

A Publication of the Winchester Unitarian Society

Mystic Messenger

www.winchesteruu.org 478 Main Street Winchester MA 01890



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June's Theme is

Celebrating Blessings

"In this refulgent summer....."



Ralph Waldo Emerson begins his famous Divinity School Address with "In this refulgent summer, it has been a luxury to draw the breath of life."

I thank Emerson for teaching me the meaning of the word "refulgent" - glowing, blazing, illuminated.

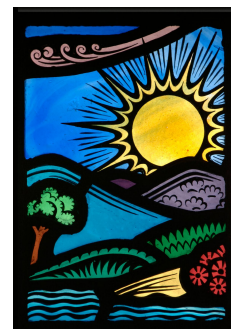
In this glowing season, it is, indeed, a gift to be alive. Summer in New England is such a redemptive experience as we are liberated from the cold and grey of winter and what often feels like a very long, non-committal spring. We take advantage of the beautiful weather and set aside work or visit with others on vacation. In this time, we savor summertime delights: days at the beach, bittersweet lemonade and ice cream on a hot day. In this time, it is easy to embrace July's theme, "celebrate blessings."

This month's resources from Soul Matters have also taught me something: "the Aramaic word underlying the English word *blessed* is *tubwayhun* which literally means "ripe" or "ready for the picking." I had not thought about being blessed as similar to 'ripe before but more memories of summer now make the connection clear.

If you have not had to thwart rabbits or deer, summer is a season of harvesting for gardeners. If you do not garden, simply the sight of bins overflowing with fresh produce at the farmer's market invites us to marvel at the abundance around us.

Of course, anytime and every time can glow with the gifts of life. Anytime can be a ripe moment. But it is easy to experience our blessings in summer.

May your June and your summer shine!



Themes for the Coming Program Year

Together we will explore and travel the path of. **Belonging** (September)
Courage (October)
Change (November)
Wonder (December)

-2023-

Finding Our Center (January)
Love (February)
Vulnerability (March)
Resistance (April)
Creativity (May)
Delight (June)

On May 15th,

Rev. Heather

shared some of the reflections she created for **#UULent** in worship.

Unitarian Universalists Mr. Barb Greve and Alex Kapitan began #UULent, a collective spiritual practice following the traditional period of Christian Lent, leading up to the celebration of Easter. Greve writes, in part:

"...Early Unitarian Universalists observed Lent and many continue to do so to this day. At the beginning of Skinner House Books' creation in the early 1960s, the UUA published Lenten manuals to help practitioners intentionally engage in reflection. Using a modern-day approach, #UULent provides similar help

#UULent is designed to be used individually, as a family, or as a congregation. For each day in Lent a word has been selected. Each day participants are invited to reflect on the meaning of the day's word, then create a photograph that represents the word, idea, practice, or concept and share it [on line.]

...May this intentional practice and discipline impact your daily life in ways that bring you closer to your spiritual core and offer you resiliency for life."

Here is another meditation, written on March 7th, exploring "flexibility":

When I think of today's #UULent theme, "flexibility," paradoxically I think of trees.

When a seed falls to the ground or is planted, that is where the tree will be for all of its life. If healthy, many trees will far outlive the people who plant them. The long life of a tree is defined by staying rooted in one place.



But another thing we know about trees is their life underground. I am grateful to the book "The Secret Life of Trees" for explaining how we may think of a tree as a singular organism but it is more accurate to understand trees as one node in a connected network, with trees communicating and sending information and nutrients through underground fibers, "the world wood web."

Here is where flexibility comes in. It is the trees who are close to other trees, who are tightly bound to one another, who survive devastating storms. Their collective rootedness allow them to bend and sway with the wind.



I think the same is true for people. A past congregant once observed that the most successful businesses - and I might add "groups" or "communities" - are defined by a combination of loose and tight properties. We need to be bound to one another so we can bend and sway with life. We need to hold each other tightly so we can be loose amid the wind and rain.

2022 Summer Services Schedule

Livestream access can be found at

www.tinyurl.com/wuslivestream

For in-person attendees:

Childcare will be available most Sundays. Bring your child(ren) to the playground to sign in before worship begins.

