



First Church Vision

February 2019

Working toward a peaceful and just world, guided by Love

From Our Minister

As a young man, I struggled with the concept of “God” I was raised with. This was a Christian God, which I understood to live in a supernatural realm, apart from my own experience. Then, as I grew older, I learned about the existence of many religions, many different approaches to God. This seemed to raise more questions than it answered. Which, if any, of these religions represented a valid approach, for me, to God?

My response to all these choices was to identify myself as an agnostic, meaning, “I don’t know”. I used the term in the negative sense to mean “I don’t know, and you don’t know, so why bother?”

As time went on, my agnosticism took a positive turn. I began to understand that “I don’t know” is an invitation to asking questions. Who is this God I don’t believe in? What kind of God could be real, for me, and not a fiction?

I gave myself permission to think about life in religious categories, while avoiding falling into magical thinking. I considered the miracle of my own consciousness, and wondered how and if the natural world could be conscious in its own way. When I ask the question “does God exist”, how shall I characterize the object of this question? What kind of explanation would allow me to stay true to a scientific perspective while responding to life’s mystery?

The faith of an agnostic puts trust in our ability to ask and pursue open-ended questions. It opens doors rather than closing them.

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



Feb. 3rd: "Reclaiming Our Universalism ", Rev. Taylor.
Feb. 10th: "Renewing the Promise", Mark Moran
Feb. 17th: "The Faith of an Agnostic ", Rev. Taylor. New Member-
ship Ceremony for Phil, Kristal and Phoebe Truax
Feb. 24th: "We Are the Music", Paula Murphy and Christi
Grausam



Notes from the Parish Committee

We are in the midst of our polar vortex and several of our members are, right now, volunteering at the Emergency Warming Station in Leominster. This Emergency Warming Station is being housed at the Emergency Management Facility on Carter St and is a direct offshoot of the work started at First Church in January 2018 where we decided to open our doors of the church on the coldest weekend in winter 2018 and invited in anyone who needed a warm place. Out of the 2018 Warming Weekend came a task force to address the needs of the city's homeless population and a drop-in center to provide information on housing, food, work placement, counseling and other basic requirements. First Church took the lead on a need in the community and did something. We started a program that others took on and improved, but never forget, First Church cared enough about our greater community, took a stand and did something. Always be proud of the fact you are part of such a great church and team of dedicated people!

The Parish Committee discussed planning a variety of events and projects for the coming months. We've been looking at outreach ideas to get to know some of our fellow UUs nearby. We've reached out to the Fitchburg UU church to garner some interest in a social night to get to know one another and to have fun. More details on that will come.

We've reached out to some congregations who have gone to a wholly lay-led model of congregational life for some best practices and to hear of their experiences in making the transition. We're working on a list of questions to start the conversations. If you have a question you would like to ask about lay-led congregational life, please let anyone on the PC know or send me a message with a question you would like to ask. I only have a million and one questions, and I need help narrowing them down, so I would appreciate any questions comments you can send me.

We started planning our annual pledge drive for 2019. Look for the kick off service later this month and be on the lookout for a mailing from the church with more information. This is an important time of year for all of us. We are making our plans for programs and activities for the year and we need congregational support for making our plans and dreams happen. We've recently started a Saturday hot soup lunch for anyone who wants to join us. Sometimes we've had more volunteers than people coming in, but we are there and available for the community in whatever capacity we are needed. Whether a bowl of hot soup or something from our food pantry or some conversation or company, we are open and available. This says something about us and our mission. We need help from all our members and friends to support the work we are doing and want to do. We need financial and volunteer commitments to accomplish what we want to do. We are small but mighty! Please consider all that we do for the community and for each other and how important First Church is to you and to all of us when you receive your pledge information packet.

Until next time.....

"Reclaiming Our Universalism "

Feb. 3rd
Rev. Taylor

Universalism plays an important role in Unitarian Universalism, but we don't often give credit where credit is due. Today's service honors the Universalist ideas and values at work in our congregation and our Association, and their significance for our future as a liberal religious movement.

"The Faith of an Agnostic "

Feb. 17th
Rev. Taylor

Agnosticism says "I don't know" to the question of God's existence. This is an honest approach to religion: rather than closing doors, it opens new possibilities. Today's service explores some of the fertile questions raised by an agnostic perspective.



Community Soup Saturdays

For the month of February, we will continue to host a hot lunch program including hot soup, bread, dessert and beverage on **Saturdays from 1 to 3 pm** in the downstairs hall. We have had good attendance for the past 3 weeks due to good PR and word of mouth. We will continue to need volunteers for set-up, serving or clean-up whether it is for a part of or the whole day. So please join us if you can! We appreciate any time you can give us. Donations of food and supplies will also be welcomed.



**Book Group Meeting
Friday February 22, 2019 at 7:30pm
in church office**

A nonfiction thriller packed with tension, passion, and politics, this book offers a rare glimpse into a secretive world, illuminating a fascinating chapter of North Korea's history that helps explain how it became the hermetically sealed, intensely stage-managed country it remains today.



The Grains and Greens Food Pantry has been selected to participate in the Hannaford Helps Reusable Bag Program again!

The program is simple!

