

THE WINCHENDON UNITARIAN

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Church Telephone 978-297-0554

JANUARY 2019

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, January 6

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

PLEASE NOTE: As per our usual practice,
Sacred Circle Meeting will convene
downstairs in the Pine Room until
warmer weather returns.

Monday, January 7

7:45 pm - AA Meeting

Thursday, January 10

5:30pm - Our Neighbor's Kitchen serves
Lucky New Year Dinner

Sunday, January 13

1:00 pm - Sacred Circle Meeting

Monday, January 14

7:45 pm - AA Meeting

Sunday, January 20

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

Monday, January 21

7:45 pm - AA Meeting

Thursday, January 24

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

Sunday, January 27

1:00 pm - Sacred Circle Meeting

Monday, January 28

7:45 pm - AA Meeting

Sunday, February 3

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

Monday, February 4

7:45 pm - AA Meeting

(UUCW Governing Board Meeting TBD)

From Your Minister

Happy New Year! I can't say I'm sorry about the milder weather this winter so far—2018 was a rough one for me, and it started out with frozen pipes, which I can definitely live without. I hope you had a pleasant, peaceful and safe holiday break. I spent New Year's reflecting on the past twelve months, and following a very old tradition: I did things I wanted to be doing more of this coming year. I exercised, I ate sensibly, I did some writing, I worked on some projects. "Start as you intend to go on" is a New Year tradition that goes back almost as far as the calendar itself. What are your resolutions for 2019?

Like you, we ended 2018 at UUCW with a flurry of holiday activity, which started in November with the Spirit of Christmas Toy Drive. On Sunday, December 2, Sacred Circle Meeting observed the New Moon in Sagittarius. We reflected on the long journeys, spiritual and geographical, we've taken in our lives, and invoked the spirit of Justice, Ma'at. On Sunday, December 9, we honored several solar gods and goddesses whose births or achievements are celebrated at the Winter Solstice. On Sunday, December 16, we celebrated Yule, the Winter Solstice, with a Yule Log on the altar, and a farewell blessing from the Holly King. On Sunday, December 23, we celebrated the Full Moon in Cancer, reflecting on how nurturing and mothering manifests in our lives, and the power our emotions have to affect us. On Sunday, December 30, Sacred Circle Meeting welcomed a new family to our version of a UUCW annual tradition: the New Year's Fire Communion ceremony. Each of us wrote things we wanted to release and banish from our lives on slips of paper which we then took outside and burned in an iron pot. As we

This Month in UU History

January 18, 1778: Prominent Unitarian Joseph Tuckerman was born in Boston, MA. His father, Edward Tuckerman, founded the first fire insurance company in America. For the first forty years of his life, Joseph didn't appear to have much ambition. He attended Harvard College, rooming with life-long friends William Ellery Channing (who would become one of America's most brilliant Unitarian ministers) and Joseph Story, who would become Chief Justice of the Massachusetts Supreme Court. Joseph Tuckerman, according to Channing, spent his three years at Harvard "as a holiday" and "had no serious view of life." After graduating, Tuckerman served as minister in Rumney Marsh (now Chelsea) for twenty five unremarkable years. The highlight of Tuckerman's service in Chelsea was his pastoral outreach, especially to sailors. In 1826 he resigned from the pulpit to head the Association for Mutual Improvement, a group of Boston ministers developing a ministry for the poor. As minister at large, Tuckerman was paid a small salary by the newly formed American Unitarian Association, but Tuckerman mostly self-funded his ministry with his father's and wives' money. Working from instinct, he walked the streets of Boston, which was growing and changing rapidly under a flood of immigrants and rural poor. Tuckerman believed poverty deserved a "scientific study" which for him meant meeting the poor, visiting their homes and gaining their trust. He rejected the idea that poverty was caused by idleness, sin or vice. He believed in the perfectability and equal dignity of all human beings, and that the privileged had a moral obligation to help the poor. Tuckerman gave practical assistance, like clothing, firewood and money, to the poor families he befriended and in return asked them to attend his Sunday lectures and send their children to his Sunday school. They responded enthusiastically. The AUA raised funds to build three chapels serving Tuckerman's families. The third, a children's chapel, opened its doors with a subscribed membership of 730 children. Tuckerman studied European writings on social science and published numerous tracts himself. He argued that alcoholism was a disease, and worked for humane reforms in the treatment of prisoners and delinquent children. He personally visited prisons and juvenile reformatories, and helped ex-convicts after their release. The reports he wrote as part of his requests for funding leave a detailed and meticulous record of his work. In 1834, Tuckerman founded the Benevolent Fraternity, a consortium of Unitarian churches, to improve and centralize organization and record keeping for relief efforts. Tuckerman's own health was never robust, and he died in 1838 in Havana, Cuba, where he had traveled to rest in the warm climate. His ministry is continued today as the Unitarian Universalist Urban Ministry. His 1838 summation of his work, "The Principles and Results of the Ministry-at-Large in Boston," can be read online.

scattered the ashes, we welcomed the new year and the spirit of transformation into our lives.

