

THE WINCHENDON UNITARIAN

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Church Telephone 978-297-0554

DECEMBER 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, December 3

11:00 am - Sunday Worship - Chalice
Circle Service: Human Rights and the
Environment

12:30 pm - Indivisible Winchendon Mtg.

Monday, December 4

7:45 pm - AA Meeting

Tuesday, December 5

6:30 pm - NA Meeting (NEW!)

Saturday, December 9

10:00 am - 4:00 pm - Open House as part
of Historical House Tour

4:00 pm - 5:00 pm - Brass Quintet Holiday
Concert and Tree Lighting

Sunday, December 10

11:00 am - Sunday Worship with Rev.
Inanna Arthen - "On the Brink"

12:30 pm - Indivisible Winchendon Mtg.

Monday, December 11

7:45 pm - AA Meeting

Tuesday, December 12

6:30 pm - NA Meeting (NEW!)

Thursday, December 14

5:30 pm - Our Neighbor's Kitchen serves
Potato Parmesan Soup & Sandwiches

Sunday, December 17

11:00 am - Sunday Worship - Chalice
Circle Service: Human Rights and
Health Care

12:30 pm - Indivisible Winchendon Mtg.

2:30 pm - UUCW Governing Board
Meeting

Monday, December 18

7:45 pm - AA Meeting

Tuesday, December 19

6:30 pm - NA Meeting (NEW!)

Sunday, December 24

7:00 pm - Christmas Eve Candlelight
Service

(There will be no morning worship service
or Indivisible Winchendon meeting
today)

Monday, December 25

7:45 pm - AA Meeting

Tuesday, December 26

6:30 pm - NA Meeting (NEW!)

Thursday, December 28

5:30pm - Our Neighbor's Kitchen serves
Beef Burgundy Holiday Dinner

Sunday, December 31

11:00 am - Sunday Worship with Rev.
Inanna Arthen - "Fire Communion"

12:30 pm - Indivisible Winchendon Mtg.

Monday, January 1

7:45 pm - AA Meeting

Tuesday, January 2

6:30 pm - NA Meeting (NEW!)

Sunday, January 7

11:00 am - Sunday Worship with Rev.
Inanna Arthen - "New Years"

12:30 pm - Indivisible Winchendon Mtg.

From Your Minister

November seems to have been a rough month for many of the people I know. I've been hearing continually from folks who have been hospitalized, had family in the hospital, had to move to another state for economic reasons, or suffered a bereavement. This week's *Winchendon Courier* has almost two and half full pages of obituaries. One of

my cats went blind and was creeping around the house; I had to feed her by hand, and she was diagnosed with lymphoma. She started chemotherapy on November 20 and has made a miraculous improvement—her vision returned and she's almost her old self. The month has been filled with such drastic ups and downs.

Personal stresses notwithstanding, we've been busy at UUCW. On Sunday, November 5, Dave Faucher offered a Chalice Circle Service on the theme of "Trigger Words." On November 12, I led a thoughtful service for Veterans Day, "Home From the Wars," reflecting on the challenges faced by returning veterans and how we can understand their experiences. On November 19, Dave Faucher prepared a Chalice Circle Service focusing on Native Americans. On November 26, I presented a Thanksgiving service on the theme of gratitude, and how difficult it can be sometimes to remember "All We Have to be Thankful For."

Our Neighbor's Kitchen served two hearty meals in November. On November 9, my assistants and I cooked up stuffed manicotti with salad, garlic bread, and homemade cookies for dessert. On November 30, chef extraordinaire Dave Faucher and assistants cooked all day to turn out our annual most popular meal, roast turkey dinner with mashed potatoes, dressing, gravy, homemade cranberry sauce, sublime roasted winter vegetables, green bean casserole and cookies for dessert.

On November 24, we collected toys and monetary donations during our annual "Black Friday" Spirit of Christmas Toy Drive. (To all of you who donated, thank you!) We've started decorating the church for the holidays, and we have a new volunteer sexton who is making our building shine.

Our NA meeting on Tuesdays has been slowly growing, and Indivisible Winchendon meeting on Sunday afternoon has been lively, with some members attending statewide events and bringing back reports and information to the group.

