

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

April 2016

THEME: TRANSFORMATION

Sunday Worship Service at 10:15 a.m.

Soulful Sundown Vespers Service on the 3rd Saturday at 4 p.m.

April Theme: TRANSFORMATION

Worship Services are held at 10:15 a.m. on Sunday. Sunday is an intergenerational service with more ritual, movement, a sermon, readings, and music. Soulful Sundown service is at 4:00 p.m. on the 3rd Saturday with meditation, silence, readings, and singing.

April 3 Chrysalis

With Rev. Sunshine Wolfe
Worship Associate Rebecca Walters

April 10 Life's Journey of Possibility

With Rev. Sunshine Wolfe
Worship Associate Robin Crane

April 16 Vespers

April 17 Abundance Sunday

With Rev. Sunshine Wolfe and Special Guest

April 24 Transformation

With Alison Reiheld
Worship Associate Joy Hoefl

April Monthly Theme: Transformation

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

Adult:

The Universe Story by Brian Swimme and Thomas Berry

Proverbs of Ashes: Violence, Redemptive Suffering, and the Search for What Saves Us by Dr. Rita Nakashima Brock and Rev. Dr. Rebecca Ann Parker

Youth:

Luna by Julie Anne Peters

Children:

The Very Hungry Caterpillar by Eric Carle

We Are All Seedlings

“In times of change, learners inherit the Earth, while the learned find themselves beautifully equipped to deal with a world that no longer exists.” - Eric Hoffer



When I was two years old, I wanted to have a garden like the one my parents made. My mom set aside a small space and we planted seeds. Each day, I would go out and water and, when it came time weed. Diligently I pulled the weeds which were actually the very plants that I had planted. The only plant to survive the carnage was a giant carrot (even my mother thought it was huge). I was so proud of my giant carrot that it mattered not at all that none of the other plants seemed to grow.

Much like gardens, transformation takes time and wisdom to understand. We can't just water and weed willy-nilly, but rather need to be focused on careful tending with patience. We also cannot pluck our transformation before it is complete. There is no rapid work around for the most significant changes in our lives and when complete, the transformation is as absolute as that of a seedling into a carrot. The carrot would barely recognize the seed from which it comes.

To be transformers, we need to let go of our protective shell and we need to be open to the truth that we will not be what we were before. Charles Darwin's theory of evolution teaches much of what we need to know about transformation. Survival is not dictated by the strongest or fastest or smartest, but rather by that being which is most able to adapt to change. Change is a scary thing. It asks us to let go of what we thought we knew to what we might become.

This congregation has been in a process of transformation- not as dramatic, but definitely as intense as any spiritual transformation. You have been invited to ask - who are we now? How did we change as a result of Rev. Khleber's leadership? What will we become? The interim time is like a chrysalis or the time perennials spend in the ground preparing for new growth. Change comes to every community. Its strength and transformation is dependent on those who show up, who recommit themselves time and again, and hold forth for the possibilities of what is to come. You are ready for the next path of this congregation's journey.

Eric Hoffer's words bring to mind one of the key truths for any organized community - those that thrive are learning organizations. Learning organizations let change

happen and face that change with the eyes of a learner-curious and empowered. Rather than focusing on what was known- they let the paradigm shifts lead them to new possibilities. A life well prepared for transformation invites us to be open to the possibilities in change through curiosity, openness, and hope.

May you seek through your life being every the budding seedling open to the new and the possible. May you support others as they face the transformations in their lives. May you know that you are not alone on this wild transformative journey called life.

Pastor Sunshine J. Wolfe

Church Potluck Lunch April 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.



We will have an intergenerational game activity to enjoy as well. Great fun for all!



Please remember to bring non-perishable foods to contribute to the Alton Crisis Food Pantry – It's the right thing to do.



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

ADULT RELIGIOUS ENRICHMENT (ARE)

Inspire Programs:

Intergenerational Games for Fun and Community April 3, 11:30 am

Join us for some intergenerational cooperative and community building games. Fun ways to get to know your UU neighbors within this community. We will have our monthly potluck first and then join together for some fun!

