



THE WINCHENDON UNITARIAN

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WORSHIP SERVICE 5 P.M.

P. O. Box 218, Winchendon MA, 01475

**This is the Church of the Open Mind
This is the Church of the Helping Hands**

**This is the Church of the Loving Heart
This is the Church of the Caring Community**

DECEMBER



Calendar of Church Events

- Sunday, Dec. 1, 4:30 PM. Children's Choir**
- Sunday, Dec. 1, 5 PM. Sunday Worship: Chalice Circle on Hanukah**
- Sunday, Dec. 1, 6 PM. Light Potluck supper**
- Monday, Dec. 2, 6:30 PM. Governing Board Meeting, John White's. Church members invited**
- Monday, Dec. 2, 7 PM. AA meeting
- Tuesday, Dec. 3, 4:30 PM Brownies
- Sunday, Dec. 8, 4:30 PM. Children's Choir**
- Sunday, Dec. 8, 5 PM. Sunday Worship: Ms. Arthen**
- Sunday, Dec. 8, 6 PM. Light Potluck supper**
- Monday, Dec. 9, 7 PM. AA meeting
- Tuesday, Dec. 10, 4:30 PM Brownies
- Sunday, Dec. 15, 4:30 PM. Children's Choir**
- Sunday, Dec. 15, 5 PM. Sunday Worship: Road to Damascus**
- Sunday, Dec. 15, 6 PM. Light Potluck supper**
- Thursday, Dec. 19, 5:30 PM. Our Neighbors Kitchen. (low price meal – everyone invited)
- Sunday, Dec. 22, 10 AM. Sunday Worship at First Parish Church in Ashby**
- Monday, Dec. 23, 7 PM. AA meeting

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**Annual Christmas Eve
Service**

Tuesday, Dec. 24 at 7 PM

Everyone Invited

FROM YOUR MINISTER

We're heading now into the shortest days of the year, mere spacers between the long dark nights. It's hard to remember that just as winter's harshest weather is starting to bear down, the solar tides turn and the days will begin to lengthen again. We plunge into icy water, holding our breath as we sink deeper and deeper, until our toes touch the bottom and we push ourselves upward toward the surface once more. That's the Winter Solstice—the time when we touch bottom and reach again for the sky.

Festivals of fire and light at the Winter Solstice are among the most universal holidays. The births of many solar and fiery warrior gods and heroes, the festivals of Astarte and Ishtar, the Roman Saturnalia, the Nordic Yule, Hanukkah, Christmas, all were celebrated in the Northern Hemisphere at the turning of the year. It's interesting to note how many of these celebrations lasted for a stretch of days, extending up to and beyond the Solstice. Advent begins four weeks before Christmas, with an additional candle

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lit each Sunday. Hanukkah candles are lit for nine nights, one more candle each night. The Saturnalia lasted for two weeks. In the Orthodox Church, Christmas continues for twelve days, culminating in Epiphany or Twelfth Night on January 6.

An old saying affirms, "It is better to light a single candle than to curse the darkness." In December, we feel compelled to kindle as many candles, lamps and fires as we possibly can. Most of us, sensibly, utilize safer electric lights for our homes, although the old-fashioned candle will never lose its serene and mystical fascination. We drape strings of lights around our houses, a custom that goes all the way back to ancient Egypt when oil lamps were set in niches on outside walls to honor the birth of the god Horus. We decorate trees and bushes with lights, calling them back to life and warmth. A favorite tradition here in New England is electric candles in windows. A light in a window is a signal to the outside world: *Here is home. Here is warmth, family, friendship, community, hospitality, love. You are expected. You are awaited. You are welcome.* Houses with thirty windows will have a small light burning in each one, even the attic.



Few of us dance around Solstice bonfires in modern times, but you'll find a few of them roaring away for those hardy souls who gather around them with hot cocoa or other warming brews. But the fireplace is central to our

December celebrations. Our children hang stockings from the mantel and we display our Christmas cards there. We decorate the hearth with greenery. Even if we seldom use our fireplace the rest of the year, we'll have a fire going on Christmas Eve or for the Open House we host for our friends. Fireplaces and woodstoves that see daily use are even more appreciated and seem even more warming and cheering, as December draws to a close.

But far more important than the lights we plug into outlets are the lights that shine from our hearts

RE NEWS

Sue Faucher has led the RE kids in making seasonal crafts. Some of their creations have decorated the tables for Our Neighbor's Kitchen and the potluck dinner after our joint congregational service on November 3. On November 17, the kids drew images of their heroes to tie in with the main theme of the Sunday service, heroes and leadership.

