

FIRST UNITARIAN FOCUS



Congregation founded 1836;
Current sanctuary built 1904

Newsletter of the
**First
Unitarian Church**

Alton, Illinois
www.firstuualton.org



Religious Education Wing built 1969;
New windows and façade 2014

Rev. Khleber Van Zandt, Minister

April 2014

Worship Services Two Services - 9:30 am & 11:00 am

April 6, 2014

"UUs, the World Community, and You."

Dr. Ronald Glossop

I will talk about the International Council of Unitarians and Universalists (ICUU) and their meetings which I attended last January in New York and in Cluj, Rumania in 2009. I will also talk about the UU-UN Office (UU-UNO) and about the UU Service Committee (UUSC). I will conclude by talking about our changing world from inter-nationalism to globalism and the implications for each of us.

April 13, 2014

"River of Life"

Dee Evans

We are all interconnected in the river of life. What does this mean to you as a Unitarian Universalist?

April 20, 2014 - Easter

"A New Dawn"

Rev. Khleber Van Zandt

Spring is a time of rebirth, of crawling out of the hibernations of winter and stretching our arms towards a new dawn.

April 27, 2014

"My Month with God"

Sabrina Trupia

After nearly 50 years of being an obstinate atheist, I decided to follow Khleber's suggestion and try to insert some god-related terminology in my everyday. In the sermon, I will discuss what happened.

To contact Rev. Khleber Van Zandt

Email: kvanzandt@uuma.org

Cell Phone: 314-223-0551

Wednesday, April 2 at noon

Community Lenten Service and Luncheon

First Unitarian Church

Rev. Khleber Van Zandt preaching.

Thursday, April 17 at 7:30 pm

Tenebrae Service at the church.

**ADULT RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (ARE)
SESSIONS AT 9:30 & 11 AM
NURSERY CHILDCARE AVAILABLE**

9:30 am

April 6 – Tracey Howe-Koch – The Bible

April 13– Dr. Ronald Glossop – Philosophy

Our 8th class will deal with the central issue in the area of philosophy called epistemology, or theory of knowledge. The question is: "Is it possible for humans to have knowledge about aspects of reality they have not experienced through the senses?" Rationalists say "Yes," empiricists say "No," and pragmatists say "No, but the rationalists make an important point."

April 20 – Michelle Bryant Barbeau – Meditation

April 27 – Cheryle Tucker – Discussion

Using the writings of Rebecca Parker and John Buehrens, we will discuss existence, community, salvation, deity, human nature, spirit, and mission as they pertain to the liberal religious movement. Join us! (This is a one session summary of the 11 a.m. month-long class.)

11:00 am

April – All Sundays

Cheryle Tucker, Coordinator -Using the writings of Rebecca Parker and John Buehrens, we will discuss existence, community, salvation, deity, human nature, spirit, and mission as they pertain to the liberal religious movement. Join us!

A First Glance



Talking about God can be daunting or bewildering or just plain scary. It can also be enlightening, enlivening, and community-building. As it happened, it was all those things at a meeting of the "UU&You: A House for Hope" class back in mid-March.

Outside, the wind was blowing to beat the band; inside the hearth was warm and the gathered hearts likewise as we shared our misgivings about even bothering with such a grandiose topic. Apparently a lot of us have carried a lot of baggage for a lot of years stemming from what we were told about God by parents and teachers and preachers when we were young. Perhaps they were trying to be helpful, but for a lot of us, it's still hard to get past the painful portions of the intimidating theologies we were handed.

Those early encounters with questions about the divine have led us to a plethora of places from which to view the landscape of spiritual possibilities. It wasn't a surprise to find out we come at these questions from so many different points of view and with so many different emotional attitudes. What might have been a little bit of a shock is that people from so many different places on the theological spectrum could come together and speak their own truths, and then listen to others' truths, not -as happens in so much of our society - in order to be judgmental and feel superior, but in order to grow closer to others, to see their own positions from a new perspective, and to learn something about themselves and the world as a result.

