

THE WINCHENDON UNITARIAN

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INANNA ARTHEN, M.DIV, MINISTER

Church Telephone 978-297-0554

MARCH 2014

SUNDAY WORSHIP SERVICE 5:00 P.M.

PO 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**

Calendar of Church Events

Monday, Mar 10

7:00 p.m. - AA Meeting

Tuesday, Mar 11

4:30 p.m. - Brownies

Sunday, Mar 16

5:00 p.m. - Sunday Worship

6:00 p.m. - Post-Service Light Potluck Supper. Bring a dish or just your wonderful self!

Monday, Mar 17

7:00 p.m. - AA Meeting

Tuesday, Mar 18

4:30 pm - Brownies

Sunday, Mar 23

5:00 p.m. - Sunday Worship: Multi-generational service for the Spring Equinox

Worship Leader: Inanna Arthen, M.Div

6:00 p.m. - Post-Service Light Potluck Supper

Monday, Mar 24

7:00 p.m. - AA Meeting

Tuesday, Mar 25

4:30 pm - Brownies

Sunday, Mar 30

4:00 p.m. - Welcoming Congregations workshop sessions three and four

5:00 p.m. - Sunday Worship

6:00 p.m. - Post-Service Light Potluck Supper

Monday, Mar 31

7:00 p.m. - AA Meeting

Tuesday, Apr 1

4:30 pm - Brownies

Sunday, Apr 6

5:00 p.m. - Sunday Worship: Chalice Circle Service

6:00 p.m. - Post-Service Light Potluck Supper

From Your Minister

February is the shortest month on the calendar, but it often seems like the longest to live through. That's been especially true this winter, with snow falling on two thirds of the twenty-eight days of February and temperatures far below average on almost all of them.

But the month of March is one of the most eventful here in New England. In its thirty-one days we travel from late winter to early spring. We celebrate St. David's Day if we're Welsh, St. Patrick's Day if we're Irish (or not!), and the Vernal Equinox or Ostara if we observe earth-centered traditions. Some years Easter Sunday is at the end of March, although this year Easter is very late, so Mardi Gras falls in March rather than February. The second weekend of March, our clocks "spring forward" to Daylight Savings Time.

The March sun is as high and strong as late September and the weather swoops between extremes—freezing cold, balmy warmth, snow storms, pouring rain. The natural world is coming back to life with all the wild vigor of a river in full flood. Babies are born, birds are courting, the spring peepers start trilling, and buds begin to swell on bare branches, making their silhouettes look all nubby. By the end of the month we see crocuses and green shoots in sheltered spots. Even the most interminable and bitter of winters finally has to end.

By this point in the year, we're beaten down by winter and longing to warm up, let loose and have some fun. That's why the ancient Christian tradition that extends throughout the month of March and is still observed by millions of people seems so counterintuitive: Lent, the six-week-long period of self-imposed deprivation and fasting before Easter.

The origins of Lent are obscure. Lasting roughly forty days, it echoes the forty days that Jesus fasted in the desert before starting his ministry. Forty is a



number that appears over and over in Biblical texts. Moses spent forty days on Mount Sinai, the Israelites wandered for forty years in the wilderness, forty days and nights of rain caused the Flood, and Jesus was believed to have rested in his tomb for forty hours before the Resurrection. The old Latin name for Lent is *Quadragesima*—“fortieth”—and a version of that name is used in a number of languages. But English adopted the name “Lent” from the German name for spring, which meant “long,” because the days were lengthening.

Lent is perhaps the last vestige of an earlier religious era when everyday life alternated periods of fasting and penance with periods of feasting and celebration. Lent traditionally emphasized three disciplines: prayer (specifically reflection and penitence), fasting and alms-giving.

The “fast” of Lent varied a great deal, but it often involved restrictions on certain categories of food, especially meat, along with milk, eggs, cheese, fruit, vegetables, or any food except bread and water. Along with the ban on types of food, fasts might restrict the number and timing of meals—one meal a day, no meal until after sunset, or small amounts of food that didn’t add up to a full meal. Ironically, these weeks of reduced rations coincided with a heavy workload in northern Europe and Britain, with lambing time and plowing typically taking up much of March. But there was a practical benefit—stored winter food stretched further into early spring.

In modern times, Christians often “give up something for Lent,” which has nothing to do with food, but may be some other luxury or indulgence, even a behavior like watching TV. They may also emphasize the charitable, reflective and prayerful aspects of the season more than the somber and restrictive ones of days gone by.

What does Lent mean for Unitarian-Universalists? We regard Jesus as a wise teacher. Easter, for us, symbolizes the rebirth of all life from the apparent death of winter, the joy of renewal and the healing that comes after loss and grief. Is Lent relevant to us?

