

A Publication of the Winchester Unitarian Society

Mystic Messenger

www.winchesteruu.org 478 Main Street Winchester MA 01890



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September's Theme is "Belonging"



"The WUS Youth Group at their service trip to Ferry Beach"

"Are you lost?"

This summer, I took a quick break from study leave to be part of an important meeting of our Marketing, Membership and Fellowship Committees. We know that COVID is still with us but we also know that we are nearing the closest thing we have seen as "normal life" in a long time. To aid Marketing with their outreach, Membership with their welcoming and Fellowship with their "inreach" - strengthening existing ties within the congregation - we met to prepare for the year ahead.

In this meeting, I told the story of attending a newcomer workshop in a UU congregation. I lived in a large city at the time. The congregation that felt most like home to me was 20 miles away. It was frustrating, driving past multiple UU churches to make it in time for worship at "my" congregation Sunday mornings. This was especially frustrating as *I literally lived across the street from a UU church.*

Why did I travel so far to be part of a spiritual community when there was one in walking distance? Another participant in the same newcomer workshop also lived in my neighborhood. He shared that when he attended coffee hour after worship at the UU church in our neighborhood, no one spoke to him, with the exception of a church member who saw him and asked "Are you lost?"



Whether she meant to or not, that member was not just asking a question but making a statement with her question. "I don't know you. But you don't belong here. So you must be looking for someplace else." I can see why he didn't stick around.

September's theme is "Belonging." My experience driving across the city and my neighbor showing up soon after are just two examples of how powerful the feeling of belonging

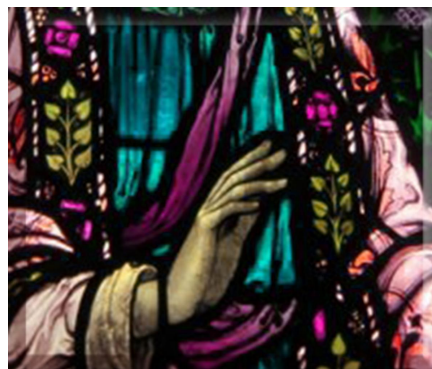
can be. Belonging is worth the effort and the distance. Belonging helps us feel whole.

But the irony is that, put another way, the question "Are you lost?" could foster a sense of belonging instead of alienation. Spiritual communities are touchstones generations turn and return to amid the chaos of life. I keep coming to the understanding that so many are hungry for authentic community right now yet are even more isolated. In a way, with the years of pandemic living, political turmoil and escalating climate danger, all of us are "lost," perhaps now more than ever.

So we are left with the question of how to "be lost together," how to be a sanctuary from the pressures and pains of life, how to create a space where - together and as families and as individuals - we can try to make sense of what is all around us. At its best, a faith community is a counter-cultural space, perhaps not defined by certainty but by naming what does not seem right in the world. A community can be a transformative space when we feel our lost-ness together when life around us seems mad.

In the same committee meeting this summer, our leaders named the things that helped them feel welcome when they first arrived. For many, it was not just encountering a friendly greeter but members sharing a little about themselves, revealing natural connections between them. For one person, a member inquired about her last name as, it turned out, she knew her father!

These moments of vulnerability, of simply showing up and sharing simple stories, pave the road towards a precious sense of belonging. It is my hope that this year is a year of deepening our connections with one another and weaving others in with curiosity, attention and care. We all need one another.



October's Theme is "Courage"

Soul Matters is a Unitarian Universalist organization, providing congregations and its members and friends resources to enrich our spiritual growth. WUS is a Soul Matters congregation.



Photo: Carving to commemorate Winitihooloo (Fighting Bear), Narragansett leader, at Horn Pond in Woburn. Indigenous Peoples' Day reminds all of us of the courage of native communities that have survived and thrive in the face of colonization.

Soul Matters engages member congregations and establishes the monthly themes we follow. The following is the Soul Matters reflection for the month of October, centered on "Courage."

