

# THE HERALD

First Church in Salem Newsletter

First  
Church  
in  
Salem,  
Unitarian  
Universalist

Dear Friends,

The streets are swarming with velvet cloaked, black hatted people so it must be October in Salem! It's been fun once again for me to get a peek at what life is like for you all in the fall. I know some of you kind of revel in this annual influx, and others, well, not so much!

Thank you for your hard work this fall on October Tours and Community Coffees, for inviting people in to see your beautiful sanctuary and learn a little about your long history in Salem. I'm sure it will be a very special memory that people take home with them from their travels.

As we move into November, we remember this is the time of Samhain, All Saints and All Souls. On Sunday Nov 5 we will bring back a tradition you told me you treasured, that of Diwali. I'll be leading worship that day with Rumni Saha, the Hindu Chaplain at Wellesley College. She'll preach and her husband who is an accomplished musician will sing. It should be a very special service, and I hope you can join us.

This month, you will be invited to fill out an online survey, the "Spirituality Snapshot Survey". It opens Nov 1 and closes on Nov 19. The survey includes questions about your own spiritual "language" an orientation, as well as your experience of spirituality and community at the church.

In this second year of interim ministry, the focus is on goal #2, identity. Who are we today? The hope is that you can articulate your identity as a congregation so ministerial candidates who apply will be better able to discern whether you and they would make a good "fit." You're going to want to know a lot about whatever candidates apply. Likewise, they are going to want to know a lot about you! So how would you describe yourself? What are some things you love about your church? Where are some "growing edges?" Congregations always work hard on the "minister's job description" and parishioners are asked to list different things they want or expect in a new minister. Similarly, candidates are going to want to know what they can expect from you, the congregation. What "norms" do you hold as a community for each other: is there anything you expect from each other? Physical presence at events or worship? Pledging? Giving of time in volunteer hours? Every congregation has a different "culture" around what it means to be a member.

Do you have any expectations at all of each other or is it more "anything goes." There is no "right" or "wrong" answer but the more accurately you can describe your culture to a candidate, the better. They want to know more about the community they might potentially serve.

In the new year we hope to have a "visioning for the future" brainstorm session. This would be a chance for you to "dream" a little about the church you aspire to be in a few years. Again, if you can paint this picture, it will help candidates know if they think they are the leader to help you get where you want to go.

And thanks again to those of you who participated in the book discussion on the UUA Common Read, On Repentance and Repair. I learned a lot from your comments and engagement.

In faith  
Jenny

## A HEARTY THANK YOU!

A big thank you goes out to our many church members and friends who volunteered a number of hours during October so that we could open the doors to our beautiful church and share it with visitors from all over the country (and even the globe!) We welcomed nearly 300 visitors over five nights! Additionally, we were able to hold a scaled back version of our parking fundraiser over four days and nights thanks to some volunteers who braved the weather and the crowds. The funds raised go directly to supporting the operating costs of the First Church.

Thank you to the following people:

Alicia Diozzi, Neil Alsip, Penny Bigmore, Ian Bigmore, Ginger Haneisen, Jane Arlander, Lynn Taggart, Hannah Diozzi, Jim Ognibene, Wolfgang Koch, Peggy MacNeil, Steve Palmer, Katherine Palmer, Anna Brandenburg, Stephanie Diozzi, Claire Donaldson, Valentina Burbank, Patricia Small, Ben Waxman, Nancy Peluso, Melody Lee, Holly Chase, Bob Soucy, Jake Hibbard, John Ninneman, Duncan Cox, Jeannine Helen, Kathleen Salas.




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## PASTORAL CARE TEAM

Our team supports members and friends of First Church who are ill or in need of comfort. We provide meals, rides, condolence cards, phone calls and visits to hospitals, nursing homes or at their home. A group of volunteers called Care Angels offers these services. If you know of someone in need, please contact Sally Millice 978-745-1632 or Sharon Corrigan 802-236-0054. You may also contact the church office who can reach us.

## CELEBRATING DIWALI ON SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 5TH

First Church is very happy to return to a treasured tradition of celebrating Diwali. A custom begun in the last decade or so, the opportunity to celebrate in the last few years has not been available. When drawing wisdom from a spiritual tradition that is not our own, it is wise and respectful to invite practitioners from that spiritual tradition to lead and to teach us. This year we are delighted to host guest preacher, Rumni Saha, the Hindu Chaplain at Wellesley College and her musician husband Somen.

