

# THE WINCHENDON UNITARIAN

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PASTOR INANNA ARTHEN, M.DIV, MINISTER

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**JANUARY 2015**

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

### Sunday, January 4

5:00 pm - Sunday Worship led by Pastor

Inanna Arthen: "Renewal"

New Member Sunday

6:00 pm - Post-Service Light Potluck Supper

### Monday, January 5

7:00 pm - AA Meeting

### Sunday, January 11

5:00 pm - Sunday Worship - Chalice Circle  
Service

6:00 pm - Post-Service Light Potluck Supper

### Monday, January 12

7:00 pm - AA Meeting

### Sunday, January 18

5:00 pm - Sunday Worship

6:00 pm - Post-Service Light Potluck Supper

### Monday, January 19

7:00 pm - AA Meeting

### Sunday, January 25

5:00 pm - Sunday Worship

6:00 pm - Post-Service Light Potluck Supper

### Monday, January 26

7:00 pm - AA Meeting

### Monday, January 26

*Deadline for February Newsletter*

### Thursday, January 29

5:30 pm - Our Neighbor's Kitchen Community  
Supper serves homemade meat loaf!

### Sunday, February 1

5:00 pm - Sunday Worship

6:00 pm - Post-Service Light Potluck Supper

### Monday, February 2

7:00 pm - AA Meeting

### Sunday, February 8

5:00 pm - Sunday Worship

6:00 pm - Post-Service Light Potluck Supper



## From Your Minister

It's been a busy, bustling and very lively December at UUCW. I hope everyone had a great holiday season and is ready to greet the New Year!

On Saturday, December 6, we hosted what we hope will be the first of many vendor events: a Holiday Crafts and Vendor Fair featuring local entrepreneurs. The Fellowship Hall was decorated to the nines and filled with colorful tables. Offerings included jewelry, ornaments, food, vacation packages, books, seasonings, soaps, and sundries. UUCW sold hot soup, cocoa and bread to hungry shoppers who came inside to warm up and shake off the raindrops.

The following Saturday, December 13, the first annual Tree Lighting and Carol Singing event was held inside and outside the church. This event had been held in Old Center and will now take place at UUCW, where we have a warm sanctuary for the music and a central location easily accessible on foot. The Winchendon Singers performed a concert of traditional carols in the sanctuary (see our Facebook page for a video!), after which we all went outside to light up the tree and sing some community carols *al fresco*. Just as the carols finished, the children got a surprise visit from Santa! Snacks and hot cocoa were available downstairs.

Our Neighbor's Kitchen served a gourmet meal of Beef Burgundy and winter vegetable torte on Thursday, December 18—a week earlier than our usual last Thursday of the month because of the holidays. We had about



Some of the tables and decorations on display at the Holiday Vendor Fair on December 6

fifty people braving the weather to enjoy the meal. This month we'll be serving homemade meat loaf and side dishes on January 29.

Our worship theme for the month of December was "Generosity." I led a service on this theme on December 7. On December 14, we had a Chalice Circle Service which explored the difference between "generosity" and "charity." On December 21, I led a special service to celebrate the Winter Solstice, which was that day. I blessed handmade ornaments to the four quarters and give them to each person at the service as a "sacrament" to take home. December 28 featured our annual year-end "Fire Communion" service led by Dave Faucher. In this multi-generational service, everyone writes or draws things from the old year that they want to let go of on a slip of paper. On another piece of paper, they write or draw things they hope to bring into their lives in the new year. Along with writing down hopes for the coming year, each person can come up front and light a candle for the things they wish to see manifest. At the conclusion of the service, we go outside and burn the papers with the "old" themes in a fireproof pan to release the energy and clear a space for the new.

Our December services were different from the usual format in one respect: the RE kids were often not with us. They were rehearsing! RE Head Teacher Kirsty Johnson-Erikson and the kids worked for weeks on their pageant for the Christmas Eve Candlelight Service. Kirsty wrote a script, and the kids all had numerous roles with many props, all of them handmade and most of them made by the kids themselves. The pageant included stars and lights, a tree, presents, stockings, a crèche and costumes. On two Sundays, worship

service was held downstairs so that the kids, Kirsty and assistant teacher Heather LaChance could run "dress rehearsals" in the sanctuary. Heather coached the kids on their parts and song outside of church time.