If you are interested in participating in a small group ministry, drawing on the monthly Soul Matters resources and related spiritual practices, please contact Reverend Heather.

Courageous people change the world. There are so many examples of courageous leaders this month. October's celebration of LGBTQ+ history month reminds us of the many who bravely moved (and continue to move) our world toward greater acceptance and affirmation. The revolutionary prophet of peace, Mohandas Gandhi, was born on October 2nd. Some Christians celebrate Reformation Day and Martin Luther's courage, changing how the world understands religious authority. Indigenous Peoples' Day affirms how native communities in the Americas fought – and continue to challenge – the forces of colonization with tremendous resilience.

We rightly honor such giants. The problem is most of us aren't that brave.

Or, are we?

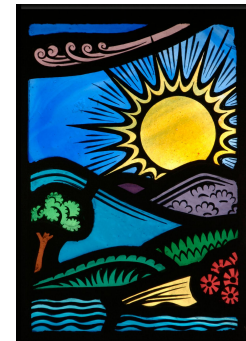
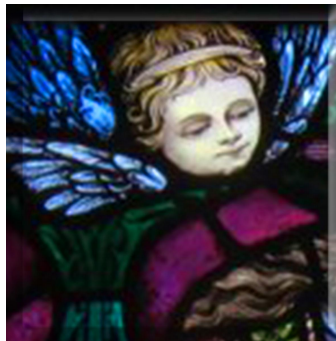
In addition to heroic acts that alter history, there are also the daily choices that prevent history from altering us! Bending the arc of the universe toward justice deserves praise, but so does the ordinary work of integrity and not allowing *yourself* to be bent.

We need to recognize these common acts of courage. The bravery of embracing your beauty even when it doesn't fit the air-brushed images

surrounding us. The courage of calling out microaggressions that occur daily for so many of us. And what about resisting the persistent seduction of status and material...stuff? Simply put, the list of courageous acts is long: Turning down a drink one day at a time. Making yourself get out of bed when depression tells you to stay there. Holding your partner's hand in public. Make no mistake: there are dozens of ordinary acts of bravery we embody every day!

Or maybe we should say there are dozens of ordinary acts of bravery we *help each other* embody every day. Courage is not only noble; it's contagious. The bravery that makes it into the history books may save the world but our ordinary courage keeps each other going. Watching someone else make it through another day helps us endure. Witnessing someone else confront bigotry allows us to be more open about who we are. They say that courage is found by digging deep but most often it is shared.

So don't worry if you haven't changed the world yet. And let's stop comparing ourselves with those giants. Our work rests less in looking up to them and more in learning from each other. Our work is also remembering that others are observing us and needing strength from us.



Deep Wells

A New Small Group Ministry



Worship is a collective, weekly spiritual practice that often inspires, heals and challenges us. But many members of the WUS community also enrich their spiritual lives through meeting in small groups for ritual, reflection, personal discussion and deep listening.

A new group is forming - Deep Wells. The focus of Deep Wells will be to bring greater intentionality to our relationship with the sacred as we understand it and to share inspiration - through the arts, a sermon, a poem...created by ourselves or another - with the rest of the group. Participants will be expected to commit to the monthly meeting and to have and maintain a spiritual practice (of your choosing) outside the group. We will prioritize meeting in person but will make it accessible to people participating virtually due to travel, mild illness or another unavoidable obstacle.

Day and time to be determined based on the availability of those who wish to take part. If you are interested, call or email Rev. Heather: 781.729.0949 and heather.janules@winchesteruu.org

The New Hope Church

and the African American Community in Winchester



On August 14th, 2022, WUS friend Nancy Schrock led a service titled “The New Hope Church and the African American Community in Winchester.” We are grateful that she has granted permission for us to share an excerpt from her compelling reflection:

Who were the new Black citizens of Winchester in 1901? Where were they from? Why did they choose Winchester and what was their life like here?”

