

# FIRST UNITARIAN FOCUS



Congregation founded 1836;  
Current sanctuary built 1904

*Newsletter of the*  
**First**  
*Unitarian Church*

*Alton, Illinois*  
[www.firstuualton.org](http://www.firstuualton.org)



Interior window and chandelier;  
Photo by Nancy Conniff

**September 2014**

## Worship Services

September 7 – One Service at 10:00 a.m.

September 14 through September 28 – Two Services – 10:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m.

**Sunday Services News:** Starting on September 14 we will have two Worship Services. One at 10:30 a.m. and one at 1:30 p.m. Children's Religious Education classes will happen at 10:30. Having two services some hours apart opens up opportunities for other church activities to happen on Sunday. People who are leading Adult Religious Enrichment (ARE) classes will have more choices regarding when they can hold their sessions. There is an ARE hour from 11:50 to 12:50 built into the schedule. However, the 9:30 time slot is also available, and since there will be two opportunities to attend the worship service, ARE classes, committee meetings, and other programming can occur as needed. How all this will work out, we're not sure ... come to church to find out, and join in the adventure!

**September 7 – 10:00 a.m.**  
*Intergenerational Ingathering Service*  
*"Beginning Again"*  
Rev. Sunshine J. Wolfe

**September 14 – 10:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m.**  
*"Relationships Trump Theology"*  
Rev. Sunshine J. Wolfe

**September 21 – 10:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m.**  
*"Walking with the Other"*  
Rev. Rebekah A. Montgomery

Excerpts on streaming video from the "Service of the Living Tradition" held during the 2014 Unitarian Universalist Association's General Assembly. The sermon is given by Rev. Rebekah Montgomery, a US Army Reserve chaplain who was deployed to Afghanistan in July '05 for an 18 month tour of duty. In '09 she was named "Military Chaplain of the Year" by the Military Chaplains Association." She is an affiliate minister at River Road UU Congregation in BethesdaMD.

**September 28 – 10:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m.**  
*"Interstitial Space(s)"*  
Rev. Sunshine J. Wolfe

## ADULT RELIGIOUS ENRICHMENT (ARE)

The programming for ARE is still in flux as the newsletter goes to press. Here's what is scheduled to date:

### September 14 @ 9:30 a.m. – Dr. Ron Glossop

This second-Sunday-of-the-month class will be focusing on global problems of the 21st century, but our first class will discuss the historical context and the ideas expressed by Kenneth Boulding in the first 3 chapters of his very insightful MEANING OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY (1964).

### September 21 @ 10:30 a.m. - Michelle Bryant Barbeau Meditations from Around the World

Our faith draws from many sources, sometimes from books, cycles and wisdom of people through the ages past and present. Our meditations this year will be influenced by world religious and spiritual practices to open ourselves up to wider awareness.

September's class will revisit practices inspired from Hindu and Buddhist practice of Jhana/dhyana/vipassana also known in the west as Mindfulness or Insight Meditation. Though seemingly simple, this practice builds a great foundation and has deeply influenced what westerners believe is meditation.

We will also discuss how we want the class to flow, what we hope to learn and when we want to meet as well as experiencing meditation for ourselves. No experience is required, just respect for each other and a willingness to try something new together. Come on in!

If you already practice a form of meditation and would like to share with the group, please do contact Michelle Bryant Barbeau for scheduling a portion or all of a class.

### September 14 through September 28 @ 11:50 a.m. – Dee Evans, Facilitator

This gathering provides a safe space to explore one's individual spiritual path. You need not have attended before or attended regularly. Drop-ins are welcome.

#### Contact Rev. Sunshine Wolfe

[swolfe@uuma.org](mailto:swolfe@uuma.org)

317-448-3818 (c)

Church Office: 618-462-2462

[church@firstuualton.org](mailto:church@firstuualton.org)

Church Administrator, Becky Green

### Your Church Board July 2014 – June 2015

President	Sabrina Trupia
President Elect	Debby Lovell
Past President	Kelly Crone-Willis
Secretary	Sandy Shaner
Treasurer	Michelle Bryant- Barbeau
Trustee	Bob Larson
Trustee	Paul Fischer
Youth Rep.	Vacant



### BOARD MEETING

### Report from the Board Sandy Shaner, Secretary

Last month I neglected to mention that we were joined by Bob Larson, our newest Board member replacing Lee Suarez, and this month we welcomed our new Interim Minister, Sunshine J. Wolfe. Our first order of business was to change our meeting dates to the 1st Thursday of each month, beginning with September 4, 2014. We continue to welcome anyone who would like to attend; the meetings generally begin at 7 p.m. and are announced in the "Church This Week" e-mail. After changing the meeting date, Sunshine shared with us gher plans for the two interim years as ghe had explained them to the Transition Team. We also set several potential dates for a day-long meeting when we will be joined by UUA regional staff who will be working with us during this interim period.

