

THE WINCHENDON UNITARIAN

Established 1954 Published by the

Unitarian Universalist Church of Winchendon



Volume 61 Issue 5

PASTOR INANNA ARTHEN, M.DIV, MINISTER

Church Telephone 978-297-0554

JANUARY 2017

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

Sunday, January 8

11:00 am - Sunday Worship with Pastor Inanna Arthen - "Starting from the Beginning"

11:00 am - "Questings" RE Class

11:30 am - "Beginnings" RE Class

Monday, January 9

7:45 pm - AA Meeting

Thursday, January 12

5:30 pm - Our Neighbor's Kitchen serves Swedish Meatballs with noodles

Sunday, January 15

11:00 am - Sunday Worship - "Humanitarianism"

11:00 am - "Questings" RE Class

11:30 am - "Beginnings" RE Class

Monday, January 16

7:45 pm - AA Meeting

Sunday, January 22

11:00 am - Sunday Worship with Pastor Inanna Arthen - "What Would Martin Luther King Jr. Do?"

11:00 am - "Questings" RE Class

11:30 am - "Beginnings" RE Class

12:00 pm - UUCW Governing Board Meeting

Monday, January 23

7:45 pm - AA Meeting

Thursday, January 26

5:30 pm - Our Neighbor's Kitchen serves Shepherd's Pie

Sunday, January 29

11:00 am - Sunday Worship

11:00 am - "Questings" RE Class

11:30 am - "Beginnings" RE Class

Monday, January 30

7:45 pm - AA Meeting

From Your Minister

I hope that all of you had a warm and happy holiday season, whether it was filled with family, friends, changes, work, time off, volunteering, celebrating or just watching the shift of the seasons. As I write this, we're waiting for our fourth storm within sixteen days to decide what it's going to do and where it's going to do it. The wood boxes are replenished, the bird feeders are filled, the car is in the garage and the snow shovels and Ice Melt are on the porch. I can see the frozen lake across the street from my house, all swirled with patterns of snow and ice and open water. Yesterday I walked into my living room and saw a crimson cardinal sitting in the evergreens outside the window. It would have been a perfect picture for next year's holiday cards, if only I'd had my camera!

UUCW has been bustling this month. On Saturday, December 10, we held our holiday Open House and Tree Lighting, turning on our festive lights on the front lawn for the first time. On Christmas Eve, I led our annual Christmas Eve Candlelight Service. We lit the Advent Candles with a responsive reading, sang favorite carols accompanied by our beautiful pipe organ (played by musician Lucinda J. Ellert), enjoyed a presentation on the meaning of Christmas by the RE kids, and concluded with sharing candlelight hand to hand around the darkened sanctuary.

On December 4, I led a service on "The Advent" in which I talked about the meaning of the season of Advent and about long anticipated events in our lives. On December 11, Dave Faucher led a Chalice Circle Service

on the theme of “Generosity.” On December 18, I led a special service celebrating the Winter Solstice, with hand-made ornaments which were blessed to the four quarters and given to each person attending to take home with them.

Our Neighbor’s Kitchen served two scrumptious meals in December. On Thursday, December 8, I cooked a no-holds-barred lasagna stuffed with seasoned ground beef, ricotta cheese, mozzarella cheese and basil tomato sauce. Accompanying this were salad and two desserts, cake and homemade iced ginger cookies. On Thursday, December 22, Dave Faucher and assistants served up our annual elegant Christmas Dinner feast of Beef Burgundy, roasted vegetables and salad, with fancy holiday desserts donated by The Winchendon School. We have two great meals planned for January—see below for details.

Have you ever been in a situation where you felt that you didn’t dare speak out and say anything, because no matter what you said, you’d be sure to offend someone? And that if you offended them, there would be consequences you didn’t want to deal with—so you just kept silent?

Maybe not. Maybe it’s just me. But I’ve certainly been feeling that way for several months now. I’ve felt it so strongly, in fact, that the last time I made a post to my own Facebook page was November 12. At the same time, I feel almost smothered by my inability to speak. I have no idea if other people feel this way, because how can you guess what people are feeling when they also remain silent?

It’s the beginning of a new year, 2017. Typically, the week leading up to December 31 is full of “reviews” of the past twelve months. I’ve never cared much for those, although it’s often interesting to skim through them and be reminded of how much we forget, and how quickly. But 2016 was not a normal year. It wasn’t even a normal year as Presidential campaign years go. There can be no doubt that this year’s Presidential campaign set some kind of record for just how insane, absurd and outright ugly American politics can get. It also devoured more of our attention and the attention of the news media than any campaign season I can recall. For example, I can’t remember seeing much at all about the Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro this year. The news media were far more interested in reporting on Trump’s rallies and Hillary’s emails.

