

# THE WINCHENDON UNITARIAN

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Church Telephone 978-297-0554

**FEBRUARY 2018**

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 4

11:00 am - Sunday Worship with Rev.

Inanna Arthen: "Go, Team!"

12:30 pm - Indivisible Winchendon Mtg.

### Monday, February 5

7:45 pm - AA Meeting

### Tuesday, February 6

6:30 pm - NA Meeting (NEW!)

### Thursday, February 8

5:30 pm - Our Neighbor's Kitchen serves

Scalloped Potatoes

### Sunday, February 11

11:00 am - Sunday Worship with Rev.

Inanna Arthen: "The Power of Love"

12:30 pm - Indivisible Winchendon Mtg.

### Monday, February 12

7:45 pm - AA Meeting

### Tuesday, February 13

6:30 pm - NA Meeting (NEW!)

### Sunday, February 18

11:00 am - Sunday Worship, Chalice Circle

Service

12:30 pm - Indivisible Winchendon Mtg.

### Monday, February 19

7:45 pm - AA Meeting

### Tuesday, February 20

6:30 pm - NA Meeting (NEW!)

### Wednesday, February 21

7:00 pm - UUCW Governing Board

Meeting

### Thursday, February 22

5:30pm - Our Neighbor's Kitchen serves

Swedish Meatballs with Mashed

Potatoes

### Sunday, February 25

11:00 am - Sunday Worship, Chalice Circle

Service

12:30 pm - Indivisible Winchendon Mtg.

### Monday, February 26

7:45 pm - AA Meeting

### Tuesday, February 27

6:30 pm - NA Meeting (NEW!)

### Sunday, March 4

11:00 am - Sunday Worship with Rev.

Inanna Arthen

12:30 pm - Indivisible Winchendon Mtg.

## From Your Minister

The best thing about February, according to some people, is that it's the shortest month in the year. The last month of calendrical winter, February often begins with the season's harshest weather, just at the time when our heating budgets are stretching thin and we're getting very sick of cold, snow, ice and short dreary days. But February is also a month filled with hope and growing anticipation. By now, we can see and feel the lengthening days and strengthening sunlight. Snow falls, but it melts away faster. The birds' songs are changing. Spring is definitely around the corner. February stuffs a lot of holidays into its brief four weeks—we start with Groundhog Day (celebrated more solemnly as Imbolg by modern Pagans and Candlemas by some Christians), then focus on love, romance and relationships at Valentine's Day, then honor some of our past heroes at Presidents Day. Most years, February is the month of Mardi Gras or Carnival, that last big party before the forty days of Lent.

We had lots of plans for January at UUCW, but some of our plans had to be postponed and rescheduled thanks to the Polar Vortex. We didn't want people to risk their safety coming to church in brutal wind chills

## ***This Month in UU History***

February 6, 1811: Lifelong Unitarian and political firebrand Charles Sumner was born in Boston, MA. Sumner was a ferociously outspoken abolitionist, condemning slavery and those who practiced it in very harsh terms. He was also a strong proponent of human rights in general. He was educated at Harvard University and Harvard Law School and served as Senator for Massachusetts. Far ahead of his time in humanist views, he argued a case against segregation (for freed blacks) in 1845, saying that schools for black children were vastly inferior to schools for white children. He was the victim of an infamous attack on the floor of the Senate in 1856. Sumner had harshly criticized the Kansas-Nebraska Act, one of many pieces of legislation leading up to the Civil War which attempted to legalize slavery in new states seeking admittance to the Union. Sumner compared slavery to forced prostitution and called the authors of the Act, Democratic Senators Stephen A. Douglas of Illinois and Andrew Butler of South Carolina, the equivalent of pimps. Butler's cousin, Representative Preston Brooks, wanted to challenge Sumner to a duel. Instead, he attacked Sumner in the Senate Chamber, beating him severely with his cane even after Sumner was unconscious, while another South Carolina Congressman, Laurence M. Keitt, held off those who tried to help with a pistol. The attack created outrage in the North while Brooks was hailed as a hero in the South. Sumner survived but was unable to return to the Senate for several years due to lasting effects of head injury and what we now recognize as PTSD. He did return in 1859, and despite advice to tone it down, was as strident a crusader for civil rights as ever. He made many enemies, including President Ulysses S. Grant, but he remained true to his principles. "He took his position and kept it," Ralph Waldo Emerson said of Sumner. He served in the Senate for 23 years total, and after his death in 1874 he became the second Senator to lie in state in the Capitol rotunda. He was a member of King's Chapel (Unitarian) in Boston.

