

FIRST UNITARIAN FOCUS



Photo by Rev. Sunshine Wolfe, 2015

Newsletter of the

First Unitarian Church

Alton, Illinois

www.firstuualton.org



Rev. Sunshine J. Wolfe, Pastor

January 2016

THEME: JUSTICE

Sunday Worship Services at 10:15 a.m.

Saturday Vesper Service at 4 p.m.

January Theme: JUSTICE

We will have one Worship Service at 10:15 a.m. on January 3rd and return to our regular schedule January 9th. Worship Services are held at 4:00 p.m. on Saturday and 10:15 a.m. on Sunday. Each service covers the same topic. Saturday is a Soulful Sundown service with meditation, silence, readings, and singing. Sunday is an intergenerational service with more ritual, movement, a sermon, readings, and music.

January 3 Inner Peace When Outer Peace is Hard to Find

with Rev. Krista Taves
Worship Associate Yomi Kinder

Sometimes life just vibrates and our minds and hearts vibrate with it. How do you find inner peace, that place of calm and acceptance, when life is pulling you in the other direction?

January 9 Vespers

January 10 Justice and the Unitarian Universalist Principles

with Rev. Wolfe
Worship Associate Mary Johnson

January 16 Vespers

January 17 Living a Life of Justice In the Face of Oppression: A. Phillip Randolph

with Rev. Wolfe
Worship Associate Dee Evans

January 23 Vespers

January 24 The Box: The Changing Face of War and Peace

with Rev. Wolfe
Worship Associate Thomas Cochran

Semi-Annual Meeting of Church Members Sunday, January 24th, following the service.

January 30 Vespers

January 31 TBD

Worship Associate Sabrina Trupia

ADULT RELIGIOUS ENRICHMENT (ARE)

Inspire Programs:
11:30am

January 10

U.U. 101: Stories of Striving for Justice

We will look briefly at the history of justice work in Unitarian Universalism. How did we impact the Civil War and help to create the American Red Cross? What has been our role in the equality of women, black folks, LGBTQ, and many other people? We will finish with a discussion of the justice work that we, as a denomination, work on today and how we come to decide what areas of justice we take on. Learn more about Standing on the Side of Love, Unitarian Universalist Service Committee, and more.

January 17 – Beginning to Understand Power and Oppression

This program will cover the basic language and systems for understanding power and oppression as taught to us in the world of sociology. In a media of mixed messages, how do we suss out power, privilege, prejudice, oppression, and the intersections of all of these?

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The Adult RE class which usually meets at 9:15 in the Emerson Room on the second Sunday of the month will not meet in January or February 2016. Therefore the next class will be at 9:15 on March 13. Yomi Kinder will be leading the discussion of Jules Verne, *PARIS IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY*. This book, written in 1863 but not published until 1994, contains many predictions about technology and society that have proved to be remarkably accurate.

Ron Glossop

~

January 3, 24 & 31 11:30 a.m.

“The Seekers” will meet in Emerson Place.

Pastor Wolfe Vacation Schedule

Pastor Wolfe will be on vacation from December 25th until January 7th. As always, Pastor Wolfe is available in the event of emergencies.

January Monthly Theme: Justice

This month our theme is *Justice*. Here are some resources to help ground our exploration.

Adult:

A People So Bold: Theology and Ministry for Unitarian Universalists Ed. by John Gibb Millsbaugh

Between the World and Me by Ta-Nehisi Coates

Do It Any-Way: The New Generation of Activists by Courtney E. Martin

Sweet Dreams in America: Making Ethics and Spirituality Work by Dr. Sharon D. Welch

Youth:

Letters from Young Activists: Today's Rebels Speak Out edited by Dan Berger, Chesa Boudin, and Kenyon Farrow

Children:

The Soccer Fence: A Story of Friendship, Hope, and Apartheid in South Africa by Phil Bildner

Sneetches and Other Stories by Dr. Seuss

Race in Film: Do the Right Thing

Friday, January 8th at
7:00 pm

Each month, we will have a movie or documentary that involves race and racial experience with a discussion to follow. This month we view Spike Lee's movie Do the Right Thing.