I’ve found it both heartening and humbling to read some recent lists of *good* things that happened

in 2016 (because for the first year in my experience, people are finding it necessary to point out that some good things did happen). The World Health Organization announced that measles (at one time a scourge that killed millions of children) has been eradicated from both American continents. I completely missed that one. And Ebola, once feared as an unstoppable plague, has been eradicated from West Africa, along with malaria—both stunning achievements. Some animals were taken off the endangered lists—like giant pandas, green sea turtles and humpbacked whales—while others increased their numbers in the wild for the first time. Unemployment reached a nine-year low. Overall, the world is healthier, adopting more renewable energy programs, and is less violent. And of course, the Chicago Cubs defied history and the odds to win the World Series. Go, Cubs!

In another year, we’d all be excited about these things. But this has been a very tough year. I’ve lost count of the friends and family members who have said that 2016 was their worst year ever. In some cases, this is partly for personal reasons. But even those of us whose personal lives went fairly well this year are left saddened by what seemed like an extraordinarily high number of deaths among famous people, and devastated by the contention and ultimate result of the Presidential campaign.

It’s the issues surrounding the Presidential campaign and its outcome that create the most problems. The divide in perception is so vast, it seems unbridgeable. People who voted for Trump had their reasons. But people who voted for someone else are overwhelmed and horrified at the prospect of what may be ahead in the next four years as the Republicans promise to destroy or privatize every social safety net, take away health insurance, cut taxes for the richest Americans, deregulate industry and eliminate hard-won advances in civil rights going back sixty years. These are not hyperbolic assumptions—these are the explicitly stated goals of the Republican administrations both in Washington and in state legislatures. People who did not vote for Trump are, in many cases, legitimately terrified about where this country may be headed and how their own lives will be impacted.

My own spirituality is earth-centered, but I was raised Unitarian Universalist, and I am the minister of a UU congregation. Unitarian Universalism has been called “liberal religion” for a very long time, and most UUs are liberal and progressive in outlook. UUs tend to feel that we must include everyone, respect every

point of view, and never judge another culture, faith or philosophy. Our First Principle mandates affirming “the inherent worth and dignity of every person.” That includes Donald J. Trump and Hillary Clinton and lots of other people some of us are spectacularly unhappy with right now.

But this staunch determination to be reasonable, to listen to all sides, to engage rather than confront, to accept all points of view has its limitations. Even before now, it seemed to me that UUs tended to be so conciliatory that they disappointed those who needed strength and commitment more than mere understanding and sympathy.

We’re fond of saying that “everyone is entitled to their own opinion,” but do we carry that too far? It’s also said that “everyone is entitled to their own opinion—but not to their own facts.” At what point do we stop saying, “I disagree with you,” and have the courage to say, “No, that’s incorrect”? At what point do we stop saying, “I understand why you feel that way,” and start saying, “It’s not acceptable for you to do things that harm other people, whatever you think of them”? At what point do we stop saying, “everyone is welcome here, as long as you act respectfully,” and start saying, “You’re not welcome here because of what you’ve said and done in the past, no matter how you act now”?

At what point, in other words, do we take a stand?

I’m not posing these as rhetorical questions with obvious answers. They’re all tricky lines to draw with many potential pitfalls surrounding them. Our country is already as divided as it has ever been (which is saying a lot). Even before November 8, liberals and progressives were at each others’ throats, as Bernie Sanders supporters and Hillary Clinton supporters attacked and accused each other of selfishness, “privilege,” misogyny, dishonesty and a million other sins.

Now we’re facing a brand new year. On January 20, our new President will be inaugurated. After that, there is going to be some very hard work ahead of us. But before we can even start that work, we have to make some very hard decisions. We have to decide what we, as UUs, as liberals, as progressives, really believe—and what we’re prepared to **do** in defense of those beliefs.

UUCW just acquired its brand new rainbow flag. But if that flag is going to be anything more than a pretty piece of cloth, we have to be ready to speak out and take action to defend the rights of LGBTQ persons, especially transpersons who stand to suffer the most in the pending backlash. We have to be ready to speak out and take action when black Americans, immigrants, and members of other religions are mistreated, threatened or persecuted. We need to resist every attempt to strip away protections for workers, the poor, minorities and the environment. We need to keep working toward



Ring out the old, ring in the new! Happy New Year! It seems like yesterday when we were greeting one another at church school, and now we’re ushering in a brand new year. Doesn’t it seem like time is rushing past us at a furious rate of speed? How do we find the time to do the things that really matter? Come to church and find out! The RE kids will be taking time this winter for self-examination, and finding ways to incorporate their UU values into their everyday lives. We’ll practice the mindfulness of meditation, play creatively, create playfully. Together we’ll explore big questions and the miracles of nature, and learn a little more about each other and ourselves along the way.

Please take a moment to congratulate our young people for a truly excellent job in performing the RE Skit during the Christmas Eve service. They had a good time preparing this for everyone, and it showed!

There will be a programming change for the winter months, when the adults come downstairs for service time. We’re going to switch up the two class times, having our older kids come to class at 11:00 while the younger children attend the beginning of service. At the halfway point of the service, the two groups will switch and the Questing class will end, with those older young people attending the sermon portion of the service, and the youngsters in the Beginnings class will come into the Pine room for their class time.

