

# THE WINCHENDON UNITARIAN

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Church Telephone 978-297-0554

**FEBRUARY 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, February 5

11:00 am - Sunday Worship with Pastor  
Inanna Arthen - "The First Stirrings of  
Something New"  
11:00 am - "Questings" RE Class  
11:30 am - "Beginnings" RE Class

### Monday, February 6

7:45 pm - AA Meeting

### Thursday, February 9

5:30 pm - Our Neighbor's Kitchen serves  
Loaded Mac 'n' Cheese

### Sunday, February 12

11:00 am - Sunday Worship  
11:00 am - "Questings" RE Class  
11:30 am - "Beginnings" RE Class  
12:00 pm - UUCW Governing Board  
Meeting

### Monday, February 13

7:45 pm - AA Meeting

### Sunday, February 19

11:00 am - Sunday Worship  
11:00 am - "Questings" RE Class  
11:30 am - "Beginnings" RE Class

### Monday, February 20

7:45 pm - AA Meeting

### Thursday, February 23

5:30 pm - Our Neighbor's Kitchen serves  
Pot Roast Dinner

### Sunday, February 26

11:00 am - Sunday Worship with Pastor  
Inanna Arthen - "Unpresided"  
11:00 am - "Questings" RE Class  
11:30 am - "Beginnings" RE Class

### Monday, February 27

7:45 pm - AA Meeting

### Sunday, March 5

11:00 am - Sunday Worship  
11:00 am - "Questings" RE Class  
11:30 am - "Beginnings" RE Class

## From Your Minister

What a crazy month of January it has been! Mother Nature has teased us with mild drippy days followed by bitter cold snaps and then back up again, while the wind keeps the chimes on my porch ringing all night long. Snow, sleet, ice, rain, and endless clouds have made for a somewhat dreary few weeks, and we had a couple of power outages to keep us humble. But we've been busy at UUCW, soldiering on even when colds and flu knocked a few of us down for a while.

We launched the new year on January 1 with our annual New Year's "Fire Communion" service. During this intergenerational chalice circle service, we wrote things we wished to release, banish or say goodbye to on one slip of paper, and things we wanted to nurture or bring into our lives on the second. At the conclusion of the service, we went outside and burned the "goodbye to the old" slips in a metal bowl. We saved the second slip—mine is on my personal altar at home.

On Sunday, January 8 I prepared a service on the theme of the new year and facing the future—but winter virii won, with several people out sick, so I'll have to offer this service at another time. On January 15, Dave Faucher led a Chalice Circle Service on the theme of "Living in Uncertain Times." On January 22, I led a service asking, "What

Would Martin Luther King Jr. Do?” in which I talked about the lives of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and gay rights activist Harvey Milk, and speculated on what they might say to us about current events. On January 29, Dave Faucher led a Chalice Circle service in which we talked about “Building Bridges.”

Our Neighbor’s Kitchen served two delectable meals in January. On January 12, I cooked Swedish meatballs, with noodles, salad, and homemade double chocolate chip cookies. On January 26, Dave Faucher and assistants whipped up the perennial favorite, Shepherd’s Pie, with salad, bread, and a plethora of yummy donated cake and cupcakes for dessert. We’ve got two great meals simmering for this month—see below for details.

February is a month full of maddening contradictions. The weather is bitterly cold and stormy, yet the days are growing longer, and the sun is as high in the noon sky on February 15 as it is on August 25. Even the branches of the oak trees are black and leafless by now, rattling in the wind like bony fingers—yet the sap is starting to run, called upwards by the light. The ground is frozen hard, temperatures are harsh and food scarce—yet small animals are leaving their dens to court, stake out territory and mate.

We feel our own blood stirring in February, as we also are affected by the changing sunlight. We might call it “cabin-fever”—we no longer want to huddle down and be cozy, we’re starting to get impatient, to want to get things done.

It may be the general wildness of this month that is contributing to the high levels of emotionalism and conflict in our culture right now. Not since the 1960s has the country been so divided and the various factions so hostile, angry and dismissive of each other’s concerns and justifications. Any hopes we may have had that the election would calm things down have been thoroughly dashed. I know people on the “winning” and the “losing” side. *Both* sides are convinced that they’re engaged in a life-or-death struggle with the forces of evil itself to “save America.” *Both* sides are convinced that they’re on the side of the angels; *both* sides regard the other side with scathing contempt, scorn and utter hatred; *both* sides believe that the stakes couldn’t possibly be higher.

And both sides, with the exception of the highest echelons of the most wealthy, are going to suffer equally from the decisions promised by the new administration. The sole difference is that only the “losing” side

fully appreciates that, and is trying to prevent the worst fallout from happening.

