

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

Now through February 28

UUCW Survey – Online or paper

Thursday, February 10

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

Mondays

7:45 pm - AA Meeting, Parish Hall

Thursday, February 24

5:30 pm - Our Neighbor's Kitchen serves
Pasta Dish To-Be-Announced
(Drive-Through/Take-Out)

Monday, February 28

6:30 pm – Governing Board Meeting,
Dial-In (RSVP Jill Sackett)

From Your Editor

For UUCW, this is a month of reflection and preparation. As I write our recap of 2021, I am amazed at what we have accomplished in these past few months. We have a wonderful set of dedicated members and volunteers. It has been a pleasure to work alongside each other. I think of how much more we can do if we had even few more friendly hands.

We are full of ideas and possibilities; which of these would appeal to others? As you read this newsletter, please ask yourself: what more might we offer you? This month we're collecting virtual input via a survey. Next month watch for some in-person discussion opportunities.

On a larger scale...things are really starting to “happen” in Winchendon. Non-profit groups are experimenting with all manner of activities and initiatives. Implementation of the town's new Master Plan officially kicked off last week. One way or another, jump on this train...it's pulling out to new destinations, and you'll want to be on board!

-Jill Nicholson Sackett - Chair, Governing Board.

UUCW Wants Your Input!

It has now been 2 ½ years since we held our focus panel and collected ideas on what direction our church may take to best serve our community. Since that time, we have been in the grips of a global pandemic which has made an indelible mark on our routines and forced us into a “new normal.” Against this backdrop, we are reaching out to query you once again. It is quite possible that where we wanted to go in 2019 is not where we want to go now. Only you can tell us.



This is the most widespread survey effort UUCW has undertaken in some years. We’re reaching out to anyone who has visited our church for any reason, as well as those who may not have even entered our doors. As the only house of liberal worship in the vicinity, we are gauging interest in more frequent worship services. We are also gauging interest in a wide variety of other activities the church currently sponsors, or could sponsor. Please take a moment to share your thoughts with

us. The link here takes you to an online form where you may provide anonymous feedback:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScNK7HZQyReLlwkI9uoJ_lpYPQ34LIRkSTKhbylBHdCThVXsw/viewform?vc=0&c=0&w=1&flr=0

We have also distributed paper copies in various places and would be happy to provide one upon request. We’ll be collecting input throughout February. We need you to guide us in setting direction for our church. We have been here for over 150 years and look forward to continuing our presence in the heart of downtown Winchendon.

UUCW Year in Review

2021 challenged us to ride a rollercoaster. It began with a wave of hope as vaccinations emerged and public activities cautiously resumed. However...not one, but two COVID variants struck back. UUCW did our best to “stay on board” and had a surprisingly busy year. It required patience, resourcefulness, creativity and steadfast volunteers to continue our community engagement, building maintenance, fundraising and worship. We look back in grateful retrospect for all we’ve accomplished...

Set in Stone Campaign: Thanks to grants we secured from the Massachusetts Historical Commission and Robinson-Broadhurst Foundation, as well as our own fundraising, UUCW fully completed Phase 2 of our masonry

repairs. Joseph Gnazzo Company erected elaborate scaffolding and worked on site from March until June. They completely dismantled and reconstructed the entire Northeast tower buttress (stone by stone!).



Next, they pinned in bulging stonework under our East tower clock. Finally, they finished up all repairs and tuck-pointing on our building's East face, and once again it is completely watertight. We are already working on Phase 3 grant applications and plans. Follow our work at: www.set-in-stone.org.

Our Neighbor's Kitchen: We are now well-practiced at running our drive-through take-out process for our community suppers. The Sackett and Faucher families take turns setting the menus and "running the kitchen." A skeleton crew of hard-working volunteers joins us in the kitchen for

prepping, serving, and carrying meals upstairs and to waiting cars. We have been serving record numbers of meals. We miss the smiles and conversation at our indoor tables, and trust we will return to sit-down dining as soon as it is safe to do so.

Fundraising: Our COVID-dampened fundraising in 2020, in combination with our major Set in Stone repairs, demanded successful fundraising this year. UUCW conducted three Lawn Fairs. The first was held over Summer Solstice weekend in June, the second coincided with the Town-Wide Yard Sale in August, and the third took place during Winchendon's Fall Festival on Columbus Day weekend. In each case we featured a lawn full of crafters, vendors and refreshments. DJ Kayden Gordon provided country music entertainment for the summer Lawn Fairs, while Winchendon Winds concert band performed in our sanctuary for the fall Lawn Fair. Our "church chili" recipe was a huge hit and we will likely reprise it at future Lawn Fairs.

Our final fundraiser was our *second* annual holiday cookie sale held in December. We took advance orders online, and sold additional cookies during Winchendon's Holiday Fair held in Town Hall. All in all, these fundraisers provided several thousand dollars of much needed funds for our ongoing repairs and operations.

Community Engagement and Worship:

This continued to be the most challenging aspect of our operations. We held only three worship services last year. We held an Easter service in the spring complete with a traditional indoor/outdoor egg hunt. In June we held our second annual “Blessing of the Bulbs” ceremony with poetry, readings and music. Attendees selected flower bulbs to take home or plant in the church garden. Both of these were lay-led. Our indoor activities remained curtailed in late summer and fall. On Christmas Eve we gathered for our annual candlelight service with Rev. Arthen in the pulpit and guest pianist Lisa Utzig.

We managed all of these gatherings with careful attention to COVID guidelines, as well as a hiking trip to Hermit’s Cave in Erving, MA in August, and our annual Toy Drive and Sanctuary Decorating on Black Friday.

Building Maintenance: A big, old structure like ours requires never-ending TLC. We continued our interior cleaning and redecorating efforts. Over the summer Joe Sackett painted all three levels of the equal access addition. In August eight Winchendon School students lent their energy to deep-cleaning the church sanctuary and other jobs.

The most obvious maintenance project right now is the refinishing of our solid walnut exterior doors. The tower doors

are “in the shop”, to be returned later this month. The center entry doors are next in line.

We are an optimistic, hard-working and friendly little community. We are always looking to welcome newcomers and returning friends as we forge new pathways ahead for UUCW.

Take Courage

Take courage friends.

The way is often hard, the path is never clear,

And the stakes are very high.

Take courage.

For deep down, there is another truth:

You are not alone.

-Wayne B. Arnason



UUCW Online

Main Website: <https://uucw.ncmuuc.org/>

Set in Stone Website: www.set-in-stone.org

Facebook: facebook.com/uwinchendon

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