

# THE WINCHENDON UNITARIAN

Established 1954

Published by the

*Unitarian Universalist Church of Winchendon*



Volume 63 Issue 4

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Church Telephone 978-297-0554

**DECEMBER 2018**

SUNDAY CIRCLE MEETING 1:00 P.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 2

1:00 pm - Sacred Circle Meeting - New  
Moon Observance

### Monday, December 3

7:45 pm - AA Meeting

### Sunday, December 9

1:00 pm - Sacred Circle Meeting - Feasts of  
Light

### Monday, December 10

7:45 pm - AA Meeting

### Thursday, December 13

5:30pm - Our Neighbor's Kitchen serves  
Homemade Pizza  
6:30 pm - Carol Singing and Tree Lighting  
after ONK dinner

### Sunday, December 16

1:00 pm - Sacred Circle Meeting - Winter  
Solstice Celebration

### Monday, December 17

7:45 pm - AA Meeting

### Sunday, December 23

1:00 pm - Sacred Circle Meeting - Full  
Moon Observance

### Monday, December 24

7:00 pm - Christmas Eve Candlelight  
Service

7:45 pm - AA Meeting

### Thursday, December 27

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

### Sunday, December 30

1:00 pm - Sacred Circle Meeting - Turning  
of the Year and Fire Communion  
Ceremony

### Monday, December 31

7:45 pm - AA Meeting

### Sunday, January 6

1:00 pm - Sacred Circle Meeting - New  
Moon Observance

## From Your Minister

This newsletter deadline snuck up on me—it's hard to believe it's already December 1 and time for a new edition of *The Winchendon Unitarian*. I recently said, "I think somewhere out there, Someone turned the dial marked 'Chaos' all the way to the right and just left it there." It's been a month filled with unexpected events, early winter weather, the beginning of the holiday season, election results pleasing, disappointing and delayed, accidents, massive regroupings, disasters hitting our friends and neighbors in other states, and just plain absurdity. I got some yard work done before the snow fell, but only part of the raking, and not everything I hoped to accomplish by a long shot. I sent foster kittens I've had since they were ten days old off to be adopted...and six hours later picked up a new litter of six kittens, all of whom love my computers and have taught me a dozen new keyboard shortcuts they discovered by sitting on the keys.

We've been accordingly busy at UUCW this month. On Sunday, November 4, Sacred Circle Meeting observed the New Moon in Scorpio, examining themes of death, inheritance and what our ancestors have gifted to us. On Sunday, November 11, we honored Veteran's Day with a circle focusing on the Sacred Warrior. On Sunday, November 18, we were joined by new people as we celebrated the Full Moon in Gemini, with its lessons about communications and how to break through blocks and barriers to connecting, as can crop up when Mercury turns retrograde, as it is right now. On Sunday, November 25, I planned a circle on the theme of Gratitude, although

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

December 24, 1745: Universalist and physician Benjamin Rush was born near Philadelphia, PA. Rush was a delegate to the Second Continental Congress, a signer of the Declaration of Independence and a life-long friend of John Adams, Thomas Jefferson and many other Founders (but not George Washington, who Rush criticized bitterly when he served as Surgeon General of the Continental Army). By modern standards, Rush was a mass of contradictions. He was one of the greatest reformers of his time, but as an Enlightenment intellectual, he believed in pure reason over empirical evidence and championed purging and blood-letting as treatments for disease. He fiercely opposed slavery, and yet owned a slave, and argued that Africans' dark skin color was caused by disease and could be changed to white with treatment. At the same time, he lectured that Africans were in no way inferior to whites. Rush helped Richard Allen found the African Methodist Episcopal Church. He saw Universalism as a religious analog to the egalitarian Republic he was instrumental in founding, and yet was not an active member of any congregation. He wrote to John Adams that his views were "a compound of the orthodoxy and heterodoxy of most of our Christian churches" including Unitarian and Methodist.

