

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**

September 2015

**Worship Services September 6-20 at 10:00 am
Saturday, September 26, Vespers Service at 4 pm
Sunday, September 27 at 10:15 am**

September 6, 10:00 am

FaithFULLy with Rev. Sunshine J. Wolfe

Unitarian Universalists join many liberal religions in proclaiming an openness to the meaning of words and the world. Faith for us is about a “free and responsible search for truth and meaning.” Faith is about embracing the mystery and opening our imaginations to that which we do not know. What does it mean to be a Unitarian Universalist in a climate of fear-mongering and divisiveness? How might our faith shine a light in the world? **Worship Associate: Yomi Kinder**

September 13, 10:00 am

Homecoming Sunday: Faith in Humanity with Rev. Sunshine J. Wolfe

As we gather the waters of our congregation in the annual Water Communion, we will consider the gifts of humanity. Unitarian Universalists place their faith in human relationships and the planet earth to bring about change in the world. What does Unitarian Universalism have to say about faith in the “inherent worth and dignity of every person” when we know that human beings are capable of so much horror?

Please bring water that is of spiritual significance for the Water Communion. We will gather for a potluck celebration after. Please bring side dishes and dessert; the main course will be provided.

Worship Associate: Dee Evans

September 20, 10:00 am

Getting Beyond Categorical Thinking with Jerry A. Carden

This is a highly recommended part of the search process for our congregation and everyone needs to be involved. 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.

Worship Associate: Mary Johnson

September 26, 4:00 pm

with Rev. Sunshine J. Wolfe

The 4 p.m. service will be a vespers service related to the worship topic of the week. It will include chanting, meditation, silence, and will have its own unique style.

September 27, 10:15 am New Time

Nothing New Under the Sun

with Rev. Sunshine J. Wolfe

For the week after Yom Kippur- the ultimate celebration of faith in Judaism- the Jewish community spends one week celebrating Sukkot. Gathering in Sukkahs Jewish people offer generosity for the gifts of simplicity. It is a time of reflection on faith wisdom as the community faces a new year. What can we learn about faith in practice from this powerful holy time?

Worship Associate: Joy Hoeft

ADULT RELIGIOUS ENRICHMENT (ARE)

September 13 at 9:30 am

Ron Glossop will lead the first session of the Adult Religious Education Class on the topic “**Understanding the Problem of Free-Will in Terms of Modern Psychology.**” Susan Wolf’s book *FREEDOM WITHIN REASON* (Oxford Univ. Press 1990) will be given special attention. Given contemporary understanding of how the brain I causally determined to function as it does, does it make any sense to continue to think in terms of free will? How if at all is the uncertainty principle in causality relevant to the issue of free will and holding people responsible for their actions? Under what circumstances is it appropriate to conclude that a person really acted freely rather than being determined by other factors? This free-will topic will be continued in October. Subsequent monthly sessions may be led by others in the class choosing a book or article on contemporary issues and ideas for us to focus on (something like a book club.) **This class meets in Emerson Place.**

September 13 at 11:15 am

“The Seekers” will meet in Emerson Place.

Inspire Programs: With Rev. Sunshine Wolfe

September 6

Monthly Theme Conversation on Faith

We will explore the meaning of the word faith individually and in Unitarian Universalism. This will be discussion group and is open to all.

September 27

U.U. 101: Judaism in Unitarian Universalism

Many Unitarian Universalists identify as Jewish. Some even call themselves “JUUnitarians.” What is the history of our relationship with Judaism? How is that practiced today? We will look at the deep and complicated roots of Judaism in our religious tradition.

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.

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. The MSC (Ministerial Search Committee) will be providing a delicious pasta and salad luncheon to the workshop participants as well. Please sign up if you plan to attend on the Facebook “UU Friends” page or the paper copy at church. Also tell us if you’ll be needing childcare for your young children. Church Service will be from 10-11, luncheon from 11-12, and the workshop runs from 12-3.

Our trainer is Jerry Carden, coming to us from Urbana, IL. He 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.

