider the promises which make the difference, to keep this house of worship as a spiritual home; to create and sustain a group of people as a spiritual body.

In faith,

Rev. Bruce Taylor



Shared Ministry Team

The Rev. Bruce Taylor (Rev. Taylor), Minister

Betsy Moran: Congregation President and Parish Committee Chair

Worship Coordinator: Stephanie Trudel

Minister Emerita:

The Rev. Dr. Susan Suchocki Brown

Upcoming Worship Dates and Sermon Topics



Nov. 4th: "Giving Thanks and Remembering, or Remembering to Give Thanks", Rev. Taylor

Nov. 11th: "Celebrating Veterans"

Nov. 18th: "To Bless and Be Blessed", Rev. Taylor. *Pot Luck Brunch and discussion following up on the October congregational meeting*

Nov. 25th: "Giving Thanks"

Notes from the Parish Committee



November already? How did this year fly by? Does time really go by faster as you get older or is there just too much going on in our lives to realize that time is passing?

We need to pause, look around and give thanks for what we have and for one another. Not just because it is coming up on a holiday set

aside for consuming either dinner or black Friday shopping. We need to really stop and give thanks for what we have, the friends, family, church and all the things that are meaningful to each one of us individually or together. We need one another and we give thanks for this need.



I've been thinking as many of the Parish Committee members have of our congregational decision to proceed starting in September of 2019 as a lay led congregation. I've also been thinking of the covenant that we will be working on as a congregation this year with Rev. Taylor that will frame the way we will promise to be together in relation as a worshiping, spiritual and nurturing group of people. We have a lot of work to do this year to prepare for this transition. But I assure you it will be very meaningful work and I strongly believe we will learn a great deal about ourselves and each other in the process.

Covenants as nouns are promises, contracts, agreements and commitments. Things that I think of as concrete. But the verb, to covenant, is an action where we promise, or we agree, or we engage. These are relational images to me. When we covenant together, we are making a promise to one another to be there for each other and for the congregation. We are taking action and not standing by passively.

Action is called for in a lay led environment. Everyone has the responsibility as equal members to lead in aspects of congregational life. Does this mean that everyone is on a committee, no. What this does mean is that everyone participates in the life of the congregation to their ability. This could be taking part in a committee or team, or volunteering or making helpful and constructive suggestions. There are many ways we can be leaders for each other.

I think that we will find this to be good and holy work that we do for ourselves and for each other. And I for one look forward to working with all of you.

Until next time....



"Giving Thanks and Remembering, or Remembering to Give Thanks"

Nov. 4th

Rev. Taylor

with Cranberry Circle CUUPS

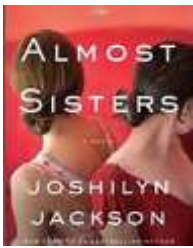
Cranberry Circle CUUPS of the First UU Society of Middleboro was organized in 2003 as a sister chapter of the New Bedford CUUPS. An eclectic group of Pagans whose mission is to educate about paganism and respect for Mother Earth, they observe the Sabbats and Esbats and have monthly classes on some aspect of Pagan beliefs ranging from herbs and crystals to drumming and healing.

"To Bless and Be Blessed"

Nov. 18th

Rev. Taylor

"We gather together to ask the Lord's blessing". So begins a Dutch hymn which has become closely associated with our Thanksgiving holiday. What does it mean to give or receive blessings? In today's service, we will recover the meanings behind this ancient practice, too often reduced to a perfunctory ritual or figure of speech. We shall consider ways to incorporate the language and practice of blessing into our lives as a way to give and receive kindness, to acknowledge grace and invoke powers of hope and healing.



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

The Almost Sisters by Joshilyn Jackson

With empathy, grace, humor, and piercing insight, the author pens a powerful, emotionally resonant novel of the South that confronts the truth about privilege, family, and the distinctions between perception and reality -the stories we tell ourselves about our origins and who we really are.

Guest at Your Table

The Guest at Your Table program is one of the longest running fundraising and educational programs of the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee, UUSC, that supports and teaches about human rights issues.

