

FIRST UNITARIAN FOCUS



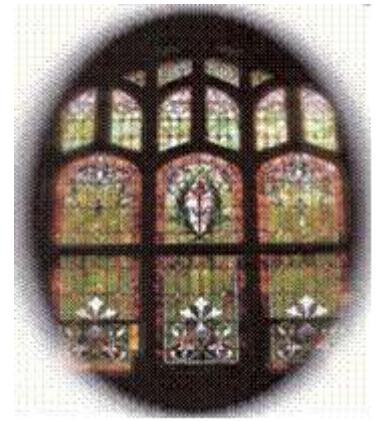
Photo by Rev. Sunshine Wolfe, 2015

Newsletter of the

First Unitarian Church

Alton, Illinois

www.firstuualton.org



Rev. Dawn Fortune

Sunday Worship 10:00 A.M. The Theme for January Is Reason

January 1st – No Services – New Year’s Day

January 8th 10:A.M.
“*The New Year’s Beacon Beckons*”
All Worship Associate – New Year Celebration

January 15th 10:00 A.M.
Rev. Dawn Fortune
Worship Associate: Yomi Kinder

Semi-annual member meeting follows service

January 22nd 10:00 A.M.
Alison Reiheld
Worship Associate: Robin Crane

January 29th 10:00 A.M.
Rev. Dawn Fortune
Worship Associate: Kayci Combs-Lueker

SEMI-ANNUAL CHURCH MEETING
JANUARY 15, 2017
11:30 AM

Religious Education for Children and Youth

Youth Group will continue with the Popcorn Theology curriculum. We are still looking for volunteers to help facilitate the classes.

Elementary classes are continuing with the UU Super Heroes: Bible People curriculum. Elementary classes are also looking for volunteers to teach or be a second person in class.

Please consider getting involved with the Children's RE and Youth Group. We have some super kids in this church. They are our church's future and we need to nurture their spiritual education.

We have had very few volunteers these past few months, Jennifer Lewis and I have been "holding down the fort" so to speak to make RE happen. Please email or call Joy Hoeft (kjabhoeft@gmail.com) with questions or to volunteer. There will be no Children's RE or Youth Group on January 8th, but please come to church for our New Years' Service by Worship Associates.

Joy Hoeft

**Nursery services are
available for children
under 4 years of age.**





From the Prez

The sidewalks and driveway are still covered with snow and ice. The streets are clear. The temperature is 22 degrees. Winter is here. At least for a while. After December 21, the

amount of daylight grows each day. That gives me hope that we will resolve our budget shortfall. Tracking shows that April is the month that pledges are caught up.

That does not mean we will not have a deficit. What it does mean is that we have a lot of work to do. Financially, we are keeping track of every expense thanks to the help of our administrator, Becky. The result of this should be a budget based on expenses that we actually have rather than on assigned categories of expenses. We will also start the budgeting process earlier this year.

The other sign of hope is that the pews are now filling up with adults and children. I was excited to see our pews filled on our 180th anniversary. Excited about the history presentation by Mary Johnson and its reception by our congregation. I knew that was a special day and tried to be realistic about how full the pews would be the following week. Yes, the pews were not as full the next week, but they were fuller than they had been and seem to be growing every week. We are growing.

The membership committee, in the faces of Mary Weber and Ruth Maskow, are making sure every visitor is greeted and welcomed. Note to self: Follow their example and welcome visitors and welcome back visitors on their subsequent visits. We are planning more parties and fund raisers to share with one another. I wrote "fun" fundraisers and Google corrected me. But I think I was correct and Google is wrong. Look for Mary Weber to be making an announcement about a shared easy meal party and Sayer and Paul to bring us a "fun" raiser.

Our new ministerial search committee is formed and starting. Expect them to come to you for your opinion about what you want in a minister. We will be expecting a part time minister hopefully with a contract possibility to renew the next year. We are not looking for another interim.

So many people have commented on the light that Kelly installed and the safety it provides at night. Thanks, Kelly.

Snow removal and ice melt placement are not contracted out. So, we are requesting that if you can shovel snow early Sunday morning (before ten) and put down ice melt

that would be great. An alternative is to donate to the budget for snow removal.

