



# FUSN News

First Unitarian Society in Newton

Unitarian Universalist

November 2, 2016

## **SUNDAY SERVICES — 10:15 A.M.**

### **The themes for November are Death/Grief**

- **November 6** – Rev. John Nichols
- **November 13** – Music Sunday *Glimpses of Eternity* “We receive fragments of holiness, glimpses of eternity, brief moments of insight.” Our Sanctuary Choir, Intergenerational Orchestra, Family Choir and Band will provide music ranging from “Ashokan Farewell” to excerpts from the Requiem by Gabriel Fauré, to music by the Wailin’ Jennys and Crosby, Stills & Nash. If you’re interested in reading in the service, please contact Anne at [music@fusn.org](mailto:music@fusn.org).
- **November 20** – Rev. John Nichols
- **November 27** – Thanksgiving Service

## **FAMILY MINISTRY, NOV. 6**

Struggling to navigate this election season and help your children understand the things they hear about the candidates in the news? You are not alone! Join the FUSN Family Ministry for a conversation about discussing politics through a UU lens – Sunday, **November 6**, 9:00-10:00 am in the Alliance Room. Childcare and a light breakfast will be provided. Please RSVP at <http://evite.me/SDsrAskDyz>

## **FROM THE MINISTER: IN THE INTERIM**

When you take the audio-tape tour of the Mount Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge you learn that the early Puritan grave yards were stark and almost brutal in their reminder that death is the ultimate goal of every life, and so one had prepare for it. The Puritan cemetery was a place of warnings. It was not a spot where one would linger long. However, by the early part of the Nineteenth Century, (when Mt. Auburn was founded) Unitarianism and Universalism were the dominant religious influences in this area. They (we) believed that when we die we are enfolded into a

larger reality, which supports and teaches the living. They envisioned their cemetery as a “community” of the dead to support the living. For many decades it actually functioned as a park and a picnic ground and it still functions as a place where the past instructs the future about its values.

It is a good thing to remember those who have gone before us and what we have learned from them. If we think about thankfulness we tend to think about what we immediately have been given. We take inventory of the various and sundry good things and bad things that have come into our lives recently. And we make a silent judgment as to how thankful we really feel. I’m not sure if in this calculation it really occurs to us how many shoulders we stand on, and now much gratitude we owe to other people.

Who nurtured our sense of humor? Who encouraged us as learners? Who instilled our recognition that there is such a thing as injustice, and who taught us to fight it no matter the cost? Who loved us into believing in ourselves? Who first encouraged us to venture ourselves in love (it may well have been someone whose name we only vaguely remember now?) Who ran alongside of our first two-wheeler until we learned to balance it on our own? Who kept tossing balls to us until we actually learned to catch them? Who sat with us when we were desperately homesick and encouraged us not to give in to it? When bullies invaded our lives, who told us with an air of considerable authority, “Don’t pay any attention to them”?

Most of us have been the recipients of incredible generosity, and we may have received it as something we sort of expected or thought was our due. In truth, there aren’t enough Thanksgivings to go around for us to acknowledge the people who have contributed to our lives – most of whom do not know to this day what they created for us. –*Rev. John Nichols*

**Staff:** Erin Splaine, *Minister*, Fran Clancy, *Administrator*, Rowan Van Ness, *Director of Lifespan Religious Education*, Beth Walton, *Assistant Director of Religious Education*, Dani Lindstrom, *Youth Programs Coordinator*, Anne Watson Born, *Director of Music*, Carson Cooman, *Organist*, Roberta Humez, *Minister of Music Emerita*, Ruslan Crosby, *Beadle*.

**Board of Trustees:** Gregg DiBiasco, Brian Burba, Josie Greene, Eric Haas, Cathy Morocco, *Chair*, Lesley Sneddon, Sarah Fazli and Julianna Lakomski, *Youth Reps*.

**Operations Council:** Susan Bartlett, *Chair*, John Brennan, Judy Curby, *Treasurer*, Laurel Farnsworth, *Vice Chair*, Andrea Kelley, Kate Mason.

**First Unitarian Society in Newton** • 1326 Washington Street • West Newton, MA 02465 • <http://www.fusn.org>  
office tel: 617-527-3203 • fax:617-964-5409 • Religious Education: 617-332-3438 • e-mail address: [office@fusn.org](mailto:office@fusn.org)

## BOARD OF TRUSTEES: WELCOME TO WELCOMING!

In a vote taken at the Annual Meeting in June 2015, FUSN committed to engage in the process of renewing our status as a congregation recognized as Welcoming. Many hoped that this would be a step toward salving bad feelings and mending rifts in our community created by the tumult during the previous winter.