Every December we gallop into the season of spending money, decorating, cooking, baking, buying gifts and getting ready for Christmas morning. Some of us have children, some of us visit family, some of us volunteer our time in nursing homes or helping to serve dinner to the homeless, and some of us work on holidays. When I worked in a shelter, I chose to cover shifts on Christmas Eve, Christmas Day and New Year's Eve, so my coworkers with families could have the time off. First responders, health care professionals, direct care staff and many others give up their holidays so

the rest of us can be safe, cared for and fed. Even some plumbers will answer an emergency call on holidays.

I'm finding it harder this year to get into the holiday spirit. We currently have a Congress full of unreformed Ebenezer Scrooges, cackling over their gold and telling the "surplus population," that is, anyone who isn't extremely rich, to go away and die (almost in so many words). They all need a good scary visit from the Ghosts of Christmas Present and Yet to Come, showing them what real life is like outside of their trickle-down delusions, and what the real outcome of their schemes will be for millions of Americans. Alas, Dickens was writing a fantasy. It's up to us to give our heartless legislators a dose of perspective and reality. But how can we do that? How do we make those who are completely irrational see common sense?

We're distressed at the wide gap between extreme views that is splitting our dinner tables, our families, our communities and our country. But the gap goes far beyond politics. On the one side we have those who care for no one but themselves and are grabbing everything they can possibly get hold of. On the other side we have the selfless, kind and generous who donate their last penny to charities, help out strangers as well as neighbors, go without so they can assist other people, and dedicate themselves to public service. These are the people who should be in our state houses and in Congress. But those who seek power are invariably the last people who should be trusted with it. I'd love to see a wealth cap on politicians—no one with more than a middle class income and asset level would be allowed to hold any public office. If I start a petition, would you sign?

As always, the best way we can change hearts, minds and circumstances is by example. But it's more complicated than simply being a quiet do-gooder. We need positive examples that running businesses and making laws in humane and ethical ways is also profitable and rewarding. It's easy to focus all our attention on the negative. Let's shine some bright lights and kudos on corporations and legislators who really are doing the right thing. If we lavish our approval and applause on those who do good, we'll encourage others with power and resources to emulate them, because everyone loves to be loved. As we shop for presents this year, let's start showing corporations that it's good business to be a good business.

Rev. Inanna Arthen

This Month in UU History

December 23, 1851: Unitarian Mary Augusta Safford was born in Quincy, IL. Augusta showed an early gift for preaching, which she practiced as a child standing on a tree stump near her family's farm. Her father, a farmer and teacher, shared "dangerous ideas" with her such as the theory of evolution and the fallibility of the Bible; after his death, Augusta read freely in his library. In her early twenties, Augusta met and bonded with a kindred soul and similar free thinker, Eleanor Gordon, and the two vowed to "serve the world as a team" for the rest of their lives. As part of the "Iowa Sisterhood," Augusta and Eleanor founded numerous Unitarian churches in Iowa. Augusta was called to ministry and served the congregations in Humboldt, Sioux City and Des Moines, Iowa. She was the Executive Secretary of the Iowa Unitarian Society. She was committed to growing congregations and recruiting and empowering colleagues, especially young women such as Mary Collson, Ida Hultin, and Rowena Morse, who all became Unitarian ministers. Augusta took the geographical isolation of Iowa from the centers of "liberal religion" to be a challenge to overcome. In 1910 she "retired" to Orlando, FL, only to organize the Unitarian church in Orlando and serve its congregation until her death in 1927. Safford believed that "true religion must first of all be 'free' religion, free from irrational dogma that discouraged personal growth." She saw congregations as communities where individuals could evolve together "in the spirit of love and helpfulness."

Our Neighbor's Kitchen

With all the holiday flurry and events, we're still putting together two great meals for December!

On Thursday, December 14, we'll dish up, by popular demand, a reprise of last year's Potato Parmesan Soup, with mini-sub-sandwiches, salad and dessert.