Rumni Saha considers herself to be a proud Hindu, a Unitarian Universalist, and a humanist. Rumni has a Master of Education degree from Boston University. She was a Public School Educator for 21 years, and in 2020 decided to give up a job that she loved to attend Seminary. In May of 2023, Rumni graduated from the Boston University School of Theology with a Master of Divinity Degree with a Certificate in Religion and Conflict Transformation. Rumni is the Hindu Chaplain at Wellesley College. She is excited to see what comes next and is currently discerning ordination. She is also an active member of the Unitarian Church of Sharon, where she has lived with her family since 2001. Rumni has been a writer, a newspaper columnist, and a long-time contributor to the Huffington Post. Rumni considers India, her home country, as having given her roots and her adopted country, her wings.

Diwali is a significant festival in Hinduism, Jainism and Sikhism. In a multicultural and diverse country like India, everyone has their own way of celebrating this festival. It is celebrated as the festival of lights, during which homes are decorated with candles. While the story of Diwali varies from region to region, its essence remains the same. People learn to rejoice in the inner light and the underlying reality of things.



## LIFESPAN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

October was a busy month for all ages in Lifespan RE! We baked bread, picked apples, learned about Salem's history, and had lots of Halloween fun. The children and youth have been exploring the concept of Individual Identity, as we prepare to move into a discussion of UU Identity.

We have some great events coming up this month as well. Highlights include a Gratitude-themed Story Slam, a volunteer slot at the Salem Food Pantry, and a Thanksgiving celebration in Sunday School. See below for more details about each event.

Throughout the month of November, there will be a Gratitude Tree in the Cleveland Room. Anyone is welcome at any time to take a paper leaf, write something you are grateful for, and put it on the tree. Make sure you take some time to look at what others have written as well! By the end of the month, we will have a beautiful decoration to enjoy full of messages from our community.

Believe it or not, we will begin preparing for our Christmas Pageant on November 5! This will be our Pageant Casting day. More information below.

Theo Burbank  
Director of Lifespan Religious Education



### November Dates and Details for Monthly Events:

Community Coffee, Nov. 14, 10:30-12

Crafting Open Studio, Nov. 15, 4-6:30 (Spotlight Craft: 3D Cards with Helen)

Third Age Book Club, Nov. 16, 11:30-1 (Discussing The Swedish Art of Exuberant Aging by Margareth Magnussen, Chapter 4)

Soul Matters Sharing Circle, Nov. 19 @ 12:30 (Monthly theme: Generosity)

## CHILDREN AND YOUTH PROGRAMMING:

**Pageant Casting**, Nov. 5 After Service: This is an opportunity for you to talk to our director, Max Burbank, about what kind of role you would like in the pageant and do a little reading from a previous script. Every child or youth who wants to and can commit to rehearsals can participate in the pageant, and there are plenty of non-speaking roles for younger children or children who are nervous about having lines. Rehearsals will be after church on 11/12, 11/19, 12/3, and 12/10, with a dress rehearsal on Saturday 12/16. Young children and non-speaking roles will not need to stay for the entirety of rehearsals. If you have any questions or if your child would like to participate but cannot make the November 5 casting date, please contact me at [fcreligioused@gmail.com](mailto:fcreligioused@gmail.com).

**Sunday School Thanksgiving Celebration**, Nov. 19: On the Sunday before Thanksgiving, all children and youth ages 5 and up will gather together downstairs for a special Thanksgiving celebration. We will have craft stations, games, and a discussion of the holiday.

**No RE (Childcare provided), Nov. 26**: On the Sunday after Thanksgiving, there will be no Sunday School programming. There will be childcare for all ages available.

## INTERGEN AND ADULT PROGRAMMING:

**Holiday Care Kits**, Tuesdays @ 10: We will once again prepare gift bags for our elderly and shut in members and friends for the holiday season. A group of interested folks will meet Tuesdays at 10:00 in the Barnard Room. Our initial meeting will be Tuesday November 7 to plan the project. If you are interested please plan to join us. All are welcome.

**Holiday Outreach Sign-Ups**, Sun. Nov 12: This year, First Church will be providing holiday gifts for Clothing Connection and Plummer Youth Promise. Come by the sign-up table during Fellowship to pick up a gift request! We will also need a few volunteers to help us transport gifts in early December. Reach out to Theo at [fcreligioused@gmail.com](mailto:fcreligioused@gmail.com) if you're interested.

