



# The Mystic Messenger

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## September • October • November

Welcome, Courage, Abundance

### Welcome!

By Rev. Heather Janules

Every weekday morning, the radio station I listen to plays a number of songs centered on a theme. The theme usually has something to do with what's going on in the local area or the world.

Recently, the station played a number of songs with the idea or phrase of "holding on" to summer. I understand the impulse. I can't help but notice subtle changes in the air that signal the coming of autumn. My calendar is now becoming full of meetings, events and tasks, indicative of busier times ahead. A recent visit to the Great North Woods of New Hampshire revealed at least one tree already transitioning to bright red. What I know and love about summer is slipping away.

This is what makes "welcoming" sometimes difficult. To truly be a people of "welcome" is to open ourselves to change, not only the changes we want but also the ones over which we have little or no control. Receiving the gifts and the challenges of change—this is what makes welcoming a spiritual practice.

Like my radio station, we at WUS also focus on themes. The month of September will center on the questions, experiences and spiritual practice of "welcome."

We begin on September 10<sup>th</sup> with Water Communion. We invite you to bring a little water to this service, whether it comes from some place far away or a puddle in your local park, to symbolize what you cherish and what you contribute to the common vessel that is the WUS community. (The water I will contribute comes from a mineral spring in Korond, gathered as part of our recent pilgrimage to our Partner Church in Transylva-

nia.) Don't worry if you forget your water; we will have lots of "symbolic" water on hand to pour. As is our Opening Sunday tradition, a potluck will follow the service. So also "welcome" your appetite!

On September 17<sup>th</sup>, we explore the modern Sanctuary movement, offering refuge to undocumented migrants within houses of worship, and what this might mean for our congregation. A conversation with the Standing Committee's Sanctuary Task Force, including leaders from the wider community involved in Sanctuary work, will follow the service.

September 17<sup>th</sup> is also "bring a friend" Sunday. Along with wanting to share what is special about WUS with others, we hope to engage many – within our congregation and beyond—in discernment about how to respond in the anti-immigrant environment in which we live.

September 24<sup>th</sup> will honor the High Holy Days of Judaism by exploring interpersonal reconciliation, a practice extending from the individual seeking forgiveness from the Holy for how they have treated others. When we seek reconciliation, we welcome the anger, pain and shame often born of conflict but also a new or renewed relationship. This kind of spiritual welcome requires remarkable curiosity and courage; the collective nature of

*(continued on p. 5)*



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## Rev. Heather writes on... Abundance

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We are invited to consider “abundance” in November, not only through this month’s theme but through the holiday of Thanksgiving. I have come to cherish Thanksgiving, not for its mythological narrative about native peoples and European colonists or for its celebration of gluttony but for simply turning us towards the human experience of gratitude. Gratitude for what we have. Gratitude for what is.

I have often quoted a colleague who would say to members of the congregation he served “It seems like life is coming at you in bulk” as they met in his office to reflect on the member’s personal challenges. How often do we find ourselves or someone we love in this state of painful “abundance,” swimming in situations and problems that only compound one another? In these times, the emptiness of the saying “God doesn’t give you more than you can handle” becomes apparent.

It is easy to feel grateful in times of abundant stability and joy. The spiritual challenge is to find gratitude in times when, to be honest, we can’t handle the life that is emerging before us. The challenge is to be present to the things that make us afraid or depleted or feel hurt and to find gift in these things too.

I am grateful to the ministry of Forrest Church. Then-minister of All Souls Church in NYC, he was successfully treated for cancer, but the disease returned, terminal this time. For a narrow window of time, Church’s ministry was defined by the public knowledge of his diminishing lifespan, giving him an opportunity to speak to human mortality in a way he never was able to before.

In one sermon, he names why he does not feel sorry

for himself. Drawing on the truths of science, he goes back in time, naming the wild improbabilities that led to his birth, never mind human life in the first place. Church reminds us that, even in our greatest suffering and grief, the mere reality of being alive, to be challenged in this way, is an extraordinary blessing.

We need this reminder in the times when gratitude doesn’t come easily. We need reminders like what Forrest Church called his “mantra”: “Want what you have. Do what you can. Be who you are.”

When I think of “abundance” and Church’s wise words, I recall a story from another colleague. He was leading a tour in India. Along with visiting the famous and holy sites,

this minister and members of his congregation visited a family of trash pickers. As one would imagine, the dwelling was small and indicative of the grinding poverty this family lived in, day after day.

But despite their meager resources, the family invited the American delegation to enjoy a cup of tea. We can assume that it was not easy for this family to provide for such a large group. And it was not easy for this group of wealthy travelers to accept this gift of hospitality from those who had so little. And, yet, they saw the authenticity of their hosts’ welcome, people who were poor in resources but who obviously had much to give. People who knew abundance.

So they accepted the invitation, sat, drank and spoke together, feeling gratitude for the moment. Gratitude for what they had. Gratitude for what is. ©



*The height of sunflower season in Transylvania, July 2017.*

## The Winchester Unitarian Society and the Sanctuary Movement

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Since the beginning of the Trump presidency, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has taken aggressive action towards undocumented immigrants, regardless of criminal status or family situation (such as undocumented parents of children born here.) The result is families living in significant fear of deportation.