Enneagram for Daily Life

April 10, 11:30 am

This program will go deeper into the Enneagram with a focus on the relationships between the various motivational types. What do wings mean? How do we move towards unhealthy and health? This will be an opportunity to discuss your particular number in more depth. *Prerequisite:* Must have participated in an Enneagram Basics program or receive permission from Rev. Wolfe to attend this program.

Adult RE Class

April 10, 9:15 am in the Emerson Room

The Meaning of the 20th Century (1964) by Kenneth Boulding is the book to be discussed. Ron Glossop will lead the discussion of what he considers one of the most important books he has ever read. Boulding succinctly discusses the history of humanity and the two great transitions in how humans live, the second of which we are now living through.

“The Seekers”

April 17 & 24, 11:30 am in Emerson Place

The Seekers will meet for a discussion on the theme of the month: Transformation. Questions for discussion include: How does having children and subsequently grandchildren lead to transformation? Is it a transformation foisted upon you or are there choices involved? Do your children and grandchildren help create meaning in your life and influence your spiritual path? For those of us who do not have children, do children have any part in our spiritual path? Do we have any responsibility to the children of our church as we seek our own spiritual paths? Have your beliefs about life changed as you grow through the various stages of adulthood. It is suggested that taking a spiritual path should transform us in wise beings. Do you agree with this? And as we go through transformation, does wisdom mean that we have all the answers to life's mysteries? These questions are not meant to be answered in order. Rather, they are meant to guide our discussion.

Religious Education for Children and Youth Time Change! SUNDAY, APRIL 3rd!



Mark your calendar for the return to Children and Youth R.E. during worship. Children and youth will start in worship and then go to their R.E. classes. Parents and guardians, please note that classes will run until 11:30. We will have intergenerational worship once per month.

Race in Film: American History X

Friday, April 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. Living a life marked by violence and racism, neo-Nazi Derek

Vinyard (Edward Norton) finally goes to prison after killing two black youths who tried to steal his car. Upon his release, Derek vows to change his ways; he hopes to prevent his younger brother, Danny (Edward Furlong), who idolizes Derek, from following in his footsteps. As he struggles with his own deeply ingrained prejudices and watches their mother grow sicker, Derek wonders if his family can overcome a lifetime of hate.

IT'S COMING!
ABUNDANCE SUNDAY
APRIL 17th



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)

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.

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

Children's RE

Please contact Kayci to sign up to help in the nursery during service and afterwards for Religious Education.

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

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



SACRED GROUND Group Events



Sunday April 3rd after Services:
Mini Spring Clean Up Event.
All are invited to participate.

Saturday April 9th, 2016 from 9:00 a.m. till 12 noon Big Spring Clean-Up Event.

We will be cleaning garden beds, removing weeds and invasive species, picking up sticks and twigs, pruning, edging sidewalks and collecting trash. Please bring your favorite tools, paper bags and gloves. Contact Robyn Stranquist for more information. All are welcome.

Sunday April 24th after Services: **Youth Group Earth Day Event**

The Youth Group will be planting a Summer Garden. The group will assemble raised garden bed and plant summer flowers and vegetables. Please bring your favorite tools, paper bags and gloves. Contact Paul Fischer for more information. All are welcome.

Alton Area Cluster Book Club

YOU'RE INVITED!



The Alton Area Cluster Book Club will meet on Thursday April 21st. They will continue reading "*Ferguson & Faith: SparLasking Leadership & Awakening Community.*" One need not have read the book to attend as we will be reading it together at the meetings.

4th Saturday Program

Two Birds - Robyn B. And Robin C. - and a Sabrina are developing a schedule for Fourth Saturday Lunches. They need individuals or families to sign up ahead of time to handle just ONE Saturday meal, usually sandwiches and soup, except for winter weather when something more substantial is desirable.



Volunteer Lunch Leaders will be provided with checklists/job descriptions, safety procedures, a schedule, etc. Each Lunch Leader will be responsible for recruiting other volunteers, seeing that food is prepared, and overseeing the lunch service and distribution of personal care items. **ONLY FOR ONE DAY!**

This is a great chance to do something helpful for people who really need help and to do it for a limited time in the framework of a well-planned structure.