From the Editor

NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

Newsletter Deadline is on the 15 of each month. Send info. to Dorothy Wilson

djjcw@sbcglobal.net and to Becky Green at church church@firstuualton.org

#staywoke

“What holds us separate?
What keeps us separated?
As we walk the street,
What still connects us?”

The Tenderloin District in San Francisco is notorious for being one of the poorest and dangerous places in the city. In the heart of this neighborhood is a retreat center called The Faithful Fools. Founded by a Franciscan Sister Carmen Barsody and a Unitarian Universalist Minister Kay Jorgensen, The Faithful Fools engages with the spiritual practice of encounter to raise awareness about poverty, homelessness, and the real life people impacted by both.

One Saturday morning, a group of us gathered at the Faithful Fools. We centered in a time of meditation and greeting. We were given the locations of soup kitchens. We could take with us a journal and a bottle of water. Otherwise, we were to spend the day finding what we needed within the confines of the area. We learned the mantra, “What holds us separate....” We then set forth on a day long journey through the tenderloin.

The Faithful Fools employs a form of justice practice that calls us in to direct relationship with that which we want to change. Injustice thrives on the lack of awareness or knowing of the “other’s” experience. News media exploit this lack of awareness for its’ selling potential of sensationalism. What we don’t know can hurt ourselves and others in a very literal sense. Most people presume that the Tenderloin (and places like it) are inherently dangerous and not a place you want to visit. When you walk the streets there, you realize that all this does is separate those in need of community support and change from those capable of bringing about that change.

It can be overwhelming thinking about all of the injustice in the world. All of us, at some point or another, feel the need to shut it away or to focus on other things. The number one travesty in social action work is the tendency for people of good will to give things that are not needed or to engage in justice actions that are not helpful. Perhaps we write to our legislators about reducing violence in a given neighborhood when what is most needed is a grocery store. Or perhaps we focus on the bad actions of a few rather than the positive actions of the many. We

see it in the #alllivesmatter campaign that makes a statement we can all agree with while ignoring the fact that black lives are not treated like the matter in many systemic ways.

The spiritual practice of encounter invites us to be in relationship with those who need justice. It invites those who do not experience the justice to say, “What do you need? How can I help?” As Unitarian Universalists, we prize relationship over hierarchy. We say yes to the inherent worth and dignity of every person AND the encouragement of one another in our spiritual growth. That encouragement requires relationship and direct engagement. We recognize that we are a part of an interdependent web which means that we are all impacted by injustice.

Many activists today use the hashtag- #staywoke- meaning stay awake to encourage activists to stay engaged. It is easy to be overwhelmed by all of the injustice and the many deeply engrained and intricate systems that maintain oppression. #staywoke is a spiritual practice of engagement- of presence- in the face of overwhelming odds. It invites us to remember how far we have come as much as how far we have to go. Justice is a journey that requires multiple lifetimes. #staywoke emboldens us to stay present to do our part in our lifetime so that lifetime upon lifetime brings healing and wholeness to the world.

We walked the streets that day. We spoke to folks in soup kitchens and on the street. We witnessed those who needed to take a bath at the local library bathrooms. We walked through the poorest and “most dangerous” part of San Francisco secure in the knowledge that connection breeds safety. We watched as human beings went through their daily lives and played chess and dominos, laughed and cried, and survived in the face of overpowering poverty. We were witnesses who through this encounter- this street retreat- were brought face to face with reality and lived to tell the tale. May you #staywoke in all that you do. May you meet and be present to those whom you serve in your personal prophetic work. May you know that you are needed and that you are enough. May you be blessed in this day and all of the days to come.

Rev. Sunshine J. Wolfe

**Church Potluck Lunch
January 3rd @ 11:30 am**

Gather 'round to share food and fellowship. Bring a dish to share and stay to help clean up, while enjoying your church community.



A sincere "thank you" to Bob Larson for purchasing a replacement storm window on the church and to Kelly Crone-Willis for installing it.



