

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 8

APRIL 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, April 11

5:30 pm – Our Neighbor’s Kitchen
serves Easter Ham Dinner,
Parish Hall

Tuesday, April 22

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

Thursday, April 25

5:30 pm – Our Neighbor’s Kitchen
serves Chef’s Choice
Parish Hall

Mondays

7:45 pm - AA Meeting,
Parish Hall

From Your Editor

This is a newsletter dedicated to gratitude. We look at how Eastertime can prompt contemplative gratitude. We are thankful for our long-running supper program, Our Neighbor’s Kitchen, and the positives it brings to our community. We are grateful for Spring.

“In this, the season of steady rebirth, we awaken to the power so abundant, so holy,
That returns each year through earth and sky.

We will find our hearts again, and our good spirits.

We will love, and believe, and give and wonder, and feel again the eternal powers.

The flow of life moves ever onward through one faithful spring, and another, and now another.

May we be forever grateful.

Alleluia. Amen.”

- Jane Rzepka

-Jill Nicholson Sackett - Chair, Governing Board.

Easter-Time and the Power of Gratitude

Easter Sunday was a lovely, sunny, crisp day...a perfect New England Easter. Our pulpit was pink with potted tulips and coffee perked off to the side as we contemplated the meaning of Easter and the opportunity it presents for gratitude. Alison and Clyde Lansing prepared and delivered a thoughtful homily, an excerpt of which follows here:

“Easter typically is about Jesus rising again after having died for all our sins, for giving the ultimate sacrifice. We can see that as a wonderful gift. It is an act of kindness, love, charity. This leads us to a grand opportunity to be grateful.

Today, we can look at this day as an opportunity to give thanks for our many blessings. If you are Christian, you will give thanks to God for sending his Son to die and then be raised again from the dead. But whatever your belief system, we can all give thanks for this connection back to God (Higher Power, One Mind) and all that is Holy.

Gratitude is a powerful emotion. And we can make gratitude an action by consciously thinking of and focusing on the gifts all around us even when we are feeling anything but grateful. It takes actually feeling that gratitude, not just saying the words.

There is so much to be grateful for. All of the natural world is a gift of great

beauty...the trees that are just starting to leaf out, the flowers that are starting to bloom, the bees working so hard to pollinate so that those same flowers will bloom again next year. We see beauty in the blue sky and puffy white clouds, the vegetable garden making food for us, the squirrel that finally figures out how to climb that bird feeder for seed. The birds that sing and grace us with their beauty. The dog who lays on your feet to warm them. When we look around us, we see all of nature as the greatest gift. The mountains, the oceans, the deserts. There is so very much within our vision, our grasp. We see people around us whom we love and cherish. And gratitude for all those things is powerful. And when we are grateful **together** it is even more powerful. We put love into action when we help someone cope with grief or take soup to an invalid or hold a door open for someone entering behind us. Can you imagine what our world would be like if we all focused on love and gratitude?!

Sometimes it takes a long list of things you are grateful for to get out of an intense negative emotion, but if you keep at it, you are changing your brain and the neural networks in your brain. You are changing your very body. We can put on each of these feelings...gratitude and love...any time we want to just by thinking of them.

And then we can truly say Hallelujah and reflect joy to those around us.”

Our Neighbor's Kitchen: By the Numbers

On March 28, Our Neighbor's Kitchen (ONK) crested 28 years of continual operations at UUCW.* We were thrilled see a plug for us published by HEAL Winchendon on their Facebook page a few days ago:



That prompted us to share more information about our program in this month's newsletter. Read along as we take a look at some of the "numbers" behind the running of ONK.

1400

Number of meals served last year

UUCW cooks every 2nd, 4th and 5th Thursday of each month. We serve both dine-in and take-out meals to anyone stopping by.

50-60

Number of indoor diners pre-COVID

Prior to COVID, we routinely welcomed 50-60 sit-down diners in our spacious Parish Hall, filling three rows of banquet tables, with only a handful of these diners taking meals home to others.

20

Number of indoor diners post-COVID

30-40

Number of takeout meals post-COVID

What a difference a pandemic makes. Today, we welcome a regular group of 20 friendly diners, with many more opting for take-out meals. The number of meals we serve hasn't changed, but we see fewer people joining in community to "break bread."

\$150

Average cost of running ONK each mealtime

The average cost for putting on one ONK meal for 50-60 includes groceries, utilities (water, propane gas, trash removal) and take-out containers, which are surprisingly expensive. We keep our average grocery tab at about \$100 thanks to generous food donations from the Winchendon Community Action Committee (CAC), which incidentally, launched the ONK program back in 1996.

\$90

Average amount of donations "at the door"

UUCW posts a suggested donation of \$2 per person, or \$5 per family, with no one turned away. The people who attend ONK come for a variety of reasons. Some enjoy an affordable meal out with their friends. Some live alone and enjoy the companionship at our welcoming table. Some are seeking a break from the kitchen. Some read our posted menu for the week and come for a favorite entrée. And some are here for the only hot meal they may be eating that week. Whatever the reason, we welcome all regardless of means to pay.

So how do we make ends meet? First off, we keep our operational costs low with an all-volunteer staff. Everything from shopping, cooking, serving, cleaning up, and even mopping the floor is performed by our dependable volunteers. We simply couldn't run the program without them. Second, we supplement the at-the-door collection with donations from others. Our solicitations to other churches yielded an annual donation from the United Parish of Winchendon. We received COVID-relief funding from the Community Foundation of North Central Massachusetts which carried us through a significant uptick in demand during the pandemic. We have received some generous donations from individuals, even from those who are already volunteering their labor. In lean years, we borrow from the church's general fund to close any remaining gap.

UUCW is committed to this program and all of the obvious good it provides: the

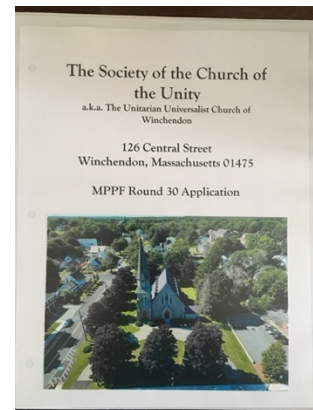
fellowship, nutritional food, and a meal that our community can depend on up to three times a month. Stop on in and try us out. All are welcome.

*Those wishing to read up on the genesis and evolution of ONK at UUCW can check out our March 2022 article in our online newsletter archives:

<https://tinyurl.com/ONK-History>

Set in Stone Grant Application Is In!

We made it! We submitted this 2-inch bound application to the Massachusetts Historical Commission for a Round 30 Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund grant on March 15.



We're requesting \$50,000 to be matched by the Robinson-Broadhurst Foundation to continue Set in Stone Phase 4 repairs. Now we patiently wait until the state announces its grant awards this June.

UUCW Online

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

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

Facebook: facebook.com/uuwinchendon