A number of faith communities have felt called to take action. There is historical precedent for houses of worship serving as “sensitive locations,” places where ICE does not arrest undocumented migrants for deportation, inspiring undocumented people take legal refuge in the buildings of such institutions. Congregations, across denominations, are now providing or preparing to provide such asylum. Others are organizing to support hosting congregations.

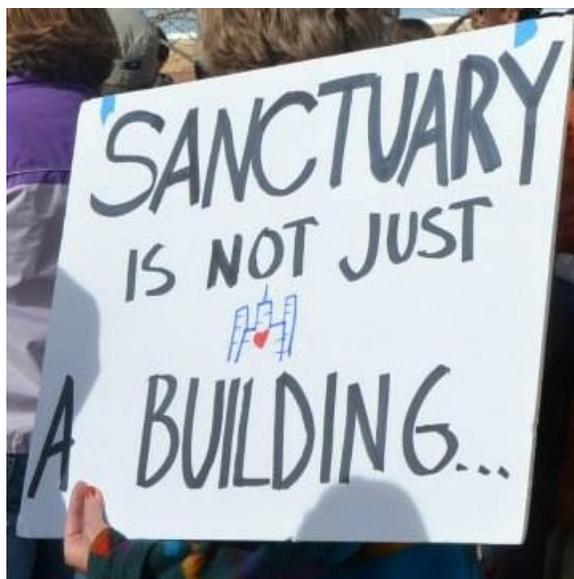
We have spoken to several churches in our area and beyond to learn from their experiences. The list includes Unitarian Universalist congregations in Cambridge, Bedford, Boston, Brookline and Bethesda, Maryland.

Our discernment process with our congregation begins in earnest this Fall. WUS will decide whether we host (Level 1), support a house of worship that is preparing to or providing sanctuary (Level 2) or decline to participate.

Based on our benchmarking to date, the task force recommends declaring ourselves a Level 2 congregation. The Lutheran Church is Harvard Square is currently housing an undocumented immigrant and her child. This church has ten houses of worship sup-

porting it. We know that First Parish in Bedford has determined by a congregational vote to become a Level 1 Sanctuary Church. At a minimum, Bedford would need seven houses of worship to support it - one for each day of the week.

All options would be on the table during our discernment process. During this process, we will also discuss and address logistics, the legality of “harboring” an undocumented immigrant and current and proposed Massachusetts legislation.



In addition to open discussions with the congregation, Reverend Heather will preach on the sanctuary movement on September 17<sup>th</sup> with a follow up conversation afterwards. We have invited and expect a representative from the First Parish in Bedford to be part of the conversation. Other congregational educational opportunities may include speakers, films like *120 Days*, training and interfaith outreach. We expect this process to take two to three months before a congregational vote.

If you have any questions about our approach or initial recommendation, please consult any member of the Sanctuary Task Force: Marilyn Mullane, Rebecca Keller, Woody Wood and Rev. Heather Janules. We also encourage you to read the June 1st issue of *The Mystic Messenger* featuring reflections by our youth who participated in a border justice trip in Arizona. Their witness serves as a guide as we consider how we feel called to act in these times. ©

**Hospitality is one form of worship.**  
—Jewish proverb

# Music in the Sanctuary: 2017-18 Concert Series

Friday, November 10th, 8pm  
**Brahms**

## Chamber Music

Cello Sonata in F Major, Op. 99  
Clarinet Sonata in Eb Major, Op. 120 No. 2  
Clarinet Trio in A minor, Op. 114



Katherine Matasy,  
Clarinet  
Sam Ou, Cello  
John Kramer, Piano

Friday, January 26th, 8pm  
**Jazz in the Sanctuary**

Every year, *Jazz in the Sanctuary* brings some of Boston's best freelance jazz players to Winchester for a fabulous night of music. This year's theme is food: think Salt Peanuts, Watermelon Man, and Scapple from the Apple.



Friday, March 16th, 8 pm  
**Vance Gilbert**



With ten critically acclaimed albums, Vance Gilbert continues to refine his unlikely union of humor, virtuosity, and the unexpected. Whether with classic, original songwriting or ageless interpretations of covers, his is a presentation steeped in deep humanism and bravery, stunning artistry and soul, and contagious, unbridled joy. Vance is now on tour with his brand new CD, "Bad Dog Buffet." [www.vancegilbert.com](http://www.vancegilbert.com)

These concerts are made possible by your generous contributions.

**Please consider becoming a concert series sponsor.**

**Sponsors \$125 | Forte Sponsors \$200 | Fortissimo Sponsors \$300**

Tickets for all events will be available at the door.

\$20 adults | \$15 seniors | \$5 students

*The sanctuary is wheelchair accessible.*

## Qi Gong: Cultivating Life Force

By Deborah Morgan Bennett

A Chinese proverb says, in essence, "stress is the bamboo trying to move the wind." Oh, how often we are in the role of the bamboo! But some of us have realized that peace is in our resilience and our ability to bend with—instead of against—the winds of life.