We also discussed several other business items such as the pending web site revision (coming soon to your computer), an Alton house tour that has expressed an interest in adding the Church to the tour (sent to the Outreach Committee for consideration), and work to do on a Church Governance Calendar to ensure that regular activities or actions happen on schedule.

See you in Church!

Sandy

### NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

Send Newsletter items by the 15<sup>th</sup> of each month  
to the newsletter editor,

Mary Johnson – [mejohanson@mindspring.com](mailto:mejohanson@mindspring.com)

and also to Becky Green in the church office

[church@firstuualton.org](mailto:church@firstuualton.org)

Church phone: 618-462-2462

Mail: PO Box 494, Alton IL 62002

## We Welcomed Rev. Sunshine Wolfe August 17, 2014



### Balcony Reflections September 2014

At the beginning of any transition, be it individually, in community, or globally, time needs to be taken to be in observation- to simply be with what is without judgment. In leadership work, we call this “taking the balcony view.” We spend most of our lives as participants. Perhaps we have a role in the play on the stage, as an audience member, or from the lighting booth. In any event, we are so involved with our role of the moment, that it can be difficult to understand our role within the great performance of life. The balcony view invites us to look at everyone and everything including ourselves. From the balcony you can watch the actors as well as those in the audience. If you have a plum seat, you might even be able to see a little of what is going on behind the scenes.

As an Interim Minister, this is the seat I look for. The first couple of months here in the interim time are dedicated to observation and getting to know the community. I have been reading the historical documents of the church, interviewing leaders, and observing how this community engages itself and the world. The more information I can glean the more I can offer strong support to the congregation in this time.

I have learned a lot in these few short weeks. This is a caring community that wants to ‘do good’ in the

world. This is a community that knows how to party. This is a community that dedicates itself to the care of people in Alton. You have a strong Board and a committed membership. You are struggling with the things that most congregations your size deal with – volunteer burnout, financial management, and how to live your values in the world. What I witness here is a very healthy congregation dealing with healthy grief and questioning that comes at the end of a strong ministry.

I invite you to join in with these balcony reflections. Look not at what you think is happening in the congregation, but at the whole of the congregation. What is working well? What are the growing edges? Growing edges are those areas we can work on and learn more about. It is a language that moves away from the notion that our imperfections are somehow a problem to one where they are normal and healthy and opportunities for growth. Consider these questions from the perspective of a future minister, a child or youth, a single young adult, a family with children, an adult reassessing their values, an elder, an introvert, an extrovert, a person of color, a wealthy person, a poor person, a person without education or with it. How do the staff, leaders, newcomers, and outsiders operate within this community?

By looking at all of this we can begin to think about what is possible. What is the direction this congregation needs to go and how will it get there? We cannot begin to answer these questions until we take some time to observe. In adult education, there is a simple model for learning. It is a cycle that goes from reflection to connection to action to discussion to reflection again. We live in a world that is very focused on action and discussion. We need more reflection and connection. Reflection on what we have experienced and connection to what we have learned in the past, what is true now, and the relationship of what we have learned to what others have learned. We are in the reflection and connection phase of the interim.

I invite anyone who is willing to participate in the information gathering interviews. They last 30 to 60 minutes and help me immensely in determining themes, assessing strengths and growing edges, and helping in the formulation of recommendations that I will make to the Board in October. Feel free to e-mail me at [swolfe@uuma.org](mailto:swolfe@uuma.org) or call me at 317-448-3818 to set up an appointment.

Whether you have an opportunity to reflect on this congregation or not, I do hope that you take time every week to reflect and connect on your own life. Get in that comfy balcony seat and see the world from the interdependent view for a while. Not only is it illuminating, but it is often a beautiful sight to see. May you be blessed with beauty in abundance.

Transform on!

Pastor Sunshine J. Wolfe

## Interest Groups

**Fifty-Plus (50+) Forum**  
First **SATURDAY** of every month  
**September 6, 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.

