

THE WINCHENDON UNITARIAN

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Church Telephone 978-297-0554

FEBRUARY 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, February 3

1:00 pm - Sacred Circle Meeting - New

Moon in Aquarius Observance

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

Monday, February 4

7:45 pm - AA Meeting

Sunday, February 10

1:00 pm - Sacred Circle Meeting - The
Power of Love

Monday, February 11

7:45 pm - AA Meeting

Thursday, February 14

5:30pm - Our Neighbor's Kitchen serves
Valentine's Day Dinner: Sweet 'n' Sour
Chicken, sides, and a chocolate dessert

Sunday, February 17

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

Monday, February 18

7:45 pm - AA Meeting

Sunday, February 24

1:00 pm - Sacred Circle Meeting - The
Sacred Fool

Monday, February 25

7:45 pm - AA Meeting

Wednesday, February 27

7:00 pm - UUCW Governing Board Mtg

Thursday, February 28

5:30pm - Our Neighbor's Kitchen serves
Potato Parmesan Soup, Italian sausage,
sides and dessert

Sunday, March 3

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

Monday, March 4

7:45 pm - AA Meeting

From Your Minister

I should be considerate and not talk about the weather this month, because I'm sure you're very tired of hearing about it by now. January has seemed exceptionally long this year, and I'm not sure why. I was on staff for the Arisia science-fiction convention in Boston, for the third year in a row. The 2019 convention almost didn't happen, between a major PR crisis (two of our Guests of Honor cancelled along with many program participants and staff) and moving the 3000-person convention to another, smaller hotel two months in advance of the event. All went well, in the sense that we got through the long weekend with just about everything happening and a mostly good time had by most (as usual). But the convention was something of a microcosm, or a metaphor, for life as a whole at the moment: everything at sixes and sevens, we're scrambling to adapt to changes and constrictions, and yet we're still moving forward.

It's been a busy month at UUCW, as we only lost one Sunday to inclement weather. On Sunday, January 6, we observed the New Moon in Capricorn, focusing on building strong foundations and deep roots for the work of the year ahead. On Sunday, January 13, we did a ceremony of blessing and protection for all of our members, and asked for guidance. We've also been repeating a healing working for friends and loved ones as part of our circle meetings. On Sunday, January 20, we were prepared for a celebration of the Full Moon in Leo, but Mother Nature had other ideas. Possibly we were meant to counter Leo's egoism with a little humility in the face of the power

This Month in UU History

February 28, 1901: Scientist, peace activist and humanist Unitarian Linus Carl Pauling was born in Portland, OR. His father died when Linus was 9, and from the age of 12 Linus worked to help support his mother and two sisters. An avid reader, he became fascinated with chemistry. In his teens, he and a friend tried to start a business testing the butterfat content of milk for dairies. He was refused his high school diploma because he lacked two credits in history, but was able to enroll in Oregon Agricultural College (now Oregon State University). Graduating salutatorian of his class with a degree in chemical engineering, he went on to earn a doctorate in physical chemistry and mathematical physics, summa cum laude, from California Institute of Technology with graduate research into x-ray diffraction and the crystal structure of minerals.

Pauling's career was defined by his brilliant and groundbreaking work in the fields of chemistry and molecular biology. He was a close friend of Robert Oppenheimer and was a professor at CalTech. He identified the genetic defect responsible for sickle cell anemia, and in 1954 was awarded the Nobel Prize for chemistry.

Pauling became an anti-nuclear and peace activist after World War II. In 1946, he joined the Emergency Committee of Atomic Scientists, chaired by Albert Einstein. Its mission was to warn the public of the dangers associated with the development of nuclear weapons. From this point on, Pauling continued public and unceasing activism in opposition to nuclear weapons and atomic bomb testing. His work with the St. Louis Citizen's Committee for Nuclear Information (CNI), conducting research into the long-term effects of nuclear fallout and loudly publicizing the results, eventually led to moratoriums on above-ground testing, and the signing of the Partial Test Ban Treaty in 1963 by President John F. Kennedy and Nikita Khrushchev. The day the treaty went into effect, the Nobel committee voted to award Pauling the Nobel Peace Prize for 1962.

Pauling received some less pleasant blow-back for his efforts, however. During the 50s he was accused of being a Communist and pro-USSR, and he was ordered to appear before the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee. When he and his wife hired a Japanese-American gardener in 1945, their home was vandalized and they received threatening phone calls. He was forced to resign from CalTech in the late 50s, and in 1962 he was denied a passport. Pauling was undaunted by any of this, and in the 1960s was an active and outspoken opponent of the Vietnam war.