A Welcoming Congregation assessment team conducted a survey and presented its findings last winter. In response to subsequent inquiries from the Minister and the Board of Trustees, a small group of FUSNites assembled and began meeting to plan what steps to take next. Following some uncertainty about our status and role, we've settled on the label, "Welcoming Congregation Implementation Team"—WCIT for short (you could say "wicket," or possibly "wicked," but so far I'm the only one that does.)

As a group, the WCIT is noticeably monochromatic: all white, men and women near or past retirement age, and—as far as we know—all straight. Some congregation members were very vocal in wanting to be included on whatever group or committee was formed to address "welcoming," but apparently instead grew disillusioned with FUSN and have left.

The group reviewed a lot of materials from the UUA and talked a great deal about the state of our congregation. As noted in this space last spring, the UUA's Welcoming Congregation program focuses exclusively on issues of inclusion and support for members who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, or queer. This constituency is usually abbreviated as "LGBTQ;" sometimes the "Q" is translated as "questioning." At first, this focus seemed too narrow to some members of the WCIT, and of the Board, because the rifts in our congregation arose over tangential issues—polyamory, most notably—and wanted the ideal of "welcoming" to include broader issues such as family structure, race, class, and social status.

Some FUSN members are satisfied with our acceptance of LGBTQ folks in the congregation, but we aren't so sure that we should be. The WC assessment team's report found that FUSN did not live up to its ideals, particularly in the areas of gender identity and expression. We have come to see that working on this issue is a stream parallel to other initiatives, such as Multicultural Ministry, Criminal Justice, and the Black Lives Matter groups, any of which can open us making sure there is room here for all despite our differences.

FUSN is made richer by its LGBTQ members. But cis-gendered, monogamous, or otherwise majority

members don't know how those members experience life in our community, nor how welcome they really feel. And it's not easy to ask: perhaps FUSN is a haven, where they don't have to represent or defend a particular way of life. Inquiring directly about these matters involves acknowledging a difference, and might be an intrusion. If anyone is willing to share comments, in public or private, it would be helpful.

The primary goal of WCIT is to guide FUSN to re-certification as a Welcoming Congregation, within the strict UUA definition of being open and supportive to LGBTQ members. While working toward that goal, we hope to begin defining our shared vision of a welcoming congregation—one of the central questions posed by the assessment team's report. Please let us know.

WCIT members are: Chris Krebs [chair], Linda Ross, Walter Graham, and Mark Leicester.

*Eric Haas, Board liaison to WCIT*

## RE-CONNECTIONS

I recently returned from the **Liberal Religious Educators Association (LREDA) Fall Conference**, in which we dove into the spiritual issues pertaining to several "tough" topics: money, death, race, and sex. We explored our own perspectives on these topics, along with their spiritual dimensions and we can (and are) bringing these topics into our conversations and rituals in our congregations.

I am thrilled that we have an active **Adult Faith Development Task Force** this year, exploring the religious needs and programs of adults currently at FUSN to propose and advocate for a structure to allow people to continue to deepen their Unitarian Universalist and spiritual identities and practices at FUSN, and am eager to explore more deeply how we are and can have more of these conversations across all age groups and in multigenerational ways.

Attending conferences such as this UU one, allows me to continue to develop as a professional and as an individual, and allows me to bring the wisdom from the successes and shortcomings of other congregation's experiences back to FUSN.

There is both energy and curiosity about how FUSN can evaluate our children's religious education (CRE) program and continue to deepen our support for families at FUSN. What's working well about our program? What ideas do we have for how we want to move forward, to continue to enrich our **ministry to children and families**? Assistant Director Beth Walton, Religious Education Council Chair Kim Shanks, and I are planning a meeting to discuss these topics and more within this coming month. Please

contact me (rowan@fusn.org) if you are interested in talking more about this and/or participating.

Lastly, the holidays are coming, and we need your help! Are you interested in helping making the annual **Christmas Eve Pageant** a success? We need people to go through and organize the costumes, to help with marketing and recruitment, and more. Is a **Passover Seder** more your style? We are also starting to assemble a team to plan the spring seder. For that, we need people to help coordinate the ritual components, organize catered food, promote the event and encourage signups and attendance. There's a job for everyone, and we need your help to make these beloved traditions happen! Please be in touch if you are able to help, in a big or a small way.