Please do not forget to thank Michael Tarabulski, Phil Embree, and Jerry Johnson for seeing that we have coffee, tea, and other drinks every week. If goodies are donated, they put them out.

Be safe, enjoy, the holidays. Please contact your board members either individually or by coming to the board meeting to share your ideas to help us carry out our mission and vision.

Dee

Ministerial Search Team

The Board of Trustees of the First Unitarian Church of Alton would like to announce the members of our new ministerial search team:

Tracey Howe-Koch, Patricia Murrell, and Christopher Strangeman.



In these times, our church and faith are so important, providing a refuge, guidance, and opportunities to work in community for a better world. We so appreciate these individuals' willingness to help our congregation be the community we aspire to be.

The board has decided that we will look for a half-time minister for next year. This decision is largely financial; that is the level we can reach while still offering fair compensation for the position. Because of this, we'll be looking for a contract minister. This would not be a "calling" of a minister though we would be able to do that in a few years if the minister works out and we're financially able.

Because of the narrowing of scope of the search and the work that has previously been done, we feel that a three person team could handle this. Organizational people at the UUA recommended the same.

We plan to have our new minister start August 1, 2017.



**General Assembly 2017
New Orleans, LA
June 21-25, 2017**

A new UUA President will be chosen at this summer's GA. There are three candidates, all women:

Alison Miller, Susan Frederick-Gray and Jeanne Pupke.

Visit www.uuworld.org/uuavote2017 to learn more.

A MONEY REPORT FOR THE HOLIDAYS



A Joyous Holiday and Happy
New Year to All!

With increasing confidence, the Board continues to look closely at income and expenditures. We see our way to ending the fiscal year with most of our Reserve Fund intact to help us out with next year's expenses.

Our best, and conservative, analysis suggests that we could close our fiscal year on June 30 with a \$20,000 deficit. If pledge fulfillment picked up so that every one of our pledging households were able to complete their pledge commitment AND if fund-raisers came up to budget, we could cut that deficit to \$15,000. We have enough cash on hand to cover that and, therefore, may not have to dip very far into our \$21,000 Reserve Fund. (We might have to use the Fund, but only temporarily to avoid cash-flow problems that would cause checks to bounce.)

It continues to look as if we will need to continue into the next fiscal year with a half-time minister.

The causes of the deficit are quite explicable:

- (1) Contracted personnel costs were finalized after the original budget was prepared, and they exceeded the original budgeted amounts.
- (2) For one-month as we transitioned from Sunshine's leadership to Dawn's, our ministerial costs overlapped, temporarily doubling.
- (3) We found that, in order to attract a new minister, we had to raise our ministerial salary and benefits (though at half-time equivalent) to meet UUA standards; what we had been offering was not competitive.
- (4) The roof repair exceeded the money in the capital fund.
- (5) This year only 48 families pledged, and that just isn't enough to support our needs.
- (6) The total value of pledges this year was lower than in prior years.

The Board continues to monitor expenditures and revenues closely, and we feel that we are developing a much better handle on our financial situation. We are most grateful to Becky Green, Church Administrator, who has had to teach herself bookkeeping and compensate for some shortcomings in our budget process. Gradually, we all are coming to a much more precise understanding of our financial situation and our options for the future.

While deficits are always unpleasant news, we remember with gratitude those earlier generations of church

members who left us a church building unencumbered with debt. We are also grateful for the other, larger St. Louis area UU churches which, a few years ago, helped us out with our finances. Their gifts enabled us to establish the Reserve Fund which now cushions our budget. We keep going, despite our small size, due to their generosity.

E-mails and letters are going out in late December or early January to update all pledging families on giving patterns to date. At this point in the year, some families are ahead and some are behind a proportional fulfillment of their annual pledges. If we all could catch up on pledge contributions, that would help maintain our current balances, so we wouldn't have to dip into the Reserve.

We approach the New Year with hope and growing confidence. And we sincerely thank all those who volunteer for the church's activities and help organize our combined fun-and-fund-raisers. We are ALL, for each other, the "wind beneath our wings."