And our beautiful Christmas tree was paid for by Anna Ds' members. Mary Johnson made the purchase for the group and she and Jerry brought it to the church and set it up. Thank you to all involved!

**UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST UNITED
NATIONS OFFICE**

In 2016 our congregation intends to become a Congregational supporter of the UU UN Office in New York. That requires a contribution of at least \$100.

On January 24 any undesignated contributions in that Sunday's offering will be used for that purpose.

Contributions to support this effort also can be made at any time by noting that purpose on the envelope or on the check.

It is also possible to be an individual supporter of the UU UN Office. Envelopes to send such individual contributions to the UU UN Office are available in the Wuerker Room on a table or in the rack for brochures on the south wall.

Also at any time you can send an individual contribution for the UU-UNO to: Stewardship and Development, UUA, 24 Farnsworth Street, Boston MA 02210-1409. When you do that, please indicate that you are a member of this congregation and provide your e-mail address and your postal address.

You can get more information about the UU UN Office at <http://www.uua.org/international/un>. Ron Glossop, UU UNO Envoy for this congregation.

**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

Transitions Committee

Marcia Custer

Sayer Johnson

Sarah Lazarz

Social Events- Sayer Johnson

Interfaith and U.U.- TBA

Pastoral Associates

Marcia Custer

Sandra Shaner

Religious Education Council

Chair- Joy Hoeft

Nursery- Kayci Combs Lueker

Pre-K/Elementary- Ed Navarre

Youth- TBA

Adult- Pastor Sunshine Wolfe

Administrative- TBA

Search Committee 2015-16

Nancy Conniff (Chair)

Robyn Berkley

Kelly Crone-Willis

Phil Embree

Mary Johnson

Layne Simpson

Stewardship Committee

Building- Kelly Crone-Willis

Grounds- Robyn Stranquist

Canvass- TBA

Endowment Fund- Kelly Crone- Willis

Finance- Matt Koch

Membership- Mary Weber

Sunday Support Ministries- Claudia Harju

Worship Associates

Tom Cochran

Dee Evans

Joy Hoeft

Yomi Kinder

Mary Johnson

Sabrina Trupia



News from Your MSC (Ministerial Search Committee)

Happy New Year!!

Due to personal reasons, Ruth Maslow has decided to step away from the Ministerial Search Committee. We all share mutual feelings of best wishes. The Board is in the process of finding a replacement member. Please let Debby Lovell know if you have interest in this position.

The Ministerial Search Website is available to peruse starting this month! It is password protected, so you'll need to get that information from any member of the MSC if you'd like to look at this lovely introduction to our special place. It has the church survey and Congregational Record included, contains videos and pictures of the church and local sites, as well as wonderful information about First UU of Alton and the Alton area. Robyn Berkley did an incredible job, so be sure and thank her!

The exciting part of the ministerial search is starting to happen! We are waiting to hear from interested ministers searching for their next settled church. In regards to the next steps in the process, we had our third and final consultation via conference call with our Ministerial Settlement Representative, Rev. Emmy Lou Belcher. From late January through early February, the MSC will be contacting interested ministers, and will exchange informational packets, (i.e. our search website,) with those we think might reciprocate our interests and needs. The search committee will then evaluate their packets, hopefully being able to choose three or four pre-candidates to further interview and check their references. I told you—it's an exciting part!

To help you understand why we need to keep mum about the ministers under consideration and the details of committee business, the Settlement Handbook the UUA provides the MSC shares the following:

- 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 "leak" a minister's name can undermine their ability to serve the present congregation and will almost certainly damage our chances of attracting that potential candidate.

- When the identities of unsuccessful applicants are shared, it heightens the competitive aspect of the search process. This harms collegiality among ministers and can also create hard feelings among congregations when neighboring congregations compete for the same minister.
- It is harder to resolve differences among the members of a search committee when factions of the congregation are looking over our shoulders. It is better to resolve our differences in private.

Please remember that we will not be able to divulge names, locations, or personal information about the ministerial candidates when we have them and we are obliged to maintain this confidentiality. However, we are more than happy to discuss all procedural matters with members of our congregation. Please contact any of us on the search committee if you have questions!