While most of us rejected long ago the concept of God as an 'old bearded guy in the sky,' it was still a leap to think of the divine not as an authoritarian, all-powerful anthropomorphic 'other' but more as the God of process theology: a loving fellow traveler who cries along with us in the face of our sufferings.

The God of Nature was easier to grasp: many can imagine God in the reflection of the full moon on new snow on a cold winter's night, or in the blooming of a crocus as spring comes on.

And the God Within as well: holding to an image of the 'better angels of our nature' as a higher power has supported at least a few of us when we've needed help in freeing ourselves from the slavery of addiction.

Plenty of us are torn, too, between the certainty that there is no Divine Overseer out there pulling the levers of the universe, and a need to hope that something or somebody somewhere has more control of difficult situations than we do.

Did we arrive at any solid answers that evening in March? I don't know. Was 'God' among us? I'm not sure of that, either. But I am sure that any night people show up and listen deeply to one another is a sacred and holy night. See you in church,

Khleber

STEWARDSHIP AS SPIRITUAL EXERCISE (Please Read ... this is Information You Need to know as a Member or Friend of this Church)

Discussing the **financial status of our church** community is part of everyone's spiritual growth; as important as the social justice action we do and as important, dare I say it, as coffee hour. To be blunt, this is because without money, none of it happens.

Member's pledges make up 85-90% of the church's total budget. There are other sources of income in the budget, but pledges are the biggest chunk.

In the past three fiscal years, we have gone from 84 pledging units in FY 2010-11 to 52 pledging units in FY 2013-14. Even without telling you anything else, it is obvious that this drop cannot be positive for the financial health of the congregation. However there is some good news.

When we put in the numbers corresponding to the contributions, this is what we see: overall, the amount of pledge per unit has gone up. Last year we averaged about \$2100 for each of the 52 pledging units.

This is not counting the "over and above" campaign of last year. Incidentally, the effect for the past three fiscal years of having the Capital Campaign happen at the same time as Stewardship was that people actually ended up giving more overall. I want to thank you for all of that.

Let's bring it to today. The very good news is that with 52 pledging units we are anticipating on making budget for the current FY 2013-14. Thank you again for your efforts this past year.

Now, according to our projections for FY 14-15, we may only be able to count on a total of 47 pledging units.

Let's remember that any budget, before the start of a fiscal year, *i.e.* before any money comes in or goes out, is a best estimate of the most likely thing that will happen, based on what happened previously and based on what we know is going to happen thus far. For good or bad, estimates and projections are not written in stone.

If every one of these pledging units pledges at the same level as last year, our budget will have to be reduced drastically. This means we will have to cut something of substance. The only significant budget item we have left to cut is the Minister's Salary line, making up approximately 50% of the total pledge amount.

The "status quo" will only get us a half-time Minister. An increase overall of 7% over the amount pledged last year, will only be good enough for a Minister $\frac{3}{4}$ of the time.

Our real target is to have a 21% overall increase from last year's pledges. With that, we can stay at the level we have, and keep the Minister full time. We will need to continue to tighten our belts as far as the rest of the budget, but we can hope for a better tomorrow. A tomorrow that may include more pledging units.

Please note that when I refer to the Minister in the budget, I am talking about a line item with no name or face attached to it. This isn't about Khleber at all.

It is my opinion that if we get into this hole of having a part-time Minister, it will take a long time to climb back out. This goes for any Minister we may want to hire in the future.

So in essence, if our pledge numbers are as estimated, *i.e.* unchanged, things may get worse not only for us today, but for future congregants of First UU Alton for many years to come.

This year, you will receive an envelope with your personalized pledge card and our budget. (Don't worry if this is your first time pledging and your card is not personalized. We can help you with that.)

You will notice that we haven't included the pledge suggestions based on your income and instead we have added two suggested ways of giving right on your pledge card.

These represent the two increases over the amount you gave last year: 7% and 21%. If you can, please choose to help this church community by increasing your pledge by those amounts. You can always give more too.