February 22, 1805: Lifelong and fervent Unitarian Sarah Fuller Flower Adams was born in Harlow, Essex, England, to the radical political editor and journalist Benjamin Flower and his wife Eliza Gould. Sarah's mother died when she was five, and her father brought up Sarah and her elder sister Eliza, involving himself in their education. Radical preacher William Johnson Fox, minister of South Place Unitarian Chapel in London, was a frequent visitor to their home, and Sarah was acquainted with the young poet Robert Browning. After Benjamin Flower died in 1825, Sarah and Eliza joined Rev. Fox's household and became active members of his church. Sarah wrote numerous hymns, including the words to "Nearer, My God to Thee." After marrying William Bridges Adams in 1834, Sarah, with her husband's encouragement, became an actress, receiving critical acclaim for her performances as Lady Macbeth, Portia and Lady Teazle. Her health and encroaching deafness prevented her from continuing her acting career. She turned to literature, especially poetry, and published *Vivia Perpetua*, a dramatic poem in five acts, in which a young wife who refuses to submit to male control and renounce her Christian beliefs is put to death. Both Sarah and her sister suffered from multiple illnesses and died childless in their early 40s.

that went as low as -30°F, or take the chance of slipping on the snow and ice that were sometimes very hard to keep up with. So, our annual Fire Communion service was rescheduled to Sunday, January 7, then postponed again to January 14, when it was still cold but not quite as brutal. On January 21, I led a service inspired by Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. Day, "What We Think When We Think About Race." On January 28, I put together a service about winter, and what it's like to deal with the cold when you can't afford to just turn up the thermostat, titled "Deepest Winter."

On Thursday, January 11, I cooked Baked Macaroni and Cheese with chicken and sausage, salad and homemade peanut butter cookies for Our Neighbor's Kitchen. On Thursday, January 25, I stepped in to assist

chef Dave Faucher in turning out our holiday extravaganza of Beef Burgundy, winter vegetable tort, salad, and homemade chocolate chip cookies for dessert, which was postponed from its usual December date by the same weather that froze the water line from my well on December 29.

Even NA meetings and Indivisible Winchendon meetings were cancelled a couple of times, and UUCW didn't escape the regional epidemic of frozen pipes—in our case, fortunately, just a drain pipe which a hair dryer thawed without complications. But now everything is back on schedule. The driveway is de-iced and I'm seeing a lot of bare ground showing as the snow disappears.

