



## From Your Interim Minister...

I’m sitting at home on this 19th day of January thinking about the Soul Matters theme for February of “Desire.” My chief desire at this moment is that I be writing this while sitting on my back porch and enjoying a warm, sunny day! Okay, time to get real.

This is hardly a profound insight, but I am aware of how the objects of one’s desires, wishes, hopes, and yearnings can change so much over the life cycle. This becomes especially clear as I now move into the eighth decade of my life. There is something liberating about not feeling the need to “build a resume.” By that I mean not having to think so much about what I need to be doing right now, so that what I’m hoping, desiring, or yearning for ten or fifteen years down the road might come about.

My desires are much more immediate these days: Keep up my energy, continue to maintain an active and inquisitive mind, savor my relationships with family and friends, feel my connection to the earth and with that which I sense is greater than myself even if I cannot adequately name it.

Picking up on what I said in a sermon a few weeks ago (“The Fundamental Things Apply”), an irony of dealing with desire is learning to relinquish certain desires: I may well not see all the places I’d like to see, read—or write—all the books I’d like to, or live in the world I’d envisioned and hoped for at earlier points in my life. There is also something liberating to be found in letting go of certain desires.

I am grateful for the wonderful wisdom of one of my late colleagues in UU ministry, the Rev. Forrest Church, who passed away way too soon at the age of sixty. Among Forrest’s many maxims, the one that stays with me the most these days is: “Want what you have.” It sounds pretty simple, but it’s far from easy to do, and admittedly, not always possible. But it is a stance certainly worth cultivating. Indeed, it is my primary desire at this point in my life: To want what I have.

Peace,  
Steve



# February Services



## February 7: What Must I Do To Be Saved?

I'm doing a slight play on the February theme of "Desire" and calling it "Yearnings." A UU, or liberal religious, take on the idea of salvation means examining the things we most yearn for and how we seek their fulfillment. While the sermon title sounds more like one heard in an evangelical church, my sense is that we all seek some form of salvation, or some fulfillment of our yearnings, in our lives.

## February 14: Here If You Need Me

The sermon is also the title of a book by Rev. Kate Braestrup, a UU minister, author, and part-time chaplain for the Maine Forest Service. It's a very moving book. Rev. Braestrup lost her husband, a Maine state policeman, in an automobile accident while they were members of the UU Church in Rockland, Maine. She then went on to become a UU minister. In addition to telling her amazing journey of faith and spirit, her book is about the ways in which we reach out to persons in need, in pain, and in their times of loss.

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## February 21: The Religion of the Presidents: A President's Day Reflection

On this day before President's Day I'll offer some insights into the religion of the two Presidents we honor: George Washington and Abraham Lincoln. The broader theme will be the role that religion plays—paradoxically for better and for worse—in our civic life. While our U.S. Constitution forbids the use of a "religious test" to hold public office, we seem to have come up with any number of sub-rosa religious tests anyway.

## February 28: Multi-generational Service: Our Hearts' Desires

Do you remember your childhood desires and wishes? Did any of them come to be? Do you catch yourself daydreaming about what might be? Do you allow the dreams to flow and then act on them? Your heart is talking; are you listening? At this multigenerational service we will dream together.



## Church Business

### Deacon Notes

As we enter this shortest month of the year, I'll pose the question "What do you DESIRE?" If you've followed previous Bulletin notes, you have probably already guessed that the Soul Matters topic of discussion this month is Desire, and furthermore that the intent of my question is really about what you may desire for FCU and you. We are in some exciting times for our church community. We just kicked off the capital campaign and had our first gathering in our acoustically modified dining room—one of the items that this campaign will be paying for. As I write this, I don't know how effective these tiles will be—but I do know that they are something we have been desiring for about 20 years.

We are also in the midst of our Healing Conversation sessions. I heard some very good buzz coming from the people who attended the first one. These sessions can be an excellent forum to discuss what you desire for our future, a future that includes a search for a new settled minister. If you have not signed up, please do.