And in closing: this year's pledge campaign is "an attitude of gratitude" and so I will say that when I am in the sanctuary, I can't help but think about the people who decided to pull together their resources and build a church here. It is because of the sense of urgency, the forward thinking and the ability to adapt to change of these early church members that we have had this special place to congregate for over a century. I am grateful to these people from the past for making a sacred space for the future.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me or any other Board member by email, or when you see us in Church.

Thank you for all you do for the good of the church, **Sabrina Trupia**



4th Saturday Lunch & Personal Care Items for those in need

**April 26
11:30 am**

Our church has been hosting “4th Saturday Lunches” for about seven years. Information about what is needed for April’s lunch will be available at church, via email from the Church Office, on UU Friends, and on the First Unitarian Church of Alton’s Facebook page. Questions – contact Robyn Berkley robynberkley@yahoo.com

Our distribution of personal care items has become very popular – as many of these needed items cannot be purchased through the government’s “Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program” (SNAP - formerly known as food stamps).

If you can contribute any of the following items, your donation would be very welcome. Toilet paper – feminine hygiene products – shampoo – laundry detergent – bleach – baby wipes – diapers/pull-ups – Afro-American hair products – cleaning supplies – toothpaste - soap. Questions – contact Sabrina Trupia strupia@gmail.com



**Report from the Board
Sandy Shaner, Secretary**

We began our March meeting by enthusiastically welcoming Lee Suarez back from her extended winter vacation ... and promptly asked her and the Building & Grounds Committee to check out the east sidewalk and improving signage, including the Wayside Pulpit which is showing its age.

There was an extended discussion of the upcoming pledge drive and budget considerations. This was then supported by a presentation by Sabrina Trupia on the information provided at a special growth training session run by a UUA Regional staff member at First Church STL the prior weekend.

We hope to incorporate much of that advice at future Board and Ministries Council meetings.

**Your Church Board
July 2013 – June 2014**

President	Kelly Crone-Willis
President Elect	Sabrina Trupia
Past President	Cheryle Tucker
Secretary	Sandy Shaner
Treasurer	Michelle Bryant-Barbeau
Trustee	Lee Suarez
Trustee	Paul Fischer
Youth Rep.	Vacant

Nominating Committee Report

(Cheryle Tucker, Jennifer Timpe, and Mary Johnson)

The Committee has nominated Debby Lovell to serve as our next President Elect. The election will take place at the Church’s Annual Meeting this spring. Nominations will also be accepted from the floor. A short bio of Debby is below.

Debby Lovell has been attending the First Unitarian Church of Alton for 2 & 1/2 years, and has been a member for about a year. She teaches in the RE Department and has enjoyed working on events such as Día de los Muertos and Campfest.

Debby is originally from Indiana and moved to the St. Louis area three years ago with her husband Jeff, an IT guy at UMSL, and daughter Kira. Debby has a degree in Graphic Design from Indiana State University and has run a freelance business for several years.

Debby enjoys reading, trying new recipes, knitting, hiking, travel, Netflix, and spending time with her family (which includes, besides those previously mentioned, Sally Cat, a native of St. Louis) and friends.

The Rocky Horror Picture Show

Saturday April 26 at 6 pm

Free. Movie sing-along event for all ages. Join us as we do the time warp again! Costumes encouraged. BYOB and a snack to share!





Unity Circle Forming

Sharon Johnson will be facilitating a Unity Circle that will take place on the 2nd Sunday of each month beginning on April 13, 2014 from 12:15-1:30pm.

(A note: in May, due to the Mother's day plant sale & BINGO, we will meet May 18th then resume the regular 2nd Sunday Schedule).

Everyone is welcome. Participants should join if they are able to commit to joining us monthly for 6-12 months, as this Unity Circle is intended for relationship building.

This Unity Circle is intended for deep listening, and not feedback or advice.

The first six topics are:

1. Living Simply
2. Beauty
3. Forgiveness
4. Manifesting Your Dreams
5. Talents
6. Change



Church Potluck Lunch April 6, 2014 1st Sunday of each Month

We hold our potluck lunches on the 1st Sunday of each month. Bring a dish to share on April 6 and stay after the 2nd service to join with friends and newcomers in an enjoyable tradition. Volunteers are needed to help set the tables and help clean up, so please enjoy both the food and the sharing of the tasks.

