

# 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

### Thursday, February 9

5:30 pm - Our Neighbor's Kitchen serves  
Picadillo (Ground Beef Stew),  
Parish Hall

### Monday, February 13

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

### Mondays

7:45 pm - AA Meeting, Parish Hall

### Thursday, February 24

5:30 pm - Our Neighbor's Kitchen serves  
Dish To-Be-Announced,  
Parish Hall

### Tuesday, February 28

6:30 pm – UU Collaborative of North  
Central Massachusetts Meeting,  
UU Society of Gardner, 66 Elm Street

## From Your Editor

February is upon us, and so are the retailers. Yes, it's Valentine's Day Month. Happy couples plan their "date night." Diamond sales blare from televisions, store aisles glow red and pink with greeting cards, florists and chocolatiers go into overdrive. Restaurant reservations are at a premium. Many couples eagerly anticipate this celebration of love and togetherness, as well they should.

For many however, there is no special someone, and they would just as soon skip from January to March. Some struggle with feelings of loss, separation or yearning. Some feel particularly isolated at this time.

Let's open our hearts. Choose someone you know who may *not* have plans on February 14. Reach out. Plan a visit. Send a card. Drop off cookies. Sometimes all it takes is a reminder that someone cares, we are all special, and none of us are truly alone.

Extend your caring and love this Valentine's Day. With warmth...

-Jill Nicholson Sackett - Chair, Governing Board.

## **UU Collaborative of North Central Massachusetts (NCM): Meeting Highlights**

Despite uncooperative but typical winter weather, UUCW hosted the second meeting of the newly formed UU Collaborative of NCM on a rainy Thursday evening, January 12. We had representatives from three UU churches in attendance, and enjoyed a frank and receptive exchange.

We all agreed UUs need to work on their branding. We acknowledged two levels of branding: micro-branding of individual church strengths (music, RE, community service, architecture, etc.) and macro-branding of the entire North Central Mass UU. Discussion will continue on this. We also agreed to set up a Google calendar to which all UU congregations in our collaboration may add their events and services for “one-stop shopping” for our local UUs.

Our next meeting will be hosted by the UU Society of Gardner, 66 Elm Street on Tuesday, February 28, 6:30 pm. The meeting will include a tutorial on how to use the shared Google calendar and continue other topics of mutual interest. For the latest news and updates, follow us on Facebook:

[www.facebook.com/groups/832013087933981](http://www.facebook.com/groups/832013087933981)

## **UUCW Year in Review**

2022 saw a welcome return to more of our “usual” practices and events. We saw many faces we had not seen in months. Central Street is *almost* complete, bringing a much-appreciated finished look to our front curb. Throughout the construction and slow growth of assemblies we are grateful for our progress and continued connection to our community. We look back at all we’ve accomplished...

Set in Stone Campaign: This year brought us another intense round of grant applications. Our pleas were answered, and we have amassed a total of \$115,000 in grant funding from the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) and the Robinson-Broadhurst Foundation. We have now embarked on Phase 3 of our multi-year Set in Stone campaign to repair our building. This Phase addresses our notoriously difficult “valley” between our tower and main building, plus additional tuck-pointing. We’ve signed contracts with the MHC, Spencer Preservation Group Architects, and Calhess Restoration and Waterproofing Corporation. We aim to begin work in March once the weather is warm enough.

Our Neighbor’s Kitchen (ONK): We finally returned to indoor dining last Spring after a two-year stint of serving drive-through take-out meals to record demand. Once again, we have smiling faces and conversation at the tables, but

not at the pre-COVID numbers we used to enjoy. We trust we will see a slow build-back of our friendly indoor diners and continue to serve a healthy number of takeout meals to those choosing to eat their meals at home.

ONK branched out this year with a number of more culturally-diverse meals. Our intrepid diners were treated to an Indian chicken cauliflower curry, a Hanukkah meal with latkes and kugel, a Kwanzaa meal with chicken peanut stew, and German noodles and sausage. We received very positive reviews of our new menu items and plan to continue our variety in 2023.

Fundraising: “Pardon our dust” indeed! The Central Street reconstruction turned our church yard into a “parking lot” for all manner of equipment: backhoes, sewer and water mains, granite curbs and even the occasional porta-potty. Despite the disruption, we managed to hold one summer Lawn Fair in June, and sell concessions at the town’s Fall Festival in October. We finished the year with a bustling indoor Holiday Bazaar in December. Our third annual holiday cookie sale topped things off for over \$1300 of much needed funds for our ongoing repairs and operations.

Community Engagement and Worship: We held four formal worship services this year; one each quarter. Our Easter service featured Rev Arthen at the pulpit, Sharon Beaty at the pipe organ, and a traditional outdoor egg hunt. In

June we held our third annual “Blessing of the Bulbs” ceremony with poetry, readings, music and flower bulbs to take home to plant. In September we held a water communion service, with attendees sharing samples of water and personal stories. Afterwards we poured our collective water into the nearby Miller’s River. On Christmas Eve we gathered for our annual candlelight service with Rev. Arthen in the pulpit and Sharon Beaty at the pipe organ.

UUCW was thrilled to host a number of festivities in our sanctuary: six Winchendon Winds band concerts last summer, two very happy weddings during the height of fall foliage, and a holiday brass quintet.

Last Fall, UUCW spear-headed a new effort to network with other area UU churches. In October the First Parish UU Church of Fitchburg hosted a kick-off meeting attended by representatives from seven UU churches. UUCW hosted the second meeting in January. Thus far, we have enjoyed making each others’ acquaintances, shared successes and concerns, formed a new group Facebook page, and are now working on a shared Google calendar where we can post all of our UU activities in once place.

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.

## And the Survey Says...



A year ago we undertook a survey of our congregations and friends to gather information on how we may better serve our community. The survey questions centered around interest in worship services plus other activities, and views on our historical significance. Here's what we learned...

A quarter of respondents had an interest in worship services. The following ranked the highest importance for such services: family-friendly, sharing joys and concerns, and embracing different religious beliefs. The majority proposed a service time of Sundays between 10 – 11 am.

Over half our respondents expressed high interest in the things we already do: community suppers, concerts and lawn fairs. Modest interest was expressed for lectures on current topics. Minimal interest was expressed for the other suggestions: meditation hours, community or church choir, cooking classes, or volunteer work. All of this feedback is important as we consider pathways forward to further engage the community.

Finally, we were heartened to learn that over 93% of respondents indicated that

our lovely church is “Important” or “Extremely Important” as an historical landmark. This is invaluable information as we continue to seek funding for our historic preservation efforts. Aside from its architectural significance, our church is rich in local history and represents the best in what our forbearers brought to town. We continue to unearth colorful stories about this building and the contributions many of our congregants made to Winchendon over the years. We'll share these as we learn more.

Many thanks to those of you who provided input. If you still wish to do so, contact us for a paper copy, or the link here takes you to an online form where you may provide anonymous feedback:

<https://tinyurl.com/puu7c4hs>

## UUCW Online

Main Website: <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)

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