Hoping to see everyone there,
Your Ministerial Search Committee

“Our faith as Unitarian Universalists is not a specific claim about a particular god. It is not found in a single book. It does not rely on claims of our inherent specialness as individuals or as a people. Our faith is messier. Our faith is a belief that we can embrace the common good through how we interact with one another by holding fast to our precepts of inclusion, participation, of intellectual humility, reminding us of our own limitations. Our faith assures us that we are not alone and that we can be part of something greater than ourselves.”

by MSNBC Host Melissa Harris-Perry in the “Forward” to The Unitarian Universalist Pocket Guide (2012)

Our monthly theme for September is *FAITH*. Faith is a tricky word that can bring up a lot of emotion and memories of restrictive and commanding religions and/or family members. For some, faith implies the preference of the supernatural over science. Faith is imbued with all kinds of characterizations and assumptions dominated by fundamentalist religious communities all over the world. For Unitarian Universalists, faith is not necessarily about G-d. It is that faith in our commonality and potential as human beings.

The dictionary definition of “faith” has multiple meanings, but the one that fits our Unitarian Universalist religion is this: “complete trust or confidence in someone or something.” For some of us, faith is complete trust in science and reason. For some, it is complete trust in the Goddess or God. For some, it is complete trust in the power of community. Whatever our personal belief, there is one central tenant to our Unitarian Universalist faith that guides us: *we have faith in our diversity in community to live love in the world.*”

As Melissa Harris-Perry notes, we believe that we can embrace the common good through how we interact with the world. We have faith in the power of compassion, love, reason, freedom, inherent worth and dignity, and the collective wisdom of prophetic people throughout history. With so many sources for our understanding, ours is not a particularly easy *faith*.

Ours is a chosen faith. We are not told what to believe or how to think from some outside authority. There are no G-ds or G-ddesses or popes telling us what we should believe as a community. We let each person discover their own path through this magnificent world. We choose the religion. We choose our own values. We choose to attend our churches. We are not afraid of, as Rev. John Wolf puts it, “a celestial peeping tom.”

It is not easy to live in the uncertainty of our own path at times. When faced with extreme loss, violence, oppression, and depravity there is no one easy narrative to guide us on our way. Our faith calls us to question, to

trust ourselves, and to respect the paths of others—particularly those paths we do not understand.

In a world that exhibits divisiveness in politics and war, ours is a revolutionary religion. As you ponder what faith means to you this month, I invite you to consider where this word fits in your life. How has it been a word that fostered violence in your life and the world? How has it been a word that has fostering healing and growth? What does it mean to you to be a Unitarian Universalist? Why have you chosen this faith?

In faith,

Pastor Sunshine J. Wolfe

Notice September Service Schedule Changes

On Saturday, September 26th, we will begin our new worship times. We will have two services each week. On Saturday at 4:00 pm, we will have a vespers service related to the worship topic of the week. These Saturday services will include more chanting, meditation, silence, and will have its own unique style. On Sunday, service will be at 10:15 am and will be intergenerational in style. The format will be similar to what we have had in recent years. This service will be followed by religious education for all ages from 11:30 to 12:30. The schedule will be as follows:

4:00 pm Saturday- Vespers Service

10:15 am Sunday- Intergenerational Service

11:30 am Sunday- Religious Education (all ages)

If you have questions and/or feedback, please contact a Worship Associate or Pastor Sunshine



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!

Religious Education Council

We are excited about this year's Religious Education. We will be sending out a registration form to families of children so to keep record of ages, parent information, and any special needs.

Children's RE will begin on Sunday, September 27, 2015. All RE classes will be held from 11:30-12:30, after the Worship Service from 10:15-11:15. This hour will give the children and teachers time to get to know each other, and learn more about growing up UU.

This year the 1-6th graders will be exploring a curriculum based on the Dr. Seuss stories. This curriculum is fun and engaging, as well as being based on life situations and experiences. It gives us a way to talk about, and reflect about things that are a part of our lives.

"We all sleep; we all get lost; we all are afraid sometimes; we all meet people who are on--and sometimes in--our way; we all like adventure in various ways; and we all struggle with what is right and what is not."

We are looking for people who would like to volunteer to teach our Elementary class. Usually 2 teachers per Sunday class. Read one of your favorite Dr. Seuss stories, and follow the simple, well laid-out sessions. Ed and I are preparing a calendar which lists the stories/activities for each week. If you are interested in teaching please contact Ed Navarre.

We are also asking for volunteers for our Nursery Care during Worship and during RE time after service. Please consider helping out in the Nursery 1-2 times a months during either Worship or afterwards."

Thanks,

Joy

Race In Film: Selma Friday, September 11th at 7:00 pm

Each month, we will have a movie or documentary that involves race and racial experience with a discussion to follow. We begin our monthly series with the movie Selma. This movie covers the events leading up to the March from Selma to Montgomery. Powerful and poignant, this beautiful cinematography, music, and acting does honor to all those who protested and lost their lives in the struggle for the right of all black people to vote.

