

FIRST UNITARIAN FOCUS



Photo by Nancy Crace Conniff, 2015

*Newsletter of
the
First
Unitarian
Church*

Alton, Illinois

www.firstuualton.org



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

August 2015 Worship Service at 10:00 a.m.

August 2

***“Planting the Seed: Rev. William D’Arcy Haley –
2nd minister of our congregation 1853-1856”
with Mary Johnson***

During his short ministry in Alton, Rev. William D. Haley encouraged the congregation to purchase land and build a church (land where we still meet); preached encouragement to the laborers and working men (not just to the wealthier classes); was recognized in the community as a spokesman for justice; took on projects for the American Unitarian Association; and spent a summer with the Chippewa in Minnesota Territory. His preaching on behalf of justice, and the conflict arising from this preaching, caused the congregation to declare “freedom of the pulpit” for its ministers from July 1856 onward. After leaving Alton, Haley pastored the Unitarian Church in DC; served in the civil war; wrote articles and published books; and continued his justice efforts through the printed word as a newspaper editor and publisher.

Worship Associate: Dee Evans

NEWSLETTER DEADLINE – The 15th of each month. Send info. to Dorothy Wilson djjcw@sbcglobal.net and to Becky Green church@firstuualton.org

August 9th

#BlackLivesMatter and Unitarian Universalism
with Rev. Sunshine J. Wolfe and friends

This Sunday marks one year since the death of Michael Brown. Members of the First Unitarian Church of Alton will share their personal experiences from organizing in Ferguson and the St. Louis Metro area in the past year. We will reflect on the work that Unitarian Universalists have done locally and across the country in response to continued injustice toward the African American community. **Worship Associate: TBA**

August 16th

Turn and Face the Strange with Rev. Julie Taylor

With great change comes great opportunity...but it sure doesn't always seem like it when you're in the middle of it. How do we begin to imagine what comes next? ...Turn, and face the strange. Rev. Taylor is a Unitarian Universalist community minister who lives in St. Louis. **Worship Associate: Joy Hoeft**

August 23rd

Understanding Islam: The Haddith of Gabriel

with Rev. Sunshine J. Wolfe

Too often, Islam is portrayed through a narrow lens in the media. Yet, the rich diversity and powerful wisdom of Islam can guide and inform our own lives. We will talk about the wisdom and practice of Islam in the 21st century. **Worship Associate: Mary Johnson**

August 30th

Risking Joy with Rev. Sunshine J. Wolfe

Recognizing and living into the joy of our lives is sometimes risky business. We can hold our joy at bay with fear, anxiety, uncertainty, and business. What does it take to bring a practice of joyfulness into our lives? Come risk joyfulness in community.

Worship Associate: Sabrina Trupia

ADULT RELIGIOUS ENRICHMENT (ARE)

Each Sunday in August “The Seekers” will meet in Emerson Place at 11:15 am. This group will meet any Sunday Pastor Sunshine does not teach.

Inspire Programs

August 9th: Exploring the General Assembly Action of Immediate Witness on #BlackLivesMatter with Rev. Sunshine Wolfe

This weekend more than a hundred Unitarian Universalists from around the country came to St. Louis to remember the anniversary of the death of Michael Brown. We will discuss what actions we can take as individuals and as a congregation to continue the work to reform the justice system toward fewer deaths of black lives. What have we learned and what more do we have to learn in the future? We will likely be joined by Unitarian Universalists guests who will be sleeping in our church this weekend.

August 23rd U.U. 101: The Deep Relationships Between Islam and Unitarian Universalism

Islam and Unitarian Universalism have much in common including a refusal to proselytize and an understanding that each person is responsible for their own personal search of truth and relationship with the divine. Our connection with Islam goes back still further to the 1500s. We will talk about our historic relationships as well as how our theology was influenced by this great religion

Church Leadership Training August 15

Lay Leadership In a U.U. World

with Rev. Sunshine J. Wolfe

Whether you have been a leader for a long time, are new to it, or are considering it, this two session workshop will provide tools and skills to support your volunteer commitments to our congregation. We will talk about church structure and organization, skills for soliciting and sustaining volunteers, conflict resolution and styles, appreciative inquiry, and more. This class will take place two Saturdays (8/15 and 8/22) from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. Please RSVP with Rev. Wolfe at swolfe@uuma.org.

