

# THE WINCHENDON UNITARIAN

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**This is the Church of the Open Mind  
This is the Church of the Loving Heart**

**This is the Church of the Helping Hands  
This is the Church of the Caring Community**

## Calendar of Church Events

### **Saturday, October 9**

10:00 am – 4:00 pm UUCW Lawn Fair  
(Winchendon Fall Festival)

### **Saturday, October 9**

10:00 am – UUCW Hosts Winchendon  
Winds Concert Band, Sanctuary

### **Thursday, October 14**

5:30 pm - Our Neighbor's Kitchen serves  
Baked Ziti (Drive-Through/Take-Out)

### **Sunday, October 17**

2:00 pm – UUCW Hosts Winchendon  
Winds Concert Band, Sanctuary

### **Monday, October 18**

7:30 pm – Governing Board Meeting,  
Dial-In (RSVP Jill Sackett)

### **Sunday, October 24**

2:00 pm – UUCW Hosts Winchendon  
Winds Concert Band, Sanctuary

### **Thursday, October 28**

5:30 pm - Our Neighbor's Kitchen serves  
Roast Pork w/ Apples & Onions  
(Drive-Through/Take-Out)

### **Mondays**

7:45 pm - AA Meeting, Parish Hall

## From Your Editor

Time to contemplate. These past few years have been some of the most challenging for our society and government that I can remember. We have faced incredible hardship, upheaval, and loss and find ourselves seeking more purpose...more meaning, in our daily lives. How do we come back together as a community? How do we come back together as a *church* community? What is our definition of a “church community” and what comprises “worship” today? In this issue we take a look at “The Overstated Collapse of American Christianity.” Are traditional forms of Christianity waning, leaving a void or perhaps making way for alternatives? What might you want from a contemporary church? How do you define and seek spirituality in your life? Ponder. We’ll be in touch.

-Jill Nicholson Sackett - Chair, Governing Board.

## UUCW Collaborates for Town Fall Festival



In just a handful of years, Winchendon's Fall Festival has become the biggest annual event in town, closing Central Street off to pedestrian traffic only and sporting up to 200 vendors. Fortuitously, UUCW is right in the center of the action. Each year, we have worked with the town to offer additional entertainment, food and vendors, and this year is no exception.

Winchendon Winds will be kicking things off at 10:00 AM with a concert themed "On the Stage." The band will play a variety of selections from Broadway, dance and film. The concert will be held in the sanctuary and broadcast out to our front lawn for those choosing to listen outdoors.

UUCW will be out on the street selling savory fare such as chili, hot dogs and baked potatoes with toppings. Our lawn will be filled with vendors and tables for those wishing to rest their feet, dine or listen to the music.

Come on down between 10:00 AM – 4:00 PM and catch some of the action!

## Winchendon School Students Lend a Hand

This past month UUCW was the happy participant in the Winchendon School's annual "Day of Service." Eight industrious students spent a sunny fall day in our building providing much-needed "elbow grease." Thanks to their efforts, we had all of our pews polished, windows and registers dusted, and furniture cleaned. They wiped down chairs and stands and set up for Winchendon Winds' fall concert series. A group in the kitchen baked and frosted seven dozen cupcakes for Our Neighbors Kitchen the following day. We're truly reminded of the adage "Many hands make light work." Thank you, Winchendon School!



## **“The Overstated Collapse of American Christianity”\***

Two years ago, New York Times columnist Ross Douthat published an opinion piece under the above provocative title. Stating “Fifty years ago, many observers of American religion assumed that secularization would gradually wash traditional Christianity away,” Mr. Douthat continues with a recent Pew Research Center survey that trumpets “In U.S., Decline of Christianity Continues at Rapid Pace.”

Is that really so? The author offers four points arguing against complete secularization. First, he suggests that “lukewarm Christianity may be declining much more dramatically than intense religiosity. Sociologists Landon Schnabel and Sean Bock argue that the recent decline of institutional religion is entirely a function of the formerly weakly affiliated ceasing to identify with religious bodies entirely; for the strongly affiliated (just over a third of the American population), the trend between 1990 and the present is a flat line, their numbers neither growing nor collapsing but holding steady across an era of supposedly dramatic religious change.” So, in essence, the people converting to secularism are those less religiously committed in the first place.