Submitted by Robin Crane, on behalf of the Board of Trustees

Alton Area Cluster Book Group

The Alton Area Cluster Book Group continues its reading of "*Waking Up White and Finding Myself in the Story of Race*" by Debby Irving. The Group meets the 3rd Thursday of each month from 3 to 5 p.m. at the church. You do not need



to have read the book or have your own copy of the book as we read the book aloud, passing copies around, and stopping often to discuss a point or topic. The next gathering will be on January 19. If you are interested in attending, or getting on the group email list, contact Mary Johnson. mejohanson@mindspring.com



Soup's On!!

— on Friday, January 20.
Come join us at 6:30 for
some hot soup, good
conversation and a fun
raffle.

Watch for more details on
UU Friends and in our
church announcements.



If you are interested in joining our congregation, please contact Reverend Dawn Fortune through their e-mail: revdawnfortune@gmail.com or by cell phone (314) 399-1023.



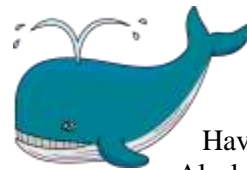
Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America will be hosting a film screening at our church on **Wednesday, January 11th at 6:45pm**

They will be showing the film "The Armor of Light" followed by light snacks and a discussion afterwards. They would like to encourage anyone interested in this subject to attend regardless of whether or not you are a parent. Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America is the grassroots arm of Everytown for Gun Safety. Moms aims to address the scourge of gun deaths in the U.S. with common-sense reforms that do not infringe on the second amendment rights of law-abiding citizens. Web: momsdemandaction.org Facebook: www.facebook.com/MomsDemandActionIL

"The Armor of Light"

The Armor of Light follows the journey of Evangelical minister Rob Schenck trying to find the courage to preach about gun violence in America. A well-known anti-abortion activist and fixture on the political right, he questions if being pro-gun is consistent with being pro-life. Along the way, Schenck meets Lucy McBath, the mother of Jordan Davis, an unarmed teenager who was murdered outside a gas station in Florida. His story casts a spotlight on so-called "Stand Your Ground" laws. McBath, a Christian, decides to work with Schenck, even though she is pro-choice. She is on a difficult journey of her own, trying to make sense of the devastating loss of her son by effecting political change. The film follows these unlikely allies through their trials of conscience, heartbreak and rejection, as they attempt to make others consider America's gun culture through a moral lens. Directed by Abigail E. Disney and Kathleen Hughes The trailer for this documentary can be found on Youtube at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hSP0Soy8ACk>

Thanks to all who helped with our December 24th personal care item distribution. We provided hot beverages and a sack lunch to each of our guests. Donations of personal care items are always needed - e.g., shampoos, deodorants, hand lotion, laundry detergent, dish detergent, toilet paper. Socks and gloves are also welcome this time of year. There is a donation collection bin at the bottom of the steps in the RE wing, next to the personal care inventory room.



Whale Coast Alaska 2017

Have you ever dreamed of visiting Alaska? If so, **WhaleCoast Alaska 2017** is for you! Four Alaska UU fellowships invite you to experience our eco-cultural and spiritual program next summer! See Alaska through the eyes of local UUs in Anchorage, Fairbanks, Juneau, Seward, and Sitka with friendly homestays and unique tour activities. See wildlife, including moose, bears, caribou, whales, bald eagles, seals, and otters. Visit Denali National Park. Experience Native Alaskan culture. Forget the cruise ships – our program is the best way to visit Alaska! Programs led by Dave Frey, member of the Fairbanks UU congregation and Alaska travel expert. Find out more about this Alaskan trip of a lifetime before our tours sell out!

Visit www.WhaleCoastAK.org, email dfrey@whalecoastak.org, or call 907-322-4966. We would love to share our Alaska with you!

Fellow Book Lovers!

After the sermon given by Irene Gulovsen on Nov. 27th, Phil Embree and Nancy Conniff and a few other people agreed that they'd like to have a book discussion about *Tribe*, by Sebastian Junger. <http://mobile.nytimes.com/2016/05/29/books/review/sebastian-jungers-tribe.html> If you are interested, please contact Nancy Conniff or Phil Embree.