Rev. Michele LaGrave presented a participatory Story for All Ages for the service on November 3, for which all the kids (and adults) contributed "props" as Michele told a version of the "Stone Soup" folk tale. We were all very entertained.

The children's choir sang "Open the Door" as part of the service on November 17 and did a wonderful job. We have some talented young musicians! Our Music Director, Lucinda Ellert, would love to welcome more children to the choir, which rehearses on Sunday afternoons at 4:30 p.m. Please contact us if your child would be interested in participating.

The children will be taking part in the Christmas Eve service, and we'll need to start planning very soon, so talk to Sue Faucher, Lucinda or me if your child would like to have an active part in the service.

Inanna Arthen, M. Div.

Director of RE

and spirits. This is a time of year when we sincerely want to reach out and help others. We offer donations of food, clothing, and children's toys, and pitch in to volunteer at events. We send gifts of money to organizations. Many people visit their church for one of the few times in the year, which has led to a joke among ministers that they'd be happy to decorate the church with poinsettias all year round if they'd make the sanctuary look more familiar.

In Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, written in 1843, Ebenezer Scrooge promises, "I will honor Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year." We sometimes forget that the generosity and compassion we feel when darkness and cold cloak all of us alike is just as needed in the spring and summer and fall. Our churches welcome us just as warmly and have just as much to offer throughout the year as they do when we pass a candle flame around the sanctuary on Christmas Eve.

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FROM THE CHAIR OF THE GOVERNING BOARD

November was a slow month at the church. What follows are the highlights from reports, decisions, discussions, and activities taken by the Governing Board and the congregation this month.

Since late last spring an effort has been underway across several of our neighboring North Central Massachusetts Unitarian Universalist



Congregations to jointly work toward becoming "Welcoming Congregations." For those not familiar, the Welcoming Congregations Program has helped Unitarian Universalist congregations become more welcoming and inclusive to those of all sexual orientations and gender identities over the past 20 years. The Program offers a structured process of education, reflection and action leading to a congregational vote and recognition by the Unitarian Universalist Association. With the blessing of the Governing Board, on November 5th Inanna Arthen and I attended a meeting to organize some of our local cluster of churches to become Welcoming Congregations. We were joined in Fitchburg by ministers and members from the Athol, Ashby, and Fitchburg congregations. We begin this 18 month journey with a first step in January at home in Winchendon with our local congregation. The second step is scheduled to a joint service / discussion in February with a speaker at First Parish Unitarian Universalist in Fitchburg.

Religious Education is stabilizing from the changes at the beginning of the year with Sue Faucher as the main Teacher, Inanna filling the role of Director of Religious Education, and Heather LaChance assisting in the classes. Throughout October and November, Sue has sought to find the right mix of education and activity for the children. Our Neighbor's Kitchen has been a beneficiary of these

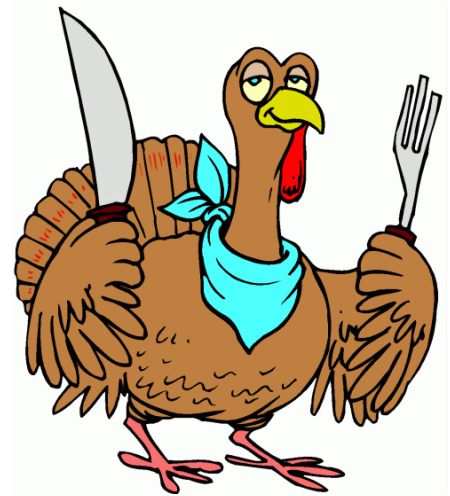
art projects as the children have allowed their craft projects to become decorations for the tables at the dinners. We also can happily note that the average attendance went up in November from 6 to 8 children.

Christmas Eve service's planning is well underway. Inanna is looking forward to leading the service. The Board voted, unanimously, to donate 100% of the collection from that evening service to the Winchendon Community Action Committee for the support of families in the community.

Toy Town Tunes returned this month to our parish hall on November 15th. Like last winter's it was very loud. Brian Dickens leads this effort in highlighting local singer/song writers across musical genres. November's performances started off with a mix of acoustic and rock bringing life to downtown Winchendon a cold fall night.