All their work paid off. On Christmas Eve we held our traditional Candlelight Service at 7:00 p.m. Around forty people attended to enjoy singing traditional carols, a reading of the Nativity story from the Bible, a homily and the children's pageant, which went very well. At the end of the service we filled the sanctuary with candlelight passed hand to hand as we sang "Silent Night."

Our worship theme for the month of January is "Renewal."

The beginning of a new calendar year has been a time of celebrations, ritual, apprehension and hope in almost every human culture for almost as long as there have been calendars and human societies to keep them. While customs vary, core themes are remarkably similar. The beginning of a new year is a moment to release the old—things that have outlasted their time, or have been completed, or were unwelcome to begin with—and make space for the new.

We don't always know what form those new things will take, which is why divination and fortune-telling are almost universal New Year's customs. In modern days these usually are party games, but our ancient ancestors took divination very seriously, and never more so than at significant times like the turning of the year. We desperately wish we could have some certainty about the future, particularly when we're faced with a choice that carries high stakes. When common sense, past experience and the advice of others fell short, our ancestors turned to the gods, the spirits or the stars—and truth to tell, so do many of us.

Some of the traditions we now associate with Christmas were actually New Year's customs, especially giving gifts. Almost all the folk practices for New Year are a kind of simple magic. Washing and putting on all new clothes, or cleaning the house top to bottom while sweeping everything out a door on one side of the building, or extinguishing all the household fires and lights and kindling them fresh on New Year's Day—these were all ways of encouraging the old to leave and inviting something new and fresh and better to fill its place. Giving gifts to others was a way of inviting the Universe to reciprocate your generosity by sending gifts to you. By sharing their prosperity, our ancestors hoped to be more fortunate and more prosperous.

Sometimes the beginning of a new year can have a rather depressing feel. The holidays are over, and we're heading back to work or school. We take down the holiday lights and decorations, put away the new gifts and bid goodbye to guests who came for Christmas, and our houses seem chillier, and emptier. If we've made "New Year's Resolutions," now it's time to either buckle down to work on them, or realize that we're not going to make these changes after all and concede defeat. The days are growing longer, but the Solstice was only a week and a half ago, so we can barely perceive it. Things feel different, though. The chickadees have begun singing their two-noted spring call in the woods. They know that the light is changing.

This sense of let-down at the start of the year has deeper roots than post-holiday decompression. Whether we consciously acknowledge it or not, the change in the calendar affects us psychologically. We've left behind another year of our lives, with all its highs and all its lows, and it will never come back. Yet when the old passes away, whatever will take its place doesn't instantaneously spring into being. For some time, we're aware of an empty space, and we aren't sure just what will fill it. Often, the "new" that will be entering that space is something very different than what preceded it. When we release something, we're given two gifts immediately: freedom and choice. If we were very attached to what we lost, it may be hard for us to recognize these gifts, let alone take advantage of them. Only time allows us to see their value.

The day before New Year's Eve, I said goodbye to an animal I cared for, a rather large rabbit. I wasn't really bonded to him; he didn't relate to people very well and didn't even like to be petted. But I was used to him being around the house. I enjoyed seeing him

munch happily on fruit and vegetable scraps or bask in a sunny spot on the kitchen floor. It was hard to watch him getting old and finally failing, until I couldn't allow him to suffer anymore. I'm not grief-struck, but I miss his presence. He made a surprising amount of noise. Now it seems so quiet. It feels strange to toss my apple cores and cabbage trimmings on the compost pile instead of into the bunny cage.

He had a good life, and I'll always remember him—especially since he ate the backs off books, part of the seat of the Bowflex and large chunks of the vinyl floors. I know that now that he's gone, I have space in my house, my budget and my life to rescue another animal that needs me. But what animal, or how many, or when, and how they'll find me—those questions are unknown and unanswerable. I'll have to wait and see, and meanwhile, I just have an empty space where there was a bunny.