In the 1970s Pauling achieved popular fame for his advocacy of high-dose vitamin C for health. While some of his views have been challenged, he highlighted the importance of nutrition and vitamins.

Pauling joined the Unitarian church of Los Angeles because, he wrote, "it accepts as members people who believe in trying to make the world a better place." He received much support from church members and ministers in his peace work, and gave talks to audiences of thousands at the UU churches in LA and Pasadena. He said in an interview that he didn't believe in God, but also said "I am not militant in my atheism," he simply didn't find it worth arguing about.

Pauling died in 1994 at the age of 93. He is considered one of the founders of modern quantum chemistry and "the father of molecular biology." He is the only person to be awarded two unshared Nobel prizes. In both his scientific brilliance and his outspoken political activism, Pauling made profound changes in the world.

of the weather! On Sunday, January 27, we celebrated Imbolc, the mid-point between winter solstice and spring equinox when our hope is renewed that life and light will always vanquish the dark and cold of winter.

Our Neighbor's Kitchen served two auspicious meals to kick off 2019 in style. On Thursday, January 10, I and my dauntless assistants cooked a feast of foods traditionally considered lucky to eat at the New Year: roast pork with roasted grapes, black-eyed peas with bacon, leafy green salad, corn muffins and golden cake

for dessert. On Thursday, January 24, Dave Faucher and assistants served up an ONK favorite: Swedish Meatballs in gravy over mashed potatoes, with salad and desserts.

February, whose name comes from a root word meaning "fever" is full of contradictions. It begins with the holiday of Candlemas, Imbolc in the old Celtic calendar and Groundhog Day to most average Americans. This date marks the exact midpoint

Spiritual Calendar

February 2: Imbolc (Pagan). This holiday is one of the four major Celtic fire festivals and marks the exact midpoint between the winter solstice and the spring equinox. Many modern Pagans honor the Gaelic goddess Brighid (Irish) or Bride (Scots), who is a goddess of fire, smithcraft, creativity, marriage and mothers. In general terms, Imbolc celebrates the triumph of life and warmth over death and cold. In the U.K., the earliest plant life was sprouting, plowing the fields began and animals like cows and sheep were about to give birth. In the United States, where winter is longer and more harsh, we often see the most intense winter weather at exactly this time, give or take a week, but the sun is stronger, small animals are active and seeking mates, and the day is a full hour longer. Modern Pagans celebrate Imbolc with ceremonies to Brighid, Hestia or other deities of hearth, home and creativity, keeping a hearthfire burning, having an outdoor bonfire if weather permits, planting early seeds and bulbs indoors (or outdoors where possible), and creating works of art or music.

Saint Brigid's Day (Christian). Saint Brigid of Kildare is one of the three patron saints of Ireland, but there is some doubt that she really existed. Many believe she is a Christianized version of the goddess Brighid. According to her hagiography, she was a former Druid who became a Christian nun in the 5th century CE. She was renowned for her kindness and generosity to the poor. She was also skilled as a beekeeper, brewer of beer, metal-worker and manuscript illuminator, as well as having power over the weather.

Candlemas (Christian). Falling 40 days after the Nativity, this date commemorates the presentation of the infant Jesus in the Temple, and Mary's purification after giving birth, in accordance with Jewish law. Many churches had a custom of keeping the Christmas decorations in place until Candlemas.

Groundhog Day (secular). Just how the groundhog got involved in this remains murky, but identical folk traditions about the weather on Candlemas Day predicting the rest of the winter go back to Medieval times. On the one hand, folk customs that use paradox to warn against false confidence, imprudent haste and trusting appearances too much are legion. On the other hand, like so many folk traditions, this one has a sly joke: February 2 is six weeks before the spring equinox. No matter what the weather or the groundhog do, there will *always* be six more weeks of winter!

February 7: Chinese New Year (Confucian, Buddhist, Daoist). One of the most widely celebrated festivals in the world, this 15-day-long event is observed by Chinese people of all religions in China and wherever they live. Filled with customs to dispel evil influences and attract good luck and prosperity, Chinese New Year is marked with fireworks, processions, feasting, gift-giving and ceremonies. Each day has a specific theme. Before the celebration starts, homes are thoroughly cleaned, painted (red is an especially lucky color) and decorated. In 2019 the Chinese calendar begins a Year of the Pig.

February 14: Saint Valentine's Day (Christian). Almost nothing is known about "Saint Valentine," who may or may not be several different people and may have been martyred in the 3rd century CE. In the Middle Ages, his feast day became associated with courtly or romantic love between couples, in part because of beliefs that birds and animals chose their mates in February. Valentine's Day became a largely secular holiday for couples and lovers, at a bleak time of year when displays of romance and affection were most welcome.