To recover this history, I needed to search a range of sources - newspapers like *The Winchester Star*, census records, old photographs, maps and documents in the Town Archives, and the Town Archivist and Historian, Ellen Knight, who has written extensively on the history of Winchester...

The 1860-80 census showed 5-10 [Black residents] who worked temporarily as laborers and domestics, all born in Massachusetts or neighboring states. They did not stay long and did not appear in later census reports.

By the 1900 census, however, the number had jumped to 150, the result of emigration from the South with a few coming from Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. They made Winchester their home, worked in its factories and houses, bought homes, and found an identity in their church, [New Hope Baptist Church]...



New Hope was more than a building, it was a center for the Black community...I met the granddaughters of William Smith, the longest serving

minister...From left to right, they are Dorothy Elizabeth Griffith Tucker, Winston Morris, and Linda Baker Berry. The most important source of hidden history often lies with interviews and oral histories, and I am grateful that these gracious women shared their memories.

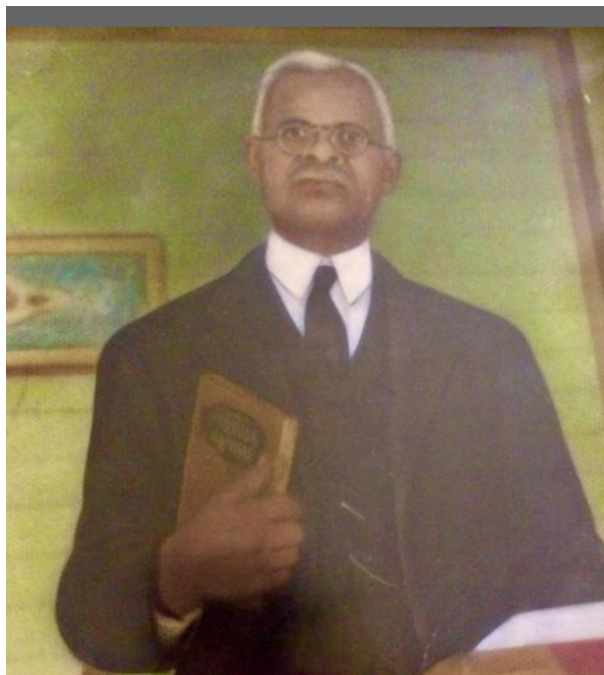
I asked Linda Berry why her family came to Woburn. "I think that there was an underground railroad station in Woburn. I think that part of the family came up during the Civil War or before." People typically chose places where they had connections and Woburn was definitely part of the Underground Railroad.

Once here, they looked for jobs and Winchester offered employment. We think of Winchester as a residential community, but in fact it had had industry from its beginnings because of the water power of the Aberjona River. Like Woburn, there were mills and tanneries. At the turn of the century, Winchester north of the center looked more like Lowell or Lawrence...

Where were their homes? The newly arrived Black families lived in "the Plains," the north end of town bordering Woburn...This area was less desirable for housing because it was adjacent to factories and the marshy Aberjona. It was finally developed in the 1890s when the Suburban Land Improvement Company laid out 100 lots between Cross and Swanton Street...

The need for a church was felt immediately. In 1893, Oliver Barksdale, formerly a Deacon in White Oaks church in Bannister, Virginia, brought together fellow Baptists in his home. The First Baptist Church in Winchester established a mission, which was served by a series of young ministers. In 1896 the church received permission to use the old Washington School. It was incorporated in 1905 as the New Hope Baptist Church....

William H. Smith became minister in 1907 and guided the congregation for thirty years. He was born in Halifax County in 1870 and grew up on a farm with little opportunity for schooling. In his early 20s he came north to Woburn and found employment in a leather tannery. He became affiliated with St. John's Baptist Church and began his education for the ministry through mentorships and courses at Andover Newton Theological Seminary



Dorothy Elizabeth, Winston, Linda, and Doug shared their memories of church life:

Dorothy Elizabeth noted, “We had both morning and evening services, so I had to take a nap because I had to go to both services, which I didn't like very much. Sunday School was after the regular service. And then we would come back for BYU, Baptist Youth Fellowship, where we teenagers debated like mad. That was followed by the evening service. And then in between some days were open because we had to practice for all of our plays.