**First Church Volunteers with Salem Food Pantry**, Thurs. Nov. 30, 9-11: Join fellow First Church Community members at the Salem Food Pantry warehouse to volunteer for a few hours. While there, we will also have the opportunity to tour the warehouse and learn more about how the Salem Food Pantry is helping fight food insecurity in our community.

Participants must register by Nov. 23rd so that I can let SFP know how many people will be in our party. You can register [Here](#).

## FROM YOUR TRANSITION TEAM

### *Learnings from Our Community Conversations, A Letter*

Dear Members and Friends of First Church UU in Salem,

The Transition Team wants to thank everyone who participated in the Community Conversations last spring. One of the most important outcomes of the conversations is that they provided the opportunity for people to talk to one another about difficult topics within a safe structure. The Transition Team greatly appreciates your candor and willingness to engage in this process. We have reviewed the comments that you shared during these meeting and have come up with a few takeaways which we have summarized here:

1. We were used to a very minister-centric style, with much of the congregational energy and engagement dependent on the personal charisma of the minister. We carried many of the norms from Jeff's time with us forward as more or less unexamined assumptions about what ministers do and what ministers are like. This made it difficult to adjust to a minister who had a very different personal style, and who brought a different set of assumptions about congregational life to the job.
2. We are not skillful at handling the kinds of conflicts that are common in any organization such as personality conflicts (e.g. "Rev. Elizabeth is not friendly") and differences of opinion (e.g., "We should / should not return to in-person services while COVID is still an epidemic"), among others. We don't really have a well-understood model for surfacing and resolving things like this in a constructive way. When people were unhappy, it wasn't always clear to them where to go or who to talk to. People did not necessarily view the Standing Committee members as their elected representatives to whom they could address a problem or issue. While conflicts with Rev. Elizabeth were being addressed by the Standing Committee this process was confidential and not transparent to the congregation. Rumors spread, folks had triangulated conversations, and as anxiety mounted, some people took action on their own, not always in constructive ways.
3. There was a lot of congregational behavior that some (perhaps many) found troubling or harmful such as gossip, rumors, secretive "back-channel" communications, and debate via email. However, there is no consensus about which actions were harmful and which were not. Likewise, there is no consensus about what, if anything, we need to do to resolve remaining tensions within the congregation. We lack a common understanding of basic relational norms – what is acceptable and what is not. The congregation remains divided on whether harm was caused by the way in which we dealt with Rev. Elizabeth, and if harm was caused, what should be done about it. While some people feel a need for naming and accounting for harmful actions, others just want to "put it all behind us" and move forward.

4. In our first three Community Conversations much of the focus was on blaming Rev. Elizabeth for things that went badly. We didn't agree on what we didn't like, but things had gone wrong. We added a fourth conversation particularly to focus our attention on the role the congregation itself played in what went wrong. This helped the congregation's focus shift to identifying what we didn't know about things like shared ministry, what more we might have done to welcome Elizabeth, and how to deal with our concerns sooner and in a more direct way.

We invite your feedback and comments on these observations. Please reach out to us.

Sincerely,

The Transition Team

Russell Lane, Melody Lee, Deborah Greel, Jerrie Hildebrand, and Eric Kenney

### ***News & Updates***

Thanks to everyone who attended the book groups to discuss the UUA Common Read On Repentance and Repair on October 19. It was wonderful to engage in substantive discussions with you about this important book. This November, we are offering two all-congregational events. First, the Transition Team is conducting "**A Spirituality Snapshot Survey**." This 20-question survey gives you a chance to let us know more about the way you view spirituality and how the church aligns with your needs. The survey will be available online and in print from November 1 – 20. Please make your voice heard. We hope to get robust participation to help us gain a better understanding of our identity as a congregation.

Second, to celebrate this time of gathering-in after harvest, we are hosting a Community Potluck on Wednesday, November 8, 2023, from 6 to 8 pm in the Cleveland and Barnard Rooms. We will share food and stories about what brought us to First Church UU in Salem and what inspires us to keep coming back. We hope to see you there. **Please sign up here** to let us know what you are bringing. We need 20 people to sign up by Sunday, November 5, for this event to happen.