With gratitude, *Rowan Van Ness, Director of Lifespan Religious Education*

### **TRADER JACKIE'S, NOV. 6**

Trader Jackie's will be open for business on Sunday, **November 6** after Sunday service. Come and stock your freezer with delicious dishes from our wonderful FUSN cooks. Calling all cooks! Please be sure you have containers and labels to freeze your edibles in. Bring your frozen dishes before church on Sunday, November 6 to the Trader Jackie's table in the Parish Hall. If you need to drop off frozen dishes before then, there is limited space in the FUSN freezer. Questions? Call Jackie Colby, 617-527-2394.

### **EVENING SONG, NOV. 6**

Join Vermilion for the Evening Song service on Sunday, **November 6** at 7:00 p.m. Evening Song at FUSN is a half-hour candlelight service of music, poetry, and meditation planned around FUSN's monthly themes. Let the sanctuary welcome you into meditative music, poetry, and silence – even at the end of a full weekend at FUSN – for a bit of quiet music, reflection, and silence to ease into the week ahead, and into our always too busy lives.

### **COMMUNITY BREAKFAST, NOV. 13**

Join us for our next Community Breakfast, the best way to start your Sunday, on **November 13**, at 9:00 a.m. in the Parish Hall. The extensive menu includes scrambled eggs, scrambled eggs with vegetables, pancakes, French toast, bacon, sausage, gluten-free corn bread, home fried potatoes, white and whole wheat biscuits, vegetarian sausage gravy, fruit, yogurt, jams and jellies, juices, coffee and tea, and the occasional special treat. It's only \$4 for adults and \$3 for kids. Newcomers eat free. We have high chairs, too. Upcoming breakfasts – **December 11, January 8, February 12, March 12, April 9, and May 7.**

### **THANK UUS**

Thank you so much to the many people who organized, decorated the hall, cooked for and cleaned up after the Oktoberfest Dinner last month. Special thanks to Ron Margolin, Alan Crosby, Bobbie Sproat and Jacki Rohan. And very many thanks to all the folks who attended the dinner in support of our trip. It was a lovely night! – *The planning team for the FUSN Musicians trip to Germany*

### **LUNCH WITH THE MINISTER AND LAY MINISTERS, NOV. 3**

Any and all are invited to join John Nichols and some of the lay ministers for soup and conversation at noon on Thursday, **November 3** in the Alliance Room. A special invitation is extended to retired or long-term members of our community. Let Fran (617.527.3203) or Cindy (617.901.6848) know if you plan to attend.

As in years past, Lunch with the Ministers will be a monthly event, so if you cannot come on this date, don't fret. We've scheduled them for the first Wednesday, Thursday, or Friday of the month, except for December and January, to avoid conflicts with the Holiday Fair and New Year's holiday.

- Friday, December 9
- Wednesday, January 11
- Thursday, February 2
- Friday, March 3
- Wednesday, April 5
- Thursday, May 4
- Friday, June 2

### **BLACK LIVES MATTER SIGN**

We have come to the time of year when we need to use the sign stand on the front lawn to promote our Holiday Fair. That means that the Black Lives Matter signs will be moving. They will be temporarily attached to the construction fence then post-construction, be replaced by smaller lawn signs until the holiday season is finished. This is the arrangement that the FUSN/BLM group made when the Board and Operations Council approved the banner to be displayed. It does not mean that our commitment to the cause of racial equality and social justice has diminished. It is important that we support our community fundraising efforts to the best of our ability so we can continue to do our racial justice work. — *The FUSN / BLM group*

## **TOYS & TREASURES FAIR ON SATURDAY, NOV. 5**

The **Toys & Treasures Fair** on **Saturday, November 5** at FUSN is sure to be loads of fun. Explore attic treasures in Parish Hall, pick up gently used toys for your kids/grandkids and enjoy a muffin/pastry breakfast and light lunch! Come browse and shop to your hearts content. We look forward to seeing you! (You can leave items behind the parish hall stage.)

## **FUSN ADULT FAITH DEVELOPMENT TASK FORCE, NOV. 6 (AND MORE)**

### **Mission:**

Rev. Erin Splaine and DRE Rowan Van Ness convened our task force and charged us to:

- Explore the diverse ways that FUSN helps congregants develop all that is spiritual, meaningful, sacred, and religious;
- Examine ways that FUSN can, outside of weekly services, improve on its mission to develop all that is spiritual, meaningful, sacred, and religious;
- Examine ways that FUSN can connect more deeply to the enriching UUA denominational programming and curriculum offered through the “Adult Faith Development” initiatives;
- Examine ways that FUSN can learn from and possibly partner with other UU congregations in this mission.