Refreshments and conversation will take place on the Bell Tower Terrace after worship. In the event of inclement weather, attendees are welcome to remain indoors for casual conversation without refreshments in the Symmes Room.

For all attendees:

There will be no worship service on July 3rd due to the holiday and historic low attendance. Have a safe and wonderful Fourth of July!

With the exception of July 10th, a conversation will follow after worship at 1pm via Zoom. Log on at www.tinyurl.com/wusworship

*Indicates a service with pre-recorded content

6/19/22 **A Service in Poetry – Bring your favorite poem to share!**

***6/26/22** “Woven in a Single Garment of Destiny”: A service offered by the Unitarian Universalist Association exploring and celebrating hallmarks of our Unitarian Universalist theology. *We're all connected: an interdependent whole. Therefore, says Rev. Susan Frederick-Gray, "covenant is our religious response to our fundamental interdependence." We make promises about how to be together, and how to be in the world. We also fall short of*

honoring those promises, inviting us to repair and strengthen the strands of community. The choice to mend broken strands of the web is an act of faithfulness.” This service includes original music, created for this occasion.

7/3/22 **NO SERVICE DUE TO HOLIDAY**

7/10/22 **Hymn Sing, Led by John Kramer, Director of Music**
No discussion at 1pm

7/17/22 **John Loewy – “What is Meant When ‘I am an Atheist’ is Said?” Summer Choir – Rehearsal at 9:45 a.m.**

7/25/22 **John Kramer – “8 Bible Vignettes’: Music by Nathaniel Dett”**

7/31/22 **Dan Hermes – To Be Determined**
Summer Choir – Rehearsal at 9:45 a.m.

***8/7/22** **UUA 2022 General Assembly Service, Led by the Revs. Gretchen Haley, Sean Neil-Barron and Shari Halliday-Quan**

8/14/22 **Nancy Schrock – “The New Hope Church and the African American Community in Winchester” Summer Choir Rehearsal at 9:45 a.m.**

***8/21/22** **UUA 2022 General Assembly Ware Lecture - Dr. Ibram X. Kendi**
Dr. Kendi’s “relentless and passionate research puts into question the notion of a post-racial society and opens readers’ and audiences’ eyes to the reality of racism in America today. Kendi’s events are sharp, informative, and hopeful, serving as a strong platform for any institution’s discussions on racial discrimination.”

8/28/22 **Ivan and Joshua Correia – “Extreme Gardening”**

9/4/22 **Lee Barton – To Be Determined**

Note that the **annual Animal Blessing Service**, traditionally held on Labor Day Weekend, will be held in the Fall.

There will be a post-worship conversation held over Zoom at 1:00 pm, giving those who attended at WUS to return home and turn on the computer! The link for this Zoom room is www.tinyurl.com/wusworship

Many thanks to Martin Newhouse, Dennis Brett and Director of Music John Kramer and our Worship Associates team for creating and implementing the summer ministry!

Litany of Beliefs



Excerpt from Senior Statement by Hope Kingdon, originally delivered at Youth Sunday, 5/29/22

WUSYG has let me figure out my own individual beliefs, and although they are not as defined or traditional as one might expect, I'd still like to share them with you

today. I believe in farmhouses, and that secrets are best shared around a fire. I believe in the magic of Hot Seat and the importance of knowing what someone's favorite book is. I believe in the power of a good road trip playlist and that Frozen 2 is an album to be screamed along to, not sung. I believe that the collage of my soul is something beautiful, I believe in the prospect of the perfect day, and I believe in check-ins that take an hour (or an hour and a half). I believe in snack challenges and skit in a bag. I believe that one day, Izzy and Rebecca will win a game of pool against Riley and Ryan. I believe in crying with friends and in climbing mountains, in hand-picked bouquets and staying awake until three in the morning. I believe in guiding each other blind and sharing your soul while painting porches. I believe in the legality of kerosene lamps and that slaying the day away by being yourself is the most important value of all. I believe in Philly, and Oxford, and Horn Pond, and War, and Winchester. I believe in the beauty of West Virginia, in the importance of community history, and in the incredible spirit and commitment of the Big Creek People in Action. I believe that I have learned things that will leave here, and I believe that I will carry the memories Winchester Unitarian Society gave me throughout my life, living by the goal of always spreading love in everything I do, carrying these lessons with me all the way to Mount Holyoke College in the spring. I believe in friendship and connection and curiosity and vulnerability and love. To believe in these things is to believe in the inherent worth of others. It is to believe in the goodness of the world around us. It is to believe in the importance of service and community action. To believe in these things is to believe in each other. To believe in these things is to believe in WUSYG.