Rush is called "the father of American psychiatry" due to his progressive reforms in the treatment of the mentally ill. He developed classifications of types of mental illness and their possible causes. He persuaded the city of Philadelphia to establish a more humane hospital for treating the mentally ill, and pioneered occupational therapy for the institutionalized and a therapeutic, rather than a moral/punitive, approach to addiction. At the same time, in keeping with his general views about health and blood circulation, he subjected mental patients to blood-letting, forced restraint, and purging.

In many ways Rush was ahead of his time, campaigning tirelessly for the abolition of slavery and capital punishment and the implementation of prison and judicial reform, education for women, stronger standards for personal, public and military hygiene, healthy diets, and the conservation of natural resources, among other progressive ideas. His 1812 book, *Medical Inquiries and Observations, Upon the Diseases of the Mind*, was a standard reference text for 70 years; his 1777 order "Directions for preserving the health of soldiers" became one of the foundations of preventative military medicine and was last republished in 1908. When Rush died in 1813, John Adams wrote to Thomas Jefferson, "I know of no Character living or dead, who has done more real good in America."

the holiday prevented most people from being able to attend. This is a theme we can return to in the future.

Our Neighbor's Kitchen turned out two well-received meals, each one ambitious in its own way. On Thursday, November 8, my assistants and I assembled—literally—"Kebab-a-Palooza": meat and vegetable kebabs with beef, pork and chicken, fresh fruit kebabs with melon, grapes and bananas, and dessert kebabs with pastry, candy, pineapple and maraschino cherries. Along with the kebabs we served rice pilaf and carrots. The food turned out great and we didn't have a crumb of leftovers, but I've promised my finally daunted assistants that we won't do this one again. (At least not three kinds of kebabs all at once!)

On Thursday, November 29, Dave and many assistants collaborated on our biggest meal of the year: Roast Turkey dinner with mashed potatoes, gravy, stuffing, green bean casserole, candied carrots and apple-cranberry crisp with ice cream for dessert. I contributed baked butternut squash with caramelized onion and

roasted garlic (which took two days to make) and assistants Arline and Elaine baked fancy nut breads for the bread baskets. We could have used bigger dinner plates! As always, a thousand thanks to all of our hard-working volunteers. We could never serve these sumptuous meals without every one of you!

On Friday, November 23, we opened up the church for our annual Black Friday "Spirit of Christmas" Toy Drive. Some of us worked on the sanctuary holiday decorations and talked to our many visitors while others braved the cold to receive donated toys and wave at cars passing on Central Street (many of which honked cheerfully as they went by). We took a carload of toys to the Fire Department at the end of the afternoon. Many, many thanks to everyone who donated toys, and to all of you who came down to volunteer your time on one of the few sunny afternoons we had all month.

As I write this, the top news of the hour is the passing of former President George H.W. Bush, father