Reigning Love: Understanding Oppression, Lifting Diversity With Rev. Sunshine J. Wolfe Alternate Wednesdays Beginning Sept. 9 To Dec 15th, 7:00 – 8:30 pm

This bimonthly class will explore the definitions, mechanisms, and history of systemic oppression in its myriad of forms. Whether talking about classism, racism, ageism, ableism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, xenophobia, and beyond, we live in a world often divided by life experience. It is difficult to understand and talk about and yet the healing of our human race means embracing and learning to do just that. This class will cover some of the newest research on oppression and offer conversations and activities to consider what each of us knows about oppression.

Due to the sensitive nature of this class, this class is by registration only. Participants must be able to attend the first session and miss no more than two of the eight sessions. Classes will be every other Wednesday from 7-8:30 beginning September 9th and concluding on December 15th. If you are interested in registering, please contact Pastor Sunshine at swolfe@uuma.org.

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](#).]



NEWS FROM (MSC)

The extremely important congregational survey is now available! Kelly Crone-Willis has emailed those congregants with an email address and is sending the survey out via USPS mail to those without email access. Please allow approximately 45 minutes to complete it when you receive it in your email or mailbox. You can save the online version to finish later, if needed. It 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/returned by September 18th. Thank you!

We are very excited for the Beyond Categorical Thinking (BCT) worship service and workshop on September 20th! The MSC will be providing a delicious pasta and salad luncheon for participants, so please sign up on Facebook "UU Friends" or on the paper copy at church. As you sign up, let us know if you need childcare for wee ones and how many, as we will have the nanny service available and need approximate numbers. There is another article in this newsletter specifically about the BCT, giving greater detail, and a bio on the facilitator, Jerry Carden. Worship Service on that day will be from 10-11, luncheon from 11-12, and the workshop from 12-3. This is a very important part in helping the MSC choose the right minister for our special place, so please mark your calendars and plan to attend!

The search committee met at a UUA facilitated retreat on Aug. 1, following the ministerial search process suggested by the UUA. It was an essential experience, helping us connect our thoughts and goals, and well as discovering how we complement each within the group. We created a covenant for ourselves, and set a rule for making major decisions. That rule is if consensus cannot be reached in the first vote, a final ratio of 6/1 will allow the decision to be approved after hearing reasons for dissenting, followed by discussion and re-voting.

We also discussed the importance of remaining "open" to discuss all procedural matters with members of the congregation. We are not able to divulge names, locations, or personal information about the ministerial candidates and we are obliged to maintain this confidentiality. The main reason for confidentiality is that ministers settled in a congregation may not have told their present parishioners that they are contemplating a move. These parishioners are entitled to hear the news from their own minister at the appropriate time. To have their name

"leaked" can undermine their ability to serve the present congregation. Also, when identities of unsuccessful applicants are known, it heightens the competitive aspect of the search process, hurting collegial feelings among ministers and even neighboring churches looking for a new minister.

Layne Simpson and other members of the MSC will be staying after Sunday services, by the fireplace, through at least Sept. 13th. MSC is there to talk on or off the record with anyone who wants to discuss what you would like in our next minister. You can also contact any of us with questions you have during this exciting phase!

Thank you—

Nancy Conniff MSC Co-Chair

Church Potluck Lunch September 13 @ 11:15 am

There will be no 1st Sunday potluck luncheon this month – instead we will bring side dishes and desserts for the Homecoming Celebration on the 13th (hamburgers and hot dogs will be provided that day)



Coffee Hour Clean Up

Most people enjoy having a time to chat with friends and have a beverage or snack following the Sunday worship Service.

Fewer people enjoy cleaning up afterwards. However, the "Kitchen Klub" (Robyn, Kathleen, Claudia, and Mary J.) have been discussing ways to encourage ALL to take a turn at kitchen cleanup. We decided that the personal touch is the best approach and one of the "Klub" members, clipboard in hand, will be asking congregational members, one-on-one, to commit to taking a turn over the next three months to clean up after coffee hour. We have developed a list of weekly tasks that need doing and will give that list to volunteers as well as having it posted in the kitchen. It should not take more than 30 minutes for folks to complete the cleanup work.

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 to apply.



Pastoral Associates Program Applications are Due September 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.