February 15: Nirvana Day (Mahayana Buddhist/Jain). Commemorates the physical death of the Buddha and his attainment of full Nirvana on the spiritual plane. Buddhists observe it with prayers, reading holy texts, visiting temples, and reflecting on their own mortality and Buddhist teachings about the impermanence of the physical world.

between the winter solstice and the spring equinox. In our latitudes, it's often the time of the most severe winter weather, from the Blizzard of '78 to the blasts of the Polar Vortex. Yet defying the weather, small animals

are marking out territory, quarreling, courting and mating. The midwinter snow in our yards is peppered with tracks of every size (and sometimes our encounters with our amorous wild kin come even closer). In

most years, Lent begins in February, preceded by the week-long celebrations of Mardi Gras or Carnival. But at the center of February for most of us is our culture's paeon to Love, Valentine's Day, filling restaurants with twofer specials and turning retail stores red and pink for weeks.

We Americans are in love with love. The best selling genre of fiction by a huge margin is romance, and romance readers are the most voracious readers of any fandom. Our popular media is filled with romantic couples, love and sex. Yet spiritual traditions, Christian and otherwise, often speak about love in general as being a powerful force in its own right. Corinthians 13 says, "Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails."

The term *caritas* in Christian writing is often translated as "charity." But its true meaning is the highest possible form of love—a love that totally transcends the self and is pure enough to negate evil, heal all injuries and create life itself. C.S. Lewis, in his spiritual fantasy novel *That Hideous Strength*, describes two characters encountering it. "It was fiery, sharp, bright and ruthless, ready to kill, ready to die, outspeeding light: it was Charity, not as mortals imagine it, not even as it has been humanised for them since the Incarnation of the Word, but the translunary virtue, fallen upon them direct from the Third Heaven, unmitigated. They were blinded, scorched, deafened. They thought it would burn their bones. They could not bear that it should continue. They could not bear that it should cease."

It might seem strange to imagine *love* as being that scary—but if pure love is that powerful, then it's also going to be that overwhelming.

We have more contemporary works of fiction that center around exactly this same idea. At the conclusion of Madeline L'Engle's *A Wrinkle in Time* (which my sixth grade teacher read aloud to the class), Meg Murry confronts the evil and powerful IT alone and defenseless, and realizes that the only power she has which IT lacks is her ability to love. "If she could give love to IT perhaps it would shrivel up and die, for she was sure IT could not withstand love." Meg can't find love in her heart for IT, but she has enough love to break her brainwashed little brother free from IT's hold.

In the Harry Potter series, the core theme of the entire story is the power of love to vanquish evil.

Dumbledore tells Harry over and over that his strongest weapon against the evil Voldemort is his ability to love, something the self-centered and sociopathic Voldemort cannot do and apparently never could. Harry is continually frustrated to hear this. For him, love mostly means pain and loss. Not until the end of the story does he appreciate why Voldemort cannot even touch him without experiencing unbearable physical pain—an agony akin to being burned alive, merely because Harry has a naturally loving heart. Not until the end of the story does Harry, in a brief sojourn in the afterlife, see the visible effects of rejecting love on a human soul—what Voldemort's soul has become after a lifetime of fear, selfishness, cruelty and hate. Through the Harry Potter books, millions of contemporary young readers have been introduced to the idea that love itself is powerful enough to stop the darkest magic and vanquish the strongest evil.

Christians didn't invent the power of love, of course, they simply re-discovered it. It has long been recognized as the greatest power of all, personified as countless gods and goddesses who prevailed above all others. They were, and are, far more than the "fertility" deities they're reduced to in the modern mind—because what greater power is there than the power to create life?

So let's raise a glass to love this February 14 (or come to Our Neighbor's Kitchen for a feast!). Never has our noisy, quarrelsome, intolerant world needed it more.

Rev. Inanna Arthen

Our Neighbor's Kitchen

February may be a short month, but we're packing it with good stuff, including two delicious dinners!

On Thursday, February 14, warm up your heart and tummy with a feast of "foods of love" affectionately prepared for you by Rev. Inanna Arthen and assistants. Sweet and Sour (like love itself) Baked Chicken, Noodles Parmesan, Winter Vegetables, Salad, and an Intensely Chocolate dessert.

On Thursday, February 28, Rev. Inanna Arthen and assistants will dish up, by special request, thick, rich and hearty Potato Parmesan Soup, with Italian sausages, 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 February 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.

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 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.

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

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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).