Please consider joining us, we love meeting new friends!

Peace and light,

Kirsty Erikson
Lead RE Teacher

Spiritual Calendar

- January 6: Epiphany / Three Kings (Christian).** The “Twelfth Day of Christmas” which concludes the Christmas season by commemorating the adoration of the Magi and the recognition of Jesus as the Son of God. In Spanish-speaking countries, Three Kings (*El Día de los Reyes*) is the traditional time to give presents to children, which are delivered by the Three Kings (or Magi) rather than Santa Claus, and left in shoes, rather than stockings. Epiphany is also the beginning of the Carnival season which culminates with Shrove Tuesday or Mardi Gras (February 28, this year) at the beginning of Lent.
- January 15: World Religion Day (Baha’i).** A day to honor the unity and oneness of all the world’s religions. It was begun in 1950 by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá’ís of the United States, but has come to be celebrated internationally.
- January 28: Chinese New Year (Chinese).** The beginning of a fifteen-day long festival for Chinese of all religions, including Confucian, Daoist and Buddhist. This will be a Year of the Rooster. This elaborate celebration varies by both region and religion, but has several consistent themes. These include family reunions, honoring the ancestors, honoring the gods and deities, releasing and banishing bad luck and old business, and welcoming good luck, prosperity and the new. Homes, altars and temples are typically given a thorough cleaning, with old decorations burned and new ones put up. Red is an important color for clothing, decorations and for envelopes filled with money that are given as gifts. Along with personal and family observances, employers often give gifts, money and special meals to their employees. Traditional foods eaten at various points in the celebrations include dumplings, vegetarian meals for cleansing the body, and sweet cakes. There is a strong focus on avoiding bad luck and attracting good luck. As we find in many traditions world-wide, the turning of the year is a perilous “in-between” time when it is essential to do and say only things that will bring good fortune.

economic equity and prosperity that truly benefits all Americans. We need to let our legislators know that we’re here and we’re watching them, and not allow things to slip by in 11th hour sessions and attached riders to budget bills.

So I’m going to have to get over my reluctance to speak out. This month we honor the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., who once said, “In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends.” 2017 is going to bring many challenges. Yes, there are wrong and right ways of speaking—or rather, ways of speaking that generate anger and division, and ways that open the doors to dialogue and healing. No matter how carefully truth is spoken, there are those who will choose to take offense. But silence is no longer an option.

Pastor Inanna Arthen

Our Neighbors Kitchen

We’re warming up January with two hearty favorites!

On Thursday, January 12, we’ll be serving Swedish Meatballs with noodles, salad and dessert, cooked by Pastor Inanna Arthen and assistants.

On Thursday, January 26, we’ll serve Shepherd’s Pie, side dishes and dessert, all prepared by our Chef extraordinaire Dave Faucher and assistants.

Come in from the cold and join your friends and neighbors for these delicious dinners. Spring is only two months away!

Dinner is served at 5:30 p.m. 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 to socialize and enjoy the meal.

January Birthdays

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



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

This Month in UU History

- January 8, 1867: Born and raised Unitarian, Emily Green Balch was born on this day in Jamaica Plain, MA. She was part of the first class to graduate from Bryn Mawr College and went on to study in Paris, Berlin and Chicago. She taught economics, sociology and political science at Wellesley. In later years she worked with numerous peace organizations and joined the Society of Friends (Quakers). She was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1946 and donated the prize money to organizations she had founded.
- January 13, 1832: Horatio Alger was born in Revere, MA. A graduate of Harvard Divinity School, he was ordained by the Unitarian church in Brewster, MA. He later moved to New York City and worked with poor boys in the Newsboys' Lodging House. His experiences there inspired his series of fiction about young boys overcoming hardships and becoming successful. These books made him wealthy and popular, and made his name synonymous with the uplifting style of stories he told. He was a prolific writer who produced 119 novels along with poetry collections and biographies.
- January 14, 1875: Albert Schweitzer was born in Kayersberg, Upper Alsace, Germany (now part of France). A Nobel Prize winner who held doctorates in medicine, music, theology and philosophy, Dr. Schweitzer was a member of the Unitarian Church of Capetown, South Africa and an honorary member of the Unitarian Church of the Larger Fellowship. He served as a medical missionary in French Equatorial Africa (present day Gabon) and wrote numerous books, including *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* (1906), *Civilization and Ethics* (1923) and perhaps most intriguing, *The Psychiatric Study of Jesus* (1948).
- January 27, 1844: The founding of the Unitarian seminary, Meadville Theological School in Meadville, PA was announced in *The Christian World*. James Freeman Clarke wrote that the school was "without endowments, buildings, library or apparatus of any sort, but nevertheless having the two essential parts, teachers and pupils." As well as, obviously, a lot of pluck. In 1926, Meadville Theological School moved to Chicago and affiliated with Chicago University, and in the early 1930s it merged with the Universalist seminary Lombard College. Today Meadville Lombard Theological School is a leading UU seminary.

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 978-297-1730 (home) or 508-572-1624 (cell).

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