Save the Date: Mission/Vision Workshop on October 10th from 10 am to 4 pm

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.

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

Interest Groups

Anna Ds – Women’s Alliance

Sept. 3, 11:30 am

Best Buffet, 615 Westley Dr. (across from Walmart)
618-258-1888

At the August meeting, Mary Johnson, a member of the Ministerial Search Committee, asked us to think about the attributes, skills and experience we’d like to see in a new settled minister in advance of the September meeting. We will have our own room in order to feel comfortable with this private discussion. Please RSVP to Sandy Shaner at by Monday Aug. 31st to confirm. Or just show up if you get a chance.

Please remember to bring a non-perishable food item for the food bank. In years past, Anna D’s was in the forefront of the Church’s social justice activities; we can generally bring a food item to share with those who have less than we do.

Fifty-Plus (50+) Forum

Sept. 5, 10:30

Emerson Room



New Program! Open to All! To help us learn all we can about our denomination before the arrival of our new minister, we are lucky to have available, thru Jerry Johnson, a DVD series on UU history. **“Long Strange Trip: A Journey Through Two Thousand Years of Unitarian Universalist History”** Each DVD is about an hour long. We will have a brief check-in, watch the DVD and lunch afterward for those who would like to go. This program will continue until about February, depending on the number of “snow” days.

A brief outline of what we’ll learn:

Part I – In the Beginning

Part I examines the roots of liberal religious thought prior to the Reformation

Part II – The Birth of Unitarianism

Part II The formation of the first coherent Unitarian theology.

Part III – American Unitarianism

Part III talks about the development of Unitarianism in America from 1620 through 1860.

Part IV - Universalism

Part IV - Documents the development of Universalism churches across America during the first half of the 19th century.

Part V – Evolution

Part V Follows both Unitarianism and Universalism through the late 19th and 20th centuries as they evolve.

Part VI – The hundred Year Waltz

Part VI Documents the century-long courtship between Unitarianism and Universalism that culminated in their merger in 1961.

Men’s Monthly Lunch

Sept. 10, 11:30 am



The men’s lunch bunch – the Romeos (Retired Old Men Eating Out) – meets on the second Thursday of each month. Join us in September at 11:30 at the Best Buffet at 615 Wesley Dr. in Wood River. All men in our church are invited (retired or old, or not). For further information contact Paul Herbert pphebert@mail.com

Renegade Women

Sept. 19, 1:00 pm

Join us as we continue our study of “Stirring the Nation’s Heart”. We are learning about the lives of some of the women who played important roles in the development of Unitarian Universalism. After our check-in Dorothy Wilson will present information on the life and beliefs of Lucy Stone. Please join us.

Due to other responsibilities, Dee Evans will no longer be able to coordinate this group after Oct 1. We will discuss a new coordinator at this meeting.

4th Saturday Lunch

Sept. 26, 11:00 am



Announcements about what is needed for September’s lunch menu and personal care items for our neighbors in need will be made at church or on UU Friends Facebook page. We also welcome cash or check donations, made out to the church and notated to be for this program. These donations are used to purchase food and products for distribution.



Sierra Club Piasa Palisades Group,

Speaker Series - September 14 at 7:30 pm

Hazardous Materials - Oil Trains

Fiery oil train accidents across the country- more than six since the beginning of this year - drive home the dangers of transporting hazardous materials via rail within yards of homes, schools and playgrounds. Gerri Songer, a member of the Sierra Club's Woods and Wetlands Group and contact for Energy Transport and Infrastructure issues, will outline the need for better regulations and more safety measures. Ms. Songer is an educator and serves as Education Chair for the Township District 214 Education Association. Her experiences with the Sierra Club have inspired her to teach high school students how to become advocates for public health and safety through a special curriculum at Elk Grove High School, where she teaches. The Speaker Series starts at 7:30 PM at the First Unitarian Church, 110 E. Third Street in Alton. Attendees and friends are invited to have dinner and meet the speaker at Princivalli's Restaurant, 602 E 3rd St, Alton, IL 62002, starting at 5:30 PM. Contact Chris Krusa on [410-490-5024](tel:410-490-5024) for any questions.



In Sympathy

Dorothy Milnor, a past member of the church, passed away on August 15th. Our thoughts and Blessings are with her family and friends.



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.

From the Church Office

Please let Becky know as soon as possible when there are changes or additions to the church calendar. These changes will be posted in the "Church This Week" email that is sent out on Mondays and Fridays. Thank you



From the Editor

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