

THE WINCHENDON UNITARIAN

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Church Telephone 978-297-0554

FEBRUARY 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, February 1

5:00 pm - Sunday Worship - "Weaving the Web of Life" (multigenerational)

6:00 pm - Post-Service Light Potluck Supper

Monday, February 2

7:00 pm - AA Meeting

Sunday, February 8

5:00 pm - Sunday Worship - Chalice Circle Service, "Community"

6:00 pm - Post-Service Light Potluck Supper

Monday, February 9

7:00 pm - AA Meeting

Sunday, February 15

5:00 pm - Sunday Worship

6:00 pm - Post-Service Light Potluck Supper

Monday, February 16

7:00 pm - AA Meeting

Sunday, February 22

5:00 pm - Sunday Worship

6:00 pm - Post-Service Light Potluck Supper

Monday, February 23

7:00 pm - AA Meeting

Tuesday, February 24

Deadline for March Newsletter

Thursday, February 26

5:30 pm - Our Neighbor's Kitchen Community Supper serves lasagna!

Sunday, March 1

5:00 pm - Sunday Worship - Pastor Inanna Arthen

6:00 pm - Post-Service Light Potluck Supper

Monday, March 2

7:00 pm - AA Meeting

Sunday, March 8

5:00 pm - Sunday Worship - "Gardens in the Age of Enlightenment" with James McCrohen

6:00 pm - Post-Service Light Potluck Supper



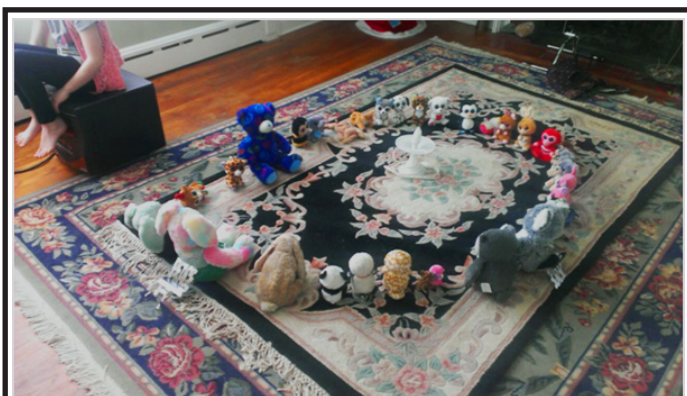
From Your Minister

January was a bit quieter month at UUCW after all our busy activity in December. On Sunday, January 4, I led a worship service on our month's theme of "Renewal." The following Sunday, we had a Chalice Circle Service that continued with this theme. January 18 was "TED Talk Sunday: Success and Failure" with a service built around two TED talks: "A Kinder, Gentler Philosophy of Success," by Alain de Botton, and "On Being Wrong" by Kathryn Schulz.. On January 25, we shared our perspectives on "Building Bridges" in a Chalice Circle Service.

On Thursday, January 29, Our Neighbor's Kitchen returned to its normal schedule—the last Thursday of the month—with a hearty winter meal of meat loaf, mashed potatoes and gravy. After the record-breaking snowstorm on Tuesday, "comfort food" was sorely needed!

Many of us are grateful that February is the shortest month in the calendar. Winter bears down hardest on us this month, even as the days are steadily lengthening and the sun is growing stronger. Not only is the weather at its most severe, we're beginning to feel worn down and exhausted by it.

Yet the natural world also presents us with a paradox. While the storms rage at their fiercest, small animals



Madeleine Faucher's stuffies hold a chalice circle service. Come join us for a real one at church!



February 2, 2014, "Punxsutawney Phil" sees the light.

emerge from their burrows to find mates and stake out territory. We may see them scuttling across roads or foraging under our bird feeders, hear them squabbling in the night, and in the case of skunks, often smell them. Their babies will be born in April, about two months from now. The song birds are singing different calls, as well. Toward the end of the month, even if we can't see it, sap begins to run in the trees, responding not to the temperatures but to the change in the light. Maple sugaring season begins, and spring is on the way.

February 2 is "Groundhog Day," a holiday with many hidden meanings. The notion that a groundhog would emerge from its burrow in midwinter is obviously based on the real fact that most small animals do become active this month, although usually not quite so early. But why would we predict "six more weeks of winter" because the groundhog "saw his shadow?"

February 2 is the traditional date of Imbolg ("in the belly" like unborn lambs) or Oimelec ("ewe's milk"), called Candlemas by Christians. It marks the midpoint between Winter Solstice and Spring Equinox. It was the time when lambing season started in the British Isles. The persistence of harsh weather made lambing dangerous and difficult for farmers and their flocks. Our ancestors created many superstitions around life transitions and times of change. One such superstition stated that if the weather was fair on Candlemas, it meant there were more storms ahead. In other words—don't be fooled by false appearances. Make sure those babies are safely under cover.

