

FIRST UNITARIAN FOCUS



*Newsletter of the
First
Unitarian
Church*

Alton, Illinois

www.firstuualton.org



December, 2014

**Rev. Sunshine J. Wolfe,
Pastor**

December Worship Services

**Dec. 7 & 14 - 10:30 am and 1:30 pm; December 21 & 28 - 10:30 only
Christmas Eve - 7:30 pm**

December 7, 2014

“The Spirit of the Christmas Tree”

with Rev. Sunshine J. Wolfe, Juliette Crone-Willis,
and friends (Intergenerational)

Liturgist: Spiral Blanton

December 14, 2014

“Humanist for the Holidays”

with Rev. Sunshine J. Wolfe

Liturgist: Kelly Crone-Willis

December 21, 2014 – 10:30 service only

“Return Again - A Solstice Experience”

with Rev. Sunshine J. Wolfe and friends
(Intergenerational)

Liturgist: Joy Hoeft

**Wednesday, December 24, 2014
7:30 pm**

“Christmas Vespers Service”

with Rev. Sunshine J. Wolfe

Liturgist: To Be Announced

December 28, 2014 – 10:30 service only

“Fire Communion”

Speaker: To Be Announced

Liturgist: To Be Announced

MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR JIM ELLIOTT



**Saturday NOVEMBER 29, 2014
10:30 am
At Church**

Rev. Sunshine Wolfe's Office Hours

Tuesdays from 4-6 at the BreadCo in Florissant

Fridays from 1-5 at First Unitarian Church of Alton

**Available by phone, e-mail, and appointment
Tuesday to Saturday**

E-mail: swolfe@uuma.org

ADULT RELIGIOUS ENRICHMENT (ARE)

ARE classes are still being organized. Contact Tracey Howe-Koch if you would like to lead, coordinate or facilitate an ARE class.

December 14 at 9:30 am – Ron Glossop – Emerson Place.

Our 4th class on "Global Problems of the 21st Century" will again focus on the problem of the sustainability of planet Earth and what should be done to deal with population growth, climate change, and depletion of critical resources. "Will the population growth problem get solved just by people getting wealthier and better educated?" "Will nuclear fusion by itself solve our energy problem?"

December 21 - Two sessions: 9:30 am and 10:30 am

Michelle Bryant Barbeau – Emerson Place
"Meditations from Around the World"

December 7 and 28 - 11:30 am

Dee Evans, facilitator for **"Supporting and Developing each Individual's Spiritual Path."**

This discussion group meets at 11:50 am in Emerson Place on the Sundays that Pastor Sunshine does not teach. On the Sundays that Pastor Sunshine teaches, please attend gher group.

December – 11:50 am

Rev. Sunshine J. Wolfe – **"Inspire Programs"** – Emerson Place

At 11:50 on Sunday twice a month, Rev. Wolfe will offer *Inspire Programs* on a wide array of topics. Inspire Programs will provide opportunities for religious education in spiritual development, justice, countering oppression, spiritual practice, Unitarian Universalist identities, and more. Some programs will require registration and others will be open to all. Each program description will state clearly whether registration is needed. All programs are open to high school age students 14 and over with permission of parents, unless otherwise noted.

December 14 - Race the Power of an Illusion: Part 2

A powerful three part documentary from PBS, Race the Power of an Illusion covers the ways in which race was formed as a concept in the United States. *Part 2 covers the creation of race in the early history of the United States through to the end of the 1800s.* Part 3 covers the creation of race legally and socially from the early 1900s to the present day. You can learn more about this series and take a short quiz on race at http://www.pbs.org/race/000_General/000_00-Home.htm

December 21 – Enneagram Basics

Based on centuries old observation and brought together into a coherent system in the 1960s, the Enneagram has become a valuable tool for understanding the core motivations we have in life and ways to challenge ourselves to go deeper in self-awareness. More than a personality test, the Enneagram invites us to explore the deeper waters of why we do what we do. This program is open to all. This is a basics program which will be a prerequisite for the future program – "Enneagram for Daily Life."