Spreading Love from West Virginia to Massachusetts, and Beyond
By WUSYG member, Anya L'Esperance

.08% of West Virginia's population is homeless while Massachusetts has a rate over three times this. Those numbers seem strange right? Because West Virginia is the fourth most poverty stricken state in contrast to Massachusetts coming in at 44th. So why such a big difference in homelessness? You



would expect the opposite. The difference is the community. West Virginia behaves like a community taking care of their own. When the youth group traveled to West Virginia this past spring break, the woman who ran the partner organization that we worked with told us about how amazing the community is in War, West Virginia. She said that everyone who wants a roof over their head has one, because neighbors take each other in and look out for each other. We don't have that here in Massachusetts.

When people see poor states like West Virginia they think of the poverty, the substance abuse, the politics, etc. but what WUSYG wants to bring back from West Virginia to Winchester is the love everyone has for each other. As you read this here today, we hope you try to bring love to everyone around you, whether that's through saying hi to a neighbor, holding the door for someone behind you, volunteering for town events, or anything else that makes someone smile.

Service Trip Reflection

By WUSYG member, Brenda Martino

In the months leading up to April vacation, when asked what my plans were, I explained that I was going on a service trip to War, WV, in McDowell County, because it is one of the most impoverished counties in the country. However, after staying in the town of War for 4 days, I realize that I should not have led with that fact. Though yes, they struggle with many things there, including poverty, obesity, drug addiction, flooding, and lack of education and job security, hearing about all these characteristics did not prepare me for what I would experience in War. I was not prepared for the community's love and interdependence. I was not expecting the beauty of the Cumberland mountains that envelop the area. I did not think that I would leave War surrounded by 15 people whom I loved more than I knew I

could. And I never thought I would ever be as inspired to help others as I was after hearing Marsha Timpson speak.

I have been in the Winchester Unitarian Society Youth Group, or WUSYG, since my freshman year of high school. It is with this group of people that I went on my first service trip to Maine to clean up beaches and plant sea grass to prevent coastal erosion. I learned about climate justice and the footprints we all leave on the Earth, and this was what convinced me to become vegetarian. Most of my best friends are in the group with me, and many of my best memories were made during WUSYG meetings and trips. When preparing for our service trip to West Virginia, Sam made sure that we avoided thinking that we were going to War to save the people who live there. He wanted us to help however we could, while also keeping our minds open to learning whatever those living in McDowell County could teach us. We need to get rid of the idea that we are saving them and recognize that we are not above them due to any of our differences in lifestyles and economic class. The idea of white saviorism on service trips is problematic and widespread among many service trips in the US. WUSYG's hope in going to West Virginia was to learn and experience all that we could, highlighting the idea of collaboration above anything else. Our goal was to be helpful, grow, and spread love, and I hope that's what we did.

Big Creek People in Action is a nonprofit organization in McDowell County that collaborates with churches, schools, and volunteer groups from all over the East Coast.



Marsha Timpson is a co-director of BCPIA and was our coordinator of service activities. She shared her best stories, favorite lunch spots, and biggest lessons with us. On our last night in War, she stayed after work and told us about her life and War and everything in between. Two hours flew by as she described to us how she was the first skateboarder in her town as a kid, how when her brother died, she made bouquets out of wild flowers from the hills for the funeral, how she had to work 3 different jobs to support her family at times, how she taught children with learning difficulties to make sure they knew how to read, how she helped recover people's belongings after devastating floods... and I was speechless. The more she told us about the ways she has helped those around her and the things she felt helpless about being able to change in her community, the more my brain flooded with ideas for my future. After

she left I had never felt more certain of what I wanted with my life than I did in that moment.



