

# 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, May 9

5:30 pm – Our Neighbor’s Kitchen  
serves Cheesy Shrimp Bake,  
Parish Hall

### Tuesday, May 21

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

### Mondays

7:45 pm - AA Meeting,  
Parish Hall

### Thursday, May 23

5:30 pm – Our Neighbor’s Kitchen  
serves Spring Chicken,  
Parish Hall

### Thursday, May 30

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

### Sunday, June 2

11:00 am – Blessing of the Bulbs  
Sacred Circle, Sanctuary

## From Your Editor

UUCW is busiest at two times of the year: December and upcoming June. While our December events are necessarily indoors, our June events occupy our entire property, inside and out. Our congregation and guests are well aware of our June lineup of lawn fair, concerts, meals, spring worship service, and Annual Meeting that are the hallmarks of our mid-year.

May is our month of preparation. We’re dusting, cleaning, gardening and readying ourselves for a lot of welcome traffic. Whether you are a new or regular visitor to UUCW, we encourage you to stop on in at one of the many activities we are hosting. We are a hardy and welcoming group. Could this be the community you are seeking? Come find out.

-Jill Nicholson Sackett - Chair, Governing Board.

## June 15 Summer Solstice Lawn Fair

Calling all vendors! Our annual Summer Solstice Lawn Fair will be on Saturday, June 15, 9 AM - 2 PM. We're looking for crafters, retail vendors, yard salers, and vendors of packaged or baked foods... the more the merrier! All vendors will receive a full 12' by 12' display space and our advertising help through social media and flyers.

The Clark Memorial YMCA is running their Summer Solstice Fair across the street at the same time, featuring children's attractions and vendors down on their athletic field, a morning road race, AND a parade along Central Street mid-morning. We expect a good draw downtown.

For more information and an application form, please visit our website: <https://uucw.ncmuuc.org/summer-fair/>

Unitarian Universalist Church of Winchendon



**Summer**  
**Lawn**  
**Fair**

*Something for  
Everyone!*

**Saturday, June 15**  
**9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.**  
126 Central Street

New and Used Goods    Freecycle Table  
Crafts                      Food

To rent a space or learn more, visit  
[uucw.ncmuuc.org/summer-fair/](https://uucw.ncmuuc.org/summer-fair/)

## Empathy

*By Joe Sackett*

Empathy is a skill naturally following from Love as this follows my February Love article. Recall that love is the source of all good. While simple and true, it becomes complex when we consider our interconnectedness. Empathy bridges these connections enabling us to appreciate another's perspective.

Empathy is defined as understanding another person's feelings. It involves stepping out of your own mindset to benevolently share another's perspective. You must work with very incomplete information so it is not easy and your success is limited by how well you know the other person. Empathy is a conscious and unconscious skill as, with practice, it becomes natural to "seek to understand."

There are quite a few pitfalls to becoming empathetic. The biggest is our fixation with Self. This impedes our willingness to consider another perspective. Furthermore, self and our own experiences bias our view of others. It is akin to looking at another through a cloudy (and partially reflective) lens. One must jettison all preconceptions, realize others have a completely unique context yet still do the work to understand this.

Another hurdle is that people present images rather than their true selves. Worse, folks change these in the presence of groups as they adjust their behavior to “fit in.” This group phenomenon, coupled with humans’ natural tendency to categorize, leads to generalization. Trying to apply empathy to groups of people is a fallacy. Ironically, even though they are trying to fit in the group, it is incorrect (and unfair) to assume they are similar people. As they say, variance within a group of people is greater than variance between groups. Generalization is an oft-traveled and failure-prone mental highway. Stay off. Know that individual empathy is essentially the opposite.

Empathy is a respectful part of a healthy conversation. It can be employed openly by “asking instead of assuming.” Or it can be in the background as you detach from bias and really listen as other people share their background and context. Certainly it has its limits. As difficult as Deanna Troi (Star Trek, Next Gen) must have it as a master empath, being bombarded with others’ emotions, it might be even more exhausting to be around her!

Empathy is a higher-order skill enabling our interconnectedness. It is imperfect due to the fractal complexity of the conscious and unconscious mind. It is impossible to fully understand oneself. Add the “air gap” between us and it’s a marvel we can empathize at all. It takes practice but it’s worth it to provide more

meaningful, bidirectional communication and healthy relationships.

It is 2024. It is a dark time for many people and our planet herself. There is a sense of foreboding as our US election approaches. This is the unshakable backdrop of my life as I pour myself into these articles. Love is divine and will outlast time but as mortals we need to deal with the reality coming our way. My series will necessarily advance past the “self-help” skills I’ve discussed and become more provocative as I take a harder look at the implications of our thinking on our collective future.

## **Kitchen Expansion Underway!**

It has taken two years of fundraising and planning, but we have finally started our long-awaited and much-needed kitchen expansion. Our sturdy little kitchen was built by handy parishioners in the 1950’s and has served us well for 70 years. While appliances have been replaced over the years, the basic footprint, plumbing, cupboards and countertops have not. With the advancing years, we have come to two realizations.

First, we need more room. The kitchen was originally built to accommodate after-worship coffee hour and the occasional church supper. Then came the Our Neighbor’s Kitchen (ONK) community supper program, which began as a once-monthly endeavor, and has grown in scope and frequency in recent

years. As you read in our April newsletter, we now serve about 60 meals every 2<sup>nd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Thursday of each month, with many more take-out meals. We need more space to stage take-out containers, desserts and side dishes. We have up to four people working around a single island counter, our backsides bumping the sink and refrigerator. We must use the same service window to serve hot food and receive dirty dishes. The solution: annex the unused children's nursery next door. This involves breaking down a wall and creating a fat "L", effectively doubling our kitchen space.

Second, we need upgraded plumbing. We will be replacing our 2-bay commercial sink with a 3-bay commercial sink complete with a goose-neck sprayer and new (required) copper piping, venting and grease trap. Since we serve on "real" dishes and work with very large pots and casserole trays, this new sink system will make cleanup much more manageable.

We have hired Sutton Homes, LLC, a company right here in Winchendon, to do the job. Kevin Sutton and his crew have worked well with us to outline the job and schedule, working around our Thursday ONK supper dates. We've assembled a "Kitchen Committee" of parishioners to follow progress. For cost-savings, our Committee will do much of the finishing work such as painting and cabinet reassembly.

Below is a "before" picture looking into the kitchen from the service window...



...followed by an "after" picture showing the removal of the wall of cupboards and shelves, and annexation of the nursery. The 3-bay sink stands awaits installation.



We can't wait to move into our expanded space and adopt our improved workflow! Stay tuned for the final pictures, or better yet, visit us at a future ONK meal and see for yourselves.

### **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)