The planning team has Lunch Leaders for eight months and need someone(s) for:

- (1) Either May or June (waiting on Board to decide which they will do)
- (2) November, 2016
- (3) December, 2016
- (4) January, 2017
- (5) February, 2017
- (6) March, 2017

Please sign up on the clipboard in the Wuerker Room or e-mail Robin Crane at patriot4511@gmail.com.



Is It Your Turn?

If you've ever had a cup of coffee or tea, or a glass of water or lemonade, or had a snack during coffee hour, or enjoyed a potluck lunch at church, please take **YOUR** turn at doing coffee hour cleanup. It should not take more than 30 minutes to take care of the dishes following our policy of "wash, dry, and put away." There is a signup sheet for April through May on the desk in the Wuerker Room. Thanks!

Social Action

The Social Action Committee met Sunday morning, March 13. It was decided that there will be a Social Action Team whose members will focus on one or another of various kinds of issues. Ron Glossop volunteered to be in charge of international social action efforts which will be done basically through the UU-United Nations Office located very close to the UN in New York.



The UU-UN Office no longer has congregational memberships as it once did because the UU-UNO has been integrated into the UUA. Nevertheless, the UU-UNO does recognize some congregations to be **Blue Ribbon Congregations**. In order to qualify for this designation the congregation must meet 4 requirements.

- (1) One or more members must be a UU-UNO Envoy or an Envoy Team.
- (2) The congregation must hold at least one UN Sunday service.
- (3) At least 5% of the congregation's membership must make donations to the UU-UNO.
- (4) The congregation must make a designated financial contribution to UU-UNO either by having a line in the congregation's budget for the UU-UNO or by having a special collection for the UU-UNO which equals about \$1 per member.

Ron Glossop has been our congregation's Envoy for UU-UNO for several years, and he would welcome others to become a team. Our congregation celebrated UN Sunday October 25, 2015. Since First UU of Alton has just over 100 members, to become a **UU-UNO Blue Ribbon Congregation** we would need at least 6 members individually contributing to UU-UNO and would need to make a congregational contribution of about \$100 a year.

The deadline for being designated a **UU-UNO Blue Ribbon Congregation**, something which is recognized at the annual UUA Assembly, is March 31. I hope that we can make it this year or next. You can find out about the great work being done by the UU-UNO, including its April 7-9 intergenerational spring seminar, at <http://www.uua.org/international/un>.

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- Robin Crane & Michael Schmidt
Endowment Fund- Kelly Crone-Willis
Finance- Matt Koch
Membership- Mary Weber
Sunday Support Ministries- Claudia Harju

Worship Associates

Tom Cochran
Robin Crane
Dee Evans
Joy Hoeft
Yomi Kinder
Rebecca Walters

2016 MidAmerica UUA Regional Assembly
Friday, April 29 @ 4 p.m.
to Sunday, May 1 @ – 1:00 p.m.



*“The WHO in the New Era of
Unitarian Universalism”*
Intercontinental Crowne
Plaza, 11 East Kellogg Blvd.,
St. Paul MN 55101

Regional Assembly will be from April 29th -May 1st in St. Paul, MN. Guest Speakers Rev. Elizabeth Nguyen, Rev. Jeremy Nickel, and Kenny Wiley will present on the future of Unitarian Universalism and the ways we are living into that future. If you would like to be a delegate at Regional Assembly, please contact Debby Lovell or Pastor Sunshine. All are invited to attend. To register go to <https://www.midamericauua.org/events/regional-assembly> .



General Assembly 2016 Is in Columbus, OH!

Unitarian Universalist General Assembly will be from June 22nd-26th. This is a great opportunity to meet UUs from all over the world and to get jazzed about the many ways our religion lives in the world. This year's Ware Lecture will be given by Krista Tippet, the host of the Public Radio show "On Being." There are many ways to participate in General Assembly including online and in-person. If you wish to be a delegate (online or in-person), please contact Debby Lovell or Pastor Sunshine ASAP. For those attending 1 day or all of the days, please know that housing reservations begin March 1st from the UUA website at www.uua.org/ga .