In honor of Earth Day, on April 22 there will be a documentary on PBS "American Masters" (check for local listing) entitled "A Fierce Green Fire" which explores the history of environmental activism from the 1960s through 2009. Areas of focus are:

1. The conservation movement of the 1960s;
2. Pollution and Cleanup in the 1970s;
3. Greenpeace;
4. Global Resources (centered on the 1980s struggle to save the Amazon rainforest);
5. Climate change.



Worship Team Associates Monday, April 7 7 to 8:30 pm

Have you wanted to share in bringing new perspectives to Sunday morning worship? Would you would enjoy a deeper study of what happens (emotionally, spiritually, intellectually) during worship, and how to make those experiences more meaningful to yourself and the congregation? If so, please plan to attend the Worship Team Associates meeting.

Contact: Khleber Van Zandt kvanzandt@uuma.org

Donations to the Alton Crisis Food Center



Please continue to bring your donations of non-perishable food for The Crisis Food Center. The Center is in need of canned green beans, corn and other vegetables; tuna; canned meat; peanut butter; boxes of mac 'n cheese; and basic food staples. The food collection box is in the RE foyer.

Personal care items should be put on the shelves in Emerson Place.

Your Capital Campaign Money @ Work

The photo on the front of the newsletter is of the new, thermal, energy efficient windows recently installed on the Alby Street side of the Religious Education Wing. This is one of the several projects that were paid for with capital campaign funds. Not only is there a noticeable difference in the ambient temperature in the rooms – making them much more comfortable (and thus more useable), we are expecting a significant reduction in heating (and AC) costs. From the outside the new windows and other changes make the building appear brighter and modernized – notice the “eyebrows” – those white, pointed features – have been removed. The cost of the windows and accompanying construction work was \$70,400.



OUTreach
Ministry wants you to
mark your calendars
for May 31!

Our OUTreach ministry is involved in several activities, including the update of our church's website. As head of this arm of our congregation, I have also been meeting with the social justice chairs and others from the other UU congregations in the St. Louis area. This group helped plan and orchestrate the joint participation in last year's LGBT Pride parade. This year, the focus has been on racial justice and equality in our region.

Donald Jeffries, from First Unitarian Church in St. Louis, has had a relationship with M-SLICE (Metro St. Louis Coalition for Inclusion and Equity) and we have come together with that group to see what we could do as a denomination to further some of our social justice goals alongside theirs. Since its inception, M-SLICE's work has focused on the Northside of St. Louis to address disparities of environmental justice, the unbanked and underbanked, Community Reinvestment Act, civic engagement, and equitable community and economic development practices. As our congregation in particular draws from so many parts of the Metro area, we see the disparities in the community in a way that some others may not.

The Metro UU Social Justice group (Did you know we existed? Here we are!) had been brainstorming ways to get involved in different ways when Ramona Williams of M-SLICE suggested **that we all partner in a cleanup day in the Kensington Redevelopment/Academy Neighborhood north of Delmar**. This area is very near First Unitarian Church of St. Louis, but might as well be worlds away. Our group fleshed out an idea for a cleanup day, focusing on getting rid of branches, debris, and overgrowth in some of the empty lots. The other focus of the day is on building community within our denomination and our region. This is intended to be a family friendly event with a social gathering (BBQ? Why not?) afterward.

May 31st is our target date for this activity. I hope you can plan to come together and meet UUs from the other congregations as well as neighbors who are striving to make their neighborhood a better place to live.

More information will be available soon, but feel free to contact me with questions! salazarz@gmail.com

Sarah Lazarz

RUMMAGE SALE
@ Church
May 9 & 10



Char and Lee are once again "hosting" a rummage sale at church!

Start your spring-cleaning soon and set aside those treasures that you thought you could never part with ... but have now decided they are just collecting dust ... and you really don't like to dust.

A great variety of items will be needed – almost anything sells if the price is right. Last years' sale was very successful, and we'd like to top that this year. So start searching closets, basements, attics, spare rooms, cabinets for what you'd like to donate to the sale.