I'd also like to include one more reminder to **please help fill up the slots on the Hospitality Board** before we have our next lottery where you may "win" an opportunity to participate.

*Jon Welch, for the Deacons*

### Standing Committee Notes

**Save the date!**

**March 6, 11:30 a.m.**

Rev. Steve and the Standing Committee invite the congregation to a conversation following the Sunday service on March 6 to discuss the processes of selecting a search team and settling a minister. We hope you'll join us with your questions. We'll also be sharing information via email and listserv, and hoping to speak individually with each member of the congregation in the coming weeks.

The **FCU directory** of members and friends was recently updated with a new, easier to read format. Look for it on the church web site at [fculittle.org](http://fculittle.org) and take a minute to review your information for accuracy. If you need to change or add anything please send an email to the church office at [office@fculittle.org](mailto:office@fculittle.org).

We have begun developing a new **Community Matters insert** that you will see every Sunday in the Order of Service. It will also be distributed via listserv each week. With a brighter and bolder look, the insert will be more informative so that you will be more fully aware of events at FCU and our community. In this time of transition, as we seek to streamline and improve our communications practices, the new Community Matters weekly insert and email will replace the monthly bulletin—March will be the final Bulletin issue. We're going to see how this works for the remainder of the church year and review at that time; we invite your thoughts.

We welcome your feedback on the changes being made to some of our church publications. Please send your comments to the Standing Committee at [sc-chair@fculittle.org](mailto:sc-chair@fculittle.org).

Tom Cowen for the Standing Committee  
Deb Girard, chair; Melissa Baern, Mike Pilman, Bob Williams

## Capital Campaign Update

Thank you to everyone who made the Make a Joyful Noise Gala such a wonderful, joy-filled event! From the Building Committee's hard work to get the acoustic panels up, to the baking team's delicious treats, to the cleanup crew, FCU came together to put on a very special evening. We're especially, deeply grateful to the stars of the evening, the Firehouse Band, whose beautiful concert was simply a joy from beginning to end. We are delighted to share that the Gala raised \$3,000 for the campaign!



Together, we've now raised over \$70,000 to care for our beloved church. We're off to a great start! If you have not made your pledge yet, you can find the pledge form at <http://www.fculittle.org/capitalcampaign>. If you have made a campaign commitment, please be sure we have a pledge form from you, as we need the written form for financial tracking.

Thank you, each and every one, for all you do to support First Church Unitarian.

## Committee Corner

### Transition Team

Have you signed up for a **Healing Conversation** yet? There's still time. *Your voice is important.*

Sign up in the Vestry or by contacting the church office for one of the following dates:

**Monday, February 9, 7:00-9:00 p.m.**

**Tuesday, March 9, 7:00-9:00 p.m.**

### Caring for Our Aging Parents (COAP)

**First Monday of the month, 7-9 p.m., in the Alliance Room**

The COAP Group continues to meet on the first Monday of each month. This has grown into a close, supportive group for those of us are dealing with issues related to caring for aging loved ones. Newcomers are warmly welcomed. Keep in mind that this is truly a support group with no agenda or goals or minutes.

For more info contact: [COAP@fculittle.org](mailto:COAP@fculittle.org)

## Sacred Circle Dance

**Friday, Feb. 12, in the Vestry**

The Circle resumes this month, with dances led by Amy Antonucci. Amy has several years of experience leading Sacred Circle Dance in Portsmouth, N.H., and is eager to meet you and share dance and fellowship at FCU. Let's give her a warm welcome, and at the same time usher out any winter blues that may be hovering. Community Circle at 7:00 p.m., with more challenging dances at 6:00. Don't forget your water bottle and a gentle, willing attitude.

