



FUSN *News*

First Unitarian Society in Newton

Unitarian Universalist

May 1 - May 14, 2016

SUNDAY SERVICES - 10:15 A.M

The theme for May is Kindness

5/1 - Rev. Erin Splaine

5/8 - Rev. Erin Splaine

5/15 - Coming of Age Graduation

The culmination of our Coming of Age program for 8th graders is a Sunday worship service. The graduates share statements of their beliefs and music that represents them. In the milestone, the congregation recognizes the transition a young person makes from being a “child” to being a “youth,” and graduates are invited to become members of our congregation. Please join us for this meaningful service.

5/22 - Sunday and Every Day

As our church year winds to a close, we celebrate the spiritual growth and learning that has happened in our congregation in our annual Religious Education Sunday. For the first time, the worship service itself will be completely led by participants in our Lifespan Religious Education programs, from hymns to homilies, lifting up the meaning of the Unitarian Universalist principles in our everyday lives.

5/29 - Rev. Phyllis B. O’Connell

Rev. O’Connell has been a Parish Minister for the past 25 years. She served the Melrose UU Church for ten years and the UU Society of Wellesley Hills for nine years and served local congregations as an interim minister for six years. Recently retired, she now leads workshops called “Exploring Issues in Retirement” and has a chapter in the recently published Skinner House book, “Landscapes on Aging and Spirituality.” She has two grown daughters, lives in Newton and enjoys playing the flute in The New Horizons community band.

A NOTE FROM ERIN

As you may have heard by now, in September, I will be taking the first five months of a six-month sabbatical. While some might remember other FUSN minister’s sabbaticals, I imagine the first question that comes to mind for many is “Why does Erin receive or even need a sabbatical and why for so long?” The most basic answer is simply that in most Unitarian Universalist ministerial contracts (including my contract with FUSN), ministers are granted a sabbatical every 5-7 years — usually a month for every year of service. As this is my 6th year at FUSN, my sabbatical will last for 6 months. However, because I want to be here to support and celebrate the Annual Budget Drive next year I will be taking five months (Sept. 20 to Feb. 20) and another month at the end of the congregational year (mid-May to mid-June).

While contracts and terms of service are important, they don’t get to the heart of why I’m taking a sabbatical. The closer we get to the upcoming time for the sabbatical, the more aware I am of a need to reconnect with some places and pursuits which are powerful food for my soul. The traditional ministerial pursuits of study and reflection are often shortchanged or overlooked in the day-to-day rush of a modern ministry and a busy, thriving faith community. I’ll be using this time to engage with places and experiences that sustain my spirit and my vocation as a minister and hopefully to garner some inspiration and return to FUSN feeling renewed physically, emotionally, and spiritually and ready to make a new beginning with all of you in our shared ministry.

FUSN is blessed to have a strong staff and lay leadership team. I know you will do well while I am away. My hope is that the rich and revitalizing time I anticipate for myself will be the same for you—a chance for this congregation to renew its sense of its gifts and abilities apart from your minister, a chance to refresh your sense of yourselves as a community of people, each with some

Continued on next page

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

Board of Trustees: Brian Burba, Gregg DiBiaso, Eric Haas, Cathy Morocco, Bobbie Sproat, *Co-Chair*, Lesley Sneddon, *Co-Chair* Julianna Lakomski, Becca Lozinsky, *Youth Representatives*

Operations Council: Susan Bartlett, *Chair*, John Brennan, Jeannie , Judy Curby, Laurel Farnsworth, *Vice Chair*, Andrea Kelley

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ministry—wisdom, experience, creativity, music, preaching, teaching, comforting, advising, helping, growing, listening, responding—to offer.

I'm happy to report that planning for the sabbatical is well underway. The Board of Trustees, the Ops Council, the Lay Ministers, the Committee on Ministry, the staff and I are making preparations so that worship, pastoral care, administration, and all of our ministries can continue to grow and thrive while I'm on sabbatical. Over the next several months, we will be sharing more thoughts and plans with you about my upcoming sabbatical. I am very excited about this opportunity and convinced that it will enable me to better serve you. Thank you again for making it possible for me to take a sabbatical. I know this will be growth opportunity for all of us.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

As I enter my last full month as a member of our Board of Trustees, I'm thinking a lot about what I've learned and come to appreciate about FUSN in the past three years of service to our beloved community.