*(continued on page 4)*

# Spiritual Calendar

- February 2: Imbolg (Pagan).** The first “cross quarter” holiday of the year, Imbolg (also called Oimeal, Candlemas or Brigid’s Day) marks the midpoint between Winter Solstice and Spring Equinox. By Imbolg, the lengthening days and stronger sun can be seen and felt. In agricultural Britain and northern Europe, the ploughing season was already underway. In the U.S., Imbolg is often the time of the harshest weather of the season (the Blizzard of ‘78 started on February 4), but conversely, small animals emerge from their dens to court and mate, weather regardless, while some animals, such as bears, give birth in their dens. Modern Pagans celebrate Imbolg as a time to acknowledge the new life still hidden under the snow of winter, but ready to sprout or be born later in the spring. It’s a time of rekindled hope and planning for the future. In the Christian calendar, Candlemas commemorated the presentation of the infant Jesus in the temple, and the purification of Mary after giving birth. Both are consistent with the older themes of Imbolg: recognition of the potential of new life, and new motherhood.
- February 4: Four Chaplains Sunday / Community Ministry Sunday (Interfaith).** The first Sunday in February is often marked by special services to commemorate The Four Chaplains who gave up their own lives to save military and civilian personnel when the troop ship *Dorchester* was sunk on February 3, 1943. The chaplains—Methodist minister the Reverend George L. Fox, Reform Rabbi Alexander D. Goode (Ph.D), Roman Catholic priest the Reverend John P. Washington, and Reformed Church in America minister the Reverend Clark V. Poling—gave up their own life jackets to others. They linked arms, prayed and sang hymns as they went down with the ship. Community Ministry Sunday is a day to recognize how much ministerial work is done outside of the pulpit or parish setting, and how much is done by commissioned ministers and laypersons as well as by ordained parish ministers.
- February 13: Shrove Tuesday / Mardi Gras (Christian).** The last day before the beginning of Lent was a time to use up perishable foods which were proscribed during the Lenten fast, such as eggs, butter and red meats. In some places rich pancakes were a traditional Shrove Tuesday food, along with cakes and other fried food. The best way to use up a lot of food is to hold a feast; in some areas, this evolved into an extended party, such as Mardi Gras (“Fat Tuesday”) in New Orleans or Carnival in Brazil, that last for several days. Customs common to New Year’s celebrations, such as parades, role-reversals, costumes and masks, and temporary relaxing of moral rules were absorbed into pre-Lenten celebrations. These celebrations worked socially as a “pressure valve” which enhanced the observance of the strict rules of Lent.
- February 14: Ash Wednesday / Beginning of Lent (Christian).** The forty day period leading up to Easter is observed as Lent in Roman Catholic, Orthodox, and some Protestant denominations. During Lent, Christians prepare for Easter, and its message of salvation, by repentance and penance, prayer, giving alms, and denying themselves luxuries and certain foods such as eggs and meat. On Ash Wednesday, Christians attend services and receive a blessing from a priest in which a cross is marked on their foreheads in ashes; this signifies mortality and humility. Some churches burn the palm fronds from the previous year’s Palm Sunday to make the ashes. During Lent, the Stations of the Cross and re-enactments of the Passion of Christ may be held. Crucifixes and religious statues may be shrouded or covered—sometimes this is not done until Good Friday, but some churches veil or shroud holy images throughout Lent. The forty days of Lent commemorate the forty days Jesus spent in the wilderness fasting and being tested before beginning his ministry.
- February 14: St. Valentine’s Day (Christian).** A feast day honoring several different saints named Valentinus who were said to have been persecuted and martyred by the Roman Empire. One such saint ministered to soldiers and performed marriages of people who were forbidden by law to marry. The date became associated with romantic love in the 14<sup>th</sup> century by Geoffrey Chaucer, and evolved into its present day form in 18<sup>th</sup> Century England, when lovers would send poetry, gifts and sweets to each other. In folk traditions, St. Valentine was associated with bees and the beginning of spring.



By the time the mailed version of this newsletter reaches post boxes, we'll know if the groundhog saw his shadow or not. Groundhog Day is undeniably the most peculiar holiday celebrated in America. Sardonic pundits have remarked on the fact that millions of Americans deny the science of climate change, yet believe that a small furry animal can accurately predict the weather. Of course, most people would insist that they don't *really* believe there will be six more weeks of winter if the groundhog sees his shadow. But the way people talk about it, you'd certainly think they do.

Groundhog Day, February 2, is actually the traditional date of the old holiday of Imbolg, or Brigid's Day, or Candlemas in the Christian calendar. It falls almost exactly at the midpoint between the Winter Solstice and the Spring Equinox. Just how groundhogs got mixed up with it remains a mystery. But folklore about weather and Candlemas day is ancient. "If Candlemass day be dry and fair, the half o' winter's yet to come and mair," ran one old rhyme. This notion is typical of folklore paradoxes, which comprised warnings about life's unpredictability and the dangers of complacency. Nature is tricky; you can't trust appearances; never assume that good times will stay, but always prepare for the unexpected; take nothing at face value. Folklore and fairy tales are full of these lessons, and sometimes we suspect our ancestors of being downright paranoid. But they had some reason to be; there were very few safety nets for those who made bad choices.