Along with *five* Sunday Sacred Circle Meetings, on Monday, December 24, UUCW hosted our annual community Christmas Eve Candlelight Service. We welcomed a new organist, Robert Couchon of Rindge, member of the Monadnock chapter of the American Guild of Organists. He played the Prelude, Interlude and Postlude, and all the carol accompaniment on our E.&G.G. Hook pipe organ (which he calls "the Rolls Royce of pipe organs"). Along with the sublime organ music, the service included lighting the Advent candles, reading the Nativity story from Matthew and Luke, singing lots of familiar favorite Christmas carols, a Christmas Eve sermon ("I Was a Stranger, and You Welcomed Me") and of course, passing candlelight hand-to-hand around the sanctuary.

Our 150-year-old organ got a tune-up and other TLC before the service, and we're planning an organ recital in the future—watch this space!

Our Neighbor's Kitchen served two hearty meals during December. On Thursday, December 13, I and my dauntless assistants cooked a meal I used to swear I wouldn't do again: spaghetti with handmade-from-scratch meatballs. Making the meatballs is fun. Cooking 70 servings of pasta to the perfect doneness all at the same time...not so fun. But I tried a new technique and it took a lot of the stress out of it. We also had bread baskets, salad, and two desserts: homemade cookies baked and decorated by Jill and Katie Sackett, and a layered cream and cake confection made by volunteers Elaine and Arline (thank you!).

On Thursday, December 27, Dave Faucher and assistants turned out our annual Christmas dinner

Spiritual Calendar

January 1: Gantan-sai (Shinto). The Japanese New Year celebration, which was changed to correspond to the Western Gregorian calendar in 1873. Popular customs include eating a collection of foods called *osechi*, each of which symbolizes a specific kind of good fortune, along with dumplings made of sticky rice. Buddhist temples ring their bells 108 times, representing the 108 sins described in Buddhism which humans need to reject. People send New Year's Day postcards, and children receive gifts of money, called *otoshidama*, in decorated envelopes. Beethoven's Ninth Symphony is performed throughout Japan during the New Year season.

January 6: Epiphany (Christian). Epiphany commemorates the revelation of Jesus as the Christ child to the Wise Men, and to the Gentiles generally who weren't familiar with the Jewish prophecies about the Messiah. Many customs settled around it in Christian countries, often derived from older New Year's or Solstice customs. Epiphany Singing featured young people going door to door singing hymns while dressed as the Wise Men. Chalking the front door of houses, and blessing of homes, were also traditional, as well as eating lavishly decorated Three Kings Cake with a hidden token, or a dry bean, inside. The person who finds the charm or token is crowned "king (or queen) of the bean." Churches held special services, and it was traditional to remove all Christmas decorations from the sanctuary on Epiphany. If this wasn't done, the decorations had to remain until Candlemas on February 2. In some churches, Epiphany was observed as the date of Jesus' baptism.

Dia de Los Reyes / Three Kings (Spanish Christian). In Mexico, Puerto Rico and many Latin American countries, children receive their gifts from The Three Kings rather than Santa Claus or St. Nicholas. Children leave their shoes by their beds to be filled with presents, and in Puerto Rico they leave boxes of hay under their beds for the Three Kings' camels.

January 7: Feast of the Nativity (Orthodox Christian). Among many denominations of Orthodox Christianity, including those of Russia, Georgia, Ukraine, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Jerusalem, the church year is dictated by the old Julian calendar; this is the date on which Christmas is observed in those denominations.

January 18-25: Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (Christian). This eight-day period of prayer was originally suggested by Father Paul Wattson, cofounder of the Graymoor Franciscan Friars, in 1908, as an observance primarily by Roman Catholic churches and orders. It begins on the day commemorating the Confession of St. Peter and concludes on the Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul. Over the ensuing decades, and especially after the formation of the World Council of Churches in 1948, it has expanded into an international ecumenical observance honored by many Protestant and Orthodox denominations. It is observed with formal prayers for unity among all Christian churches.

January 25: Conversion of Paul the Apostle (Christian). Commemorates the conversion of St. Paul as related in the Acts of the Apostles. Paul described himself as a fervent Pharisee who aggressively persecuted the new Christian faith until he encounters Christ on the road to Damascus, in a blinding light. He then becomes the most fervent of Christians. Some would argue that without Paul, Christianity would not have survived, or would have taken a very different form, possibly (if you read between the lines of Paul's epistles) one more inclusive of women and less bound by laws and rules.

feast of beef burgundy over noodles, winter vegetable torte, salad, bread, and a special holiday cake baked by volunteer Celeste LaPrise (thank you!).

As always, many many thanks to all our dauntless volunteers: all of you who help cook, come in to set up, serve food to everyone else before you sit down to eat yourself, stay to help with clean-up, make desserts to donate, and everything else you do. We couldn't do it without you. You ARE Our Neighbor's Kitchen!