News from your Board

Debby Lovell, Pres; Dee Evans, VP; Sabrina Trupia, Immediate Past Pres.; Pat Moore, Sec.; Lisa Strangeman, Treasurer; Paul Hebert and Paul Fischer, members at large.

Summary of March 8, 2016 Board Meeting

The Board accepted the Feb. meeting minutes and the Search Committee Report as written. The Search Committee is waiting for the second round of applications from ministers searching for congregations. Rev. Wolfe says he is sure we will have interested ministers. If no interested members are deemed appropriate for our congregation, the Board will need to hire an Interim minister for another year. We will begin that search, just in case. Send positive thoughts and prayers to our committee for a successful search. The second round will begin in late April.

Rev. Wolfe gave a very thorough and positive report regarding gher ongoing efforts in the areas of Heritage (improving church records), Leadership (social action, worship associates, pastoral associates, RE council, implementation of new church structure), Mission (Abundance Sunday plans, HERE Covenant, Race in Film series) Connections (Advocacy Network Illinois involvement, Lenten Luncheons, Websites), and Future (Working with folks who are anxious about changes, plans for a going away party).

The treasurer gave a monthly and year-to-date of where we stand financially. We are currently somewhat behind on pledge collections right now. Since this money was expected in order to meet our budget, it's important for folks to keep up with their promised pledges. If you have a problem with this, talk to our treasurer Lisa Strangeman or to pastor Sunshine. We budgeted \$3000 as expected money from fundraisers, so Paul F. and Sayer are considering doing a trivia night and pastor Sunshine will sponsor a cakewalk after church on April 3.

We got our first look at a new policy on child and youth protection. This is available to read on Google Docs, and you can talk to any Board members if you have further suggestions.

We are getting one additional bid on roof repairs for our towers, and are having one bid revised to be for repairs only. The Board should be able to make a decision next month and get the repairs started.

The Board agreed to support the candidacy of Rev. Susan Frederick-Gray as the new UUA president. Rev. Gray is from Kirkwood. Since she was introduced after the Feb. 1 deadline, she needed at least 25 churches to support her

candidacy, according to UUA By-law. The final election will be held at the General Assembly in Columbus, Ohio in June. If you are interested in attending GA or the Regional UUMA Assembly in St. Paul, MN, May 18-20, talk to pastor Sunshine about whether you want to be a voting member.

President Debby Lovell will help coordinate our participation in the annual St. Louis Pride Parade in June. You will be hearing more about our role as the time comes to march. We were the first UU church in the area to participate, so let's keep up our tradition of strong participation.

Our annual Abundant Sunday will be on April 17. Be thinking of what you can pledge to the work of the church for this coming year.

Dee Evans led the cleanup of our basement area. Thanks to all who helped with that. We would like to plan more work days to update the looks of our church, inside and out, before we host any potential new minister.

The next Board meeting will be April 12, and our annual meeting will be planned soon. Be watching for a firm date.

Pat Moore

Board Secretary

Remember, if you have any questions about things going on at the church, please ask a Board member or Rev. Wolfe. We are YOUR board, and we want to serve YOU. Anyone may attend Board meetings. Our next meeting will be April 12 at 7:00 PM.

"History Extravaganza" Trivia Night Friday, May 20 7:00 pm



night.

From UU history to local Alton history to fabulous "historical" 1980s music - join us for this all-ages fun filled

- \$20 a person, tables of 8 may purchase an entire table for \$150.00!!
 - 8 rounds of 10 questions, including photo challenge round and name that 80's tune!!
 - BYOB We will have popcorn and soda.
 - Costumes and theme tables are encouraged!! Represent your favorite era!
 - Silent Auction. We are looking for items. Please see Paul Fisher or Sayer Johnson for details.
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Happy Spring, everyone!

Don't give up quite yet!! Many congregations will not choose ministers that interviewed in the first round and this opens up the availability of prospective settled ministers for us! We've recently heard from several reliable sources that there are ministers interested in our special place!!