Of course, there will *always* be six weeks of winter after Candlemas, because it's exactly six weeks until the Equinox, or "first day of Spring." But the ancients knew that fine weather before the proper time was not to be

trusted. A sunny, mild Candlemas was most likely just the eye of the hurricane.

In Britain, it was the hedgehog who might scurry in fear from his shadow—"knowing" that more storms lay ahead and only his snug burrow was safe. How our modern tradition of Groundhog Day replaced the old Candlemas lore is uncertain, but it seems to have originated with German settlers in Pennsylvania in the 19th century.

For a short month, February is stuffed with holidays, possibly because we feel like we need them more than usual. Groundhog Day, Presidents' Day, Mardi Gras...but the one that fills the stores, media and our Internet feeds with pink and red frilliness, and breaks many of our New Year's Resolution diets, is Valentine's Day. Where did this one come from?

Although February 14 is the feast day of Saint Valentine in the Roman Catholic church, there are several different Saint Valentines, with conflicting (and generally gruesome) legends attached to them. Saint Valentine's Day first was proclaimed as a day to honor and express romantic love in the Middle Ages. The modern version of the holiday began at the end of the 18th century when printed Valentine's Day cards first appeared. Like Christmas cards, Valentine's Day cards became immensely popular in the late 19th century. In the 20th century retailers and restaurants leaped on the bandwagon and encouraged gift-giving and romantic dates as part of the celebration. Valentine's Day is now a major commercial event in the United States, and the third biggest holiday for chocolate sales, after Halloween (#1) and Easter.

No one really knows why Saint Valentine's Day, in the middle of cold, slushy, and often hunger-ridden



A Victorian Valentine card, circa 1887

February, was first associated with romantic love and courtship. Some writers suggested that the early Church was trying to Christianize an ancient Roman fertility celebration called Lupercalia, which was held in February. Other historians dispute this.

But my feeling is that Valentine's Day arose from a deep unconscious response to what was happening in the natural world. Just as life was stirring again in the seemingly frozen landscape, as small animals courted, and trees answered the returning light, so humans felt an impulse to reach out, to make connections, and to

revive warm feelings of affection and bonding. In a world without the artificial reassurances that we enjoy, without central heating and supermarkets, without mass media and the Internet to keep reminding us that it's always spring somewhere and winter can't last, our ancestors needed ways to keep their hope and courage alive. We continue with their celebrations because those holidays still call to deep inner needs, and because they're just plain fun.

Our February worship theme is "Community." During this month of cold and wearisome weather, we need to connect with our communities, small and large. We're tempted to huddle indoors as much as possible. Travel, by foot or car, requires extra effort, and it may not seem worth the bother to go out.

But "cabin fever," depression and discouragement are very real dangers at this time of year. We gain many benefits from interacting with friends and neighbors. Our church community can nourish us in many ways. It can help us feel less alone, and offer us diversion, food for thought, spiritual awareness, hope and encouragement. Spending an hour or two with other people, face to face, rewards our investment of time and energy far more than sitting at home in front of the TV.

So come celebrate all the holidays of February with your friends at UUCW. From Super Bowl Sunday to Presidents' Day, we UUs have our own way of looking under the surface at what our fun times really mean. See you in church!

Pastor Inanna Arthen, M.Div



RE News

Now that the holidays have settled down, we've had more time to work on our curriculum in our RE class. We've talked about the wide variety of families—including ones with two dads or two moms—as we made our own personal rainbows, symbolic of our church's journey towards being a Welcoming Congregation. We've also talked about winter (how timely!) and shared a story about a Mish-Mash heart—about how our hearts can change and grow when we spend time with one another. As we head into February we will continue working with a "heart theme"—talking about love, and spending time over the next few weeks making Valentine Cards to exchange with the folks from Upstairs Church.

Do consider joining us! We would love to meet you and your kids!

