



The First Universalist Church of Essex

May 2017

Covenant not Creed

This past Sunday I took the opportunity to speak to the issue of what it is that binds us together as a community of faith, and to speak pretty personally about how I've tried to understand my role as minister and, related to that, my relationship to all of you. As one of us shared with me afterwards, my model of ministry is not exactly every minister's and that might be helpful for all of us to know as we go through this transition.

I tried to explain that UUs, much like some other left-wing Reformation denominations, do not require adherence to a particular creed (for example, some of us grew up with the Apostles' Creed), a fixed set of beliefs, but rather we come together around a covenant, that is, we make promises and commitments to one another to create a safe, nurturing environment, a loving and justice-inspired, that calls each of us to bring our best selves to the life of the congregation. All of this requires TRUST; that is, we commit and promise that we will strive to act well with one another and respectfully share our own spiritual journeys, acknowledging that we might differ in some of our views and commitments.

Promises, Commitments and actions for the common good over an agreed upon set of beliefs, a creed, that's one holds us together. As a Jewish philosopher/theologian puts it, we are called to "helping relationships" with one another, communally nurturing each of our spiritual journeys. It's a sacred practice and, for those in search of God, a way to experience/encounter God.

On Sunday, May 7, we will all have an amazing opportunity to exercise this covenantal understanding as we come together after service to participate in our annual congregational gathering, hearing from our leadership and sharing our own thoughts and dreams as members and friends of this faith community. It's an amazing exercise of democracy in religion, of what one UU theologian, James Luther Adams, refers to as Radical Laicism, i.e., the practice of lay members and friends exercising leadership in the congregation, not under the leadership of the clergy, but alongside the clergy in a mutual commitment to making this community all it has pledged to be. As the band sang last week, it's a religious revolution, really, and a rejection of hierarchy in the development of community. But it only works when EVERYONE participates, otherwise a small group gets to shape the community, thus reverting back to a kind of hierarchy that our religious ancestors rejected several centuries ago.



So, please consider coming to church and staying for our ANNUAL MEETING on SUNDAY, MAY 7, and lending your thoughts and prayers and ideas as well as your recommitment to the mission and ministry of this wonderful community of faith, hope and love. See you all there.

Blessings, Love and Hope, Art

DATES:
Tues. May 2 PFLAG 7pm
Thurs. May 4 Worship Comm. 6pm
Sun. May 7 Choir, 9am
" " " " Annual Congregational Meeting, 11:30am
Thurs. May 11 Empty Bowls event - 4pm
Fri. May 12 Family Game Night, 6pm
Sat. May 13 Spiritual Parenting 4:30pm
Wed. May 17 Board of Trustees, 6:30pm
Sat. May 20 Coffee House 8pm
Sun. May 21 Choir 9am
Wed. May 24 Board of Trustees 6:30pm
LOOKING AHEAD
Sun. June 4 Children's Sunday 10am
Sun. June 11 Annual Church Picnic, 11:30am
Sun. July 30 Annual Church Boat ride (tentative)

ADULT EDUCATION

WHAT MONEY CAN'T BUY

The Moral Limits of Markets

MICHAEL J. SANDEL

AUTHOR OF THE INTERNATIONAL BESTSELLER *Justice*



We are currently reading a book entitled: **WHAT MONEY CAN'T BUY**, by philosopher Michael Sandel. We started this week, on April 27, but join in for the next gathering on May 4. Also, I would like to form a new **ADULT ED. COMMITTEE** going forward. If you are interested, please let me know.

COFFEE HOUSE has its final concert for 2016/17 on **Saturday, May 20, 8pm** with a great duo **Susie Burke and David Surette**

Call the church to make reservations



Join us on Saturday, May 13 at 4:30 for a conversation about self-care. A potluck meal will follow our discussion and child care will be provided.



BOARD UPDATES

As May ushers in, it is time for our annual meeting. This is a business meeting which allows us to update our members on the business aspects of the church, hear from the congregation if there are items they would like to see worked on and present items to the congregation for a vote. We hope that you will join us Sunday, May 7th!

The search committee has been conducting small group meetings with members and friends to help define the values and needs of the congregation as we look for our next minister. We will present an update at our annual meeting on May 7.





Friday, May 12, beginning at 6pm

ANNUAL CHURCH DIRECTORY



Tori Rosati and Art will be updating the annual church directory.

Current copies can be found in the church foyer and downstairs in the church hall. Please look at your

contact information and update it if necessary, or simply write ok, or, if you are not currently in the directory, please put your information in.

CARE & HOSPITALITY

Many thanks to all those who helped our church host the traditional breakfast after the Sunrise Service on Easter Sunday. Many church members and friends helped in setting up, cooking, serving and cleaning up. We served about 50 people and received many compliments on the delicious food. Again, many thanks to so many generous church friends.

Please also check the Sunday morning hospitality signup sheet in the church basement. There are plenty of available Sunday slots to fill going forward. Remember that sharings don't have to be lavish. Healthy and yummy snacks can be purchased or made for about \$25. See Becky Axelrod for details.

THANKS to the Band, ALL PLAY, for another great year of music, as they recharge over the summer.

SOCIAL JUSTICE & COMMUNITY OUTREACH

PFLAG next meets on Tuesday, May 2, at 7pm.

Open Door's EMPTY BOWLS Dinner occurs on Thursday, May 11, beginning at 4pm, at Cruiseport in Gloucester.

ECCO celebrated a great victory as it helped guide the city of Salem to declare itself a Sanctuary City at a gathering of over 400 Salem residents. With the support of the Mayor and police chief, City Councilors voted 7-4 to support Sanctuary City. ECCO also had a great gathering with state legislators on prison reform issues recently, as the process to institute major reforms continues. But, on a tragic note, many of us attended a memorial service for a slain ECCO member from Lynn, the victim of a shooting. A second victim is recovering.

FAMILY PROMISE

We volunteer, half a dozen times a year, with the families in the Family Promise program, as they have their week of – home – In the welcoming classrooms of a neighboring church in Essex. Friends from UU Essex bring in and host a couple of evening meals, play with any children who invite it, and a couple of us sleep there overnight.

I drop by once a week for a couple of hours – a Sunday afternoon shift – in their central space, a shop-front in Beverly. It's a time for the families to do their laundry, relax; the children play quietly, and sometimes one of the five-year-olds pulls up the chair beside the "volunteer desk" and suggests I play with her: ... anything from goofy made-up-between-us tall stories to helping me unravel a piece of knitting.

On a different level, a young mother with a history degree from BU tries to work out her future, and a middle-schooler translates her powerful Women's Day story into Spanish; her mother is training as a bilingual medical translator.

Come sit with me one day? After church on a Sunday, just a couple of hours ... *Diana Hughes*