

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

June 2016

Sunday Worship Service at 10:15 a.m.

Soulful Sundown Vespers Service on the 3rd Saturday at 4 pm

No monthly themes from June to August.

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

June 5 Your Gifts, Your Ministry

With Rev. Sunshine Wolfe and Yomi Kinder

June 12 Non Ministrare Sed Ministrare:

The Role of the Minister

With Rev. Sunshine Wolfe and Dee Evans

June 18 Vespers

June 19 Bring It On - A Vision for

First Unitarian Church of Alton In 2040

With Rev. Sunshine Wolfe and Rebecca Walters

June 26 Change, Challenge, and Dedication

With Dee Evans Preaching and
Worship Associate Robin Crane

**Congregational Meeting
on June 5th, following service.**

ADULT RELIGIOUS ENRICHMENT (ARE)

“The Seekers”

We will begin our summer schedule; each week a topic for discussion will be pulled from a jar. Come join our always lively and loving exchange of ideas, support, and encouragement.



**Religious Education for
Children and Youth**
Will be on summer schedule –
no classes until fall.

A Beacon of Hope

“Your gifts

*Whatever you discover them to be
Can be used to bless or curse the world...
Choose to bless the world.”*

Rev. Dr. Rebecca Ann Parker

Our world needs love.
Our world needs communities of hope.
Our world needs you and us.

Occasionally, I am asked to give my elevator speech on Unitarian Universalism and the three sentences above is really the speech. It can be said before the elevator door ever closes, but it takes a lifetime - a cohort and series of lifetimes to achieve. This congregation lives this wisdom.

I don't know what messages you will carry with you from my time here, but I hope that you take in part that idea of being a “learning organization.” Learning organizations do not look at success and failure. They look at excellence and improvement. They hone strengths and respond to weaknesses. They see each imperfect moment as a moment to grow. In other words, they focus on hope and potential.

This congregation holds many strengths. You already see your community as expansive - as an *OUR* community that includes all who walk in our doors and all who might walk in our doors. You live love with each other - however messy it maybe - care and concern are present. You do not engage in codependent behavior where love is conditional. Rather, love is given freely and openly. You are a community.

You are a community of hope. You engage in creativity and curiosity with ease. You hold your heart open to possibilities. You do not expect that all of the congregation's programs will meet every person's needs. Rather you hope everyone will find something of value to their spirits and lives.

It is easy to talk about the growing edges, the things to work on, the things that don't go well. This congregation is a little too good at talking about these things at times. It isn't that we shouldn't talk about them because goodness knows we do. It is that we should be at least as good at talking about what we do well as what we have to work on.

Dr. Parker invites us to choose to bless the world. To bless the world, you must be able to identify your gifts - both personally and as a congregation. Highlight those gifts. Let them be a beacon of light in a world that needs beacons of hope. People will not join this congregation because of all of the learning it needs to do. It will join the congregation to celebrate in community, hope, love, and gifts. Alton and St. Louis

and Illinois and Missouri need your beacon in these trying times. How will you shine it out into the world?

Pastor Sunshine J. Wolfe



The Stewardship Committee would like to acknowledge the hard work of three team leaders:

The Abundance Team Leaders have worked extremely hard to see that we had an emphasis on giving as part of our Spiritual Path and as part of building our church so that we can carry out our vision within our church and in the greater community. It is with great appreciation that we thank Robin Crane and Michael Schmidt.

Look at our grounds. Flowers are blooming, weeds are culled, the youth beds with herbs and vegetables are planted. Robyn Stranquist has led the charge and got all this accomplished. No wonder she calls it the Sacred Grounds team. Thank you to the mighty Robyn who has created such beauty.

Church Potluck Lunch June 5 @ 11:30 am

This month we'll have Congressional Meeting following our potluck dinner. Please take part - bring a dish to share and stay for our semi-annual church governmental meeting.



From the Editor
dijccw@sbcglobal.net
church@firstuualton.org

NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

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

and to Becky Green at church

Welcome Our New Accompanist!