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE Summit of Restoration – August 8

On Saturday, August 8 from 9 am to 3 pm, the United Congregations of Metro-East will be hosting a “Summit of Restoration,” looking at the problems of mass incarceration. This Summit has two tracks: one for educators which will included ways of implementing restorative discipline practices in our schools to stop the school to prison pipe-line; and the other track will help the community develop an understanding of the challenges faced by individuals returning to society after being incarcerated and learn what can be done to assist in this transition.

The Summit will be held at Edwardsville High School, with lunch provided. The Summit is free and open to the public, but there is a suggested donation of \$20 at the door.

To register go to ucmetroeast@gmail.com or call 618-451-1458.

Racial Justice in the Age of Ferguson

Last year, on August 9th, Michael Brown was killed in Ferguson. As a new minister, I must admit I was pretty anxious about how to lead in the face of such a tragedy. Oakland was home to me when Oscar Grant was killed. It had been barely a year since I preached about the death of Trayvon Martin. As Unitarian Universalists we seem to be called again and again to ask what our role as a community is in the face of racial prejudice and violence. It is not an easy question to answer.

We are in a difficult time where conversations about race often become heated. The most important thing is to stay at the table. Engaging in these conversations is a spiritual practice. They are about giving life and meaning to our world and to the people participating. What does it mean to stand on the side of love when people are being killed because of the color of their skin? There are many ways to converse on these issues including through action and presence.

From August 7th to August 10th this year, there will be more than one hundred Unitarian Universalists coming to St. Louis to participate in actions in remembrance of Michael Brown. If you have not already registered, please consider doing so at <https://www.midamericauua.org/events/showingup>. We will have a worship service at Eliot Chapel on Friday, August 7th. On Saturday, August 8th, participants will wear white t-shirts and khaki pants- the same clothes that Michael Brown wore- during a march through downtown St. Louis. On Sunday, August 9th, communities are encouraged to engage in silent vigil. We will have a special worship service with voices from our congregation who have been active in Ferguson and racial justice work this past year. Afterward, we will have a discussion of an Action of Immediate Witness in support of the Black Lives Matter Movement. At 12:00, those who are interested are invited to join us for a silent vigil on Highway 67 at Henry Street. If you cannot participate in all of these events, I do hope that you can participate in one or two of them. Our presence matters as we encourage people in power to stay in the conversation- to be at the table.

This year at the General Assembly, the Youth Caucus presented an Action of Immediate Witness (AIW) to support the Black Lives Matter movement. In August, we will engage in a time of study of this document and consider what we can do as a congregation to respond to the ongoing violence in our communities. However, I

want to take a moment to share what happened at General Assembly this year.

This AIW was hotly debated. There were unkind words spoken. People walked out of the assembly. There was anger and tears. For many, they relived the 1969 General Assembly when at least a third of the assembly walked out in protest of a vote about race. After that assembly, many people- black and white- left Unitarian Universalism forever. We have a long struggle with talking about race issues which included a nearly two decade silence on the issue from 1969 to the late 1980s. What was most noteworthy this year was that a lot of attention was paid to caring for the people who were gathered. Chaplains spoke, and when it was noticed that a chaplain of color had not spoken, it was remedied. Folks struggled with one another and they stayed present. Language was worked and reworked and immediately after the assembly voted for this AIW- a group of youth and young adults lead a Black Lives Matter protest outside the convention center for all of Portland to see.

We can learn from this as individuals and communities active in racial conversations. Emotions will run high. Disagreements will be ever present. Yet, when we stay at the table and work it through, we find a path that affirms life and engagement and moves us toward action.