New to U.U. Program on December 7th – 11:50 am

New to Unitarian Universalism and/or the First Unitarian Church of Alton? Thought about becoming a member or just want to learn more about our congregation? Then join us on Sunday, December 7th! Rev. Sunshine, Religious Education Coordinator Juliette, and lay leaders from the congregation will join us to talk about the congregation and to answer your questions. So, grab a plate from the First Sunday Potluck and join us in the Emerson Room!

The Risks and Gifts of Community

In speaking with members and friends about the First Unitarian Church of Alton everyone seems to agree on one thing- people attend because they like the people here. That is a great gift. To really like and feel supported by the people in your church should be a given, but it is not true in all churches. At the heart of the holiday season is a recommitment to the communities of which we are a part. Whether we celebrate Kwanzaa, Chanukah, Chalisa, Christmas, Solstice, New Year's, and/or no holiday at all, in the United States the holiday season is about community- family and friends.

Like all great gifts, there are pitfalls that are a natural part of any great blessing. With strong community can come lack of connection in other areas and lack of support or community for those who, perhaps, do not fit in. We have members of this congregation who can no longer attend church or find that their struggles makes it difficult for them to connect. They can feel left out of major church events. This, too, happens in our personal communities.

In addition, when concern is placed on supporting the community that is here, we lose track of the larger goals of the congregation. If we are not committed to the institution of which we are a part- the practical details and tasks- then we have no church in which to have community. The same is true in our personal communities. If we fail to pay head to the practicalities that maintain families and friendships, then they can fade over time.

Even worse, if the community does not have a common understanding of how to communicate, solve problems, and get the basic work done then conflict can destroy the community. Too often this occurs in families in which the differences in communication, ideology, and belief can drive wedges so deep that there seems no way to repair them. In the face of all of the pitfalls of community, Unitarian Universalism offers paths that allow us to prevent isolation, respond to a wider vision, and manage conflict.

These tools include:

- a strong Membership Team that focuses on the presence and needs of members.
- a regularly renewed Mission and Vision statement that is easy to remember and guides *ALL* of the work of our Board, Minister, staff, committees, and teams.
- a Congregational Covenant that informs all of us expected norms for how we will communicate with one another and manage conflicts between us.

In other words, we need to be intentional. Ask a couple who has been successfully married and they will tell you- it takes a lot of work! This is true wherever two or more are gathered.

As you go into this holiday season and are engaging with your communities of family, friends, church, work, and beyond take some time to consider how you intentionally maintain your relationships. How does what you believe about the world guide how you speak to that judgmental aunt or rude cousin? How are you called to be in healthy relationship? What helps bring you back to the table when things are difficult? Community is not just about the good times and the fact that we like one another. Community is also about loving and living in times of struggle and uncertainty. May you find a path of support and love this holiday season and may you know that this congregation loves you.

Happy Holiday!!!

Rev. Sunshine J. Wolfe

Congregational Interviews

Rev. Wolfe is conducting interviews to learn more about the congregation. She is interested in interviewing everyone and would like to interview those who have been a member since before 1999. These interviews are open-ended, confidential, and valuable to help determine the course of the interim time. Rev. Wolfe is willing to meet you where it is convenient for you. Please contact her at swolfe@uuma.org. Thank you for your time and participation.

Church Potluck Lunch Sunday, December 7 11:45 am



Our monthly fellowship potluck lunches are held on the 1st Sunday. Everyone is invited to bring a dish to share. This is an all-church event so everyone should plan to participate in setting up and cleaning up, as well as in the sharing of food and conversation.



Deadline to Apply to Worship Associate Program is December 15th!

Want to deepen your understanding of Unitarian Universalism while supporting the work of the congregation? Would you like to learn more about worship, liturgy, and preaching? Would you like to actively help create worship with the Minister and guest speakers? Then Worship Associates is for you!

The Worship Committee is now accepting applications for six Worship Associates. We will interview potential applicants in December and January and announce them at the end of January. Worship Associates will be expected to attend a two hour Orientation in February. Then on *March 1st* they will begin their service in the pulpit. We ask for a one year commitment from March 1, 2015 to February 29, 2016 with the option of two years of service. Responsibilities include:

- one monthly meeting which includes training
- serving as Worship Associate for 8-9 Sundays per year
- preaching once during the summer
- assisting in locating potential guest speakers

Please send an e-mail to Pastor Sunshine at swolfe@uuma.org to receive an application. This is an exciting, meaningful, and fun way to serve the congregation! We hope you will join us!

NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

**Send Newsletter items by the 15th of each month to the newsletter editor,
Mary Johnson – mejohanson@mindspring.com
and also to Becky Green in the church office
church@firstuualton.org
Church phone: 618-462-2462
Mail: PO Box 494, Alton IL 62002**



Report from the Board

**Sandy Shaner,
Board Secretary**

The Board met on November 13, and focused on simplifying our process with a consent agenda discussed in advance by e-mail and requiring only a single vote for approvals. This time the consent agenda included committee and regular reports, and we were able to move quickly to Rev. Sunshine's first interim report, discussion of an updated committee structure, and plans for the semi-annual meeting which will probably be scheduled for January, 2015. Next month's meeting on 12/11/14 will pick up those subjects in even more detail. In the meantime feel free to ask any Board member for details.

The Board now meets on the 2nd Thursday of each month @ 7 pm.

**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

In Our Church Family

Patricia Murrell's mother, Alberta Flye, passed away on Thursday, November 13. Patricia conducted the funeral service held on Nov. 18. Our condolences to Patricia and her family.



Jim Elliott, long-time member of our church, and of the former Thomas Jefferson Fellowship, died on Tuesday, November 18. Our sympathies go out to his wife Phyllis and the Elliott family.



What's Up With That?

You may have noticed that birthdays are missing from the First Unitarian Focus. One area that I focus a lot on in my ministry is congregational safety. We are at a time of ever increasing identity theft and computer crime. In an effort to protect your privacy, we will take a number of steps in the coming months to increase security and reduce risk. Some key changes include:

- No posting of birthdays, addresses, e-mails, or phone numbers without express permission.
- No posting of pictures of children or youth currently in our programs on the website or publications.
- Providing only printed copies of the Church Directory. No longer will the Directory be sent via e-mail.
- Continuing to limit access to personal information to those who need it unless otherwise directed.

Our world has grown ever more complicated and we will commit ourselves to doing our best to protect you and all who come to the First Unitarian Church of Alton in the future. I will be working with the Board to formalize communications safety policies in the next two years. If you have questions, please contact me, Rev. Sunshine, at swolfe@uuma.org.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!!!

All are **HIGHLY** encouraged to attend the **Congregational Covenant Creation Workshop** on Saturday, March 14th from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. I know that Saturday is not ideal for everyone. However, creating a Congregational Covenant that everyone can agree to requires the participation of as many people as possible. This will be a day of talking about values and what matters most to us. Childcare will be provided and will include children and youth providing their input into the covenant. Youth ages 14 and older are encouraged to attend the Workshop. This will be a great opportunity to spend time with people you care about and influence the future of this community. We hope to see you there!

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

Kathleen McKeever mckeeperjim@sbcglobal.net

Ethel Potts ethel.h.potts@gmail.com

Donna Young 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 for more information.



Sunday Announcements

If you have an announcement to be made during worship services, please either write it in the notebook provided at church or email Pastor Sunshine swolfe@uuma.org with that announcement. The liturgist will share your announcement with the congregation.

Global Chalice Words for December 2014

Each month the International Council of Unitarians and Universalists (ICUU) publishes a reading to be used in chalice lightings during that month. It is called a "Global Chalice Lighting" because it is distributed in the language of the country submitting it and then translated into several other languages for reading throughout the world. Congregations world-wide are invited to use the reading for at least one worship service in the designated month, identifying it was the ICUU Global Chalice Lighting for that month. Ron Glossop has included a translation in Esperanto, along with the English and Spanish text. It's also available in French, German, and Italian.

ENGLISH:

In times of darkness we stumble towards the tiny flame.

In times of cold we seek the warming fire.

In times of repression we reach for the lamp of truth.

In times of loss we pray for the comforting light.

In times of joy we light a candle of celebration.

Spirit of Life, as we kindle this light, help us find what we need this day.

- Brian Kiely (ICUU Past President and Canadian Unitarian Universalist Minister)

ESPERANTO:

Dum fojoj de mallumo ni stumblas en la direkto al la eteta flamo.