Our Neighbor's Kitchen had its 3rd Annual Turkey Dinner on November 21st. Six turkeys, 30 lbs. of mashed potatoes, 16 lbs. of candied carrots, 12 lbs. of green bean casserole, many pounds of stuffing, Waldorf salad, and over 100 dinner rolls later a good meal was had by everyone who attended. We had a full crew of volunteers that day. Amy and the crew from the Winchendon School came to help

serve and brought brownies for desert. From UU Ashby Catherine Dart, Liz Strong, and Ward Clark helped serving and cleanup. Margaret Hawthorn and the guys from Camelot Farm assisted in serving, cleanup, and putting away the



chairs. Katherine, Maddy, Mary Ann, and Sue Faucher set the tables. John White helped set tables, manning the door, and handling the money. In addition Sue, Audrey Faucher, and I did prep-work and prepared the dinner. There was plenty of hard work but it was a lot of fun. I would personally like to thank everyone involved in making this annual event a success again this year. Mark your calendar the

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Governing Board chair, Continued on page 5)

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I look forward to seeing you at 7:00 p.m. on Christmas Eve for our traditional candle lighting service. But please join us for Sunday service at 5:00 p.m. on December 1 and December 8 and December 15. Come share a delicious meal with your community at Our Neighbor's Kitchen on Thursday, December 19. On December 22, we will not meet at our



own church, but will visit the First Parish Unitarian-Universalist of Ashby, Massachusetts at 10:00 a.m., where I will be leading an inter-generational Winter Solstice service. Everyone is welcome! Our UU community extends outside the doors of our beautiful church build-

ing to include other congregations in central Massachusetts and beyond.

The year 2013 is drawing to a close—a year which has seen many changes, in our immediate sphere and in the greater world. Whatever midwinter holiday you observe, we're connected by a thread of tradition more ancient than any modern faith or custom. Practice random acts of kindness and spread warmth and cheer for no good reason. Smile at your neighbors and give your children and pets extra cuddles. Whatever and whoever you acknowledge the gods to be—may they bless us, every one.

Inanna Arthen, M. Div.

CARING CONNECTIONS

UUCW is a caring congregation. We reach out to each other to offer caring and we remember each others' joys and concerns. Please let Inanna know if you would like to visit other members and friends, deliver flowers or an occasional meal, act as a greeter on Sunday services, offer a ride to church or any number of "caring connections" or if you are in need of a "caring connection" yourself at this time.

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BIRTHDAYS IN DECEMBER

Eben Gordon	December 3
Julie S. Gambill	December 15
Scott Gambill	December 31

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Tuesday, December 24, 7 PM. Annual Community Christmas Eve Service



- Wednesday, Dec. 26, 7 PM. January newsletter material
- Sunday, Dec. 29, 4:30 PM. Children's Choir
- Sunday, Dec. 29, 5 PM. Sunday Worship Fire Communion
- Sunday, Dec. 29, 6 PM. Light Potluck supper
- Monday, Dec. 30, 7 PM. AA meeting

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next dinner is on December 19th at 5:30 pm.

Our building is our greatest single boon and challenge as a congregation. It provides a space for activities like Our Neighbor's Kitchen, Toy Town Tunes, Girl Scouts, AA, and other groups to meet. It allows us to open our doors to couples seeking to be married, as the Governing Board approved this month for a couple in October of 2014. It also can become a burden at times. The main pump in our elevator failed and we have received an estimate for its repair of around \$3,000. Work is set to commence when the parts arrive. Any donations you would like to make to help defray the cost involved in repairing the elevator would be greatly appreciated.

Maintenance of our building for future generations is also the source of our request to Robinson-Broadhurst Foundation for their next grant cycle. We are seeking monies to perform the re-pointing of the stonework on the church. This will be a large job split into at least two phases. The Governing Board is attempting to work with not only Robinson-Broadhurst but other state and possibly federal funding sources to pay for this once every 75 year project. We will be submitting the proposal to Robinson-Broadhurst in mid-December.

On the fiscal side we are in reasonable shape. Our cost cutting measures and John White's vigilance have allowed us to remain in the black. However our reserves are low and we have made a concerted effort as a Governing Board to not draw down our endowments so every penny counts. In this time of giving we continue to appreciate your support of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Winchendon so we can support the Winchendon community.

As I write this we still have the 9th Annual Spirit of Christmas Toy Drive to happen on November 29th, Black Friday. Each year this event provides several car loads of toys and clothes to be given out to the families of Winchendon and the surrounding communities. Be a part of this tradition by donating or stopping by to be one of the "elves."

It's funny. For a slow month there was certainly a lot going on. Have a wonderful Holiday Season as we all prepare for a hopeful 2014.

Thanks and Peace,
Dave Faucher

*Merry
Christmas*



**HAPPY
NEW YEAR
EVERYONE**