I am going to Simmons in the Fall to study social work. I've always wanted to go into a helping profession. First I considered being a teacher, then a veterinarian, but I think social work is the right path for me. While listening to Marsha speak, someone asked her if those with addiction in McDowell County

had anywhere to get help. Her affect changed as she explained to us that there are no rehabilitation centers in War, and the closest one to them was a two hour drive to a bigger neighboring town. For an addict, it's hard enough already to find the motivation to change drug abuse habits, but not having easily accessible support makes it near impossible to break the cycle. Our first night in War, Marsha explained to us that we needed to lock the doors at night and not let anyone in if they tried. This was not because she thought anyone would try to hurt us, but because she knew that the addicts in town were not above stealing so they could sell things to get the money to buy more drugs. The reality of drug abuse in War, and in many other places as well, is that people are desperate for more drugs to avoid withdrawal and trapped because there is no one around who can help them to try to quit, even if they want to. For a while, I've been thinking about what field I want to go into in social work. There are so many different paths to consider, but substance abuse has particularly stuck out to me. That is one of the reasons listening to Marsha talk about her town was so inspiring. I want to help people in the ways that Marsha has helped those in McDowell County, but I also want to help people in the ways that Marsha didn't seem to know how to.

As we drove out of War and made our way back home, the changes in all of us were palpable. We all left West Virginia with more understanding for those who live such different lives than us, and feeling closer to those around us in ways none of us could ever have hoped for. The love I feel towards all of my peers in WUSYG is indescribable, and I think the effects this trip has had on me will stay with me for the rest of my life.

Meet Brenna Mayer Our Newest Staffperson!

We are excited to introduce Brenna Mayer, our new Children's Religious Education Coordinator. She comes to WUS from Groton, where she is renovating her new home and gardens. She loves cooking and gardening, so they were obvious starting points for her. She is the mother of two boys: Sam is 21 and a junior at Tufts University, and Henry is 16 and just got his learner's permit (send Brenna strength). In addition to CREC, Brenna is a freelance editor and writer. Brenna began her UU journey in 1999. She knew she wanted to explore Unitarian Universalism and ended up at Main Line Unitarian Church in Devon, Pennsylvania. Coming from a Congregationalist religious background as a child, she was excited to find a faith that felt like it fit her. She found inspiration and challenge in the services and social action activities and knew it was the kind of spiritual practice she was looking for.



When Brenna moved to Groton in 2003, she joined First Parish Church, where she first became involved in religious education as a member of the worship committee. As a new member and then chair, she advocated for creation of intergenerational services that were engaging for all ages, a revival of the annual Youth Service, creation of a Bridging Dinner for Bridgers and families, and many other child- and youth-centered programs. Seeing the success of bringing children and youth into the sanctuary and empowering them to take part in and lead worship was energizing, and

Brenna knew that she had found her life’s passion. Brenna’s first foray into professional religious education with youth was at the Ferry Beach Youth Camp in Saco, Maine, a UU retreat and conference center. She has been the Youth Camp Coordinator for three years, and it’s where she met Sam Wilson. From the start, Brenna admired Sam’s calm, reassuring manner, easy laughter, and deep knowledge of programming that speaks to youth. She was flattered that he asked her to apply for the CREC position at WUS, and is thrilled to already be working with so many wonderful, dedicated UUs. Brenna’s hope for her time with WUS is to build a strong foundation for children’s RE programs that incorporates curriculum, intergenerational experiences, and spiritual discovery. She’s excited to begin the work with all of you!

Summer

IN PERSON ATTENDEES

Come to the WUS Sanctuary (478 Main Street, Winchester)

VIRTUAL ATTENDEES

On Sunday at 10:30 AM, [click here to connect with the livestream](#) from the Sanctuary: <https://tinyurl.com/WUSlivestream>

More information about the worship services can be found on our [website](#).

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