Church Hospitality August 7th to August 10th

From August 7th to August 10th, we will have a group of Unitarian Universalists participating in the many events remembering the life of Michael Brown sleeping at our church. They will not interfere with other programs and events occurring at the church that weekend. Some will likely attend services on Sunday. Please be gracious and welcoming to these visitors during their stay. If you are willing to assist with letting people in and out of the church at set times that weekend (generally in the evenings), please let Rev. Wolfe know at swolfe@uua.org.

Show Up for Ferguson August 7 - 10

As we approach the 1 year anniversary of Mike Brown's death, Unitarian Universalist leadership in St. Louis joins the local Action Council, Don't Shoot Coalition and Movement community in a call for people of faith and conscience to join us here for the weekend of August 7-10, 2015. We are calling for UUs to Show Up for Ferguson.

Already UUs from all over the country are registering to take part in these events. If you are able to provide home hospitality for this weekend, we need you. Please contact Rev. Julie Taylor right away if you think you might be able to help WokeUUp@gmail.com.

As UUs local to the St. Louis metro area, we have been at the epicenter of this national Movement for almost a year. UUs from around the nation recognize and have been inspired by the work our congregations are doing in support of #Black Lives Matter. Plan to take part in the events taking place in UU space and outside. If you are planning to participate in any part of the weekend, please register here

<https://www.midamericauua.org/events/showingup>. Even though you may be local and don't need travel or lodging info, we need you to register to stay in contact with everyone who plans to participate.

The weekend will kick off Friday evening with a UU rally at Eliot Unitarian Chapel. This rally will include orientation for the weekend's events and all who plan to participate must attend. Saturday we will join the "I Am Mike Brown" march, dressed in white t-shirts, khakis and baseball caps. The local organizers are calling for all who attend to dress as Mike Brown was dressed when he was killed, we will humbly comply. Sunday will be a day for worship and additional opportunities to support the local Movement community (yellow Standing on the Side of Love shirts would be appropriate for these events). Monday is direct action day. There will be specific requests about how we show up for this from our community partners, so please be sure to stay tuned for these instructions. We will be releasing information through Standing on the Side of Love, the Mid America Region, UUMA Connect and the St. Louis Standing on the Side of Love Facebook page

<https://www.facebook.com/stlstandingonthesideoflove?ref=ts&fref=ts>.

If you have questions about the weekend Rev. Julie Taylor is the local contact and can be reached at WokeUUp@gmail.com.

Pastoral Associates Program Applications are Due August 15th

A team of between four and six people will be selected to support congregants who need pastoral care and presence. This team will meet once a quarter (in person or by conference call) to discuss the ongoing needs in our community and to participate in continuing education around providing care and support. Team members will need to pass a background check due to the sensitive nature of the position. Once the Pastoral Associate Team has been determined, they will work with the minister to determine the best way of organizing the work. If you are interested in being a Pastoral Associate, please contact Rev. Sunshine at swolfe@uuma.org. You can also contact Marcia Custer for more information. Look for more information in July. The deadline for applications to the program will be *August 15th, 2015*.



Worship Associate Position Open

We continue to have an opening on the Worship Associate Team. If you have wanted an opportunity to learn about and bring your gifts and ideas to worship, then this is the team for you. Worship Associates serve for one year with the option of serving for two years. Worship Associates participate in 8-9 worship services a year. They preach one time during the summer. This team meets once monthly to discuss, evaluate, plan, and learn. This is a fun team and we hope you will join us. Please contact Rev. Sunshine at swolfe@uuma.org.



NEWS FROM YOUR MINISTERIAL SEARCH COMMITTEE (MSC)

The extremely valuable congregational survey is coming soon! Kelly Crone-Willis is planning to get the survey out via email or copies mailed in early August. This is very important to complete fully, in order to have your opinions, needs, and thoughts shared with the MSC committee. We request it be completed as soon as possible in order to compile the data for use as we progress with the search for our new minister. Please allow approximately 45 minutes to complete when you receive it in your email or mailbox.