# Spiritual Calendar

- December 2-24: Advent (Christian).** In the Christian calendar, Advent comprises the period inclusive of the four Sundays before Christmas. During this time, Christians spiritually prepare for a renewal of faith and the second coming of Christ (the word “advent” means “coming”). A number of Advent customs are commonly practiced, all of them with the intention of structuring prayer and focusing awareness on the Christ spirit. Some of these include following an Advent calendar with a prayer or action for each day, lighting candles each Sunday of Advent, making and lighting Advent wreaths with four or five candles, and decorating with greens and a Christmas tree. In the U.K., Advent wreath candles are usually red, while in the United States, Advent candles traditionally comprise three purple and one pink. The carol “O Come O Come Emmanuel” is a traditional Advent hymn.
- December 3-10: Hanukkah (Jewish).** The dates of this festival are set according to the Jewish lunar calendar and vary year to year. Known as the Festival of Lights or the Feast of Dedication, Hanukkah commemorates the rededication of the Second Temple in Jerusalem at the time of the Maccabean Revolt against the Seleucid Empire in 165 BCE. The current custom, of lighting an additional candle each night, evolved over time, and is based on the story of a Temple lamp miraculously burning for eight days while new sacred oil was prepared. But the real focus of the holiday is an affirmation of the Jewish faith and identity. Candles are lit at or just before sunset, with prayers. During Hanukkah, families may give children money or gifts (known as “Hanukkah gelt”), and enjoy foods cooked in oil to commemorate the miracle of the Temple oil. Popular foods include latkes, or potato pancakes, and jelly-filled doughnuts. Children may play a game with a spinning dreidel, a four-sided “top” inscribed with Hebrew letters representing the phrase “a great miracle happened here.”
- December 8: Bodhi Day (Buddhist).** This date commemorates Prince Siddhartha’s achievement of enlightenment as he meditated underneath a Bodhi tree after years of extreme ascetic practices. As the Buddha, he explained that he became aware of all his past lives and the cycle of rebirth, then comprehended the law of Karma and the importance of living by the Eightfold Path, and finally discovered the Four Noble Truths, and attained Nirvana.
- December 21: Yule / Winter Solstice (Pagan).** This ancient holiday marks the moment when the Sun reaches its lowest point in the winter noonday sky, and the night is the longest of the year. Structures dating back thousands of years which catch a beam of sunlight at dawn on the solstice are found world-wide, including in North America. Pre-Christian cultures throughout the world celebrated this time as “the rebirth of the light” and the victory of good over evil. Numerous gods, heroes and enlightened teachers were born around the Winter Solstice. Modern Pagans celebrate Winter Solstice, or Yule, as a festival of lights with candles, fires (bonfires outside if weather permits), burning a blessed Yule Log, feasting and giving gifts. Decorating lavishly with fresh greenery, which symbolizes life everlasting, is a common custom. Along with celebrations, Solstice Eve is a time for solemn contemplation of the past year and divination for the year to come.
- December 25: Christmas (Christian).** A holiday commemorating the birth of Jesus Christ, Christmas has always been fraught with controversy. Banned or omitted in numerous times and places, most famously in Colonial New England, it never had the theological significance of Easter, which honors Christ’s Resurrection. Protestants going back to Martin Luther quite correctly claimed that Christmas owed far more to Pagan holidays such as the Roman Saturnalia and Germanic Jul than anything in Scripture. In the model of such holidays, Christmas became a mid-winter feast of lights honoring hospitality and generosity (two of the greatest virtues in the ancient world), family, charity and the power of love and light. Its inherent contradictions may explain why it remains a source of contention to this day. Secular customs aside, Christians observe Christmas through acts of charity, attending church services, and sharing food and gifts with family and friends.
- December 26-January 1: Kwanzaa (African American).** Kwanzaa was created in 1966 as a celebration of African-American heritage and culture. It honors seven principles: Unity, Self-Determination, Collective Work and Responsibility, Cooperative Economics, Purpose, Creativity and Faith. Celebrations include traditional African art and clothing, African music and theatre, readings and candle lighting ceremonies. About 5 million Americans celebrate Kwanzaa.



of George W. Bush (only the second father-son pair to serve as Presidents besides John and John Quincy Adams). Although Mr. Bush was 94 and had been failing for some time, I was genuinely sorry to see the news.

I've always been a progressive (if not downright radical) in my politics. When G.H.W. Bush was President, I was frustrated. It felt as though Ronald Reagan, for whose two terms Bush was Vice President, had gotten an unfair extra four years, even though G.H.W. Bush was not a clone of Reagan. I wasn't that excited by Bill Clinton, but his election in 1992 after twelve years of Republican Presidents was like the English Restoration sweeping away the repressions of the Puritan regime.

Since then, I've logged many more years of learning experiences, and I now look back on G.H.W. Bush with some nostalgia. He was a conservative, but we progressives who grumbled about him didn't know how good we had it—or rather, how bad things could get. I started thinking this a couple of years into the younger Bush's presidency. And as for now, well...I've abandoned all complacency about how low things can go. Could Mark Zuckerman be elected President? You betcha. Kids always used to be told, "anyone can grow up to be President." We now know that this is literally true.