In April, the second round of applications begins. Names of interested ministers will be released by the UUA Transitions Office to congregations April 22nd through the 29th if they are thought to be a good fit to the church for which they've applied. The MSC will conduct phone interviews the last week of April and the first week of May. We will then schedule pre-candidating weekend(s), where the committee will interview and get to know any applicants that seem to mesh with the congregation's ideals, needs and goals. This will be followed by the candidating week, where the prospective minister meets with the congregation in depth, provides us with a sermon, and then is voted upon by active members of the congregation. (Hint—if you've been thinking about becoming a member of our church, this might be the impetus to join!!!)

In the second round, search committees may set their own pace with all of these obligations, and there aren't strict deadlines to meet. However, we cannot lollygag as we must allow time if there is to be an interim search. We're truly hoping we don't come to that, but if the "right" person has not come along, be rest assured that we won't settle just to fill the pulpit.

Please remember that we will not be able to divulge names, locations, or personal information about the ministerial candidates 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! As a reminder, that includes Robyn Berkley, Kelly Crone-Willis, Phil Embree, Mary Johnson, Layne Simpson, and me.

With warm regards,
Nance Conniff
MSC Chair

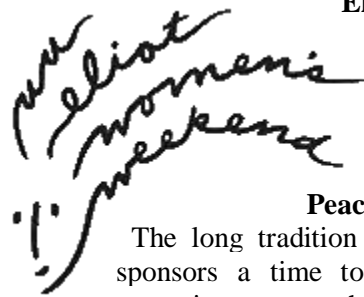


**Wild Woman Retreat
Saturday, April 2**

Another Wild Woman Retreat is planned for Saturday, **April 2** at the Torqua / Girl Scout site 3 miles north of Edwardsville. A variety of workshops, massage, walks in the woods, great food, campfire, drumming, spontaneous music and many other lovely options are planned! This event is open to all women in our church and communities ... please contact Peg Flach for details

**Eliot Chapel Women's
Weekend**

**Friday, April 22 -
Sunday, April 24**



**The 2016 theme is
Peace, Love and Sisterhood**

The long tradition continues - Eliot Chapel sponsors a time to retreat, relax, and find community among other women. Please join us on April 22 - 24, 2016 at Toddhall Retreat Center, located in Columbia, IL approximately 20 miles from Kirkwood, MO. The registration deadline is Sunday March 29, 2016. You have a choice to spend one night, two nights or just come for the day. Women's Weekend features a wonderful variety of workshops, Sunday service, a White Elephant Sale, a BYOB Wine Tasting, massage, icebreaker and board games, great food, line dancing, bonfire and songs, and time for relaxation and socializing. This retreat is open to all UU women and friends. We especially invite women from Alton, Emerson, First UU of St Louis and UU Church of Springfield to join us.

<http://www.eliotwomensweekend.com>

INTEREST GROUPS:

Anna Ds – Women’s Alliance

April 7th, 11:30 am

Joan Hashimi has volunteered to host us at Bella Milano, so please respond to her (by e-mail: jhashimi@sbcglobal.net or by phone), by April 4 so she can confirm the reservation. The address for Bella Milano is 1063 South State Route 157; Edwardsville, IL 62025, and their phone number is 618-659-2100.



Men’s Monthly Lunch

April 14th, 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



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.

April 23rd Fourth Saturday Outreach Event



4th Saturday Luncheon and Personal Care Item Distribution Serving starts at 11:30

Our youth group has volunteered to be help in March but will require additional help. Please contact Paul Fischer to find out what you can do to support this important mission of our church.

Another meeting will be held in April to discuss the direction of this ministry. Meals, most likely, and product distribution will continue for now.

Free For All (formerly 50 Plus) April 2nd at 10:30 am



On April 2nd at 10:30 a.m., we’ll again take up the DVD series on UU history “**Long Strange Trip: A Journey Through Two Thousand Years of Unitarian 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.

We’re making great progress through the UU DVD series, with Section V scheduled for this Saturday. I think Paul Hebert will again set up the system (or Jerry Johnson will) so we can learn more about UUA history. Part V follows both Unitarianism and Universalism through the late 19th and early 20th centuries as they evolve, from Christian bible-oriented religions to our present-day non-creedal movement. It discusses influences as diverse as the Civil War, Feminism and Suffrage, Darwin's "On The Origin of Species," and the Social Gospel.

Hope to see you there.

Sandy