Warm regards,
Nance Conniff
MSC Chair

Children's RE

The Nursery continues to need volunteers to help during Worship Service and then afterwards for Religious Education. Please contact Kayci for more information.

The kids in Spirit Play continue to enjoy listening to stories and associated play.

Elementary age kids continue to learn about UU principles and life skills by listening to Dr. Suess stories and activities. If you are interested in reading, contact Ed Navarre.

**Keep the Date
SEMI-ANNUAL
MEETING OF
CHURCH
MEMBERS**

**Sunday, January 24th,
following the service.**



INTEREST GROUPS:

Anna Ds – Women’s Alliance

January 7th, 11:30

Come join us at our winter hangout, Best Buffet in Wood River, across from Wal-Mart, address is 615 Wesley Drive, and the phone number is 618-258-1888. Let's hope for good weather on this day so we can visit together and catch up on what's happening. There's no need to RSVP. If the weather is good, I'll see you there. If the weather's bad, there's always the next month.



January’s 4th Saturday Lunch

January 23rd

11:00 am



We will need volunteers around 10am to help us set up, and servers to help with lunch, which begins promptly at 11:30am. We will also need help getting the personal care items distributed to our guests

On average, it costs us about \$100/month to feed our 4th Saturday guests and your past generosity is gratefully acknowledged. If you are able to make a donation to the 4th Saturday Lunch Fund for the meal, or Food Ministries generally, please send a check with Food Ministries written on it so Becky can deposit it and credit it to the appropriate account.

We also welcome ideas for where to get outside funds donated to our Food Ministries fund. If you know of an organization willing to make donations to worthy causes, please contact (robynberkley@yahoo.com) and let her know how we can go about soliciting a donation for support. A sign up list for volunteers and dessert items will be made available at church and will be posted on UU Friends Facebook site.

Free For All (formerly 50 Plus)

This group is on a winter hiatus for the months of December, January and February. On March 5th, we'll again take up the DVD series on UU history “**Long Strange Trip: A Journey Through Two Thousand Years of Unitarian History**”



Men’s Monthly Lunch

January 14, 11:30 a.m.

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

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, at 11:30 a.m. with the following date to be determined at each meeting. They will not meet in December.

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

Social Action Meeting

Are you interested and/or already supporting the social service and social justice work of the congregation? Please join us Sunday, January 17th, at 9:00 a.m. for a meeting to coordinate the various social service and justice initiatives of the congregation.



The Kitchen Klub – The “Wash, Dry, Put Away” program for kitchen and Wuerker Room cleanup seems to be working quite well. Rare is it to see dishes left in the sink or on the drain rack. Please

remember that “Wash, Dry, Put Away” is not only for coffee hour and potluck but for any meeting or gathering that is held at church. Everyone needs to help keep the kitchen and Wuerker Room neat.

Alton Area Cluster Book Club YOU'RE INVITED!



The Alton Area Cluster Book Club will meet on Thursday January 14th 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 meetings.



New Valances!

Thanks to the financial support of several church members, and the sewing skills of Nancy Conniff, we now have new window valances in the Kate Wuerker Room.

Mission and Vision Statement



All members will be able to vote on the Mission & Vision Statements during the January 24th congressional meeting.

The team appreciates all of the feedback they've received and welcomes additional input for another two weeks. The latest versions are as follows:

Mission:

Outward Reaching Inward Seeking

We are creating and nurturing an intentional community that values acceptance, social justice, and the embodiment of UU principles. Come, let us question together.

Vision:

Inclusivity: We welcome, create & sustain a diverse community of belief that finds its identity in shared UU principles.

Communication: We share our mission and activities well in a variety of formats within and outside our church community.

Education: We learn and teach at all ages and provide space for spiritual and community growth.

Social Justice: We work for social justice in Alton and beyond.

Celebration: We embrace and celebrate our community and our world.



**Board Meetings was held late in December.
Report will be combined with January's Board
report.**