I've never liked the month of January. It's not because of the wintry weather. I liked winter, before I had a job in a shelter which never closed, and before I had to worry about paying for heating and frozen pipes and snow plowing. But January always seems heartless and implacable to me, hard-edged and too bright, stern and empty. My mom used to take down and pack away every scrap of holiday decorations on New Year's

Day. Then we were all back to school and work without even the residual pleasure of colored lights to turn on when we got home. And there was the return to school or work itself, and the general sense of let-down after all the anticipation and activities of the long holiday season. Martin Luther King Jr. Day didn't exist in my childhood (indeed, Rev. King was still alive for most of it), and there wasn't another holiday or break to look forward to until February.

January was named by the Romans for the god Janus, who was considered so important that he was invoked on every ceremonial occasion, before any other god or goddess was named. Janus was depicted with two faces, a metaphor to represent that he could see the past and the future simultaneously. More importantly, Janus was able to clearly understand what we mortals so often don't: consequences, and how our deeds in the past and present lead to the events and situations of the future. He was the god of prophecy, but also the god of beginnings, endings, doorways and gateways, transitions and transformations. His wisdom and his power were weighty indeed.

It's Janus who we invoke, knowingly or not, when we make our "New Year's Resolutions." At the beginning of the first month of the new year, we set goals and vow to make changes in our lives and in ourselves. As we all know, most of us fail to keep most of our New Year's Resolutions, yet we keep right on making them year after year.

There's a reason that our resolutions, however sincere and earnest we are in making them, so often fail. Change is unsettling and scary, and transitions are seldom the quick and painless affairs that we want them to be. We may tell ourselves that we would like to lose weight, or find a better job, or quit a bad habit, or lose our temper less easily. But in many cases, we're not really up to the challenge of releasing the things we don't want, getting used to not having them, resisting the temptation to return to our familiar patterns, and becoming accustomed to being someone new. All that takes a lot of work, because true change is neither simple nor easy.

What we really want, when we make our resolutions, is not to slowly and laboriously become different, but to somehow magically have always been different—to have always been, effortlessly, a thin person or a sober person or a self-controlled person, to have always had our dream job or live in the place we love. We don't want to have to retrace our steps and undo past decisions, as two-faced Janus shows us we must, in order to start over and make other decisions with all

their uncertainty.

Very few of us are consciously aware that we're thinking this way, of course. We plot out our diet plans and job-hunting strategies and workout routines, start our journals and sign up for our classes, sure that we're being realistic and are ready for the long haul. Of course we know that we aren't going to miraculously change overnight, we tell ourselves. And yet, most New Year's resolutions have been abandoned by the end of the month.

Fiction writers learn that the hero of a good story always changes in some fundamental way—it's the hero's confrontation with themselves and their resolution of their inner and outer conflicts that make the story. In the real world, grappling with our conflicts is heroic. It takes courage, and strength, and principles, and depth of character, to recognize that change is needed and then to make that change successfully.

In every adventure story, the hero fails a few times before they eventually prevail. We can expect the same to happen when we pursue our resolutions. It's easy to tell ourselves "it's too hard, I'm too stressed, this isn't a good time, this just isn't working," when we slip up. But wise Janus would tell us not to give up: that we'll get to our goal as long as we take more steps forward than we slide back.

This energy may be part of what tempers January for me—the bright white light letting us hide nothing, even from ourselves, the stern voice from somewhere saying, "now get up and do it again." But we need that voice to keep us going, sometimes. To truly change ourselves, to truly change the world, we must keep on moving forward. The future is what we create it to be.

Rev. Inanna Arthen

Our Neighbor's Kitchen

We're launching 2019 with two delicious dinners!

On Thursday, January 10, start off the next twelve months propitiously with a "Lucky New Year" feast of foods traditionally eaten for good luck at the New Year. Rev. Arthen and assistants will cook roast pork with corn bread and "lucky" side dishes, and a dessert for a sweet beginning to the year.

On Thursday, January 24, chef extraordinaire Dave Faucher and assistants will whip up that ONK favorite, Swedish Meatballs, with plenty of savory gravy, over noodles or mash, with sides 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 January 3, 17 and 31, Immaculate Heart of Mary church (52 Spruce Street) will be serving "first and third (and fifth) 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.

UUCW Online

<http://uucw.ncmuuc.org>

<https://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

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).

coming week.

Many Unitarian Universalist congregations are experimenting with new kinds of spiritual experiences. UUism overlaps broadly with earth-centered and other faith traditions (such as Buddhism). "Circle worship" is being adopted by numerous UU congregations (see 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.

January Birthdays

Jacob Nathaniel Elkins

Jan 3

Carol Bramblett

Jan 14



(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 or send a written note to the church at P. O. Box 218, Winchendon, MA 01475.

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