Mark your calendars for the *Beyond Categorical Thinking* (BCT) worship service and workshop on **September 20!** This is another crucial part in choosing the right minister for our special place, and everyone needs to be involved. There is another article in this newsletter specifically about the BCT, giving greater detail.

Please contact any of us on the committee with questions you have during this time. Also, please understand that we have to keep certain things confidential, but you are entitled to know what's happening.

Nancy Conniff, Co-Chair

Save the Date: Mission/Vision Workshop on October 10th from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

This ALL CONGREGATION workshop will focus on one of the final important tasks of the interim. We will explore together who the congregation is and who it wishes to become. We will work through a process to renew the Mission and Vision statement of the congregation. This will further support the Search Committee in their work of completing the congregation's packet for ministers. Lunch and child care will be provided. Youth are welcome to attend the program as they are interested. Look for further information in upcoming newsletters.

Congregational Covenant Approved May 17, 2015



To strengthen and nurture with love, compassion and respect, we covenant together to:

Honor and make space for our diversity; respect our volunteers, leaders and staff by supporting balance in their lives and in their personal professional pursuits;

Encourage each member to develop a personal spiritual practice that cultivates honesty and acceptance;

Remembering our humanness, we acknowledge our imperfection and extend forgiveness to ourselves and others;

Engage within our own and the larger community with integrity, by taking responsibility for our actions, facilitating right relationships, and living into the journey.

[The acronym for our Covenant is [HERE](#).]

Small Group Ministries

Goals of Small Group Ministry are to develop a growing network of small groups that:

1. Draw us into mutual ministry
2. Strengthen our congregation
3. Deepen our understanding of Unitarian-Universalist principles and values
4. Continuously develop lay leadership
5. Challenge us to action and spiritual growth
6. Express our principles and values in the community
7. Help members identify their own calling and expression of lay ministry

Summer Meetings:

Alternate Mondays, August 3, 17, & 31,
7:00 – 8:30 pm,
lead by Jennifer Tempe

Alternate Thursdays, August 13 & 27,
5:30 – 7:00 pm,
lead by Sandy Shaner

Interest Groups

ANNA DS – WOMEN’S ALLIANCE
AUGUST 6TH @ 11:30

The Anna Ds meeting will be hosted by MaryLu McManus at Catelli's Moonlight in Alton. RSVP to her email: mlmcmanus@charter.net no later than Thursday, 7/30, so she can finalize reservations.

Church Potluck Lunch
August 2 @ 11:15 am

Our monthly fellowship potluck lunches are held on the 1st Sunday. Everyone is invited to bring a dish to share – AND **PLEASE PLAN TO STAY TO HELP DO DISHES** (washing, drying, putting away), **WIPE OFF TABLES AND COUNTERS, SWEEP FLOORS, TAKE OUT TRASH AND DO WHATEVER TASKS NEED DOING AFTER A MEAL.**



3RD SATURDAY RENEGADE WOMEN CANCELLED IN AUGUST DUE TO LEADERSHIP TRAINING SCHEDULED FOR THAT DAY.

4th Saturday Lunch –
August 22



Announcements about what is needed for August's lunch menu and personal care items for our neighbors in need will be made at church, on can also be made by check, payable to the church and marked for this program. Thanks to Kathleen, Robyn, and Sabrina for their ongoing efforts in coordinating this very important program that has been in operation since October 2008.

Changes to the Religious Education Program

Religious Education Council

The program for 2015-2016 next year will be coordinated by a Religious Education (RE) Council with representatives coordinating one aspect of the Religious Education Program. It will include the following portfolios:

- RE Council Chair (Joy Hoeft)
- Nursery Portfolio (TBD)
- Spirit Play/Elementary Classes
- Youth Programs (including youth group, coming of age, and OWL) (Juliette Crone-Willis)
- Adult Programs (including covenant groups)
- Administrative

Each of these portfolios will be responsible for coordination of volunteers for their area. The goal is to split up responsibilities into manageable and easy to understand areas. Each portfolio will be implemented by numerous volunteers. We will create clear job descriptions for each portfolio in the coming weeks. Juliette and I will be contacting those already active in RE to help fulfill these roles. We thank everyone who continues to be involved RE for your support and hard work!

