

THE WINCHENDON UNITARIAN

Established 1954

Published by the

Unitarian Universalist Church of Winchendon



Volume 60 Issue 2

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Church Telephone 978-297-0554

MARCH 2016

SUNDAY WORSHIP SERVICE 11:00 A.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

Don't Forget--Sunday worship at 11:00 a.m., Our Neighbor's Kitchen Thursdays at 5:30 p.m.!

Sunday, March 6

New Time!

11:00 am - Sunday Worship with Pastor

Inanna Arthen

11:00 am - RE "Beginnings" Class

11:30 am - RE "Questings" Class

12:00 pm - Family Potluck lunch—all are welcome!

Monday, March 7

7:00 pm - AA Meeting

Thursday, March 10

5:30 p.m. - Our Neighbors Kitchen "Soup and Sandwich" Night! Potato-Leek Soup and Turkey Salad Sandwiches

Sunday, March 13

2:00 am - DAYLIGHT SAVINGS TIME

BEGINS! "Spring Forward" one hour

11:00 am - Sunday Worship

11:00 am - RE "Beginnings" Class

11:30 am - RE "Questings" Class

12:00 pm - Family Potluck lunch—all are welcome!

Monday, March 14

7:00 p.m. AA Meeting

Sunday, March 20

11:00 am - Sunday Worship with Pastor

Inanna Arthen - Spring Equinox

11:00 am - RE "Beginnings" Class

11:30 am - RE "Questings" Class

12:00 pm - Family Potluck lunch—all are welcome!

Monday, March 21

7:00 pm - AA Meeting

Thursday, March 24

5:30 p.m. - Our Neighbors Kitchen

Sunday, March 27

TBA - Easter Sunday Intergenerational Service

TBA - Family Potluck "Easter Dinner"—all are welcome!

Monday, March 28

7:00 pm - AA Meeting

Sunday, April 3

11:00 am - Sunday Worship

11:00 am - RE "Beginnings" Class

11:30 am - RE "Questings" Class

12:00 pm - Family Potluck lunch—all are welcome!

From Your Minister

February was a busy month of changes at UUCW.

On Sunday, February 7 at 11:00 a.m. we started our new schedule for Sunday worship, with a Chalice Circle service led by David Faucher on the theme of "Acceptance." For February 14, I planned a service titled "Giving It Up, Letting It Go," while the RE program was busy making Valentines for a "Secret Valentine" exchange. But the Polar Vortex, obviously worried that we'd forget our close relationship the last two years, swooped down for a visit and thermometers in Winchendon hit -16° F on Sunday morning—with a roaring wind. We didn't want our

congregation to risk frostbite getting to church (and we did have some pipes freeze!), so we cancelled service that morning.

We were back on Sunday the 21st with a Chalice Circle Service on “Beauty Around Us” led by David Faucher. On February 28, I led the postponed service I planned for the 14th.

Meanwhile, Our Neighbor’s Kitchen went back to its old time of Thursday at 5:30 p.m. We enjoyed tomato-basil soup and grilled cheese sandwiches on February 11. On February 25, we served our popular Swedish Meatballs dinner, with gravy, mashed potatoes, salad, homemade cranberry sauce, bread and dessert. We’re seeing friends return for the meal who couldn’t make it on Sunday afternoons, so we know we made a good decision. We’re planning some yummy menus for the two March dinners—see below for more details!

In like a lion and out like a lamb, that’s what we used to say about March when I was a kid. Of course, the best thing about March for most of us is the fact that February (after squeezing in an extra day) is finally over. It’s the beginning of what’s called “meteorological spring” (March, April and May) and the month of the Vernal Equinox, which kicks off the spring quarter in the solar calendar.

The beginning of the zodiacal year—which in old days was New Year’s Day—falls on the Vernal Equinox, which is marked by the entrance of the Sun into the sign of Aries. Ruled by Mars and symbolized by a ram, Aries is the sign of undaunted forward motion, breaking and beating down every obstacle, overwhelming all resistance, exerting every ounce of available energy, fearless and unwavering. It can be a combative sign, but there’s no one better to have on your side in a struggle. We see this energy everywhere in the spring, as ice breaks up, rivers and streams rage, new sprouts push through heavy wet earth and even snow, and strong winds pull down winter’s damage to make way for new growth. Look out below!

We’re infected by spring’s energy. This is when we feel impelled to make those changes we’ve been thinking about for the last two months, whether we made “New Year’s Resolutions” or not. We’ve been blessed with a milder winter this year than the last few seasons. The ground is already bare and the temperatures more like April 1 as I write this. I’m feeling a tug toward yard work and garden clean-up. Everything looks matted down, brown and flat. I want to rake off all that dead dry ground cover so the new shoots can

feel the sun. Of course, we may yet see some snow—but snow in March isn’t like snow in November. Even if we get a foot, we know it won’t be there for long.

This year, March ends with Easter, earlier than usual. Easter’s date is set according to the lunar calendar: it’s always the first Sunday after the first Full Moon following the Vernal Equinox. The Equinox is just about midnight, Eastern Time, on Sunday March 20 and the Full Moon is March 23. There’s barely time for the Easter lilies to come into bloom.