Please join us on Sunday, June 5th, as we welcome our new Accompanist, Nicole Robbins. Nicole has a Bachelor's degree with a major in Music from Washington University, more than a decade of experience in accompanying congregations, and more than fifteen years teaching piano and voice. During her interview she played a beautiful piece and showed great skills in sight reading. Joy Hoeft and I were excited to offer her the position. Please offer a warm welcome to her when you see here at church.



The Kitchen Klub – The “Wash, Dry, Put Away” program for kitchen and Wuerker Room cleanup seems to 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.

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)



Bollywood Dinner on June 10th

Please join us for this fun and yummy fundraiser for the church. Pastor Sunshine will cook curry, naan, and lassis. After dinner, we will watch the film Monsoon Wedding. Cost for the dinner is \$20 per person - children and youth 17 and under eat free. If you are unable to afford this amount, do not fret - please pay what you can. All proceeds will go to the First Unitarian Church of Alton. If you need nursery care, please RSVP by June 6th. You can sign-up at church on June 5th or via this sign-up website:

<http://www.signupgenius.com/go/4090d4aacab2aa4ff2-bollywood>

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.”



A GREAT SUCCESS!

Thanks to Sayer, Paul, and Rebecca for their efforts and time and sense of humor in putting together the fund

raiser. Thanks to everyone for designing questions. Not only did we make nearly \$1,200, also on Sunday morning every one commented on what a great time they had. And when people ask if we can do this again--that is a measure of true success.



Despite best efforts, the search for our settled minister did not yield fruit. We should not view this as a failure of the committee or a failure for the church. As the ministerial settlement handbook points out, the only failure is to call a minister who is a poor match for our congregation. Any other result is preferable to that.



Knowing we were in a tough climate for finding our settled minister, the board initiated a parallel search for a new interim in late April. Round one started May 9. Dee Evans, Pat Moore and Debby Lovell comprise the interim search team. The plan is to engage a new interim for another year (we cannot keep Rev. Sunshine according to a UUA limit) and to form a new ministerial search committee to find a settled minister for next year.

As we move forward, we hope you will be extra welcoming as the members of the ministerial search committee return to the congregation as "civilians." If you feel disappointed by this result, imagine how they feel. The committee did a huge job that will provide us a blueprint for the future. We will thank them and officially release them from their duties during the June 5 worship service. Please join us.

Sincerely,
The Board of Trustees
First Unitarian Church of Alton

4th Saturday Lunches:

Due to the on-going shortage of volunteers to cook, serve and clean up, we may not have a luncheon in June or July. However, we would probably continue to distribute personal care items. This would require fewer volunteers and is a much needed and unique service that no one else in our region provides. More information will be forthcoming.



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

SAVE THE DATE!



When: Saturday, June 25 at 7:30 PM

Where: Our church sanctuary

Who: Krista Tippet, winner of the National Humanities award and creator and host of NPR's "On Being" and "Speaking of Faith"

And finally "**What**" – Ms. Tippet is delivering the Ware Lecture at General Assembly and we will be doing a live stream of her talk.

Since we all can't attend General Assembly, we can still see one of the most anticipated events. We will have light refreshments afterward and probably some lively discussions as well. Also, members are very welcome to invite anyone else who might like to have the opportunity to see and hear Ms. Tippet's lecture. If you have any questions, contact Mary Weber – mary.weber3@gmail.com.

Sacred Grounds Group

June Event: Big Spring Clean Up



Saturday June 18, 2016 from 9:00 a.m. till 12 noon. We will be planting annuals, 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. Come for one-half hour or an hour or any time you can spare. All are welcome.

Please help increase our "curb appeal" for new members. If your spirit or body does not allow you to do yard work please consider donating a small sum toward the purchase of plants, mulch, tools, paint for railings or other permanent improvements. Contact Robyn Stranquist rlstranquist@gmail.com for more information.