Winston was a generation later said, “When I attended the church, the Baptist population had dwindled so we didn't have a big service at all, but there was Sunday School held downstairs and they followed the Baptist curriculum. I did take piano and violin lessons, so when we no longer had a church pianist, I played the piano during the church service.

Linda noted, “The church had a full basement that was used for all the various activities. If there was a wedding upstairs, there was the reception downstairs.

Dorothy Elizabeth added, “Well, I know my father cooked a lot of pancakes. The men were great cooks and the only time they really showed their cooking skills is when there was a breakfast or something down there.”

They all remembered the outdoor Easter Sunrise Service “and then afterwards we had this great big breakfast, which was wonderful. We had bacon and eggs and pancakes and sausage and biscuits and baked beans and juice and coffee and milk. Good smells coming from the kitchen and everybody seemed happy.” The whole neighborhood came.



All of them recalled the July Colored Picnic held at the Salem Willows amusement park as the highlight of the summer when they got to see all their cousins. The network of Black Baptist Churches in Winchester, Woburn, Medford, Malden, and Everett all participated. It was a continuation of Negro Election Day

Celebration begun in 1741 in Salem and now held as the Black Picnic...

But Blacks – as well Italians, and other newcomers - felt that they were not welcome everywhere in town. Winchester did not build a public swimming pool, for example. While the West Side had its boat club, country club, and tennis courts, the Plains had Leonard Pond, across from the Whitten factory.

The Depression hit Winchester and the number of factories dropped from 20 to 13, and families did without maids. In 1940, Lewis Parkhurst of the Unitarian Church led a drive to pay off the mortgage for New Hope. In his article in the *Star*, he notes that the number of Blacks had dropped from 250 to 150 as people moved to find new employment.

The drive was successful and the church continued for thirty more years, but numbers steadily declined. Some of the drop was caused by members joining the other churches, but there was also an exodus of Blacks from Winchester...

The last minister of New Hope was Benjamin Berry, husband of Linda Baker Berry with whom I spoke. She described the last years of the church.

“Ben began a few other non-Sunday activities like a bowling league, epicurean club where they would go out to dinner. However, the average age was 70 so they were dying off one by one. When he took over there were only 12 members left but by the time the year ended there were only six.”

“The biggest activity was putting a roof on the church. It was literally caving in so Ben got hold of the music director at Moorehouse College, which has a fantastic traveling choir, and made arrangements for them to come up. We sold enough tickets to fill the high school (Lincoln) hall, and had the reception in the Unitarian Church. It was a huge event, biggest of the year in town except for the En Ka Fair.”

While the church raised enough money to roof the church, it closed shortly thereafter. The building became overgrown as the Baptist Church figured out what to do with it. The church members tried to find an arts group in town to purchase it but neighbors did not want traffic. Finally, the Baptist Church released it for sale...

I would like Dorothy Elizabeth and Winston to have the final words. I asked them what they would like you to remember about New Hope:

“Well, the New Hope Baptist Church was actually community and immunity. It was the place where we did and learned everything. We learned about Black history. We learned naturally about our faith.”

“It should be preserved as a historical site, because there was so much history of African-Americans, and maybe the only history that's left of African-Americans.”

“This was a space for survival. This was a space where people could find out who they really were, not being defined by other people. And that's what I call a shelter, a place where you can come and learn about you as a person

and get the self-respect, your own self-respect if nobody else chooses to give it to you.”

Music in the Sanctuary

2022-2023 Concert Series

It is a little hard to believe that we are now in our 17th season! We have really enjoyed presenting these concerts and celebrating community and great music along the way. The support of this congregation has been invaluable to our continued success. You are vital, not only in attending and sponsoring the concerts, but also in helping spread the word: a personal invitation to attend is always more powerful than other messaging.