I was raised in a UU church, and my personal spirituality is Earth-centered. I’ve always wondered why UUs celebrate Easter, and what meaning we should find in it. Easter is the central mystery of the Christian faith. We UUs respect the teachings of Jesus, but we don’t believe that he rose from the dead, was the son of God or died to save us from original sin. Those are the doctrines that define Christianity, and it was the rejection of those doctrines that made early Unitarians heretics. If we don’t believe in the Resurrection, what does Easter mean for us?

The name “Easter” derives from an Old English word, *Eostre*, which the Venerable Bede wrote was the name of a goddess who was celebrated in the month corresponding to April. Little else is known about the word or the goddess. But we do know that nearly all pre-Christian cultures in Europe celebrated the rebirth of life in the spring, frequently with myths about a divine maiden or mother who descends to the underworld (or death) in the fall and returns when winter is over. One of the best-known of these myths is that of Proserpine or Persephone, daughter of the earth mother, Demeter. When Hades, the god of the underworld, falls in love with Persephone and kidnaps her, Demeter’s mourning casts the whole world into bleak winter. Each spring she reunites with her daughter, and their joy revives the earth again.

We can relate to this celebration on a deep instinctive level. We know how it feels to be weighted down by the cold and dark, to almost feel imprisoned by harsh weather and bitter temperatures. We shovel and fight our way out of our houses after storms, or simply stay put, housebound and stircrazy. Moving around is dangerous, or just stressful, and we’re burdened by our heavy clothing and boots. When spring comes, it brings a tremendous sense of liberation, just to throw off our coats and stretch in the sun, just because we can simply open our doors and walk, without wading through snow or balancing precariously on ice.

We hear the courting songs of the birds even while

it's still cold, and we may be lucky enough to see baby animals born. Life is appearing everywhere as if by magic.

The joy of returning spring is an emotion we can all attune to, regardless of what spiritual teachings we believe or don't believe. Lives may end but life itself continues, always cycling back to birth and renewal. The egg, a symbol of spring that far predates Easter, represents this cycle.

But UUs can find another inspiration in the Biblical stories of the crucifixion. Jesus was a man who taught a progressive and egalitarian message far ahead of his time. His followers were learning to defy the restrictions of the political and religious establishments of the day, and it was for this that Jesus was executed. He encouraged slaves, women, and the humble to reject the lowly positions forced on them. He taught that all were equal.

More than a thousand years later, "heretics" like Unitarians also suffered for resisting oppressive institutions and spreading ideas about equality and freedom. We can remember our own "martyrs" at Easter, those who endured torture and execution for arguing that

salvation belongs to all and people have a right to think and believe according to their conscience. In fact, we might say that if you value your religious freedom, thank a Unitarian. We owe an enormous debt to our religious ancestors, and Easter is a good time to reflect on that.

But whatever you observe this month and however you choose to celebrate it, we can all share a universal song of gratitude. Farewell to winter! Welcome, longer days; welcome, stronger sun; welcome, new life; welcome, Spring!

Pastor Inanna Arthen, M.Div

Back to Thursday for Our Neighbor's Kitchen - Now Twice a Month!

Join us on Thursday, March 10 at 5:30 p.m. for Soup and Sandwich night. Inanna will be cooking a Celtic-themed feast of potato-leek soup with turkey salad sandwiches. Come celebrate St. David's Day



RE News



After an amazingly easy winter, it seems that Mother Nature is gliding right into Spring this year. Despite that one frigid Sunday, we've rebounded and the earth is warming, snow is melting and our spring flowers are beginning to poke their green leaves up towards the sun. Easter is coming early, at the end of March, and plans are underway for that joyful Spring holiday. There will be an Easter Egg Hunt, but the specifics are still being worked out. Look for an e-blast update once we're all settled on those plans!

Our RE class changes have been working well, despite a bout of sickness for many of us during February. We've spent time investigating our various connections to one another, to our church community, and to our families. The older class has created a braided wall hanging, which is on display in Fellowship Hall; we invite you to check it out!

As we move ahead into March, we'll continue to explore our connections to the wider fellowship of all humans and creatures that share this Earth with one another. We'll talk about famous Unitarian Universalists, and everyday heroes of today. Our young people are realizing that they have a voice to share their thoughts and opinions, as well as hands and hearts to make changes to the world. We all have a part to play, within our communities, and within the family that is our church. As we weave our lives into those various groups...we become more closely knit, more a family, more able to make active change in the world. It doesn't have to be a big action to get big results!

I'll hope to see you in church school!

If you have any questions regarding the RE Program, please feel free to contact Kirsty Johnson Erikson at 978-534-1946 or email her at kirstyerikson@gmail.com.