Meet with Pastor Sunshine

If you would like to meet with Pastor Sunshine before she goes on vacation on July 7th, please contact her through church office or via e-mail at swolfe@uuma.org.

Campfest 2016!

Friday July 22 from 3pm till Sunday July 24 at 5pm. All ages cooperative camping experience. Cost is \$30 per person. Includes rustic shared cabins meals activities and a private pool.

Email sayerjohnson@gmail.com for more information. Reservations and payment due by July 1.



Summary of May11, 2016 Meeting

Board of the First Unitarian Church of Alton

Rev. Wolfe reported that he is working on correcting the problem with the minister's discretionary fund that was created by an error in bookkeeping.

The Board will be doing assessments that Rev. Wolfe needs for his final fellowship with the UUA.

The Bollywood Dinner and Potluck given by Rev. Wolfe as a fundraiser will be June 10.

We will be working on ideas of ways to celebrate new members, possibly at monthly potlucks.

Debby Lovell is taking over the website upkeep when Rev. Wolfe leaves us.

Treasurer Lisa Strangeman reported that not all members have turned in their pledges. So far our pledges are less than last year. All members should pledge whatever they can in order to help with funding the budget. This is a responsibility of membership.

We had been borrowing money from our reserve fund to pay an RE director, so we should start thinking of returning money to that fund, possibly with a monthly payment from our working funds.

We have used about \$7000 from the Capital Campaign to pay for painting the sanctuary, and we will apply the last \$3200 from that fund to pay for roofing our towers. The Board has approved a roofer for the project, but is waiting to hire them until we are sure we have enough money left to pay the remaining \$1400.

The Board has approved a policy regarding General Assembly voting. Delegates will be allowed to vote their own conscience, keeping in mind the ideals of out congregation.

Sandy Shaner is working on wording for a policy regarding qualifications for church leadership and also one regarding the bank accounts. The Bank requires a complicated process of how we add or subtract names from our accounts.

The equation used to take an annual donation from the Endowment Fund has been taken from the by-laws to a policy statement.

We have also directed Sandy to add the job of assistant treasurer to our by-laws and to write up a way to stagger the offices to add the co-treasurer. The co-(assistant) treasurer would have time to learn the job before becoming the treasurer.

New policies will be submitted to the congregation for voting at our annual meeting on June 5.

We plan a formal ceremony to thank the Ministerial Search Committee for their hard work. Although they did not find a settled minister this year, they learned a lot about what will be needed for next year's search. We are a great congregation with a lot to offer for one of our size, but there were just too many churches in search this year. We want to wait until we can find a great match for us.

Sabrina Trupia is heading the nominating committee, looking for 2 new board members, one who will assume the Vice-Presidency. We will vote on that slate at the June 5 meeting. The committee will also be searching for folks interested in serving on next year's Ministerial Search Committee.

The 4th Saturday Lunch program is going well. We still need groups or families to sign up for a month to be in charge. Continue to support this social action project by donating food and/or personal care items, by donating money, and by showing up to help. In the future we may be working with other churches in the area to divide the meal responsibilities.

One more group has been approved too use our church as a part of their Haunted Alton Tours. The Minister suggests that we charge all tours more per person, since our beautiful old building is a feature of their tours, so he and Becky will work on that.

Four people from Alton will be attending General Assembly. 2 of them will be our official delegates.

Krista Tippit from NPR is giving the Ware Lecture on June 25. We will have a watch party at church, with a potluck preceding the lecture. Other congregations from the area will be invited to join us. It is Saturday, June 24 at 6:00 pm, with dinner at 5:00.

Dee Evans is working on the organization of teams to handle the work of the church. See Dee if you are wondering where you can use you unique talents to support our cause.

We are still using Schnucks Cards to support the church. It's been a long time since we started this program, so new folks may need to learn about it, and

others may need reminding. All you need to do is ask at Schnucks for a card, then go online to sign up your card to our account. Then, each time you shop and show your card, our church receives ½ percent of your total bill. That's all that is necessary. If 50 families spent \$100 per week, we would get \$1300 per year of easy money. That's like having another pledging "ghost family" member!