Items may be brought to the church on Mondays and Fridays between 10:00 am and 2:00 pm.

JOB OPENING

Emerson UU Chapel (Ellisville, MO) is looking for a Director of Religious Education.

Wanted, Part-time (18 hour, including Sunday mornings) Director of Religious Education for Emerson Unitarian Universalist Chapel, a progressive church in West St Louis County. Experience or a degree in education, human services, religion, or a related field. Please submit a letter of interest and a resume/curriculum vitae to DREsearch@emersonuuchapel.org by April 15, 2014. Emerson is an equal opportunity employer and welcomes applicants regardless of race, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, or disability.



A Course in Esperanto

The 7th meeting of the Esperanto Class will be at 12:30 p.m. on Sunday, April 13th. All are welcome even if you never attended before.

Directory Updates

Three of our members have recently moved to be closer to family members. Please change their addresses in your church Directory and keep in touch with them.

Paul and Joyce Berney

Oakmont of Escondido
Apartment 251
3012 Bear Valley Parkway South
Escondido, CA 92025
perney@mail.win.org (email hasn't changed)

Ronnie Schoenborn

No mailing address yet available
veronicafschoenborn@gmail.com

New Email address for **Lee Suarez**

Sunlover4272@yahoo.com

New Email address for **Jack and Ginger McCall**

jmvk60@att.net

Interest Groups

ANNA DS – WOMEN'S ALLIANCE

The Anna Ds will meet at 11:30 am on **Thursday, April 3** at Rizzos Restaurant in Florissant, MO. It is located in Waterford Plaza, 1829 Dunn Road (I-270 service road.) Rizzos' Phone: 314-921-6886.

Directions from Illinois: Take westbound I-270 in Missouri to the West Florissant Avenue exit (#29). Cross West Florissant and continue west on Dunn Road for about a mile. Waterford Plaza and Rizzo's will be on your right.

If you're coming from Missouri, you probably already know where Rizzo's is located ☺.

Let Mary Johnson know if you'll be joining us – mejohanson@mindspring.com. All women in the church are invited.

Fifty-Plus (50+) Forum
First **SATURDAY** of every month
APRIL 5, 2014
10:30 am to noon at church



We invite anyone who is over 50 or even getting near that milestone to join us. We have a lot in common: long work lives, preparation for or entry into retirement, a vast array of interests ... and we love sharing all of it.



Men's Monthly Lunch
APRIL 10, 2014
11:30 am

The Men's lunch bunch meets the second Thursday of each month. Join us on **Thursday, March 13** at 11:30 am at the **Best Buffet** at 615 Wesley, Drive in Wood River, IL. Coordinator: Jim Moore patjimmoore@charter.net. All men in our church are invited.

RENEGADE WOMEN - TOPICAL DISCUSSIONS

1 pm to 3 pm every 3rd Saturday.

APRIL 19, 2014

For information for the topic of this month's discussion, contact Dee Evans, zorn227@fastmail.fm

Book Discussion Group – MAY 2014 (No meeting in April)

The Alton Area Cluster book discussion group has chosen *Falling Upward: A Spirituality for the Two Halves of Life* by Richard Rohr for our next session, which will be on Thursday, May 15 from 4 to 5:30 pm in the Kate Wuerker Room.

Rohr writes about " ... the duties of the first half of life, then charts the adventures of the second half of life where spiritual maturity is the goal ... and what looks like falling (e.g., getting old) ... can be experienced as falling upward and onward into a broader and deeper world."

Join us! Questions – contact Mary Johnson.

Lay Caring Ministry

Below is the list of members of the **Caring Ministries Team**.

Marcia Custer is the Coordinator. You may always contact a Team member in time of illness, loss, crisis, or other need. Keep this list of contact people available in case you or your family is in need of pastoral support.

