

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

October 2015

Sunday Worship Services at 10:15 a.m.

Saturday Vesper Service at 4 p.m.

*Each week's Vesper service will be related to the worship topic of the week.
It will include chanting, meditation, silence, and will have its own unique style.*

October 3 **Vespers**
October 4 **A Good Death**
with Rev. Sunshine J. Wolfe
Worship associate: Yomi Kinder

We frequently talk about what it means to live a good life, but what does it mean to die a good death?

October 10 **Vespers**
October 11 **Death to the Closet; Long Live the Closet**
with Rev. Sunshine J. Wolfe
Worship associate: Sabrina Trupia

On this National Coming-Out Day we will celebrate the lives of those who are out of the closet and pay honor to the struggles of those still in the closet. With marriage equality, what remains to help pave the way for LGBTQQIA people to find safety in the open?

October 17 **Vespers**
October 18 **Wisdom of the Books of the Dead**
with Rev. Sunshine J. Wolfe
Worship associate: Dee Evans

Much wisdom has come from those who have sat with and supported the dying. What can we learn about the nature of death and dying and living from the many Books of the Dead - the wisdom on death from many cultures the world?

October 24 **Vespers**
October 25 **The United Nations at 70: Its Past and Future**
with Dr. Ronald Glossop
Worship associate: Joy Hoefl

This sermon will be given by Dr. Ronald Glossop, Professor Emeritus, Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville. The theme for that Sunday will be the Sixth Unitarian Universalist Principle: "The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all."

ADULT RELIGIOUS ENRICHMENT (ARE)

October 18, 9:15 a.m. in the Emerson Room - Ron Glossop will lead the 2nd session of the Adult Religious Education class continuing on the topic "**Understanding the Problem of Free-Will in Terms of Modern Psychology.**" The focus will be on the difference between mechanistic and teleological explanations. How they are related to the free-will problem and to the difference between scientific and religious views of reality?

If you have an issue about which you would like to lead the class in the future, please come and suggest it.

Ron Glossop

October 18th & 25th, 11:30 a.m. "**The Seekers**" will meet in Emerson Place.

Inspire Programs:

October 4, 11:30 a.m. **Five Wishes: Planning for End of Life** with Rev. Sunshine Wolfe

Utilizing the "Five Wishes" document, we will explore the questions of end of life planning and personal wishes for end of life. What do parents want for their children? What would you like in the face of tragic accidents and care? What questions may have you not considered in planning for end of life?

October 11, 11:30 a.m. **U.U. 101: LGBTQIA People In Unitarian Universalism** with Rev. Sunshine Wolfe

How did we becoming a Welcoming denomination to LGBTQIA people? Who were the key leaders who helped us get to where we are today? What work do we continue to do? We look at the importance of LGBTQIA lives in our communities.

R.S.V.P. for the Mission/Vision Workshop

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. Please register via the sign-up sheet at church, on Facebook or by email Pastor Sunshine at swolfe@uuma.org

In the End

*"When the journey of my life has reached its end
And I wander through places of confusion,
May I stay awake so to transform fear and suffering."
from The Tibetan Book of the Dead*

Death. Ending. Finality. In the Tarot deck, the 'Death Card' simply means great change. It could mean the change of death or it could mean the ending of others for good or ill or both. When we see endings as a part of the cycle of life, what transforms in us? I think of the words of Gandalf in the movie The Return of the King, "Death is just the next great journey - one we all must take." Yet, when I think about how death was handled in my family of origin, in media, in the arts, it is hard to see anything but resistance, denial, and erasure of the death experience.

This is not the norm the world over. Most European cultures talk about death openly. It is not uncommon or considered strange for someone to talk about what they want for themselves when they die. It is just one of many topics of conversation. Here in the United States, it would be considered morbid or at least uncomfortable making to have such a conversation publicly. Margaret Mead put it best, "When someone is born we rejoice, when someone is married we celebrate, but when someone dies, we pretend that nothing happened."

Many people have discovered Unitarian Universalism by attending our memorial services. Frequently, our celebrations of life for those who have died are seen as beautiful and powerful. This is because we lift up the life that has been lived and weave into the ongoing lives of those present. The core of our message is that we live on in those we have known and loved.