In one of its aspects, I think that it is. UUs are fervent about service to others, social justice, and helping our neighbors and those who are less fortunate. We can join in the spirit of Lent by adopting service projects, donating to important causes and organizations, pitching in to help our neighbors or senior citizens in our communities, volunteering our time to youth groups or shelters, or in many other ways. Many people feel especially inspired to donate their time, work and

money at Christmas. But others need our help just as much throughout the year as at the holidays.

As winter reluctantly retreats before the growing power of light and life, we stand weary but upright on a battlefield—after all, that’s what our flattened yards and gravelly littered streets look like as the snow slowly melts away. As we shrug off winter’s armor, our heavy coats and boots, and straighten our shoulders, we can listen to early spring’s call to action. We can join hands and help each other to our feet. Winter is ending. We made it.

Inanna Arthen, M.Div

Welcoming Congregations

UUCW has launched its “Welcoming Congregations” journey of learning quite well! On Sunday, January 26, we met as a congregation for the first two workshop sessions in *The Welcoming Congregations Handbook*: “Introductions and Expectations” and “What We Know and How We Learned It.” The first session was a general overview of the process, and included a discussion of protocols such as confidentiality and respectful dialogue. We also looked at some common vocabulary terms. Session two looked at some of our earliest conceptions of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered persons and where those ideas came from.

On Sunday, February 9, members of UUCW joined members of the Athol and Ashby UU congregations at the UU Church of Fitchburg for a joint service designed as part of our Welcoming Congregations journey. We heard guest speaker Deborah Fabian, a transgendered woman from the Gardner UU church, and participated in a roundtable discussion at social hour afterwards.

On Sunday, March 30, we will meet at 4:00 p.m. for sessions three and four from *The Welcoming Congregations Handbook*: “The Common Elements of Oppression” and “Gender Socialization and Homophobia.”

For session three, we’ll talk about some of the methods our culture uses to keep certain groups or individuals at a lower level—some of them quite subtle. We’ll have a chance to talk about how we ourselves may have been affected by these tactics, as well as how we see them operating on others.

In session four, we’ll look at some attitudes and assumptions about what “proper” gender roles are and

Caring Connections

UUCW is a caring congregation. We reach out to each other to offer caring and we remember each other's 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 for Sunday services, offer a ride to church, or make any other "caring connection." Please let us know if you or someone close to you is in need of such a "caring connection" from us. You can call Inanna directly at 978-433-8866 (home) or 508-572-1624 (cell).

why people expect a man or a woman to act, look or behave a certain way.

Everyone will have a chance to share their personal experience and views if they choose to do so. We should cover both sessions in about an hour, and will segue into a worship service which echoes the theme of our discussions. We'll continue our dialogue informally at our post-service potluck supper afterwards.

All are welcome! You don't have to have attended earlier sessions to join in for later ones. If you'd like copies of the reading materials, slides or handouts, please contact me. The Welcoming Congregations journey of learning is intended to be a thoughtful process, not a painful one. Don't hesitate to get in touch if you have any questions.

Inanna Arthen, M.Div

Yard Sale Time is Coming!

It's almost time for our ever-popular UUCW Yard Sales to resume for a new season! Right now, soggy ground allowing, we're aiming to hold our first 2014 Yard Sale on Saturday, May 17. The Yard Sales generally take place the third Saturday of the month—in June, that will be June 21, day of the big annual Summer Flea Market and Winchendon's 250th Anniversary Celebration (food, parade, fireworks! Be there!).

If you'd like to donate materials for a Yard Sale, or have a table of your own, please contact the church or Sue Faucher.

We're also contacting vendors for the Summer Flea Market, which will have longer hours this year due to the full day and evening of exciting events. If you'd like a table or booth, please contact Sue Faucher.

Like Us on Facebook!

If you're on Facebook, be sure to "like" the UUCW page for all our news and updates, including descriptions of forthcoming services, announcements of special events, the menu for the next Our Neighbor's Kitchen, photos and reports on happenings, and more! We'll be putting updates about the Summer Flea Market and 250th Celebration here, so "like" us to stay informed.

<https://www.facebook.com/uuwinchendon>

March Birthdays



Sam Elkins	March 3
Roger Bryant	March 6
Mrs. Charlotte Drury	March 26
Ann M. McGrath	March 29

Change of Address?

We want to stay in touch! If you change your address, either U. S. Mail or email, please let us know. Email dfaucher@on24seven.com or send a written note to the church at P. O. Box 218, Winchendon, MA 01475. Thanks!

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