The groundhog, being a burrowing animal, is associated with the earth and the underworld. In Britain, it was hedgehogs who sometimes foretold more winter. But the animal is just an added detail. The core idea is that fine weather in midwinter is a cheat, like the eye of a hurricane. Enjoy it, but don't let down your guard, uncover your tender plants or let the animals out of the barn yet.

The cautionary tales of folklore have a certain logic, or at least common sense behind them. In today's skeptical world, we're just as susceptible to superstitious ideas, but we don't think of them as superstitions because we've imbued them with rational (or rationalizing) justifications. The mistrust of Nature (or in many cases, the faeries, spirit world or demons) behind folklore beliefs has been replaced, in our time, with a mistrust of institutions, governments, the medical profession and big industries. Don't vaccinate your children—you've just been brainwashed by Big Pharma chasing huge profits. Those childhood diseases were harmless, didn't we all get measles and chicken pox

when we were kids? Don't pay attention to the news, those stories have all been fabricated by the Deep State or the liberal media or sinister cabals of communists. If they say it, it must be false. There's no such thing as climate change, it's just those environmental fascists trying to destroy the American economy. The paradoxes of folklore have become the perversity of paranoid delusions; how can you explain the truth to people who assume that if you disagree with their fears, then by definition you're lying?

Any psychologist will tell you that superstitions are extremely hard to break. They come from the same pre-rational part of our psyches that govern phobias and the fight-or-flight reaction. Defying a superstition creates emotional fear and deep anxiety—we're certain that something bad will happen. Superstitions work retroactively, too: when bad things happen, some people home in on something they feel guilty about doing and conclude that they somehow caused or deserved the negative event.

No less than our ancestors, modern Americans want to feel in control of their fate. We resist the reality that bad things can happen to people no matter what they do. But compassion, empathy and humility all require us to accept our own powerlessness. We blame fat people and drug addicts for a lack of self-discipline, disaster victims for living in the wrong place, cancer patients for smoking or eating a bad diet, homeless people for bad judgment, poor people for being lazy. It's how we handle our fears of suffering their ill fortune. "As long as I don't do what they did, I'll be fine," we think. "There but for the grace of God go I," is a sentiment long out of fashion.

It may be sunny or snowy on February 2, but neither one means winter will be longer or shorter. Rather than cling to our need to feel in control, let's remember that our best course of action is to prepare for whatever may come and feel active gratitude that it isn't worse. And let's never forget that whatever the weather, it's falling on all of our heads, be we liberal or conservative, young or old, black or white, no matter what our gender or religion or income level. We're all in this together. Helping each other and coming together in community is a better remedy for fear than all the superstitions our ancestors ever passed down to their descendants.

Rev. Inanna Arthen



## Our Neighbor's Kitchen

We have two delicious meals in the pipe for February—you'll be sorry this month is so short!

On Thursday, February 8, come on down for a hearty winter dinner of everyone's comfort casserole favorite, scalloped potatoes layered with meat, with salad or vegetable and dessert, whipped up by Rev. Inanna Arthen (channeling her mom) and assistants.

On Thursday, February 22, come enjoy the ever-popular Swedish Meatballs with gravy and mashed potatoes, served with sides and dessert, cooked by chef extraordinaire David Faucher and assistants.

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 February 1 and 15, 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.

## NA Meeting at UUCW

UUCW is hosting a new Narcotics Anonymous (NA) meeting on Tuesdays at 6:30 p.m. in our Parish

### 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).

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 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](http://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](mailto:dfaucher@on24seven.com) or send a written note to the church at P. O. Box 218, Winchendon, MA 01475.

## 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!)

## UUCW Online

<http://uucw.ncmuuc.org>

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

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