Along with being a minister, I’m also an artist and writer. I’ll confess: I’m finding it very difficult to work creatively these days. Douglas Adams (*The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy*) once said, “Writing is easy. You just stare at a blank page until your forehead starts to bleed.” I’ve been known to call it “banging my head against the wall until inspiration falls out of my ear.” For some months now, I’ve been doing a lot more staring and banging than usual. There’s something about the current atmosphere all around us which is both immobilizing and mesmerizing. We keep going back to the news, to Facebook, to Twitter, to the TV, to see what’s happening now. We keep expecting some call to action, some sudden event, some disaster that we’ll have to drop everything and deal with. This is what I call “crisis mode.” It’s not good.

Many writers, or people who want to write (and this goes for other creative fields, too) complain about not having enough time to write. I often feel like that, too. But I know now that “not enough time” is really an illusion.

In 1995, I started grad school. I was commuting two hours a day into Cambridge, taking full-time classes, and doing a field education unit. I was reading a couple of books a week and writing papers every week. Yet with all this going on...I wrote a novel.

Well, it was half of a novel, maybe 60,000 words. I was posting it to an email list comprising dozens of prolific amateur writers. The list voted on the best fiction posted during the year, and my half-a-novel was voted Best Long Fiction, even though it wasn’t finished. Despite this wonderful validation and incentive, I couldn’t continue with the book. This was partly because I’d run into a snag with the structure of the plot that took me a while to solve. But that wouldn’t have held me up for years. What actually stopped me was getting a job with a battered women’s shelter during my first summer of grad school.

For a lot of reasons, that job put me in perpetual crisis mode—because the agency I worked for was in a constant state of crisis. Staff morale was abysmal, management was authoritarian, rules changed all the time, staff turnover was so high the place needed a revolving door. I never knew when I went to work who would have quit that day and what extra shifts would need to be covered. There were times when part-time staff were working 50-hour weeks. Add all that chaos to the fact that we were serving women and families fleeing

domestic violence, with abusers who sometimes threatened not only their lives but ours, and you can see why my stress level was rather high. I finished grad school and took my degree with distinction, but I stayed at the shelter for eight more years. And during all that time, I couldn't write fiction. I wrote letters and journals and essays, but my half a novel languished unfinished. I used National Novel Writing Month to force out half of another novel in 2005—and there it sat.

In 2006 I quit my job at the shelter. Within a year I had finished and published one novel, and then I solved the problems with the 1995 story and finished and published that one. That's not because I wasn't busy—I'd started my own publishing company. But being "busy" only made me more creative, not less.

That's how I learned first-hand how destructive crisis mode is. Crisis mode basically stops you from doing anything except wait for a crisis to occur. You can't think, you can't plan, you can't concentrate on anything except the crisis. The difference between a "problem" and a "crisis," you see, is that problems can be solved, and they always have multiple possible solutions. Crises can only be reacted to, like jerking your hand out of boiling water.

All of us progressives are in crisis mode now, and it's going to wear us down fast. We keep hearing that "we're in this for the long haul." But crisis mode leaves

us vulnerable to manipulation. Not everything we're seeing can be taken at face value. The last couple of weeks, I've thought a lot about that tactic used by stage magicians and pickpockets, called "misdirection." If you distract people with something dramatic or upsetting, and hold their attention in one place, you can then pull something sneaky off right under their noses, and they won't even see what happened.

We need to beware of crisis mode more than anything else. There are some extremely clever people on the "winning" side and we must not underestimate them. Never take your eyes off the man behind the curtain; keep watching both the magician's hands. When something happens that tempts us to leap up and go rushing off to respond—with a march or a protest or a letter writing campaign—always take a moment to think. We should ask ourselves, "what's *really* going on here, and what is really the most effective course of action?" That, you see, is problem-solving mode, not crisis mode. Reacting with our brains instead of our emotions will help armor us against manipulation.

UUs have always valued reason at least as highly as faith, if not more. Times like these call for rationality, calm, fair-mindedness, cool heads and creative problem-solving. Above all, these times call for us to reject fear and fear-mongering—even from our "own side." "Perfect love casts out fear," the Bible says; the



## RE News



Winter is nearly "broken" in two. Soon we'll start to notice that we're slipping into those really cold and blustery February storms when we feel like winter will never end. But downstairs at UUCW in the Pine Room, a band of young people are braving the cold and muck outside and snuggled warmly in our space! We've been talking and learning about each other, how we live our Unitarian Universalist values, and how our lives interconnect and intersect in strange and mysterious ways.

We've had a scheduling change for the winter, regarding class times. With Adult Services happening downstairs, we've decided to have the youngest kids sit in the opening of service, participating in the candle lighting, joys and sorrows, and bell ringing parts of service. They will also hear a story from the service leader! While this happens, our older youth will be in class, until 11:30. At that point, the two groups will switch, and the younger kids will come to class while the elder kids will go out to listen to the sermon and readings through the end of the church service. Holding all of the service downstairs allows us to save on heating the upstairs during the heart of the cold days. And let's face it, it's just nice to huddle together where it's warm and the camaraderie comforts the spirit as the weather percolates through the end of the winter season!

Hoping to see you in church!