This month we will focus on the themes of death and endings. As we reflect, I invite you to consider what you would like for yourself at the end of life. Speak to loved ones and one another about what a "good death" would look like for you? What things are ending in your life? Perhaps a job is ending or a child is becoming a teenager or a loved one is dying or has died. What has spoken to you in these experiences? What sustains you during these times of change and conclusion?

May you be ever present to the endings of life and to the endings in your life. May we move forward together without comment and with support for those endings. May we be the community we are ever becoming - the community that ends and begins again and again, never ceasing. May it be so.

Blessings on the journey,
Pastor Sunshine

Monthly Theme: Death

This month our theme is *Death and Endings*. Spiritual practices and meditations are designed to help us be present to the great wonders and challenges of our lives. Death and endings are among the greatest spiritual experiences of our lives. How do we understand death? How do we make meaning of the ends of experiences and life cycles? Here are some resources to help ground our exploration.

Adult:

The American Book of Dying: Lessons In Healing Spiritual Pain by Richard F. Groves and Henriette Anne Klauser

The Year of Magical Thinking by Joan Didion

Youth:

The Lovely Bones (novel) by Alice Sebold

The Fault in Our Stars (novel) by John Green

Children:

The Next Place by Warren Hanson

How to Bury a Goldfish: And Other Ceremonies and Celebrations for Everyday Life by Virginia E. Lang and Louise B. Nayer

New Member Orientation

Sunday, October 18th at 11:15 a.m.

If you have signed the book in the last six months, are a visitor who is considering joining the church, or a member who is interested in a refresher on membership in this congregation, you are invited to attend New Member Orientation. We will cover the basics of Unitarian Universalism, the organization of the church, and the responsibilities and benefits of membership. We look forward to seeing you on the 18th!!

Race in Film: Fruitvale Station

Friday, October 9th at 7:00 p.m.

Each month, we will have a movie or documentary that involves race and racial experience with a discussion to follow. This month we view the award winning movie Fruitvale Station. This movie follows Oscar Grant on the last day of his life. It shows his family life, his imperfections and gives, and who he was as a person. Oscar Grant was shot in the back by a BART (transit) officer at the Fruitvale Station stop on New Year's Day of 2009.



News from Your MSC (Ministerial Search Committee)



Ministerial Search Committee
Latest News

Robyn Berkley is working diligently to create an interesting and informational website about our congregation and community to help prospective ministerial candidates learn about us.

Layne Simpson, Mary Johnson, and Nance Conniff have received personal feedback from some members about needs and wants related to the new Minister. You are encouraged to contact any of us on the search committee with further input.

Kelly Crone-Willis is in the process of compiling the data from our congregational surveys. The ministerial search website and packet will be available to the entire congregation, and the survey results will be in there as well.

Ruth attended the September board meeting, keeping them, and anyone else who attends, informed of our status and progress.

On September 20th, we held our Beyond Categorical Thinking service, luncheon and workshop, guided by the UUA facilitator, Jerry Carden. If you weren't able to attend and would like to hear about this event, please ask any of us on the MSC.

We are pleased to discuss all procedural matters with members of our congregation. Please remember that we are not able to divulge names, locations, or personal information about the ministerial candidates and we are obliged to maintain this confidentiality.

Best regards,
Nance Conniff, MSC Co-Chair

Religious Education Council

We are looking forward to the new RE church year and our schedule change. The Dr. Seuss curriculum should be fun and interesting to learn about Unitarian Universalism and our world.

We are still needing Leaders and Readers to fill in our schedule for the next few months. The lesson plans are simple and take just a little planning. Please contact Ed Navarre if you are interested in teaching our children this year.

Joy

Summary: August & September Board Meetings

The board met on August 13 and September 10:

The first hour of the September meeting was an executive session used to discuss the questions asked on the 6 month interim minister evaluation of Rev. Wolfe. ghe also submitted answers to the questions. If any member has comments to make regarding the interim minister's evaluation, he/she should talk to a board member.

Ruth Maskow presented reports from the Search Committee. They have not yet received surveys from all members, but the deadline was Sept. 18. They have received a lot of valuable information already from interviews and fireside chats. The committee will sponsor an afternoon workshop on Sept. 20, presented by Jerry Cardin from the UUA, who will also be our guest speaker that day. The subject matter is non-discrimination in hiring practices. The committee has spent part of their budget on a retreat and this guest presenter.