And that's how it feels as the new year begins—we're hopeful, but apprehensive at the same time, and we're just a little bit sad. If we had the most wonderful year of our lives, now it's over. Can 2015 possibly be as good? If 2014 was not such a great year, we're dealing with what we went through and trying to look ahead.

How does "renewal" come into this? It's simple: all change is an opportunity for us to remake ourselves, to start fresh. In order to turn a new leaf—that saying refers to the leaf of a book—we have to stop looking at the page we're on. In order to change our appearance, we need to get rid of our old wardrobe, cut off our hair, or abandon our unhealthy habits. In order to welcome a new baby, we have to change our entire lives. When we truly change, we literally become new people, different than we were before in many ways besides the obvious ones. But it starts with letting go. Sometimes it



## RE News



What a December it has been! The youngest members of UUCW spent much of the month practicing the skit that they presented to the congregation on Christmas eve. Not only did they work really hard to get their parts down, but they also made nearly all of the props that were used in their presentation! I'm so proud of them, of their diligence and fun spirits, and also so lucky to be working with an assistant teacher, Heather LaChance, who has been such an integral part of the Religious Education classes.

Our theme for January will be "renewal"—what fills us, what helps us through the dark and hard times, what lifts our spirits? These will be things that we'll explore as we work our way through the first month of the new year. If you've not brought your kids to RE in a while, consider this your invitation! Come join us, have fun with us, create with us, and after service, share food with us. We'd love to have you with us!

Kirsty Johnson Erikson  
Lead RE Teacher

## ***This Month in UU History***

January 1, 1735: Unitarian and American Patriot Paul Revere was born in Boston, MA. After his active participation in the events of the Revolutionary War, Revere resumed his career as a craftsman. He worked as a silversmith, opened a foundry for casting bells (one of which hangs in the belltower of the First Parish UU of Ashby, MA) and supplied plates for the construction of “Old Ironsides.” He and his wife subscribed to a pew in Second Church (Unitarian) in Boston.

January 2, 1782: Emperor Joseph of Austria issued the Edict of Toleration, which gave Unitarians legal rights of free worship.

January 6, 1568: Prince John Sigismund called the Diet of Torda in Transylvania to settle disputes between Unitarians and Calvinists. Sigismund was persuaded by the debates to convert to Unitarianism and on January 13, issued the Edict of Torda, declaring official toleration for other religions.

January 8, 1867: Lifelong Unitarian Emily Greene Balch was born in Jamaica Plain, MA. She was in the first graduating class of Bryn Mawr College and was appointed to the faculty of Wellesley College, teaching economics, political science and sociology, in 1897. A pacifist, Balch was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1946, donating the money to organizations she had founded.

January 10, 1882: Unitarian (and hugely successful) novelist Olive Higgins Prouty (*Stella Dallas; Now, Voyager*) was born in Worcester, MA. She wrote, “Social debts must be paid. One must serve on committees, take part in welfare organizations, pull one’s weight somehow.”

January 18, 1782: Unitarian Daniel Webster was born in Salisbury, NH. A lawyer and political leader, he argued for unity and moderation when slavery threatened to split the country. He became a Massachusetts Congressman and Senator and served as Secretary of State under three different Presidents.

January 29, 1861: African-American and Unitarian Florida Yates Ruffin Ridley was born in Boston, MA. Ridley was the second African-American teacher in the Boston Public school system. She was a founder of the Society for the Collection of Negro Folklore and founded the Society of Descendants, Early American Negroes. She was an advocate for women’s suffrage and wrote many books about African-American life and race relations in New England.



hurts, but the pain won’t last. Wonder and joy are the Universe’s healers. We only have to open our hearts to them.

So, goodbye 2014, hello 2015 with all your unknowns. Let’s fearlessly ring in the new. Happy New Year!