On Thursday, December 28, chef extraordinaire Dave Faucher and assistants will present our annual elegant holiday meal of Beef Burgundy with sides, vegetables and dessert.

We can always use more volunteers. If you can help with food prep, contact the chefs for details on their work flow for the night's meal and when help will be most needed, as this varies with the menu. If you'd like to help with set-up, come to the church between 3:30 and 4:30 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 5:45 p.m. and usually takes about forty-five minutes. Volunteers have a chance to sit down together to socialize and enjoy the meal.

On December 7 and 21, Immaculate Heart of Mary church (52 Spruce Street) will be serving "first and third Thursday" Our Neighbor's Kitchen dinners in their hall. Contact IHM for menus and details on volunteering. UUCW and IHM will be alternating serving dinner on the fifth Thursday, in months that have five Thursdays (silly calendar...!).

This meal is sustained by gifts from the people who attend, the religious communities of Winchendon,

the Winchendon Community Action Committee, The Winchendon School, and many volunteers.

Saturday, December 9 Holiday House Tour and Open House

On Saturday, December 9, from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., UUCW will participate in the Winchendon Historical Society's bi-annual Holiday House Tour. We'll have our church decorated for the holidays, with holiday treats available. Rev. Arthen and church members will be there offering a tour of our beautiful historic building. We'll be ready to answer your questions about our church, its history, and what Unitarian Universalism is all about. Don't miss this fun opportunity to tour Winchendon's most beautiful historic buildings and homes in their holiday finery. It doesn't happen every year! Contact the Winchendon Historical Society (<http://www.winchendonhistory.com/>) for more information.

Saturday, December 9 Brass Quintet Holiday Concert

Winchendon Winds and UUCW will present a special Brass Quintet concert of holiday-themed music and poetry on Saturday, December 9 at 4:00 p.m., directly after our Holiday House Tour open house.

Five professional brass musicians, coordinated by Winchendon Winds lead trumpet player Jeanne Pocius,

Spiritual Calendar

- December 6: Saint Nicholas's Day (Christian).** Feast day of Saint Nicholas (270-343 C.E.), also known as Bishop Nikolaos of Myra. Many miracles are attributed to him, earning him the name "Nikolaos the Wonder-worker." He attended the First Council of Nicea in 325 C.E. and was a signatory to the Nicene Creed. A staunch defender of orthodox doctrine, he is reported to have punched the heretical priest Arius in the face. (The Arian "heresy" held that Christ was not fully divine or equal to God the Father, and was a precursor to Unitarianism.) Saint Nicholas is a popular saint and the patron saint of many cities and countries. His reputation for secretly giving gifts led to a widespread custom of gift-giving on his feast day. Children would place shoes by the door for Saint Nicholas to leave coins in. The image of the stately bishop in long red robes and a long beard became the Father Christmas of Britain and northern Europe. He was especially beloved in the Netherlands, and his name in Dutch, *Sinterklaas*, is the origin of our "Santa Claus."
- December 13-20: Hanukkah (Jewish).** The eight-day Jewish Festival of Lights, Hanukkah commemorates the re-dedication of the Temple at the time of the Maccabean Revolt against the Seleucid Empire in 165 BCE. Traditional accounts of the holiday's origin vary. In the best known, the priests could only find one vial of sacred oil for the Temple lamps, which should have burned only a day, but it lasted for eight days while new oil was prepared and consecrated. The success of the Maccabean Revolt was cause enough for a celebration, miracles aside. Jews observe Hanukkah by lighting candles or oil lamps for eight nights, kindling an additional flame each night. Eight-branched candelabra called menorahs are often used (but aren't required) to hold the candles, which must burn for at least a half hour after sunset. Jews also speak extra prayers, and traditionally enjoy fried foods like latkes and jelly doughnuts to emphasize the theme of oil and its importance. Some families exchange small gifts each night of Hanukkah, or give "Hanukkah Gelt" to children. Hanukkah is another example of a "feast of lights" held at the time of the Winter Solstice.
- December 17: Saturnalia (Ancient Rome).** The most popular and widely celebrated of the ancient Roman holidays, Saturnalia commemorated a mythical golden age of total equality and innocence, when all property was held in common, no one was a slave or a noble, and no one had to work hard to live thanks to a benevolent, fruitful world. Saturn was an agricultural god; his consort Ops was a goddess of fertility and prosperity. Saturnalia was best known for the custom of reversing social roles, with slaves ordering their masters around and everyone eating at the same table. Along with public banquets and a sacrifice in the temple of Saturn, customs included parties and gift-giving, and a general atmosphere of ongoing merriment and silliness. Many of these customs, along with the celebration of the return of the light at Solstice, became part of secular Christmas celebrations. The rollicking "carnival" license and public merriment became part of New Year or pre-Lenten (i.e. Mardi Gras) celebrations in many Christian countries.
- December 21: Winter Solstice / Yule (Pagan).** Astronomically, Solstice is the date when the sun is lowest in the noonday sky, the day is the shortest of the year and the night the longest. After the Solstice the days begin to lengthen and the sun rises higher in the sky. Cultures throughout history and around the world have traditional celebrations at the time of the Winter Solstice which focus on light, the sun, generosity, gift giving, feasting and defying winter. Modern Pagans observe Yule as the time when the reborn Solar god (the Oak King) overthrows the outgoing earth or forest god (the Holly King, recognizable in fiction as Dickens' Ghost of Christmas Present), who will reclaim power again at Summer Solstice. They celebrate with parties, gifts, decorating with greenery and lights, and often burning a special Yule Log.
- December 25: Christmas (Christian).** A solemn and joyful celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ. Christmas was never as important to the Christian faith as Easter, and has had a checkered past. The Protestant Reformation attacked Christmas as a pagan holiday with no basis in Scripture; it was banned in Puritan New England and wasn't widely celebrated in the United States until the 19th century. The Gospels describe Christ's birth but never identify a date. Most historians agree that the Protestants were right and Christmas was adapted largely from the Roman Saturnalia, with some Winter Solstice observances (such as the Germanic/Norse *Jul* or Yule) mixed in. Whatever its pedigree, Christmas is firmly enshrined as the second most important holy day of the Christian faith and is celebrated around the world.