So how do we cultivate that resilience? Thousands of years ago, Taoist practitioners began to develop a movement practice to cultivate and work with (*gong*) the vital life force energy (*qi*) that exists in and around our bodies. When properly cultivated, this energy could become very powerful. When respected for the power that it was, this life force could be directed for healing and vitality. With the recognition of this vital energy also came the ability to relax, bend, and flow with



life, instead of resisting.

On the outside, *qi gong* can look like little more than gentle exercises and focused breathing. But folks who've been attending classes this summer at WUS report a general feeling of calm and balance, plus relief from insomnia and from joint stiffness.

It has been a terrific summer of leading these classes and learning to be the bamboo in the wind. There is an amazing opportunity for you to learn from one of my teachers—someone who has studied for over 25 years with many masters in China, Thailand and the US! His name is Lee Holden and he will be at WUS October 27 and 28. Look for [posters](#) in the church and details in *Highlights*. I'll be with Lee both days and I really hope you will join us to experience the power and beauty of this ancient practice.

May you recognize and cultivate the *qi* that is always with you! @

## Looking Ahead to October's Theme: Courage

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*"Courage doesn't always roar."* —Mary Anne Radmacher

Courageous people change the world and always have. This autumn we celebrate courageous history makers and world shapers. In October, we will celebrate LGBTQ history month, and those who bravely moved and continue to move our world in the direction of greater acceptance and affirmation for all expressions of love and self. Mohandas Gandhi, born on October 2<sup>nd</sup> more than a century ago, transformed the face of India through his prophetic witness of peace. Protestants around the world, celebrate October 31<sup>st</sup> as Reformation Day to commemorate Martin Luther's courage in confronting religious authority. We honor giants such as these.

Most of us aren't that large or tall. But is it true that we are small and insignificant? Consider that, in addition to heroic acts that alter the face of history, there are daily acts, daily choices, that prevent history from altering us. Those are found in the ordinary work of living with integrity and staying true to beliefs and values in the face of pressure to conform or go along to get along. There's bravery in embracing your own physical beauty even when it doesn't fit in with the air-brushed images surrounding you. There's courage in calling out the micro-aggressions that pervade our workplaces and communities. What of the fortitude it takes to resist the persistent seduction of status and stuff? The list is long: Turning down a drink one day at a time. Making yourself get out of bed when depression tells you there's nothing to get up for. Holding your partner's hand in public. Each day, we rise up with ordinary, but potent, acts of courage.

Daily courage is not only noble; it's contagious. The stories of courage that make it into history books may be saving the world, but our ordinary courage keeps us inside that "long arc of the Universe bending toward justice." Watching someone



else make it through another day helps us to endure our own travail. Witnessing another confront bigotry allows us to bravely be more open about who we are. It is said that courage is found by digging deep, and we can add that it is also passed on.

Don't worry if you haven't changed the world yet. Refrain from comparing yourself with those giants of history. Our work is here and now, as we look toward and gain strength from each other. Our work is in remembering others who look toward us and what strength we may offer them by the example of our lives and our actions. Take courage and inspiration in the truth that we are not now, and not ever, alone. ©

*This reflection on "courage" is part of the Soul Matters curriculum for small groups for the month of October. The Winchester Unitarian Society is a "Soul Matters" congregation. Soul Matters ([www.soulmatterssharingcircle.com](http://www.soulmatterssharingcircle.com)) is a subscription-based network of UU communities that share theme-centered resources for worship, small group ministry and faith formation.*

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### *Welcome, continued fr. p. 1*

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this annual practice reminds us that we are not alone in this hard work.

This month is also part of a theme the staff has chosen for this year—"building and crossing bridges." A common saying these days is "build bridges, not walls." So much feeds into the human impulse to isolate, to separate, to dehumanize and to be dehumanized. How do we counter barriers with openness? How do we create new connections when it is easier to succumb to fear of the "other"? Including "the other" within ourselves? At its best, a faith community like WUS is a place where we can explore responses to these questions.

We welcome you—with your wonderings, with your needs, your hopes, your gifts and your acts of service—to a new year at the Winchester Unitarian Society. What happens next is unknown. And what happens next is up to all of us. May you be blessed—may we be blessed—as we travel across this bridge of time together... ©



# Six-Word Stories of WUS

...offered to you by the 2016-17 Standing Committee

Invite all, welcome  
and nurture. Thrive!

Turn toward  
faith, peace,  
and love.

Come,  
you will connect  
and celebrate!

Offer, promote  
and execute  
your passion.

Our  
journey  
now  
our  
whole  
lives.

To seek,  
to learn,  
to serve.

Get outside your comfort zone.

Come  
whoever you are  
and  
grow.

Inspired intergenerational community,  
service, and joy.

What are YOUR  
six words?

Email them to [office@winchesteruu.org](mailto:office@winchesteruu.org)

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