We are very excited about our upcoming season. It begins with the **Woodwind Quintet *Solar Winds*** on **Friday, October 28th, at 8 pm.**



This is our first time inviting such an ensemble into our sanctuary and we think everybody will be enthralled with the color and texture of the quintet. The quintet is comprised of the principal woodwinds from an orchestra: flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, and French horn. Each of these instruments is a beautiful color and combines to create a dazzling array of sound. The quintet will perform a variety of different works, including the sublime

woodwind quintet by Danish composer Carl Nielsen. Music Director John Kramer will be joining them for the Piano Sextet by French composer Francis Poulenc.

Jazz in the Sanctuary returns on **Friday, January 27th**, at **8 pm**. As the pandemic wanes, we are really excited to bring back a horn section for this concert. Much as we have enjoyed the piano trios of the last two years, there is nothing quite like the thrill of multiple horns, playing sweet harmonies on tunes and trading solos. If you've never been, this is a really great jazz show with an emphasis on improvisation. We invite some of the area's finest jazz musicians and let them play. The house is always full, the energy high, and the music is fabulous.



We are very excited to bring back **Kemp Harris on Friday, March 31st**, at **8 pm**. Kemp is an inspiring performer, a singer and songwriter; a master weaver of American musical styles. He has been a mainstay of the Boston music scene for some time; he honed his intimate style

in Cambridge's coffeehouses. He has also collaborated with the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, the Wang Theater and Berklee College of Music. Kemp Harris defies categorization.

November's Theme is

Change

By Sam Wilson, Sam.Wilson@winchesteruu.org

*Interspersed with excerpts from
"Change Sings: A Children's Anthem"
by Amanda Gorman*



*I can hear change humming in its loudest, proudest song.
 I don't fear change coming, and so I sing along.
 I scream with the skies of red and blue streamers.
 I dream with the cries of tried and true dreamers.
 I'm a chant that rises and rings.
 There's hope where my change sings.*

Changes are afoot with our youth and children's ministries at Winchester Unitarian Society. Changes in staffing: I am stepping into a new role (Director of Youth and Children's Ministries), we've hired Brenna (Children's RE Coordinator) and Alison (Assistant Director of Youth Ministries) plus 4 new teen RE teachers (Rebecca, Riley, Ryan and Celia), 2 new OWL teachers (Liz and Victoria), and we're about to start the search for a new Nursery Supervisor as well. We also have new families joining us, and old families coming back after some time away. We're in new spaces, or back in places we haven't been for a while. We have 4 new members on YAC and 2 new members on the RE Committee. We have a new vision for RE too; a vision that focuses on faith formation as a community of communities where children, youth, families, adults and people of all ages have opportunities to learn, lead, and love together. This means you'll probably be seeing us and hearing a bit more about what we're up to than you might have in the past. Can you hear the change humming? There's hope where our change sings!

***I'm bright as the light each day brings.
 There is love where my change sings.
 I show others tolerance,
 Though it might take some courage.***

***I don't make a taller fence,
But fight to build a better bridge.***

Our RE classes will also be a bit different this year. We will have two classes that both meet on either ends of Metcalf Hall (with the Nursery in the middle). Children in Kindergarten through 4th grade will be doing "Spirit Play," a Montessori-based UU Curriculum (with origins at the Winchester Unitarian Society!) that gives structure but also freedom for children to explore various themes in the ways that they want to. Our 5th and 6th graders will be returning to a beloved classic, "Neighboring Faiths," where they explore other world religions (and visit people who practice them) with the hope of building bridges between our faith and theirs. We're also adapting this curriculum to focus first on Unitarian Universalism and our own faith, before we go off to learn about others'.

***I talk not only of distances, from where and how we came,
I also walk our differences to show we are the same.
Change sings where? There! Inside me.
Because I'm the change I want to see.***



Riley, a WUSYGer and new RE teacher, paints Sam's office. On the left you see how it turned out!