Dum fojoj de malvarmo ni serĉas la varmigan fajron.

Dum fojoj de subpremado ni klopodas akiri la lumon de la vero.

Dum fojoj de malĝojo ni preĝas por la komfortiga lumo.

Dum fojoj de ĝojo ni lumigas kandelon de festo.

Spirito de Vivo, kiel ni ekbruligas ĉi tiun lumon, helpu nin trovi tion kion ni bezonas ĉitagon.

- Ronald Glossop (membro de la Unua Unitariana Preĝejo de Alton, Ilinojso)

SPANISH:

En tiempos de oscuridad avanzamos a tientas hacia una pequeña luz.

En tiempos de frío buscamos el calor del fuego.

En tiempos de represión sostenemos la lámpara de la verdad.

En tiempos de pérdida rogamos por una luz que nos consuele.

En tiempos de alegría encendemos una vela de celebración.

Espíritu de la Vida, al prender esta luz, ayúdanos a encontrar lo que necesitamos hoy.

- Brian Kiely (Expresidente del ICUU y ministro UU canadiense)



36th Annual Renaissance
Madrigal and
Christmas Rout
Eliot Unitarian Chapel in Kirkwood

December 4, 5 & 6

7 pm – doors open

7:30 pm – festivities begin

Menu: wassail, hors d'oeuvres, Yule log dessert.

Entertainment by The Not-Ready-for-Reformation Players in "A Pirate Christmas Carol" with the Greenleaf Singers in concert.

\$30 to \$35 per ticket (depending on date).

For reservations or further information

madrigal@eliotchapel.org.

Must make reservations by Nov 30.



Decorate the Sanctuary Event

Date to be Announced.

Interest Groups

Fifty-Plus (50+) Forum
First SATURDAY of every month
December 6, 2014
10:30 am to noon at church



The 50+ Forum invites both retirees and those who are still active in their careers. Some of us have gray hair, some of us do not. Some of us love science, some of us love the arts, some of us love both. Some of us have grandchildren, others of us do not. Some of us love to be physically active, others of us do not. Some of us love nature, and others think nature is a plant in their house. You get the point. We can't be stereotyped just because we are over 50. The only thing we have in common is facing the fun and facts of being 50 and over. If you are over 50, join us.

Ah – besides being over 50, the other thing we share is our love to eat. So, we go out to lunch after our 10:30-12:00 first Saturday of the month meeting. For further information, contact Sandy Shaner.

ANNA DS – WOMEN'S ALLIANCE

Our December meeting on Thursday, December 4 will be hosted by Ginger McCall at Meridian Village. She has reserved an area in the dining room from 11:30-1:30. Please contact her by Tuesday, December 2 if you will be coming. The dining room accepts cash only and there is no tipping permitted! The menu includes breakfast items as well as lunch.

The address for Meridian Village (Evergreen Building) is 101 Evergreen Lane, Glen Carbon, IL Note: it is just off Meridian Road and close to Highway 157. Ginger's e-mail is jmyk60@att.net.

RENEGADE WOMEN – WILL NOT MEET IN DECEMBER.

It was decided at the November meeting that since the December meeting date was so near Christmas, and folks were busy with holiday preparation, that December's meeting would be cancelled.

Men's Monthly Lunch **December 11 @ 11:30 am**



The Men's lunch bunch – the Romeos - meets the second Thursday of each month. Join us on **Thursday, December 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.

LIVING SIMPLY **UNITY CIRCLE**



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

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.

Donations to the Alton Crisis **Food Center**



The Crisis Food Center, down the street from the church, is always in need of donations of food items. 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.

Please bring non-perishable food items and put them in the collection container in the RE Foyer.

Please be especially generous over the holiday season.

Introducing the Transition Team

Hopefully all of our members and friends have gotten a chance to meet our Interim Minister by now. Rev. Sunshine's role is pretty obvious and she has clear goals set by our Board and the job description of Interim Minister. Working in conjunction with the Interim Minister is the Transition Team. Our team consists of **Marcia Custer, Sayer Johnson, and Sarah Lazarz.** The role of the Transition Team as set forth by the UUA is "... to provide the Interim Minister with insight, organizational and facilitative talent, and willing hands as the ministry proceeds." Let's break that down a little, shall we?