Fifty-Plus (50+) Forum
Next Meeting on August 1.



The next 50+ meeting will be on Saturday, August 1, at **Princivalli's Café** at 11:30 at in Alton. Possible future directions for the group will be discussed.

Men's Monthly Lunch
August 13 @ 11:30 am

The Men's lunch bunch – the Romeos (Retired Old Men Eating Out) - meets the second Thursday of each month. Join us on **August 13** at 11:30 am at the **Best Buffet** at 615 Wesley, Drive in Wood River, IL. All men in our church are invited (retired, or old, or not ☺). For further information contact **Paul Hebert** pphebert@mail.com.



Church Leadership 2015-2016

Board of Trustees

Board President- Debby Lovell

President-Elect- Dee Evans

Past President- Sabrina Trupia

Treasurer- Lisa Strangeman

Secretary- Pat Moore

At-Large- Paul Fischer

At-Large- Paul Hebert

Committee/Team Leads

Pastoral Care- Marcia Custer (until 9/15)

Transitions Committee

Marcia Custer

Sayer Johnson

Sarah Lazarz

Social Events- Sayer Johnson

Interfaith and U.U.- TBA

Religious Education Council

Chair-Joy Hoeft

Nursery- Kayci Combs Lueker

Pre-K/Elementary- Ed Navarre

Youth- Juliette Crone-Willis

Adult- TBA

Administrative- TBA

Search Committee 2015-16

Nancy Conniff (co-chair)

Ruth Maskow (co-chair)

Robyn Berkley

Kelly Crone-Willis

Phil Embree

Mary Johnson

Layne Simpson

Stewardship Committee

Building and Grounds- TBA

Canvass- TBA

Endowment Fund- Kelly Crone- Willis

Finance- Matt Koch

Membership- Mary Weber

Sunday Support Ministries- TBA

Worship Associates

Dee Evans

Joy Hoeft

Yomi Kinder

Mary Johnson

Sabrina Trupia

Joys and Milestones



Our best wishes are extended to Paula Moore and Larry LaFond who were married by Pastor Sunshine on Saturday, July 25.



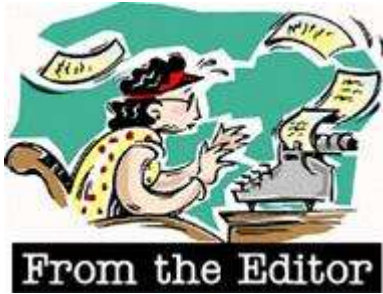
Hiring Worship Accompanist

The First Unitarian Church of Alton is currently searching for a new Accompanist for worship on Sundays. We are specifically looking for someone who is not a member of the congregation who can work most Sundays throughout the year. If you are aware of person who would be a good match for our congregation or locations where we should advertise, please contact Rev. Wolfe at swolfe@uuma.org.

We offer our congratulations to Rachel Pashea as she begins her new job at Lockheed Martin!



In Sympathy
Jennifer Lewis' father, Jon Collman, passed away in early June. Our continued wishes for comfort and peace are extended to Jennifer and her family.



New Newsletter Editor On-Board

Starting with the September 2015 issue, Dorothy Wilson (djjccw@sbcglobal.net) will be the church's newsletter editor.

After 14 years and 168 newsletters, the time feels right for me to step down as editor. I've enjoyed my years in this role, and especially appreciate the help Becky Green has given me month after month.