One of the most exciting and biggest changes this year will be the addition of a Junior Youth Group (exact name tbd by the group's new members) for 7th and 8th graders. This group will meet from 6:30-8 pm on Sunday nights, with dinner during the first half hour. The group will be a judgment-free space for teens to be and love themselves, have fun, talk about things that matter to them, and do service projects. Speaking of service, WUSYG (WUS Youth Group) also has some exciting new things in store this year. We are implementing a better structure and system for youth leadership development, where teens will have more opportunities to lead and do what they want to do.

Some WUSYGers have already been stepping into leadership roles this past summer as they cleaned the

WUSYG room (volunteering to do so on their own!) and then painted my new office. I'm also thrilled to share that we will have an ever bigger focus on social justice this year, including an intentional and active partnership with the Network for Social Justice. More than ever, we will endeavor to be the change we wish to see.



Ryan, Riley and Izzy, all WUSYGers and RE teachers, while cleaning up the WUSYG room over the summer.

***As I grow, it grows like seeds.
I am just what the world needs.
I'm the voice where freedom rings.
You're the love your bright heart brings.***

How can you, members and friends of the congregation, get in on all this exciting new stuff? I wrote earlier that you'll probably be seeing us a bit more than you have in the past, but we also hope to see you a bit more, too! It takes a village, or, in our case, it takes a congregation! Our new vision includes increasing children and youth presence in areas of church outside of RE and youth groups, and it likewise includes increasing adult members' presence in our children's spaces. We're currently looking for adult volunteers to work with a teen teacher to staff our Nursery until we find our "new Juanita." We're also looking for more help with the new Junior Youth Group, including help leading the group sometimes, but also 1-off opportunities to bring us dinner (and enjoy it with us!). Soon, we'll be hoping to get more adult volunteers to lead our RE classes in the future, too (including becoming trained for OWL, both for the 7-9 OWL we currently offer, but also for OWL for younger kids that we're hoping to offer in the future). If any of those things excites you, shoot me an email or text! If not, no worries; we'll still look forward to seeing you in the sanctuary and at a variety of other returning (and new) multigenerational events we are planning for this special year. See you there soon! We are the change we sing, and I'm excited to be singing alongside all of you in our wonderful WUS community.

*We are the waves starting to spring,
for we are the change we sing!
We're what the world is becoming,
and we know it won't be long.
We all hear change strumming.
Won't you sing along?*

Introducing ADYM

Alison Luck

We are thrilled to introduce our new **Assistant Director of Youth Ministries, Alison Luck**. Alison is a lifelong Unitarian Universalist from Davis, California. She was raised in the UU Church of Davis, where she participated in children's religious education, the Our Whole Lives curriculum, and youth group. Despite being raised in the UU church, Alison discovered a real passion and love of church in high school, when she began taking on leadership roles, participating in worship, and attending regional and national events. In 2017, Alison visited the Boston area as a participant in the Unitarian Universalist Association's Summer Seminary, a week-long program for high school youth interested in becoming a religious professional, and it changed her life, setting her on the path to ministry.

After graduating from high school, Alison moved to Walla Walla, Washington, to study sociology and religion at Whitman College. There, although she was physically distant from her UU community, Alison developed her call to ministry further while also pursuing an academic interest in religion. With both of these interests in mind, she decided to pursue a Masters of Divinity degree at Harvard Divinity School, knowing she may decide to seek further degrees in sociology or religion, but with the intention of pursuing ordination as a Unitarian Universalist minister. Hoping to reconnect with the thing that first inspired her to pursue this path, she was thrilled to begin working with high school youth again in the context of WUSYG.



Outside of her religious and academic life, Alison enjoys spending time with her girlfriend, Madi, and their cat, Reginald. Alison loves to craft and create, and always has a crochet, knit, embroidery, and/or digital art project in the works. She also loves to cook and bake, and is a strong believer that brunch can be ministry. Alison is very excited to be a part of this community and cannot wait to get to know you!



 **Winchester Unitarian Society**

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