It's said that we can choose our friends but we can't choose our families. But this little meme is untrue in both respects, and highlights the way we place choice on a pedestal and hold ourselves and others to unrealistic conditions and expectations. We can choose who we associate with, but we can't customize a pool of people who are available as friends. People are who they are, and a pre-requisite for making friends is the willingness to overlook foibles and failings and focus on positive qualities. On the other side, we certainly choose families when we marry, or form a bonded partnership or household, or add children to our lives through birth or adoption.

In a similar way, we can only partly choose our leaders. There is a limited number of people with the qualifications to be good leaders, good legislators, good statespersons, and who are willing to sacrifice their lives to serve the common good. If we don't accept the imperfections and contradictions that these people, like every one of us, has, we can't make strategic choices in the voting booth.

Rest in peace, former President George Herbert Walker Bush; condolences to your friends and loved ones. You taught me some lessons about evaluating

leaders and appreciating people for their skills even when I don't agree with their views. I thank you for that.

Rev. Inanna Arthen

## **Our Neighbor's Kitchen**

We're definitely planning two great meals for December...but we may be adjusting the menus a bit. Check our weekly email blast, website or Facebook for updates.

On Thursday, December 13, Rev. Inanna Arthen and assistants are hoping to make homemade pizza, with homemade-from-scratch crust and tons of toppings. We may have to come up with something else brilliant, but whatever we cook, it will be great.

On Thursday, December 27, chef extraordinaire Dave Faucher and his dauntless assistants will cook up our annual holiday dinner of delectable Beef Burgundy, with sides and a special dessert made by one of our 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 December 6 and 20, 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.

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.

## **Tree Lighting on December 13**

After Our Neighbor's Kitchen on Thursday, December 13 (at approximately 6:30 p.m.), we'll be lighting up our tree on the front lawn and singing some carols together. You're welcome to join us even if you don't attend the dinner that day! We're keeping our fingers crossed for seasonally clement weather, but the lights will go on regardless. See you there!

## Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

UUCW will hold our traditional Christmas Eve Candlelight Service for the community on Monday, December 24 at 7:00 p.m. All are welcome at this inter-generational service which will include lighting the Advent candles, readings from the Gospels, a short Christmas-themed sermon, traditional carols, music, and passing candlelight around the sanctuary. Our guest musician for the service will be Robert Couchon, member of the Monadnock chapter of the American Guild of Organists. Come and share this lovely and peaceful prelude to Christmas Day.

### UUCW Online

<http://uucw.ncmuuc.org>

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

### Sacred Circle Meetings

Sacred Circle Meetings are held at 1:00 p.m. every Sunday. These are quite different from traditional church services. We meet in a circle, so that everyone is equal. We begin by creating a sacred space, and we light our UU Chalice to honor Unitarian Universalism and our UUCW congregation. From there, we do a variety of things depending on the needs of the group. We'll be doing meditations, we'll be doing healing work, we'll be honoring and celebrating the cycles of the seasons, the lunar cycles and the greater powers that give us life, love and all the myriad blessings we so often take for granted. Sacred Circle Meetings are highly participatory; everyone shares in the readings and ceremony. We may use drumming, chanting and movement as part of our circles. Circles are intergenerational: young people are welcomed as equal participants. It is a time to spiritually renew and energize ourselves for the coming week.

Many Unitarian Universalist congregations are experimenting with new kinds of spiritual experiences. UUism overlaps broadly with earth-centered and other

### 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).

faith traditions (such as Buddhism). "Circle worship" is being adopted by numerous UU congregations (see [www.uua.org/worship/circleworship](http://www.uua.org/worship/circleworship) on the UUA website).

If you're looking for something like this, you're invited to join us. If you have a friend, relative or co-worker who might enjoy this type of meeting, please pass this information on to them! We hope this change will mark a new stage in UUCW's long history as a vital part of Winchendon.

If you have questions or would like more information, please contact Rev. Inanna Arthen at [iarthen@inannaarthen.com](mailto:iarthen@inannaarthen.com).

### 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!)

### 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.

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