## Member/Reach Committee

Have you wondered about the contents of those colorful gift bags that Steve brandishes on Sunday mornings? What exactly are we offering newcomers to our midst? You may have heard there is some chocolate in there. That is true. There is also a welcoming letter with an invitation to get to know us better through the web, through Facebook, and through direct contact with our Interim Minister. There are copies of fliers that talk about our Unitarian Universalist faith and our beautiful sanctuary quilt. There is a small candle affixed to a piece of paper stating: "May the light of this candle remind you of the Unitarian Universalist "Flaming Chalice" and a Faith that promotes love, acceptance, reason and justice." There is a wildflower seed packet with the attached message: "As Unitarian Universalists we promote respect for the interdependent web of all existence. We'd love to have you plant these seeds in celebration of the beauty of nature." And there is a card that has on it our vision statement: "We are a Joyful Welcoming Community where we: Honor Each; Explore the Sacred; Question Deeply; Seek Justice; Make a Difference."

Wouldn't you want one of your friends to receive one of these bags? It would be so simple.

**Ask them to join you some upcoming Sunday.**

*Joel Ross for Member/Reach*

## Share-the-Plate

On the third Sunday of each month, an international charity will receive all undesignated offerings and checks made out to the charity as a contribution from the First Church Unitarian congregation. If you would like to nominate an international charity please send an email to [stp@fculittle.org](mailto:stp@fculittle.org).

On Sunday, January 17, **FCU contributed \$849 to Room to Read**. I thank Barbara Heffner for being with us to share this important work promoting and enabling education and literacy.

### **February's Recipient**

We have selected **Tostan** to receive our Share-the-Plate offerings on February 21. Tostan's vision statement is simply "Dignity for All." They work in six West African countries promoting community-led change around women's empowerment, health, and child marriage practices. Please check them out at [www.tostan.org](http://www.tostan.org). It is a very interesting web site. Our own Susan Tordella will tell us more about their work.



## FCU Annual Camping Trip

What a beautiful time of year to start thinking about summer camping on the shores of Lake Dennison. Just imagine the fun you can have alongside other FCU campers! I can almost hear the joyful laughter of the children playing on the beach and chasing around my dogs. I can almost smell the fires and imagine the taste of the s'mores.

If you would like to be part of the fun, and would like to have a campsite near other FCU campers, the time to reserve your spot is almost here. We are planning to camp together the weekend before Labor Day weekend, August 26 through August 28. To reserve your campsite, go [www.reserveamerica.com](http://www.reserveamerica.com) and search for Lake Dennison Recreation Area. We'll be clustered in the sites from 110 - 117. They accept reservations anytime within 6 months of arrival, so I would suggest trying to **lock in your site February 26**—spots fill up very quickly. Please give me a call if you need further information.

*Joel Ross*



## **Multicultural Ministries Committee**

The Committee has continued to meet regularly and we are all excited about our upcoming activities:

### **Multicultural Film and Discussion Series**

**Friday, February 5, at 7:00 p.m. in the Vestry**

Please join the Multicultural Ministries Committee to view *The Vigil*, the story of Gina, an undocumented single mother who aspires to do more than just survive. The story follows her journey from living in fear of deportation to becoming a leader of a vigil on one of the toughest battlegrounds over immigration in the U.S.—Arizona. *The Vigil* is told from the point of view of Gina and the small group of determined immigrant women who join her to transform a vigil into a refuge for their community in the midst of the clash over Arizona's groundbreaking anti-immigration law, Senate Bill 1070. This is a story of those who are not considered American making American history. There will be time afterward to share our thoughts, feelings, and reactions to the film and, of course, refreshments!

These movies have been well attended by 20-30 people, most of whom are from outside our church. The discussions are lively and thought provoking.

### **Racism Here and Now – Let's Talk.**

**Feb. 27th 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.**

Watch your email for details about the next session of this series.

### **Racial Justice: Ending White Supremacy**

**8-week workshop offered by Ken Wagner**

**Begins Monday, March 7, 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.**

COMING SOON!!! Remember the terrific sermon that Ken Wagner did last year? – he's returning. In his MLK sermon, Steve so profoundly expressed how important it is to become aware of how we as white people collude with the racist system. Here's an opportunity to become more aware.