### **ANNA DS – WOMEN’S ALLIANCE**

Our next Anna D’s meeting will be held on **Thursday, September 4** at 11:30 am at **Lucy n Ricardo’s** Restaurant at 3624 Edwardsville Rd. (Highway 143), Edwardsville. RSVP to our hostess **Peg Flach**, [pegflach@gmail.com](mailto:pegflach@gmail.com)/ by Monday, September 1.



### **Men’s Monthly Lunch** September 11 @ 11:30 am



The Men’s lunch bunch meets the second Thursday of each month. Join us on **Thursday, September 11** at 11:30 am at the **Best Buffet** at 615 Wesley, Drive in

Wood River, IL. All men in our church are invited. For further information contact **Paul Hebert** [pphebert@mail.com](mailto:pphebert@mail.com)

### **RENEGADE WOMEN - TOPICAL DISCUSSIONS**

**Due to the Wild Succulent Women of the Woods Retreat on Saturday, September 20, the Renegade Women will not be meeting in September.**



**Worship Associates Team**  
Date & Time to Be Announced

### **LIVING SIMPLY UNITY CIRCLE**



The Unity Circle, facilitated by Sharon Johnson, will meet on **Sunday, September 21** from 12:15 to 1:30 p.m.

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.



### **Fourth Saturday Lunch & Personal Care Items** for those in need **September 27** 11:30 am

Information about what is needed for September’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](mailto: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](mailto:strupia@gmail.com)



Come and Join Us!

**Social Justice At Home – A “mission trip” to support one of our own**

**October 18 - 19**

Church member Spiral Blanton purchased a home in Alton a little over 8 months ago. It needs a lot of work. It specifically needs a lot of work to get ready for winter. She's in real danger of losing her home without some real support. Sayer Johnson is organizing an “at home mission trip” and has outlined the work needed.

Members and friends of our congregation (and friends of friends) are invited to help with the work outlined below, as well contribute financially. A Board approved special collection will be taken on to support this work.

Signup sheets and items needed will be posted at church, via church email, and on UU Friends.

1) Guttering: Need to get the water going away from the house. It should be done before drywall work happens around the two windows (upstairs and downstairs) where water sometimes leaks in after a hard rain. I don't know if it could be a quick fix to caulk the windows and up where it is coming out of the gutter and running down the house. Gutter repair in the front where the water goes directly into the foundation. (It doesn't look damaged, but in the basement in that spot it is more damp and there's some mold).

2) Drywall and Insulation: On the list and getting it done before winter will hopefully save on heating bills. I will be able to follow up with the mudding, taping, and painting (with homemade paints) and that will be good.

3) Replace downstairs toilet.

4) Outside painting: Good to get done before winter. This includes parts of the foundation, the carport, and garage. It's on the list and I think it will be positive to spruce up the outside appearance of the place. We may be able to find donated paint.



## September 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](mailto:church@firstuualton.org) and give her that information.

- |         |                           |
|---------|---------------------------|
| Sept 1  | Dee Evans                 |
| Sept 3  | Jim Moore                 |
| Sept 4  | Riana Herndon, (10)       |
| Sept 6  | Chris Strangeman          |
| Sept 7  | John Jeffrey              |
| Sept 9  | Isabella Navarre, (9)     |
| Sept 10 | Gina Adams, (6)           |
| Sept 10 | Mary Lu McManus           |
| Sept 10 | Roger Thorogood           |
| Sept 11 | Alex Reiheld, (7)         |
| Sept 12 | Patrick Murphy            |
| Sept 12 | Sheela Cochran            |
| Sept 13 | Phil Finley               |
| Sept 14 | Mona Hebert               |
| Sept 16 | Paul Fischer              |
| Sept 16 | Meredith Johnson, (14)    |
| Sept 19 | Kelvin Crone-Willis, (12) |
| Sept 19 | Jen Politsch              |

### Capital Campaign Update

With four months to go in our 3 year campaign, we have received \$241,324, which is 95.6% of our goal! **Thanks to everyone for their contributions.** To date we have spent \$211,787 on capital campaign projects but have window and entry-way work to complete as well as some additional roof related work.