Sandy Shaner is still working on composing a policy book for the church. Some parts have been completed and approved. Next month we will be hoping to approve policies on Direct Assistance, Insurance, Undertaking New Projects, and possibly more. Sandy hopes to be done by November, with the hope of submitting the book to the congregation by the semi-annual meeting.

Mary Johnson has taken bids on the painting of the sanctuary, the final project to be funded by the capital campaign. The board will be comparing bids and making a decision soon. We hope to have the work done before a new ministerial candidate comes to the church.

Other building problems right now include a plumbing leak in the upstairs that has caused ceiling damage in a downstairs room; huge holes appearing in the backyard, possibly due to clogged drainpipes; and a hole in an entryway ceiling from a leak in the flat roof above. These problems are being investigated and hopefully all repaired soon.

A Right Relations team is being formed to help people deal with conflicts when they arise. It will be a three person team which will be trained by Rev. Wolfe.

Rev. Wolfe has been writing job descriptions for team coordinators. The Board is still looking for leaders for the Sunday Support, Racial Justice, and Building and Grounds teams.

The pianist job is open. If you know anyone who might be interested, please let Rev, Wolfe know.

The next Board meeting will be on Oct. 15. Any member is welcome to attend Board meetings.

Pat Moore, Board Secretary

YOU'RE INVITED!

The Alton Area Cluster Book Club will be meeting at our church on Thursday, Oct. 8 and on Thursday, Oct. 22 from 3:00 to 5:00 pm to continue the study of *"Ferguson & Faith: Sparking Leadership & Awakening Community."* One need not have read the book to attend as we will be reading it together at the October meetings.

Congregational Covenant

Approved May 17, 2015



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

Honor and make space for our diversity, respect our volunteers, leaders and staff by supporting balance in their lives and in their personal and 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 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](#))

Church Potluck Lunch October 4th @ 11:30 am



Our monthly fellowship potluck lunches are held on the 1st Sunday. Everyone is invited to bring a dish to share & stay to help clean up.

INTEREST GROUPS:

Anna Ds – Women’s Alliance **Oct. 1st 11:30 a.m.**

This month’s luncheon will be held at Fazzi’s, in Collinsville, 1813 Vandalia St. (618-344-5440 & www.fazzis.com), a wonderful Greek | Italian | American restaurant. Please RSVP. To Mary Weber (Mary.Weber3@gmail.com) no later than Sept. 23rd. 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.



Free For All (formerly 50 Plus) **Oct 3rd, 10:30 a.m.**

Open to All! Join us in the Emerson Room for the 2nd of 6 DVDs to help us learn as much as possible 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 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 **Oct. 8th 11:30 a.m.**



The men’s lunch bunch – the Romeos (Retired Old Men Eating Out) – meets on the second Thursday of each month. Join us in October 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

Due to decreasing attendance and no one stepping forward to take over as leader for Dee Evans, it was decided that the group would no longer meet. If anyone is interested in organizing and leading this group, please contact Rev. Sunshine Wolfe at swolfe@uuma.org

4th Saturday Lunch **Oct. 24 11:00**



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.



Halloween November 1st **- Wear Your Costumes!**

We will have our Halloween service on November 1st.

You are encouraged to wear your costumes and to bring change to help UNICEF!



The Kitchen Klub – a group of people who want to change the kitchen cleanup culture – are inviting everyone to participate in our new program called **“Wash, Dry, Put Away.”** If you have a meeting or gathering at church that involves food or drink, we encourage you to make sure that the dishes used are washed, dried, and put away – not left in the meeting room, or in the sink to be washed later by someone else, or left drying on the drain rack to be put away by someone else. This effort on the part of everyone using the church facilities will keep the kitchen neater, and provide an equitable way to get cleanup tasks done.

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

The members of the small groups have decided to continue through the winter, but only once per month, rather than every other week. Both groups would welcome new members.

Jennifer Timpe’s group will now meet one Sunday per month, 7:00 p.m. with the following date to be determined at each meeting.

Sandy Shaner’s group will now meet the 2nd Wednesday of each month, at 5:30 p.m.

NEWSLETTER DEADLINE



Newsletter Deadline is on the 15 of each month. Send info. to Dorothy Wilson djjccw@sbcglobal.net and to Becky Green at church church@firstuualton.org

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 - Robyn Stranquist

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