Workshops will be held on Monday evenings and include small group discussions. Pertinent readings will be provided. Even if you can't make an eight-week commitment, **please consider attending on March 7**, when Ken will give an introduction and overview of this workshop, which he has presented at a number of UU churches including Stow-Acton, Groton, and Northborough.

If you have questions about this excellent workshop, please contact Cindy Heiland, [cgheiland@mac.com](mailto:cgheiland@mac.com), who participated at Stow-Acton last Spring.

Enrollment is limited, and due to the nature of this program Ken requests that participants commit to attending all sessions. We appreciate Ken's generosity!



## Kids Matter(s)

### Gargoyle in the Garden—Winter Dreaming

Into that limbo between sleep and wakefulness comes a steady staccato stammer. “Someone answer the phone,” I think again and again, punctuating each beat with a sigh.

Slowly awareness seeps in through the bedroom window, open year round for air, of nature's wake-up call. High in the ancient sugar-maple the woodpecker sounds his message: “Wake up! Wake up! Wake up! The day has begun,” he insists.

Morning ablutions complete, I wander outside to greet the day and the woodpecker still busy in the tree just above my secret garden. The gargoyle listens, frozen, holding firm to its mysterious thoughts.

A shadow catches my eye. A skinny gray cat limps slowly away just beyond the garden's edge. Homeless, cold, injured, the sight breaks my heart. I call to him softly knowing he will not come. Determination and desperation driving him to find a meal and a warm place to sleep—or fear of humanity—keeps him away.

Can I erase his memories of hurtful touch, or of none at all? Should I try to help just this one, yet another in the long lost procession of suffering that passes by? Would he let me—let me try “to bring some portion of misery to an end?”


The same staccato stammer that rings throughout my life finds its way here where the lonely cat has drunk from the garden's fountain. Someone must answer this call. The gargoyle listens to the persistent woodpecker still searching inch by inch on that huge tree.

But now it is time for me to rise, prepared to enter the day, the world, perhaps to help another find a place in the garden.

*Vicki Merriam, Director of Spiritual Development for Children and Youth*

SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT CALENDAR	
2/7	Youth Group pancake breakfast; Spirit Play, Holidays & Holy Days, Breakfast Club, Senior High meet
2/14	Spirit Play, Holidays & Holy Days, Breakfast Club, and Coming of Age meet
2/21	Chapel Sunday: “Making Wishes, Claiming the Torch,” all ages
2/28	Multigenerational Worship: Our Hearts’ Desires



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<p><b>CHURCH OFFICE ADMINISTRATOR</b> Laura Beltrami <a href="mailto:office@fculittle.org">office@fculittle.org</a></p> <p><b>SEXTON</b> Henry Whitcomb, Jr. <a href="mailto:sexton@fculittle.org">sexton@fculittle.org</a></p> <p>Henry can also be reached via cellphone at 978.273.0170.</p>	<p><b>OTHER FCU CONTACTS</b></p> <p><b>LAY PASTORAL MINISTERS</b> <i>Lay Ministers offer a listening ear and pastoral attention to members of the congregation.</i> Thom Bentley, David Butz, Caroline Marvin, Jim Nehring, Patti Sardella <a href="mailto:laypastoralmin@fculittle.org">laypastoralmin@fculittle.org</a></p> <p><b>MEMBER-REACH COMMITTEE</b> Joel Ross, chair <a href="mailto:memberreach@fculittle.org">memberreach@fculittle.org</a></p>	<p><a href="mailto:announce@fculittle.org">announce@fculittle.org</a></p> <p>❖ Thursday, 10 a.m.</p> <p><b>The Bulletin</b> The March issue of the Bulletin will be the last. <a href="mailto:bulletin@fculittle.org">bulletin@fculittle.org</a></p> <p>❖ <b>Deadline: Thursday, February 18, 1 p.m.</b></p> <p><i>Items submitted after deadline may not be included.</i></p>



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