# 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](mailto:paintedgoatfarm@yahoo.com)

**Marcia Custer** [mcuster@siue.edu](mailto:mcuster@siue.edu)

**Claudia Harju** [dachsandcats@gmail.com](mailto:dachsandcats@gmail.com)

**Kathleen McKeever** [mckeeverjim@sbcglobal.net](mailto:mckeeverjim@sbcglobal.net)

**Ethel Potts** [ethel.h.potts@gmail.com](mailto:ethel.h.potts@gmail.com)

**Donna Young** [donnae47@gmail.com](mailto:donnae47@gmail.com)

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](mailto:mcuster@siue.edu) for more information.

## Alton Area Cluster Book Group Meeting

After a couple months off, the Cluster book group will meet once again on Thursday, September 18 from 4 to 5:30 p.m. at our church.

We'll be talking about Richard Rohr's book "Falling Upward: A Spirituality for the Two Halves of Life." We discussed some of the book at our last meeting in the spring, but the consensus was to do further study of this book.

So, even if you haven't read the book, but are interested in joining in an interfaith dialog, please plan to attend.

## Worship Transition Poll Summary

Thanks to all of you who responded to the Worship Transition Poll distributed in August. The results have been reviewed by the Worship Team and Rev. Sunshine.

The topic that received the most comments in 3 out the five questions, was Music. You wanted more inspiring, lively and spirited music; a wider variety of types of music; new hymns; the musical talents of our members in services; a choir.

You also wanted better communication among congregational committees and also better communication to the wider community; and more appreciation of volunteers. You wanted more structure for children while they are in the sanctuary. You liked the hymns/readings displayed on the wall. You liked greeting your neighbor, chalice lighting, joys and sorrows, the meditation time. You wanted more congregational members involved in the service.

If you would like to read a document that summarizes each question in more detail, contact Mary Johnson.

## Donations to the Alton Crisis Food Center



An **alarming study** released today by **Feeding America**, a network of 200 food banks and 46000 emergency food service agencies, reveals that 1 in 7 Americans are now reliant on food aid

programs such as food banks, soup kitchens, Meals-On-Wheels and other means of food assistance. This includes **one quarter of all households** with someone in the U.S. military.

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.

**Church BBQ &  
Potluck Lunch –  
September 7, 2014**



Our Ingathering Sunday will include a BBQ Potluck Lunch following the Worship Service. The meat (and non-meat BBQ options) will be provided (small fee charged).

Please bring a side-dish or dessert.

**Volunteers are needed to help set the tables and help clean up, so please enjoy both the food and the sharing of the tasks.**

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Jennifer & Bob Timpe  
19849 St Hwy 3  
Grafton, IL 62037

Brynda & Willis McCoy  
511 Summit Lane  
Dundas, MN 55019



Phone numbers and email addresses will remain the same.

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**September RE Program News & Notes**

**REGISTRATION for 2014-2015**

Unless you registered very recently, please update your family's information this year. Registration forms will be available from Juliette Crone-Willis or in your child's classroom. Thanks for your help.

**Fall Semester Begins**

**September 14, 11:00 AM**

Our RE Program church year begins, Sunday, September 14. This year we will continue to offer a comprehensive religious education experience, including active and reflective learning, worship and social service opportunities, and intergenerational church fellowship.

**What will our children and youth learn this year?**

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**Pre-K and Kindergarten: Spirit Play.** Joyful discovery and learning for children ages 3 or 4 through 5. The primary goal for this age group is to introduce the children to RE Program classes, increase their comfort with the church environment, and provide a nurturing environment for children to discover their growing capabilities.

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**Grades 1-5: Community based Religious Education**

Our elementary-aged children will be exploring their spirituality through a rotation of community based (and hopefully community building!) types of classes. There will be time spent in the sanctuary with intergenerational worship services and a few children's chapel services. On **CoExist Sundays** our first through fifth graders will connect with a series of members of our congregation who celebrate elements of other religions. They will discover what's happening in the natural world outside on **Nature Sundays**. Finally, on **Social Service Sundays** they will regularly work on social service projects benefiting both our church and the larger community around us.

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**Youth Group. Grades 6-12.** Junior High and High School youth meet several times a month on Sunday at 11:00 a.m. or as the Group decides. The group is self-directed and with the help of adult advisors and available curricula, plans programs that may include worship, education, social events, social action projects, and development of leadership skills. Discussion topics cover current events, situations in school, and various religious concerns.

**Juliette Crone-Willis, RE coordinator**

314-482-5239 (cell)

RE\_Coordinator@firstuualton.org



**Needed!**  
Energetic leader to  
organize volunteers for  
Sunday morning  
beverages and snacks.