### **Activities:**

Our Task Force work divides into two stages:

- (1) gathering information (September through February) and
- (2) reporting to the professional staff and to the Board of Trustees (March).

Our Stage 1 work includes four overlapping streams of activity, each led by one of our task force members:

- Online- and Paper- Survey of the Congregation, *forthcoming* (Devon Welles, Task Force Chair)
- Discussion/Focus Groups, *in progress* (Jenny Lerner)
- Individual interviews with members of the FUSN community, *in progress* (Peggy Ellertsen)
- Interviews with Other Congregations and UUA Leaders, *in progress* (Andrew Morse)

### **Participate:**

Please look for announcements about upcoming activities and contact one or more of us to participate in any of these streams.

Next discussion/focus group will take place Sunday, **November 6**, 9:00 – 10:00 a.m., in the Alliance Room. Coffee, juice, bagels, and home-baked breakfast treats will be served. Please arrive early or on time. In order to facilitate discussion, doors to the discussion will be closed at 9:15 AM. Please RSVP by **November 4** to [adultfaith@fusn.org](mailto:adultfaith@fusn.org)

### **Helpful links and contacts:**

Task Force Email (Devon Welles):  
[Adultfaith@fusn.org](mailto:Adultfaith@fusn.org)

Sign up soon to request an interview (time constrained): Peggy Ellertsen ([pellertsen@aol.com](mailto:pellertsen@aol.com))h

## **HOLIDAY GIFT BAGS FOR MCI-CONCORD PRISONERS, NOV. 1-27**

Again this year the FUSN community will join with other local houses of worship to provide holiday gift bags to the prisoners at MCI-Concord—we are collecting items in the month of November as the bags are organized and given to the men at the beginning of December

MCI has very strict regulations regarding approved gift items. There will be a large box covered in holiday wrapping paper in the area near the archway entrance, the men can receive only approved items. Non-approved items are disposed of, so please be very careful when buying these gift items. The men greatly appreciate these gift bags, and for many this is the only holiday gift that they receive. Any or all of these items can be donated, and the bags are assembled by volunteers at the prison:

- soap 4-5 oz bar–(not liquid)
- toothpaste–5.8-6 oz size
- pads of 100 pages of white paper without wire, 6×9 or 5×8 size
- boxes of envelopes, business size
- plastic bottles of shampoo 5 to 12 oz size
- white crew socks with ribbing, 5 inches or less–(no tube/knee-hi/or tennis socks)

And hand made holiday cards are very appreciated, sign with first name only. Please remember to contribute only items on the approved list. The gifts will be collected from **November 1 to November 27**. On behalf of these men, thank you very much. —  
*Marylou McArdle*

## **MULTI-CULTURAL MINISTRY INITIATIVE — DISCUSSION GROUPS**

A few spaces are still available in the upcoming Multi-cultural Ministry Initiative (MMI) Discussion Groups. To sign up, contact

[JudyFriedman57@gmail.com](mailto:JudyFriedman57@gmail.com).

- ***Waking Up White*** – by Debby Irving, 4-session group on Sundays! Sundays: **November 20, December 4 and 11, January 8**, 12 Noon to 2:00 pm
- ***Uprooting Racism*** – by Paul Kivel, 6-session group on Monday evenings! Mondays: **January 9, 16, 23, and 30, February 6, and 13**, 7:30 to 9:30 pm

## **NEWCOMER POTLUCK DINNER, NOV. 12**

If you are new to FUSN or still feel you are new, you are invited to a potluck dinner at the home of Rachel Viscomi on Saturday, **November 12** at 6:00 p.m. Children are welcome. Come talk with other newcomers who are interested in Unitarian Universalism and FUSN. There will be time to discuss our congregation's services and activities and to ask questions, as well as time just to get to know one another. Please RSVP to Brenda Roberts, [bnroberts@comcast.net](mailto:bnroberts@comcast.net) to tell us if you can come and what you would like to bring (suggestions: an appetizer, main dish, side dish, salad or dessert that serves 6-8 people). We will provide beverages. We look forward to having this opportunity with you!

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1326 Washington Street  
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