Please remember that Dorothy is new to the church and to the position as editor, so she can't immediately be expected to know who to get in touch with regarding the various happenings at church and she won't know what information to be expecting, nor who to nag ☺ when it doesn't come in. It's going to be up to YOU to get information to Dorothy in a timely manner that you want included in the newsletter. Remember that Becky gets most of her information for the calendar and for 'This Week at Church' from the newsletter, so please think of the newsletter when making plans for church activities. I'm very grateful to Dorothy for her willingness to take over the newsletter editorship.

Mary Johnson

Our thoughts are with you

Please hold good thoughts for the loving spirit of Nancee Magilson's precious daughter Melanie, who passed away unexpectedly on July 30th.



I'm sure all of you will want to join me in offering Mary a great big "Thank You" for her for the excellent newsletter she has produced over these many years. I appreciate the opportunity to serve the church and I look forward to working with all of you. I will certainly need your help and ask for your patience as I learn the ropes. Feedback is always welcome.

Dorothy Wilson

Homecoming/Water Communion Service

September 13th at 10:00!

Our annual homecoming and water communion service will be Sunday, September 13th at 10:00 a.m. followed by a potluck. Please join us as we celebrate our community and a new year!



NEWSLETTER DEADLINE – The 15th of each month.
Send info. to Dorothy Wilson djjccw@sbcglobal.net and to Becky Green church@firstuualton.org

**THINK OF A MINISTER.
DON'T THINK OF AN ELEPHANT.**

Chances are you thought of both. And distinct images perhaps came to mind. In terms of a minister, what images came to mind? Was it a person of a particular gender, race, or age?

Ministers in our faith who are people of color, bisexual, gay, lesbian, female, transgender, differently-abled, young, old, ethnically different, or of a different class — all of these credentialed ministers still face discrimination as part of the ministerial search process.

In our efforts to find the best match, we will be hosting a Beyond Categorical Thinking (BCT) worship service and workshop on Sunday, September 20, 2015. This is a highly recommended part of the search process for our congregation. In finding the person who would be the best match for our minister, we could potentially overlook or even let biases keep us from knowing that a particular person would be the best match for us.

Our trainer will meet with the search committee, lead the Sunday service, and then facilitate a 3-hour conversation where we will have a chance to examine how we can avoid letting prejudice become a part of our search process. This is yet another way for us to put our faith into lived experience and improve the odds that regardless of identity, we will find the minister who is the best match for us and will serve us well. This opportunity allows the entire congregation fuller participation in the search process. It will allow us to explore our hopes and concerns for a new minister, learn more about the search process, and see how our own history (both personal and congregational) might interfere with our efforts in this search.

Please plan to attend on Sunday, September 20th to participate in this service and workshop developed by the UUA. Search committee members and board members are expected to attend, and ALL congregants are strongly encouraged to attend. Our trainer will be Jerry Carden, coming to us from Urbana, IL. The MSC (Ministerial Search Committee) will be providing a pasta and salad

luncheon as well, after the service and before the work shop.

Hoping to see everyone there,
Your Ministerial Search Committee

**Summary of Board
Meeting
July 1, 2015 7:00 pm**



This was the first meeting of the new board for 2015-2016, with members of the previous board also in attendance. Also attending were several members of the Search Committee.

The next regular meeting will be Aug. 13. The Board will also have a retreat at the Edwardsville Library from 9-3 on Aug. 22.

All minutes and reports were read ahead of time and are available to members at any time on google.docs. All were approved.

Ruth Maskow gave a Search Committee report. They are well underway on their task, and expect to have a congregational meeting sometime in Sept. They will be getting out a survey of the members in August. The committee wants everyone to know that they are taking their task very seriously and will be good stewards of the budgeted monies.

Rev. Sunshine is working on establishing a “Right Relations” team, so that congregants would have a place to go to air grievances or concerns such as the recent one that began with Facebook posts.

The board endorsed the hiring of a community organizer on racial justice, who would be hired by the 4 local congregations. Funds have been made available for the position, so there will be no cost to us.

Respectfully submitted,
Pat Moore, Secretary