### **Sunday, January 4: New Member Sunday**

On Sunday, January 4, Pastor Inanna Arthen will lead a worship service focused on our January theme of “Renewal.” This will also be our New Member Sunday, when everyone interested in becoming a member of UUCW is invited to attend and speak with Pastor Arthen and members of the Governing Board. New members will be able to sign the membership book and commit formally to joining our congregation. Please speak with Pastor Arthen or Dave Faucher if you’re interested in signing the membership book this Sunday.

### **Thursday, January 29: Our Neighbor’s Kitchen Serves Meat Loaf**

Join us on Thursday, January 29 at 5:30 p.m. for a delicious meal of homemade meat loaf, gravy, vegetables and a dessert, prepared by our chef David Faucher and his crew of dauntless assistants. We’re back to our regular schedule of the last Thursday of the month, now that the holidays are over. Come and welcome the new year with a hearty meal for a cold winter night!

### **January Birthdays**

Jacob Nathaniel Elkins	January 3
Carol Bramblett	January 14
Durrand Michalewicz	January 26



**(If I’m missing any birthdays, please let me know!)**

# Spiritual Calendar

- January 1: **Gantan Sai** (Shinto). New Year's festival observed with prayers for inner renewal, prosperity and health.  
**Gamelia Festival** (Ancient Greece). New Year's celebration focused on Gamelia, or Hera, the Queen of Heaven and a goddess of wisdom. This was a lucky day for marriages.  
**Strenia** (Ancient Rome). New Year's celebration. Gifts called *strenaea* were exchanged, and temples were decked with branches of palm and bay hung with dates, figs and sweetmeats, to attract prosperity, joy and happiness in the coming year. Sometimes the fruit was gilded.
- January 5: **Mahayana New Year** (Buddhist).  
**Koré's Day** (Ancient Greece) Honoring Koré (or Persephone), the Divine Maiden, who sits by her husband as Queen of the Underworld in the winter. Richly decorated statues of Koré were carried around houses seven times for good luck. That night, statues of Kore were carried seven times around temples.
- January 6: **Epiphany** (Roman Catholic).  
**Día de Los Reyes or Feast of the Three Kings** (Spanish-American Christian). Traditional time for exchanging gifts, as the three wise men gave gifts to the Christ child.
- January 7: **Feast of the Nativity of Christ** (Orthodox Christian).
- January 8: **Justicia's Day** (Ancient Rome). Honoring Justicia, the goddess of Justice. Oaths were sworn in her name while the oath-taker wore her symbol, a purple mantle.
- January 18: **World Religion Day** (Baha'i). Baha'i sponsored day dedicated to the unity and oneness of all world religions.
- January 24: **Vasant Panchami** (Hindu). Hindu celebration dedicated to Saraswati, goddess of learning.
- January 30: **Festival of Pax** (Ancient Roman). One of three annual festivals honoring the goddess of Peace. Priestesses stood on the temple steps and read the names of "enemies of peace."



## 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](mailto:dfaucher@on24seven.com) or send a written note to the church at P. O. Box 218, Winchendon, MA 01475. Thanks!

## UUCW Online

<http://uucw.ncmuuc.org>  
<https://www.facebook.com/uuwinchendon>

## 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).

## Contact Information

**Minister: Inanna Arthen, M.Div**

Phone: 978-433-8866

Cell: 508-572-1624

Email: [iarthen@inannaarthen.com](mailto:iarthen@inannaarthen.com)

**RE Lead Teacher: Kirsty Erikson-Johnson**

Email: [kirstyerikson@gmail.com](mailto:kirstyerikson@gmail.com)

**Musician: Lucinda Ellert**

Phone: 781-944-7254

Email: [lucindajellert@gmail.com](mailto:lucindajellert@gmail.com)

**Governing Board Chair: David Faucher**

Email: [dfaucher@on24seven.com](mailto:dfaucher@on24seven.com)

**Governing Board Members:**

Allan Gordon: [lilpun31@mass.rr.com](mailto:lilpun31@mass.rr.com)

Secretary, James McCrohan:

[jmccrohan@yahoo.com](mailto:jmccrohan@yahoo.com)

**Sexton (Custodian): Sue Faucher**

Phone: 978-632-5588

Email: [sfaucher@on24seven.com](mailto:sfaucher@on24seven.com)