Kirsty Erikson, Lead RE Teacher

Spiritual Calendar

- February 2: **Imbolg** (Pagan). Midpoint between Winter Solstice and Vernal Equinox, celebrates the first signs of new life and the passing of the worst of winter. Also called Oimelec or Candlemas. In traditional folklore, good weather on Candlemas meant more harsh winter storms to come—the origin of the story that there will be six more weeks of winter “if the groundhog sees his shadow.”
- February 2: **Saint Brigid’s Day** (Celtic, Celtic Christian). “Saint” Brigid is generally accepted as the Christian version of the Irish goddess Brigid. Brigid was seen as a Triple Goddess who ruled over poetry and the arts, crafts, smithcraft, agriculture, and all things related to women and childbirth. Solar crosses made of colorful fibers woven around an equal-armed cross were called “Eyes of Brigid” and were hung over doorways to keep evil out of the house.
- February 3: **Setsubun-sai** (Shinto). Celebrates the change of seasons from winter to spring. Believers shout, “devils out, good fortune in!” and throw beans to avert evil forces.
- February 3: **Tu BiShvat** (Jewish). “New Year of the Trees” or “Israeli Arbor Day.” An ancient festival formerly related to agriculture and the age when fruit trees could be harvested, Tu BiShvat is now dedicated more to environmental issues and meals of traditional Israeli fruits and foods.
- February 11: **Our Lady of Lourdes** (French). On this date in 1858, the Virgin Mary first appeared to a peasant girl named Bernadette Soubirous in Lourdes, France. The grotto and spring at Massabielle where Bernadette saw a total of eighteen visions is now a shrine visited by millions each year and credited with miraculous healings. According to some writers, Massabielle was a Pagan temple site in pre-Christian times (France has a very large number of such sites).
- February 15: **Nirvana Day** (Buddhist). A day commemorating the death of the Buddha.
- February 17: **Mardi Gras** (Shrove Tuesday, Roman Catholic). The day before Lent began traditionally was a time to use up the last of the forbidden foods, such as eggs, meat and milk, in dishes such as pancakes or “collops” (fried strips of meat). In some areas, such as New Orleans and Rio de Janeiro, this evolved into a pre-Lenten festival known as Carnival or Mardi Gras (“Fat Tuesday”) with many elements of the Roman Saturnalia (such as role reversals, masquerades and feasting).
- February 18: **Ash Wednesday** (Roman Catholic). Beginning of Lent, the six weeks of penance, fasting and prayer leading up to Easter.
- February 19: **Chinese New Year** (Confucian, Daoist, Buddhist). Beginning of a fifteen-day festival in which families reunite, ancestors are remembered and ceremonies are held to honor Heaven and Earth.

Thursday, February 26 Our Neighbor’s Kitchen Serves Lasagna

Join us on Thursday, February 26 at 5:30 p.m. for a delicious meal of homemade lasagna, salad and a dessert, prepared by our chef David Faucher and his crew of dauntless assistants. Get out of the house and share a delicious hearty meal with your friends and neighbors, as we do our best to shoo winter on its way and look forward to spring!

Would You Like to Lead a Sunday Service?

If you have an interesting talk or presentation that you’d like to give as the centerpiece of a Sunday worship service, please get in touch with us! We’ve had guest

speakers talking about gardens, the Montachusett Interfaith Hospitality Network, and their service work in other countries. You only need to speak for about 15 minutes (but you can have more time if you wish!), and we’ll help you with all the other parts of the service. If you have an unusual or creative idea for a service, we’d love to hear about it. We’ve had several slide shows and we have a “TED Talk Sunday” with videos most months. Don’t be shy! We’re informal and flexible, and we’re eager to hear your ideas.

February Birthdays

Kayden Gordon	February 3
Kirsty Johnson-Erikson	February 9
Joseph Sackett	February 26



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

This Month in UU History

February 3, 1821: Elizabeth Blackwell was born in Bristol, England. Her family emigrated to America in 1832, settling in Cincinnati where they were members of the First Unitarian Church. Elizabeth became a teacher in the South, educated herself in medicine and went to the Geneva School in New York. Despite resistance and ridicule she received her medical degree at the top of her class in 1849. She studied medicine in London where she met Florence Nightingale. She wrote and published on the taboo topic of women's hygiene and health, and founded the New York Dispensary for Poor Women and Children in New York. In later life she returned to England where she was made professor of gynecology at the London School of Medicine for Women.

February 6, 1900: Adlai Stevenson was born in Los Angeles, CA. He served as Governor of Illinois and ran for President twice. President Truman sent him to the General Assembly of the nascent United Nations in 1946 and 1947, and President Kennedy appointed Stevenson U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations in 1961. Stevenson joined the Bloomington, Indiana Unitarian Church, which his great-grandfather had co-founded, in 1952.

February 7, 1812: Charles Dickens was born in Landport, England. Reared in poverty and largely self-educated, Dickens wrote extensively on social issues and advocated radical reforms. He was a member of Little Portland Street Chapel (Unitarian) in London when he wrote *A Christmas Carol*.

February 11, 1802: Lydia Maria Child was born in Medford, MA. Her brother was minister of the Unitarian church in Watertown, MA and she was a member of that church, as well as a Swedenborgian chapel. A prolific writer and strong advocate for racial justice, Child was vice president of the Women's Anti-Slavery Convention of New York and edited the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*. In 1833 she wrote *An Appeal in Favor of That Class of American Called African*. She supported women's suffrage and defended Native American rights. A popular writer of household manuals, she authored *The Frugal Housewife* in 1829.

February 11, 1819: Merchant, ship owner, member of Parliament and lifelong Unitarian William Rathbone was born in Liverpool, England. Rathbone said that wealth above one's reasonable needs was "a trust for which he owes an account to himself, to his fellow-men, and to God; it is not an absolute freehold which we may use solely for personal enjoyment and indulgence." Rathbone helped establish University College in Liverpool and Bangor. He refused a peerage because he preferred to use the money that would have supported that lifestyle for charity.

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!

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).

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