This year the theme of Guest at Your Table is Justice Across Borders. From the UUSC's website:

From the Northern Triangle of Central America, to deserts of Mexico and Arizona, to detention centers in the United States, the road away from danger is paved with injustices. Partnering with grassroots allies along the Central American migration trail, UUSC addresses root causes, supports migrants in transit, and protects the right to seek asylum. Join with UUSC for Guest at Your Table to learn more about UUSC's and our nation's involvement in Central America – historically and presently – and our courageous Migrant Justice partners.

Today, October 29, as I write this a caravan of near 3,500 migrants is currently at the Chiapas-Oaxaca border in southern Mexico. A second group of about 3,000 migrants is at the border crossing between Guatemala and Mexico.



Both groups are making their way to the southwest border of the United States. Federal officials have announced some 5,000 support troops are to be dispatched to the border to bolster the Department of Homeland Security and Customs and Border Protection.

This struggle of migrants is real and happening now. Our help is needed to support the work of social justice workers to help migrants navigate entry into the US for humanitarian reasons, legally. We ask you to take part in the Guest at Your Table program to remember those who are struggling to have a better and safer life and future for themselves and their families.

Collection boxes and a pamphlet containing the stories of 4 individuals who could be any one of the some 6,000 people on their way to the US looking for help, for asylum, for sanctuary are available in the church to take home, place on your dining room or kitchen table. These collection boxes represent the people you are helping through collection of loose change that you have in your pockets daily. Gather this money and donate it to the UUSC and help the Guests at Your Table.

We will be collecting money in our homes throughout the month of November. We will then be gathering the collection boxes and donations during the first two weeks in December. We will pool our donations and sent a single check from First Church to the UUSC. Please consider taking part and supporting Guest at Your Table.

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

November 18th.

Minister's Availability and Office Hours

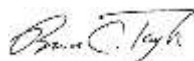
I respond promptly to emails and cell phone messages (603-233-3554) between 9:00am and 9:00pm, Tuesday through Sunday. (Monday is my Sabbath). For pastoral emergencies, please call me anytime and I will respond as soon as I can.

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

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

Thursdays Nov 1, Nov 8, Nov 15 and Nov 29 from 3:00 to 6:00 P.M.

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



Rev. Bruce Taylor



The Leominster Area Interfaith Clergy Association invites you to An Interfaith Community Gathering:

"Turning Our Thanks into Action"

November 18, 3:30 P.M.

at the Congregational Church of Christ, UCC,
583 Main Street, Leominster, MA

All are welcome.

A collection of canned and dry goods for Ginny's Helping Hand and donations to support the Montachusett Interfaith Hospitality Network and Native American Education will be taken.

Dates to Remember

November

- Nov. 5th:** Lady B's craft night 6pm
- Nov. 8th:** Membership Committee meeting 6pm
- Nov. 12th:** Lady B's meeting 7pm
- Nov. 15th:** Spanish-American Center's Holiday dinner 4 to 5:30pm
- Nov. 15th:** PC Meeting 6:30pm
- Nov. 18th:** Potluck Brunch after church services.
- Nov. 18th:** Interfaith Community Gathering 3:30pm at Congregational Church of Christ
- Nov. 30th:** Book Group 7:30pm



November Birthdays

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

Spanish American Center Community Thanksgiving Dinner

at First Church, **November 15**
from 4:00 to 5:30 pm.

All are invited. See Mickey Guzman
with any questions or to RSVP.



Sharing the Collection Plate

On **November 18th**, any cash that is collected separate of designated pledge money goes towards the Spanish-American Center.



Ladies Benevolent Society



We will meet on two Mondays this month on **November 5th** at 6pm at an offsite location and **Nov.12th** at 7pm at First Church in the lower level of the building. We will continue to make craft items for our table at the Winter Stroll. Coffee and refreshments will be served. Come join in the fun! Questions? Please contact Chris at cauhlig2002@yahoo.com or see Betsy at church on Sunday.

The Lady's will be having a fundraiser these holiday months selling Cyclamens and Poinsettias in 4", 6" or 8" pots in all colors. The prices are as follows:

4" Poinsettia \$5	4" Cyclamen \$5
6" Poinsettia \$10	6" Cyclamen \$10
8" Double Poinsettia \$21	

The deadline to order is on **Dec. 9th**. We will decorate the church with the flowers for Dec.16th and people can take them home also on that date. There will be an order sheet available at Sunday services or you can place an order by contacting Chris Uhlig or Marilyn Murphy.