During the month of **February**, every **Fight Hunger bag** sold at the Hannaford store located at:

18 Main Street, Harbor Village, Townsend MA
will generate a \$1 donation to support
Grains and Greens Food Pantry!

1st Church Wish List

Socks for both men and women

Gloves, hats and scarves

Hand and foot warmers

Food pantry items:

Pasta Sauce

Pasta

Peanut butter

Canned fruit

Canned soup

Canned vegetables

Canned meats and tuna

Rice

Canned milk

Cereal

Personal care items: combs, brushes, toothbrushes and toothpaste, small bars of soap, razors and shaving cream, mouthwash

Food pantry items no kitchen needed:

Peanut butter or cheese cracker sandwiches

Granola bars

Protein bars

Flip-top cans of ready to eat foods; pasta, soup, meat, tuna

Small bottles of water

Unused travel mugs or reusable cups for hot or cold beverages that we can have on hand

All Donations Are Greatly Appreciated !!

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

February 18th.

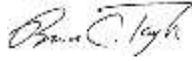
Minister's Availability and Office Hours

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. This month, I will be in the office on the following days:

Wednesdays Feb 6, Feb 13, Feb 20 and Feb 27 from 10:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M.

Thursdays Feb 7, Feb 14, Feb 21 and Feb 28 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.



Rev. Bruce Taylor



Dates to Remember

February

Feb. 7th: Membership Committee meeting
6pm

Feb. 11th: Lady B's Meeting, 7pm

Feb. 17th: New Membership Sunday

Feb. 22nd: Book Group Meeting 7:30pm

Feb. 28th: PC Meeting 6:30pm

Every Saturday: Hot Soup Lunches, 1 to 3

Date TBD: Spaghetti Dinner with Fitchburg
UU First Church



February Birthdays

Amy Kerswill.....Feb. 12
Greg Aldrich.....Feb. 13
Greely Summers.....Feb. 14
Edward Summers.....Feb. 19
Stephanie Trudel.....Feb. 21
Ron BrownFeb. 21
Adam Goodwin.....Feb. 21
Donna Normile.....Feb.29



Many hands make light work!

**Please come help us keep our church clean by
volunteering whatever time you can give us!**



Ladies Benevolent Society

We will meet on **February 11th** at 7pm at First Church in the lower level of the building. We will be making food bags for those without kitchen access, personal care bags and finish making Valentines. Coffee and refreshments will be served. Come join in the fun! Questions? Please contact Chris at cauhlig2002@yahoo.com or at church on Sunday.

Lynne Lockhart

August 25, 1945 – January 17, 2019

One of our beloved long-standing members of First Church, Lynne Lockhart died on Thursday, January 17, 2019 at Mass General Hospital after a brave fight.

She was born in New Haven, CT, the daughter of Thomas H. and Carolyn (Haskell) Lockhart. She was raised in Durham, CT and had lived in Princeton before moving to Leominster in 1991. She leaves her daughter, Marni MacLean Karro and her husband, Christopher Karro of Pawtucket, RI; two step-sons, Paul LaRocca and his wife, Karen of Lutz, FL and Steven LaRocca of Acton, MA; her sister, Virginia Lockhart of Ashland; her three granddaughters, Grace Karro, Sophie Karro and Kayla LaRocca; as well as her three nieces. She was predeceased by her husband, Louis A. LaRocca who died in 1981. Lynne loved to spend time with her family, especially her granddaughters and family and friends were a vital part of her life.

Lynne was a graduate of Lasell College in Newton and then worked as a personnel assistant for Digital Equipment Corporation for several years before continuing her education. She earned her bachelor's degree in Advertising from UMass Amherst and went on to work with Vietnam veterans. She worked for the Worcester Committee on Homelessness and volunteered to tend children in homeless shelters.

She was a feminist in her beliefs long before it became popular to talk about the feminine nature of the divine. Without doubt and with a conviction that blessed her over and over again she experienced the divine as HOPE. A feminine symbol of strength, compassion and in hope she had total and complete trust. Lynne was a 1960's activist, a hippy gal, a role which she brought back to life each Halloween with her vests, pins, hat and wide legged jeans or granny skirt. She worked for the election of many worthy senators and presidents, going door to door for some, dragging Marni off with her to politician's headquarters to make calls, attending rallies, and writing letters of protest and support. She had the wonderful experience of hearing/seeing Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. in Boston when he spoke in the 60's. This so profoundly affected her that when we put together the First Church UU diversity Committee which birthed the MLK Coalition she worked tirelessly to see that it could continue and attended all the celebrations and events. The coalition just celebrated its 20th year on Monday, Jan. 21st. It is bittersweet that Lynne would die during the week of King's birthday celebration.

She was a proud member of the Ladies Benevolent Society being the corresponding secretary for many years and got everyone making baby blankets that she would then deliver to the Linus Project. She was one of many who made meals for one of our elder members, Sherwin Drury. She put aside food to bring to our Food Pantry although sometimes she had precious little for her own needs. She gave money, time and attention to others; she had great compassion. She helped out in small and not so small ways to make life better for people. She was a great volunteer at church, serving on many committees and she was great at taking one of Reverend Susan's ideas and making it an organized project. She made the world better and will be sorely missed.

A celebration of life for Lynne presided by Rev. Susan was held at 11 a.m. on Saturday, January 26th at First Church. A private committal service will be held in the spring at Woodlawn Cemetery in Princeton. In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to First Church Unitarian Universalist of Leominster. To share a memory or offer an online condolence, please visit the Miles Funeral Home website.

Peace

soft sweet saddened
glittering
jewel-like serenity
invades
the world
offering
an eternal cloak
of protection
and I stand
lone-being
watching above
in upward glance
cast
the peaceful joy of
well-being
and am humbly
grateful
and
no longer
alone

-Lynne Lockhart, 1965



Kayla LaRocca, Grace Karro and Sophie Karro light the chalice during Lynne's memorial service.