will perform some of your favorite holiday carols, including “Deck the Halls,” “Hark the Herald Angels Sing,” “I Saw Three Ships” and “Lo, How Rose E’er Blooming.” Interspersed with the music, Rev. Inanna Arthen will give lively readings of some Christmas poems, including “A Visit from Saint Nicholas.”

At the conclusion of the concert, UUCW will invite everyone outside to raise voices in some al fresco carol singing as the “tree of lights” is turned on for the first time. Top off your busy Saturday afternoon with an entertaining concert and tree-lighting at UUCW! The concert is free of charge. All are welcome!

Sunday, December 24 Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

UUCW will host our annual Christmas Eve Candlelight Service on Saturday, December 24 at 7:00 p.m. Join us for this traditional service that includes readings of the Nativity Story, carol singing, and passing candlelight around the sanctuary. Everyone is welcome at this lovely prelude to Christmas Day.

We will not have a morning worship service on Sunday, December 24. On Sunday, December 31, we’ll have an intergenerational “Fire Communion Service” in which we release the old and welcome new hopes and opportunities for 2018. All are welcome!

NA Meeting at UUCW

UUCW is hosting a new Narcotics Anonymous (NA) meeting on Tuesdays at 6:30 p.m. in our Parish Hall. This is an open meeting, with free discussion, information, support and sharing. If you’re in recovery or would like to be, you’re welcome to join us. If you know anyone who would benefit from an NA meeting or is looking for a local one, please pass this information on to them.

Winchendon NA Meeting (we will be giving it a

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).

more official name of its own) is led by Winchendon residents, in collaboration with the Central MA Area and New England Region of Narcotics Anonymous. For more information about NA and its principles, see www.nerna.org.

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.

December Birthdays

Eben Gordon	December 3
Julie S. Gambill	December 15
Brian Dickens	December 20
Joseph Sackett, Jr.	December 21
Scott Gambill	December 31



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

UUCW Online

<http://uucw.ncmuuc.org>

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

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