#### **Transition Team by the Numbers**

- 5 Transition Team member gave pulpit editorials on Sept. 24
- 40 books ordered from UUA for Common Read
- 30 books taken by parishioners

**16 people participated in Zoom discussion of Common Read, On Repentance and Repair**





# FIRST CHURCH COMMUNICATIONS

## Connect with Members and Friends

To connect with members of committees or leadership at First Church please use our online Directory. This can be accessed through your Breeze account: [firstchurchinsalem.breezechms.com](http://firstchurchinsalem.breezechms.com) Under 'Tags' you will find "Online Directory". Updated printed Directories will be made available quarterly. Please feel free to contact Catherine at [firstchurchinsalem@gmail.com](mailto:firstchurchinsalem@gmail.com) as well. First Church in Salem can also be found on social media!



## Contact the Staff

Rev. Jenny Rankin, Interim Minister: [jrankin@firstchurchinsalem.org](mailto:jrankin@firstchurchinsalem.org)  
 Catherine Bertrand, Congregational Administrator: [firstchurchinsalem@gmail.com](mailto:firstchurchinsalem@gmail.com)  
 Theo Burbank, Director of Lifespan Education: [fcreligioused@gmail.com](mailto:fcreligioused@gmail.com)  
 Michael Kraft, Music Director: [music@firstchurchinsalem.org](mailto:music@firstchurchinsalem.org)

## Get the Word Out!

We want all of our events and meetings at First Church to be well attended and successful. The First Church staff is here to help you get the word out about your ministry event or need! We strive to reflect the heart of your event while maintaining the best practices to ensure effectiveness, clarity, and consistency.

All communications for publication must be submitted via email to [firstchurchcomm@gmail.com](mailto:firstchurchcomm@gmail.com).

### Monthly Newsletter: The Herald

We have a monthly newsletter that is sent either on the first of every month or the Friday before the first Sunday of each month.

- Publication Dates: Around the 1st of each month
- Materials Deadline for publication: The 15th of each month

### Weekly Newsletter: e-Herald

We have a weekly email newsletter that is sent by 2pm on Fridays.

- Deadline for publication: Every Thursday by 10am.
- Articles about church related items or events are welcome. Photos and other images are welcome, however, those that are blurry, out of focus, or may violate copyrights may be excluded.
- Things to include as necessary:
  - Contact name and info for committee/team or an individual if your article asks readers to take an action. Consider that many people no longer have house phone lines; it's good to indicate if texting is preferred. Phone numbers should also include area codes.
  - Date and time of event.
  - Location.

### Order of Service & Sunday Verbal Announcements

- Print Deadline: Every Thursday by 10am
- In-Person Announcement Deadline: Every Friday by 10am
- Announcements submissions are 75 words or less (three brief sentences) - not including the title, and date and time, if needed.

Verbal announcements should follow print guidelines regarding length. If your news is a repeat announcement or something longer than a few sentences, please reach out to discuss the possibility of a pulpit editorial or offertory reflection.

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 Congregational Administrator: Catherine Bertrand  
 Director of Lifespan Education: Theo Burbank  
 Sexton: Billy McCarthy  
 Chair of the Standing Committee: Steve Palmer  
 Chair of the Deacons: Lynn Taggart  
 Director of Henny Penny: Tricia Pini

## >>> November 2023

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
29	30	31	1	2	3	4
5 10:30am Sunday Service & Religious Ed	6	7 9am Staff & Worship Meeting 10:30am Holiday Care Crafters	8 6pm Community Potluck	9	10 Henny Penny Closed	11 Veterans Day 9am Choir Rehearsal
12 9am Choir Rehearsal 10:30am Sunday Service & Religious Ed 11:30am Standing Cmte Open House Holiday Outreach Sign-Ups	13	14 10am Community Coffee 10:30am Holiday Care Crafters 12pm Staff & Worship Meeting 7pm Spiritual Reading	15 December Herald Submissions Due 4pm Crafting Open Studio 6pm Transition Team 7pm Standing Committee	16 11:30am Third Age Book Club	17	18 9am Choir Rehearsal
19 9am Choir Rehearsal 10:30am Sunday Service & Religious Ed 12:30pm Soul Matters	20	21 10:30am Holiday Care Crafters	22 Church Office Closed Henny Penny Closed	23 Church Office Closed Thanksgiving Day Henny Penny Closed	24 Church Office Closed Henny Penny Closed	25
26 10:30am Sunday Service & Religious Ed	27	28 10:30am Holiday Care Crafters 12pm Staff & Worship Meeting	29	30 9am Volunteer with Salem Food Pantry	1	2 10am Holiday Maker Space