Second, Mr. Douthat posits that recent secularization is disproportionately attributed to millennials and younger. While he admits that millennials are the “least churched” generation in modern American history, he notes that religious attendance ebbs and flows over one’s life, falling when one leaves home and resuming during child-rearing and later years. Rather, the aging and dying of “the more pious Silent Generation” and their replacement by Baby Boomers should be held accountable. Significant de-Christianization occurred in the 1960’s and 70’s, the years of Boomer young adulthood.

Third, the Christian institution most at risk appears to be Catholic versus mainline or evangelical Protestant. While the biggest mid-20<sup>th</sup> century losses were mainline Protestants, those losses were evangelical Protestants’ gain. Catholic losses were obscured by an influx of Catholic immigrants. Mr. Douthat summates “after a long period of immigrant-supported stabilization, in the current ‘aftershock’ it’s mostly Catholic mass attendance that’s been falling, even as Protestant church attendance bobs up.”

Finally, and perhaps most interestingly for UU’s, American society is seeing greater tolerance and interest in alternative spiritualities. Mr. Douthat notes that “the decline of Christian institutions and the weakening of Christian affiliation may be clearing space for post-Christian spiritualities —

pantheist, gnostic, syncretist, pagan — rather than a New Atheist sort of godlessness.”

Does an intrinsic need for humans to seek some form of spirituality endure? Is that form ever more removed from traditional worship? In addition to exploring any of the world religions, do some find their spiritual enrichment in nature? In music? In volunteer service? We invite you to review the broad umbrella of Unitarian Universalism at our website:

<https://uucw.ncmuuc.org/about-uuism/>

Consider these things, as we consider our future.

- *\*Ross Douthat, New York Times  
October 29, 2019*

## Contact Information

### Governing Board Chair:

Jill Nicholson Sackett  
(224) 567-3635  
Email: [jill@sackett.com](mailto:jill@sackett.com)

### Governing Board Members:

Allan Gordon:  
Email: [31Allangordon@gmail.com](mailto:31Allangordon@gmail.com)  
Rev. Emerita Inanna Arthen (Clerk)

## UUCW Online

Main Website: [uucw.ncmuuc.org](https://uucw.ncmuuc.org)

Set in Stone Website: [www.set-in-stone.org](http://www.set-in-stone.org)

Facebook: [facebook.com/uuwinchendon](https://facebook.com/uuwinchendon)

## Equal Access Entry Gets a Facelift

Over numerous months now we've been reporting on the many decluttering, cleaning and redecorating efforts underway at our venerable old building. Our latest project was the cleaning and painting of the Equal Access Entry. The descent to the Parish Hall takes the brunt of traffic abuse and the inevitable banging and brushing of objects against the corners and walls. Paint on our bannisters was completely worn off in some places.

Volunteer Joe Sackett prepped, spackled and repainted all walls and trim. Did you know that that pleasant pale, green color is actually called “Woodland White?” What a fresh difference one notes when entering the church! Many thanks to Joe.



**Winchendon Winds**  
Professional Concert Band  
James Chesebrough, Conductor Rick Anderson, Assistant Conductor

### 2021 Fall Concert Series

Unitarian Universalist Church of Winchendon  
126 Central Street

Sunday, September 26 - 2:00 p.m.  
“Repertoire Classics”

Saturday, October 9 - 10:00 a.m.  
Winchendon Fall Festival - “From the Stage”

Sunday, October 17 - 2:00 p.m.  
“Dances and Marches”

Sunday, October 24 - 2:00 p.m.  
“Beauty”

Sunday, November 14 - 2:00 p.m.  
Veterans’ Tribute - “America!”

Pre-Concert Refreshments - Free Admission

Sponsored by:  
Auburnham Cultural Council  
Mass Cultural Council  
Gardner Cultural Council  
Winchendon Cultural Council

RBFI Robinson Broadhurst Foundation, Inc.

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Contact Us:  
[music@winchendonwinds.org](mailto:music@winchendonwinds.org)