1. *Serving on the Board is an act of faith and love.* I am grateful for your trust and confidence, and for the opportunity to serve this congregation I love. I admit I was reluctant to serve as Board chair in 2014-15, and I had a few moments of regret and many of angst and sleeplessness during that year. Now, with the perspective of a more peaceful year, I can better appreciate how much I have learned – about myself, about FUSN, about congregational and UUA operations and politics, and about why this community is so important to me. I feel enriched by my experience, and I thank you for the opportunity you've given me.

2. *We are a vibrant, healthy congregation – and...we experience the same kinds of missteps and conflicts that other UU congregations face.* As most of you know, we had a rough year last year (2014-15). Through an unpredictable confluence of events, we lost a staff member whose departure and its aftermath created a difficult and tender atmosphere for the remainder of the year. We learned a lot about the importance of open, inclusive, and respectful speaking and listening; about not rushing to judgment or action when feelings are tender; and about the fact that we won't agree 100% on everything, and that's ok. I continue to hope that we've also learned to forgive each other for our mistakes.

I think we're also better at handling conflict. Our facilitated listening circles last year helped a lot of people work through their feelings about events. There have been opportunities this year to continue working on our communication skills, and to tackle some of the substantive issues we faced last year.

Finally, with a full and energetic staff in place, and with lots of new faces appearing at services, events, and coffee hour, we're in great shape to forge ahead with increasing growth and vitality. I am so impressed by how our staff is thoughtfully and faithfully working together to accomplish so much this year!

3. *We are engaged in some vital social justice work, which makes me proud, and we are learning to do it better.* As always, there is important work going on in Social Action at FUSN, and it's wonderful to see how vital and committed the participants are. I am particularly proud of our Multicultural Ministry Initiative and the Black Lives Matter working group. Both are working to address institutionalized racism in deliberative ways that make sense to me for a mostly-white congregation. I've watched our Black Lives Matter group become an example for all of us, as it works in an organic and open way to produce, in only a few months, thoughtful proposals with room, time, and ways for everyone to weigh in.

4. *We would benefit from learning and thinking more deeply about our role as stewards of our congregation.* I hadn't given stewardship much thought before three years ago, but I've come to understand "steward" of the congregation as an identity I'm living when I make and increase my family's pledge, and when I volunteer my time in service to the Society. I love the many different opportunities there are to do important work (and have important fun) in service to FUSN.

At the same time, I worry when every year's budget drive, and every year's Nominating Committee, has trouble attracting the money and volunteer effort needed for our spiritual home to continue to grow and prosper. I'd love to see us do some thinking and talking about stewardship in a broader and deeper way. The Developing Leadership Team has begun working broadly on the volunteer issues. Can we also start a group talking (and helping all of us to talk) more deeply and openly about money? After all, it's in all our best interest – FUSN cannot thrive and do important work in the world without money and volunteer effort.

So here's my "ask:": I invite each of you to become a steward of our wonderful community. If you haven't yet pledged to this year's Annual Budget Drive, please do it now. When the Nominating Committee asks you to volunteer, please resist the initial urge to say "No, I can't." Instead, please think about how you'd most like to be engaged – what would fulfill you as well as a FUSN need, in a way that's sustainable for you at this point in your life. Together, we can make a real difference in FUSN and the world beyond.

-Bobbie Sproat, Co-chair Board of Trustees

ANNUAL PLEDGE DRIVE

The end is near. The annual budget drive that is. We have raised over \$500,000 thus far from approximately 240 FUSNites. We need another almost \$75,000 to make our goal. With your help, we can do it!

If you have not pledged, it is your turn. If you have pledged, and are not feeling good enough about your pledge, there is no prohibition on increasing it. We are asking people to give 2%-5% of their adjusted gross incomes. Please stop by the Budget Drive table during coffee hour to make or increase your pledge. Not going to be in church? Just email us at budgetdrive@fusn.org, and we will contact you.

Thank you. We and all of FUSN appreciate your generosity.
-Ellen, Tom & Saul

NEW MEMBER SUNDAY

Are you ready to feel a deeper sense of connection to interested in pledging, and someone the FUSN community? Do you want to vote in official congregational meetings and hold an elected position at FUSN? Then become a member and express your full commitment to the sustainability and well-being of FUSN! New members will be honored at this Spring's New Member Sunday on May 22 during service. Official membership involves a brief application - filling out your contact information and answering a few short answer questions. If you are interested in membership or have any questions about the application process, contact Ash Engel, ash@fusn.org. We look forward to celebrating with you on May 22!

