

THE WINCHENDON UNITARIAN

Established 1954

Published by the

Unitarian Universalist Church of Winchendon



PO Box 218, Winchendon, MA 01475

Church Telephone: 978-297-0554

Volume 68 Issue 5

JANUARY 2024

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, January 11

5:30 pm – Our Neighbor’s Kitchen serves
a Sloppy Joe “Picnic”, Parish Hall

Mondays

7:45 pm - AA Meeting, Parish Hall

Thursday, January 25

5:30 pm – Our Neighbor’s Kitchen serves
Meat Lasagna, Parish Hall

From Your Editor

Happy New Year! Many of us make resolutions, or at least undergo some level of introspection with the incoming New Year. Many contemplate making changes, endeavoring some type of self-improvement. Consider this taken from our Christmas Eve service:

“Just as when we go inward to the quiet within, we search for our own understanding of ourselves, our choice of community and our purpose for the coming year. Being present with community also helps quiet us and being present means fully being there and not letting our minds distract us with outside matters.”

As you reflect, ask yourself what type of community do you wish to be a part of? Who are your kindred spirits? Who shares your values? How can community help you become a better version of yourself?

Is the UU Church community in your sight-lines? Check us out. Our welcome mat is always out.

-Jill Nicholson Sackett - Chair, Governing Board.

Christmas Eve Service Highlights

This year we expanded our traditional Christmas Eve Candlelight Service to touch on a variety of themes related to mid-winter. During our lay-led service titled “Towards the Light,” we looked at how light plays a central role in Christmas as well as other holidays and ceremonies. A collection of Yule Logs was on display – all the products of our community Yule Log-making workshop held at the church two weeks earlier.

Alison and Clyde Lansing provided a thoughtful mid-winter homily, some of which is excerpted below.

“The winter solstice time is no longer celebrated as it once was, with the understanding that this is a period of descent and rest, of going within our homes, within ourselves and taking in all that we have been through, and all that has passed in this full year which is coming to a close. Like nature and the animal kingdom around us, this time of hibernation is so necessary for our tired limbs, our burdened minds.

Our modern culture avoids rest and introspection at a max at this time; with alcohol, lights, shopping, overworking, overspending, comfort food and consumerism. And yet the natural tug to go inwards as nearly all creatures are doing is strong, and the weather so bitter that people are left feeling that winter is hard, because for those of us without burning fires and big festive families, it

can be lonely and isolating. In actual fact winter is kind; she points us in her quiet soft way towards our inner self, towards this annual time of peace and reflection, embracing the darkness and forgiving, accepting and loving in an embracing goodbye to the past year.

Winter takes away the distractions, the buzz, and presents us with the perfect time to rest and withdraw into a womb-like love, bringing fire and light to our hearth. Then, just around the corner the new year will begin again, and like a seed planted deep in the earth, we will all rise with renewed energy once again to dance in the sunlight.

Sometimes it is difficult to go inwards...to be still and quiet with ourselves. Things that can assist with this challenge are meditation, meditative music, being in a natural setting and using all five senses to notice your connection with nature. Nature operates at an optimum energy level to bring us inward. It “grounds” us. Lighting candles, practicing gratitude, noticing beauty - all of these things help us be still, letting our inner being arise.

The magic of winter teaches us the value of finding light among the darkest of times. It shows us that warmth can be found even in the coldest moments. Winter is when nature becomes as a blank canvas, ready for you, the artist, to paint it as you wish. It is a fresh start to the beginning of endless possibilities.”

Let us hold these thoughts close as we head into the New Year.

UUCW Holiday Bazaar & Cookie Sale a Festive Success

Our church was brimming with vendors, shoppers and good cheer during our Holiday Bazaar held on Saturday, December 16. Visitors browsed through two floors of merchandise ranging from crafts to popular retail lines.



Many stopped at our kitchen window downstairs to treat themselves to a hot drink and a wide variety of holiday cookies including traditional “sugar-laden” as well as sugar-free/gluten-free options. Our Serv-Safe certified bakers turned out over 70 dozen cookies, with pre-paid orders receiving complimentary gift-wrap.



All in all, we netted over \$1200 in much-needed funds which we split between our operational costs and ongoing Set in Stone building repairs.

Sanctuary Receives a Face-Lift

With our Set in Stone Phase 3 exterior work complete and our roof “valley” now watertight, we turned our attention to long-awaited interior repairs. Painters Pride, Inc., a company specializing in interior work for historic churches, came to the rescue. They repaired a large area of water stain in one ceiling panel, and reconstructed 24’ of deteriorated plaster molding. Six large ceiling panels, the entire south wall and all of the trim around the south-facing stained-glass windows were primed and repainted.



Painters Pride took care to protect our beautiful black walnut pews, draping everything in tarps and plastic. The ladder work was not for the faint of heart: extra-long extension ladders with

“spotters” were used to reach the highest points of the work areas. The crew worked full days and finished the job in just one week.



We now have a gleaming, clean south wall free of stains, cracks and dirt. We are tempted to paint even more!

Our Indispensable Volunteers

UUCW has long been servicing the community, and over the years we have had many hard-working volunteers to thank for their efforts. We pause to give special thanks to *all of our volunteers*, especially those few that have truly gone “above and beyond” to make our church what it is today. Our heartfelt thanks to:

Kathy Fugatt and Jean LaDuke – these indefatigable sisters have anchored our concessions sales and prep work for Our Neighbor’s Kitchen (ONK) for over five years. They have also championed healthier dining options and are the first ones to “cut all the vegetables” when we prepare our made-from-scratch meals.

Dave Faucher – as our longest-standing ONK chef, Dave has turned out enduringly popular and hearty hot meals with the help of his talented daughters. Diners look forward to many of his annual menu items.

Al Gordon – one of our longest-standing church members, Al Gordon is responsible for many of the “behind the scenes” indoor and outdoor maintenance and repair tasks that are all too often taken for granted. Al and his family also spear-head our Annual Spirit of Christmas Toy Drive held on Black Friday each year.

Joe Sackett – If you visit our building and observe that things look brighter, cleaner, fresher – you can thank Joe for countless hours of scrubbing, scraping, and painting walls, doors, trim and more. Joe also helped restore our northside gardens and rakes our leaf-addled lawns.

Many hands make light work – and we are so grateful.

UUCW Online

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

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

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

Contact Information

Governing Board Chair:

Jill Nicholson Sackett (Treasurer)

Governing Board Members:

Allan Gordon: (Member)

Rev Inanna Arthen, Minister Emerita (Clerk)

Dave Faucher (Auditor)