The next Board Meeting is June 14. Any member may attend.

REMEMBER:

- ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING (And POTLUCK) JUNE 5
- Bollywood Party June 11
- Sunshine's Last Sermon June 19
- Ware Lecture and Dinner June 24
- Alton Fireworks from our lawn July 3

Minister's Discretionary Fund

In April, our Bookkeeper, Becky Green, discovered that the way that the Minister's Discretionary Fund was set-up in Quickbooks (by a consultant who was hired to do so in 2012) led to misinformation and confusion as to how much money was in the account. After auditing the account, Becky determined that the account is at \$-800. This was the result of an accounting error which has now been fixed. In the meantime, we are at a negative amount for the fund.

The Minister's Discretionary Fund has federal guidelines that direct how and where the money can be spent. It cannot be used to cover general fund expenses or for any programs of the church. It is specifically designed to provide financial assistance to individuals within and outside of the congregation. This could mean many things and is up to the minister to determine how the money is given out. In the two years that Pastor Sunshine has been here, the fund has supported five members of the congregation and four members of the community to cover urgent financial needs.

The congregation replenishes the fund on Christmas Eve and through the collection on the fifth Sunday of the month when that occurs. If you have questions or would like to provide financial support to bring the fund back into a positive balance, please contact Pastor Sunshine Wolfe or Becky Green.

**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. - Vacant

Pastoral Associates

Marcia Custer
Sandra Shaner

Religious Education Council

Chair-Joy Hoeft

Nursery - Kayci Combs Lueker

Pre-K/Elementary - Ed Navarre

Youth - Vacant

Adult - Pastor Sunshine Wolfe

Administrative - Vacant

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

Pastor Sunshine's Travel Schedule

Pastor Sunshine will be away from June 20th to June 29th to attend Ministry Days and General Assembly. Ghe will be available via e-mail and phone for emergencies.

Bookkeeping Help

Please use the envelopes available in the pews for cash donations that are designated as pledges or for specific funds like for the Minister's Discretionary Fund, 4th Saturday Lunches, Sacred Grounds, etc. Write this information along with your name on the envelope. All other undesignated or unrestricted cash donations can be placed in the collection plates.

Also, please make sure that all checks and envelopes have the pledge year in the memo line. That is especially needed this time of year when some are paying the balance on their 2015 - 2016 pledges and some are paying towards their 2016 - 2017 pledges.

Thank you, Becky Green, Administrator & Bookkeeper

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 Tippett, the host of the Public Radio show "On Being." There are many ways to participate in General Assembly including online and in-person. UUA website www.uua.org/ga.

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

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.

INTEREST GROUPS:

Anna Ds – Women's Alliance June 2nd, 11:30 am

We will meet on Thursday, June 2, at 11:30 am. We'll be at someplace new to many of us, which has a great lunch menu and a HUGE room to enjoy, The Old Bakery Beer Company at 400 Landmarks Blvd, Alton, IL 62002 (Phone:(618) 463-1470).

<http://www.oldbakerybeer.com/>

Sandy Shaner will handle the reservation. Please contact me by Friday, May 27. Although latecomers would be most welcome.



Men's Monthly Lunch June 9th, 11:30 am

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



Free For All June 4th @ 10:30 am

The final episode in our UU history series is Part VI: "Unitarian Universalism" This film tells the story of the century-long "courtship" between Unitarianism and Universalism as a classic love story - "boy meets girl, boy loses girl, boy gets girl." It details how they "courted" each other, sought out other partners, and finally consummated the merger. It discusses how Humanism helped bring the two movements closer together, and the role that Liberal Religious Education, especially Sophia Lyon Fahs, had on laying the groundwork for the merger. It then follows Unitarian Universalism through the 50 years of its existence and ends with some personal comments on what its future might hold.