CHIMES CELEBRATION

Chimes Celebration: 100th Anniversary, Saturday, June 4 at 4:00 p.m. The year 2016 marks the 100th Anniversary of FUSN's chime. The 11 bells were heard for the first time on June 4, 1916. We feel especially fortunate that June 4 falls on a Saturday this year, and we will celebrate as they did in 1916, with a concert.

Carson Cooman has composed a special piece for the occasion, *Tower Antiphonies*. The three-movement composition will be the centerpiece of the 2016 concert.

We plan a casual and celebratory event at 4:00 p.m., a Saturday afternoon. For further information, contact Gayle Smalley, gaylesmalley@mindspring.com

SIGN UP TO TEACH

A Month of RE 'Memes': ReMEMEber To Sign Up To Teach FUSN Religious Education Next Year

Yes! It's that time of year again...your trusty RE Council members are bringing together several RE Teaching Dream Teams for next year's RE program. We have teaching spots available for **all ages**. Do you love making silly faces to amuse tiny babies? Do you enjoy reading books to an adoring group of school children? How about discussing decision-making and ethics with middle schoolers? Or perhaps just chilling out with high school teenagers? We've got something for everyone!

This year we're trying to mix up our teacher recruitment campaign with a series of "memes" for your entertainment. A meme (rhymes with 'theme') is a humorous image, video, piece of text, etc. that is copied (often with slight variations) and spread rapidly by Internet users. We're going viral this season, baby! Be on the lookout for our pithy and fabulous memes and **if you react with a smile or a chuckle, you are who we are looking for to join in our fun!**

Being a teacher in RE takes a little bit of humor, whimsy, and lightheartedness--you'll find your place with our crew! If you'd like to learn more about volunteering next fall, contact Beth at reassist@fusn.org or Rowan at rowan@fusn.org or chat with any member of the RE Council at our table during coffee hour over the upcoming weeks. (To see a full description of the RE teacher job at FUSN, click on the blurb on the home page at www.fusn.org.)

OUR WHOLE LIVES UPDATE

This year, we have expanded our comprehensive sexuality program: Our Whole Lives (OWL) from being offered just for the 8th graders to also offering the age-appropriate upper elementary curriculum to our 4th/5th grade class. We are thrilled that both parents and children alike shared that they appreciated the new program. This lifespan sexuality education program has curricula written for kindergartners through adults, and a new OWL Oversight Team has been created with the intention of determining the process for rolling out the different levels of this program and ensuring that the program can happen safely and effectively in our congregation.

Last chance to support the FUSN team on our Walk for Hunger! The Walk supports the Newton Food Pantry and 399 food pantries and soup kitchens across New England. To sponsor, just go to <http://support.projectbread.org/goto/FirstUnitarianNewton>, and thanks!

COMMUNITY BREAKFAST

Join us for our last Community Breakfast, the best way to start your Sunday, on May 22 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.

EVENING SONG

Evening Song Sunday, May 1, at 7:00 p.m.! FUSN's Vespers service sung by Vermilion, a quartet directed by Amelia LeClair, has a new Name, a new Time, a new Date! Our monthly service of contemplation with music and poetry chosen by FUSN poets continues every FIRST Sunday of the month at 7:00 p.m. in the sanctuary.

FUSN REIMBURSEMENT REQUESTS

Just a reminder that our FUSN Fiscal Year ends May 31, 2016. Any Committees or individuals with reimbursement requests should get those to Fran Clancy in the FUSN office at your earliest convenience, and definitely before the end of May. Thank you!

-Judy Curby, FUSN Treasurer

HONORING MOTHER EARTH

Join us on May 8 as we appreciate and re-envision our environmental work at FUSN and in the world. Whether you are just tuning in to the need to support the environment or are already connected - Come. Appreciate. Suggest. Comment. Your participation will help direct FUSN's activities to support Mother Earth. On Mother's Day at noon, join the Green Sanctuary Committee in the Alliance Room. Light refreshments will be served.

Deadline for the next newsletter is May 10, 9:00 am.

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