Peace and light,

Kirsty Erikson  
Lead RE Teacher

# Spiritual Calendar

**February 1: Vasant Panchami (Hindu).** Celebration dedicated to Saraswati, the goddess of learning.

**February 2: Candlemas / Oimeic / Imbolg (Pagan).** Modern Pagans celebrate Imbolg as one of the four “cross-quarter” holidays that fall between the Solstices and Equinoxes. It is seen as a time to acknowledge the unseen quickening of new life, influenced by the lengthening days and stronger sunlight. Small animals emerge from their dens to court and mate in February, and maple sugaring season begins, as the sap starts to run in dormant trees, presaging spring. This is also known as Brigid’s Day in Ireland, for the goddess whose name gave us the word “bride.” By Imbolg, all greenery and decorations left from Yule must be burned or disposed of and the house is given a good cleaning. Spiritual work focuses on good fortune and abundance for the coming spring.

**February 13-15: Lupercalia (Ancient Rome).** An ancient holiday even in Rome, this celebration meant to encourage fertility continued until banned by Pope Gelasius I at the end of the 5th Century CE, and gave the month of February its name. The festival culminated with celebrants running through the streets hitting everyone in reach with rawhide thongs called *februa*. Women jostled to be struck by a thong, as this was supposed to give fertility and an easy childbirth, and cure women of being barren. February included several important Roman holidays, including Parentalia and Feralia which honored one’s family and ancestors, and the Festival of Diana, who protected wild animals and Nature.

**February 14: St. Valentine’s Day (Christian).** There were several martyrs named Valentinius, and numerous conflicting stories about them. St. Valentine’s Day began as a Christian feast day to honor Christ’s love and love in general (*caritas*). It moved to a celebration of courtly and romantic love after the 15th century, and was blended with older traditions related to fertility and courtship.

**February 28: Shrove Tuesday / Mardi Gras (Christian).** Carnival or Mardi Gras (French for “Fat Tuesday”) evolved from the tradition of feasting on foods banned during Lent in order to use them up before the long fast season began. The custom of eating special meals, like pancakes, merged in some areas with old traditions like Saturnalia, with popular customs like wearing costumes and masks, pranks, processions, and role-reversals among masters and servants or parents and children. The Mardi Gras “King Cake” with its favors baked inside the cake derives directly from similar cakes in Pagan traditions which have small favors inside, like the Irish *barm brack*. Shrove Tuesday is followed by Ash Wednesday, which commences the season of Lent.

ancient Greeks and Romans gave that same power to reason. Faith and love informed by reason is our great power as UUs, and right now it is a rare power. As we continue to take action in every way we can to preserve our country’s highest ideals and protect those who are at risk, let’s remember what our strongest gifts are, and use them.

Pastor Inanna Arthen

## Our Neighbors Kitchen

We’re putting the love into February with two favorite family comfort foods!

On Thursday, February 9, we’ll be serving “Loaded Mac ‘n’ Cheese.” This never came out of a box! Pasta baked with several kinds of cheese, with chicken and sausage added in, along with salad and dessert, cooked by Pastor Inanna Arthen and assistants.

On Thursday, February 23, we’ll serve a New England all-time favorite, hearty Pot Roast Dinner, with side dishes and dessert, all prepared by our chef extraordinaire Dave Faucher and assistants.

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.

## UUCW Online

<http://uucw.ncmuuc.org>

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

# This Month in UU History

February 9, 1791: Founding of the Unitarian Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge and the Practice of Virtue by the Distribution of Books at Essex Street Chapel in London, England. The Unitarian denomination would not be established in England for another 34 years, and Unitarians were considered “Dissenters” from the Anglican faith. First proposed by Thomas Belsham, the Society published numerous books and tracts propounding Unitarian principles, which served to connect isolated Unitarians throughout Britain.

February 15, 1820: Quaker and Unitarian Susan Brownell Anthony was born in Adams, MA. Anthony was active in several 19th Century progressive movements, including abolition of slavery, temperance and teachers’ organizations. She campaigned for women to be included in the 15th Amendment which gave the vote to African Americans. In 1869, she and Elizabeth Cady Stanton organized the National Woman Suffrage Organization. Both women spent the next 35 years traveling the country crusading for women to be given the vote. In 1872, Anthony went to the polls in Rochester, NY, demanding her right to vote as a citizen. She was arrested but refused to pay her \$100 fine. One month before her death, in February 1906, Anthony gave her last speech to a woman’s suffrage convention in Baltimore, saying, “Failure is impossible.” Fourteen years later, in 1920, Congress passed the 19th Amendment giving women the right to vote.

February 17, 1818: Sallie Holley was born in Canandaigua NY. At Oberlin College, she was the only Unitarian student, and defended her beliefs to other women there. One of those students was Caroline Putnam, who became Holley’s lifelong friend and partner. Both women were fervent abolitionists who worked for the American Anti-Slavery Society and fought for the voting rights of freed slaves. They founded a school to teach black students in Lottsburgh, VA which became known as the Holley School, although Holley herself traveled a great deal, not liking the isolation of the school’s rural location. Two black women were hired as assistant teachers at the school.

## February Birthdays

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



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

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