Kirsty Erikson
Lead RE Teacher

Spiritual Calendar

- March 1: St. David's Day (Christian).** Feast of St. David, a national figure in Wales. This is "the Welsh St. Patrick's Day."
- March 5: Celebration of Isis (ancient Near East).** The cult of Isis spread through the ancient Near East, Mediterranean, northern Africa and Asia Minor just before the beginning of the first millennium C.E. Isis was depicted holding the infant Horus and was called Mother of All and the Queen of Heaven. Her worship is thought to have evolved into the Christian worship of the Virgin Mary.
- March 17: St. Patrick's Day (Christian).** Feast of St. Patrick, credited with converting Ireland to Christianity. This has become a day of national pride and affirmation for people of Irish nationality and descent.
- March 20: Ostara/Spring Equinox (Pagan).** Celebrates the first signs of spring and the rebirth of life and warmth. Beginning of the zodiacal year.
- March 20: Palm Sunday (Christian).** Celebrates the entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem. Some churches distribute palm fronds to worshipers.
- March 22-23: Festival of Minerva (ancient Roman).** Minerva (Athena in Greece) is the goddess of wisdom, logic, learning, knowledge, and the sciences. Her cool-headed influence is certainly needed today!
- March 23: Magha Puja Day (Buddhist).** Commemorates the presentation of the teachings of the Buddha to holy men.
- March 24: Purim (Jewish).** Celebrates the saving of the Jewish people in Persia from genocide through the actions of Queen Esther. Observed with gift-giving, acts of charity, devotion and a special meal.
- March 25: Good Friday (Christian).** A solemn observance in memory of Christ's crucifixion. Some churches shrouded crosses or crucifixes with black or purple cloth at the end of the day, to be removed on Easter morning.
- March 27: Easter (Christian)** Celebrates the resurrection of Christ. Central holy day of the Christian religion. Feasting and the end of Lent.



(March 1) and St. Patrick's Day (March 17) with this delicious soup traditional in both Wales and Ireland.

On Thursday, March 24 at 5:30 p.m., join us for a hearty just-before-Easter holiday dinner.

We can always use more volunteers! If you'd like to help with set-up, come to the church between 3:00 and 4:00 p.m. If you want to help with serving, come at around 5:15 p.m. so we can go over any special protocols for the night's menu. Clean-up starts around 6:15 p.m. and is usually done shortly after 7:00 p.m. Volunteers have a chance to sit down and share the meal and fellowship.

New Yard Sale Season

It's not too soon to start thinking about this summer's Saturday Yard Sales! We cleared out everything at the end of last season, so we'll be starting off with all new stuff this spring. If you're going to be spring-cleaning your attics, down-sizing, de-cluttering, moving, or just want to pay it forward, we want your stuff! Needless to say, it needs to be clean and in good repair, and portable enough to be stored between sales if it doesn't sell the first day. But aside from that, anything

goes. If you'd like to have your own table, we just ask that you make a donation to the church in return.

The first Yard Sale date will be announced in a month or two, as it will depend on weather. We'll be holding them twice a month through the summer and into the fall.

To donate goods and materials for the Yard Sales, or have a table of your own, please contact the church or Sue Faucher (978-632-5588).

Summer Solstice Fair 2016

Sue Faucher is already taking applications for vendor spaces for the Summer Solstice Fair on Saturday, June 18. If you're a vendor and would like a space, don't delay! 10' x 10' spaces are only \$30 for the front yard and \$25 for the side and back. Don't miss this great opportunity to reach hundreds of fair-goers at Winchendon's biggest party and UUCW's most popular event of the year! Contact Sue at sfaucher@on24seven.com or 978-632-5588.

This Month in UU History

- March 3, 1568: Beginning of the second debate, which lasted ten days, between Unitarian Francis Dávid and Calvinist bishop Peter Melius in Gyulafehérvár, Transylvania. Dávid must have been quite a speaker. Legend says that after the debate, he preached standing on a rock at the corner of Torda Street in Kolozsvár and all listeners were converted to Unitarianism. The rock is now in the First Unitarian Church in Kolozsvár. The series of debates converted Prince John Sigismund of Transylvania to Unitarianism.
- March 6, 1582: Beginning of debate between Roman Catholics and Lithuanian Unitarian Simon Budny at the Synod of Iwie in Poland. Budny held that Jesus was an ordinary man born of a natural union, and should not be worshiped. He founded a Polish Unitarian sect called the Budneans, and translated the Bible into Polish. He was denounced and excommunicated by the Synod of Luclavice for his “obnoxious opinions.”
- March 18, 1612: Bartholomew Legate was burned at the stake at Smithfield, England, as “an obdurate, contumacious and incorrigible heretic” for refusing to deny his Unitarian beliefs, although he was offered a reprieve if he would do so.
- March 19, 1652: Oxford University student Richard Coppin was put on trial for his belief in universal salvation, and expelled from the university.
- March 23, 1657: The very determined Richard Coppin was arrested again for preaching Universalism—he was one of the first two Englishmen to do so. A 1648 English statute required a belief in future judgment. Coppin was released after a public outcry, but records disagree on whether he was executed several years later or lived on more quietly. His works were reprinted in the 1700s.



March Birthdays

Sam Elkins	March 3
Mrs. Charlotte Drury	March 26
Anne M. McGrath	March 29



UUCW Online

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

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

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!

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).