"...Insight..." The Team can fill Rev. Sunshine in on some of the institutional memory of our congregation, alert her to possible candidates for leadership, personality conflicts of the past, and give a general sense of how we see ourselves in the community. This insight comes from the Team's years of membership, but it also comes from members communicating with the team during Rev. Sunshine's tenure with our congregation. Some members may feel more comfortable speaking with a familiar face about certain issues they feel need to be addressed. The Team is here to communicate YOUR insight as well.

"...Organizational [talent]..." While most ministers are already very good at organizing, each institution poses its own unique set of organizational hurdles. RE, parties, potlucks, and the rest can be dizzying to navigate. Getting people involved and not stepping on groups' toes while scheduling is challenging, but the Team is here to see that organizing is done right.

"...Facilitative talent..." Team members are also facilitators during this interim period. What will the Team facilitate? Conflict resolution, congregational goals, and the like begin to hint at what the Team will try to do in this arena. The Team is here to act as a go between to make sure what needs to happen, does happen.

"...Willing hands..." The Team's hands are willing to do some work to get our congregation ready to search for a new minister. But the Team can't do it all alone; your hands are needed as well to make this a successful endeavor. Contribute your insight, ideas, problems, issues, hopes, fears, time, talent, and treasure alongside the Transition Team. The Team and the Interim Minister are here to act as a bridge to our congregation's future. We can't do it without the rest of you.

Please contact anyone on the Transition Team with questions, concerns, issues, praise, and the like.



The full brochure about this weeklong program is available at www.swimuu.org.

WINTER WOMANSPiRiT 2015

Have you ever struggled with a difficult issue in your life? In your time of stress has a friend created a holy space and listened to you? In that listening, did you find your voice? Your wholeness? Your healing? And did you discover your ability to forgive yourself and let go of whatever hurt you?

Unitarian Universalist presenter, Mary Pierce Brosmer - sharing the story of Women Writing for a Change. We will hear the stories of women and then have the chance to learn the process.

HEALING WORDS: A CALL TO
CONSCIOUSNESS
FEBRUARY 6TH THRU 8TH, 2015
Lake Country UU Church
Hartland, WI

Find more information on registering at
www.womenandreligion.org

December Religious Education (RE) Program News & Notes

December Schedule

Date	Spirit Play (PreK-K)	Elementary (1 st -5 th)	Youth (6 th grade and up)
Dec 7	INTERGENERATIONAL	CHRISTMAS SERVICE	Youth Group
Dec. 14	Solstice Story	Nature Sunday	Our Whole Lives (6 th -8 th grade) Coming of Age (7 th grade and up)
Dec. 21	INTERGENERATIONAL	SOLSTICE	SERVICE
Dec. 28	Dreidel Sunday	Dreidel Sunday	Our Whole Lives (6 th -8 th grade) Coming of Age (7 th grade and up)

Social Action December Opportunities

Oasis Women's Center—Adopt a Family

The RE Program leads the church in sponsoring the Oasis Women's Center. The Center provides housing for women and children that are victims of domestic violence. We will sponsor one family this year. That means five total items per family member with a value of less than \$30 for each item. When we get specific information about our family and what they want and need, we will post a sign-up board in the Kate Wuerker fellowship hall.

Alton Community Christmas Collection

In support of our wider church community, the RE program will contribute to the Alton Community Christmas program, which provides Christmas to families in our region through the donations and charitable giving of churches, businesses, and individuals. Fourteen local agencies have been chosen by the program's sponsors – the United Way and the Alton Telegraph – to receive the toys and clothes we donate. There will be a contribution box in the Kate Wuerker Room so please bring in your donations to church.

So, what to do? Take your children shopping, have them pick out a few items for this program, and put them "in the box" at church. Requested items include: toys, new coats, new socks, blankets, stocking caps, gloves, and mittens; also diapers and personal care items. This is a wonderful way for children and adults to share the bounty of their lives with needy Alton families.

Juliette Crone-Willis
Acting Religious Education Coordinator
jrcronewillis@gmail.com
314-482-5239 (cell)