Kathryn Chapman paintedgoatfarm@yahoo.com

Marcia Custer mcuster@siue.edu

Claudia Harju dachsandcats@gmail.com

Char McAllister
charlenemcallister613@hotmail.com

Kathleen McKeever mckeeverjim@sbcglobal.net

Catherine Nofles cnofles@gmail.com

Ethel Potts ethel.h.potts@gmail.com

Donna Young donnae47@gmail.com

Khleber Van Zandt kvanzandt@uuma.org
314-223-0551

The Caring Ministries Committee is ready to welcome several more members! If you are interested in engaging in conversations with other church friends and getting to know them on a deeper level, please consider joining our group! Please contact Marcia Custer at mcuster@siue.edu for more information.



April Birthdays

Most people enjoy getting a card, email, or phone call on their birthday. Below is

the list we have of church members and friends celebrating birthdays this month. If you do not think the church office has your birthday on file, please contact Becky Green at church@firstuualton.org and give her that information.

4/02	Michelle Bryant Barbeau
4/03	Debby Lovell
4/04	Maggie McCarthy, (14)
4/05	David Wiseman
4/12	Lily Tarbell, (20)
4/14	Brynda McCoy
4/16	Delores Ele
4/22	Linda Walker
4/23	Gayle Borman
4/27	Lucas Koch, (10)
4/27	Virginia McCall

Future Events for Your Calendar

Sunday May 11 @ 12 noon

Mother's Day Plant sale and Bingo party! Join us after the 11:00 am service for our annual plant sale, followed by a Bingo game for all ages! \$1 cards. All proceeds will benefit Campfest. Great prizes and snacks! Plant donations gladly accepted. Please see Sayer or Juliette.

First Unitarian of Alton Campfest

Campfest dates open to the congregation are Monday June 30th through Friday July 4th. Core planning members will be on site from Sunday June 29 till Saturday July 5. Talk to Sayer Johnson for more information.

UU Summer Camps

MUUSA June 29 – July 5

Consider joining fellow UUs this summer in the Missouri Ozarks at the annual Midwest Unitarian Universalist Summer Assembly (MUUSA). The week-long camp offers many workshops and activities for families, couples and singles of all ages. This year Reverend Amy Shaw will lead the daily Morning Celebration service on this year's theme: "Sailing Strange Shores: The Wisdom of the Weird."



Come gather in the beautiful forests and rolling hills of the Missouri Ozarks at YMCA Trout Lodge, where you can connect with old friends, make new ones, and participate in a wide variety of activities. Get all the details at <http://muusa.org>



The Annual Meeting of the UUA will be in Providence Rhode Island

June 25-29

Theme: *Love Reaches Out*

Early registration (3/3 – 4/30) \$335

Late registration – (5/1 – 6/29) \$385

Financial aid is available.

Housing is an additional cost.

For information regarding registration, the program and schedule, and other GA information go to

<http://www.uua.org/ga/>



April 2014 RE Program News & Notes

April RE Program Calendar

Apr	PreK - Kindergarten	1 st -3 rd Grades	4 th -5 th Grades	Jr. High Youth Group
	<i>Spirit Play Stories</i>	<i>Love Will Guide Us</i>	<i>Sing to the Power</i>	<i>Popcorn Theology & Exploring our Values through Poetry</i>
6	Passover	Spring	The Power of Persistence	Meets in Jr. High Room
13	Easter story	Love Builds Trust	The Power of Gathering	Meets in Jr. High Room
20	Multigenerational Easter Service in Sanctuary	Multigenerational Easter Service in Sanctuary	Multigenerational Easter Service in Sanctuary	Multigenerational Easter Service in Sanctuary
27	Flower Communion (Capek Heroes/Heroines)	Love in Action	The Power to Make Change	Meets in Jr. High Room

RE Thank You!

To all the folks who helped the RE program host the March 22nd Fourth Saturday Luncheon!

Time for Teachers.

This is the time of year we begin to look for folks to teach in our R.E. classes next year. We will need at least 16 people willing to put in an hour a couple times a month to help our U.U. kids explore their spiritual past and paths. Consider joining us! No experience required. Teacher orientation is in late August, you will be supported by staff, experienced teacher-teammates, and engaging, top-quality curricula.

Juliette Crone-Willis

Acting Religious Education Coordinator

(314) 482-5239

jrcronewillis@gmail.com