Camp Unistar Is Hiring!

Spend the summer working where natural beauty is rich, life is simple, and community is cherished on Star Island in Cass Lake, Minnesota:

Camp Director, Food Service Director, Lead Cook, Lead Baker, Waterfront Director, Assistant Director, Children's Program Director, Youth Program Director, Program Area Staff

Qualifications: lived away from home 1+ year; experience working in team; self-starter and motivated to help; able to live and work in the North Woods; experience in food service (kitchen jobs); experience working with youth or children (Children and/or Youth program); have or are willing to get lifeguard, CPR, and First Aid training (reimbursable)

Training and camp season is June 5 to Sept. 2, with some personalization of schedules possible.

Starting salary for first year general camp staff is \$270 per week, room and board included.

Application and position details at: www.CampUniStar.org Please contact 612-354-6566 or jobs@campunistar.org with any questions.

Applications due January 31, 2017



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)

NEWSLETTER DEADLINE



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



4th Saturday Personal Care Item Distribution Saturday, Jan. 28th, 11 A.M

Help our friends and neighbors by giving out much needed items that cannot be purchased through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). With Christmas and cold weather coming, *we would like to have plenty of socks, of all sizes* to distribute. (we've also have received requests for basics like towels and washcloths also) As always, cash or check donations are also gladly accepted. Please be sure to indicate that the funds are for "personal care items".

Items Needed for the January 28th event will be announced at a later date

Crisis Food Center

Please help the Crisis Food Center in Alton assist those in need. Your contributions of canned meats, beans, stews, fruits, and vegetables will go a long way in providing meals for the hungry.

When you do your regular grocery shopping please pick up a couple extra cans of food and bring them to church. There is a basket in the RE entrance hall to leave your donations.



INTEREST GROUPS:

50+ Group / Free For All Winter Schedule Saturday, January 7th, 10:30 A.M.



We will continue reading in the Landscapes of Aging & Spirituality, weather permitting. We decided we're a small enough group (even when everyone on the distribution list comes) that we can plan on meeting through the winter BUT understand that any prediction of bad weather would prompt a cancellation.

My point: if weather seems unpredictable, check your e-mail before leaving the house to see if we've already decided to stay home and safe.

So, weather permitting, we'll get together again on January 7th for the next chapter in our book.



Anna Ds – Women's Alliance Thursday, January 5th 11:30 am

Our winter schedule is in effect, meaning we have a "come as you are", gathering at 11:30 at

Best Buffet in Wood River on the hill across from Wood River Wal-Mart; the formal address is 615 Wesley Drive and the phone number is 618-258-1888. They are always open, we don't need a reservation and won't disappoint anyone if 2 or 12 arrive. If the weather is good, please come and join us. If the weather turns sour or is predicted to do so, stay safe and warm at home.

If you have questions or information you'd like circulated to the group, just let Sandy know.

Men's Monthly Lunch Thursday, January 12th 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

Healing Energy Meditation Mondays, January 9th & 23rd 6:30 P.M. by the Fireplace.



Our group is growing and attracting new people. Please join us for meditation and fellowship, and maybe, just maybe, benefit the Interconnected Web of Life of which we are a part.

CHURCH LEADERSHIP 2016 - 2017

Board of Trustees

Board President- Dee Evans
President-Elect- Michael Schmidt
Past President- Debby Lovell
Treasurer- Lisa Strangeman
Secretary- Pat Moore
At-Large- Robin Crane
At-Large- Paul Hebert

Committee/Team Leads

Transitions Committee - TBA
Social Events- Vacant
Interfaith and U.U.- Vacant

Pastoral Associates

Marcia Custer
Sandra Shaner

Religious Education Council

Chair-Joy Hoeft

Stewardship Committee

Building- Kelly Crone-Willis
Grounds- Robyn Stranquist
Canvass 2017- TBA
Endowment Fund- Kelly Crone-Willis
Finance- Matt Koch
Membership- Mary Weber
Sunday Support Ministries- TBA

Worship Associates

Mary Johnson
Robin Crane
Kayci Combs-Lueker
Joy Hoeft
Yomi Kinder