

FIRST UNITARIAN FOCUS



Congregation established 1836

Newsletter of the

First Unitarian Church

Alton, Illinois

www.firstuualton.org

Pastor Amy Brooks



Sunday Worship 10:00 A.M

The Theme for April, 2018 is “Miracles”

April 1st 10 A.M.

Easter Sunday – No 1st Sunday Pot Luck

Pastor Amy Brooks

Worship Associate: Robert Kokenyesi

April 8th 10 A.M.

Mary Johnson

A Faith Rocket Sermon - “Ordinary Miracles”

Worship Associate: Sabrina Trupia

April 15th 10 A.M.

Pastor Amy Brooks “Break the Silence”

Worship Associate: TBD

April 22nd 10 A.M.

Wayne Politsch “Responsibility for the Web of Life”

Worship Associate: Michael Tarabulski

April 29th 10 A.M.

Robin Crane

A Faith Rocket Sermon

“A UU View of Miracles”

Worship Associate: Robert Kokenyesi



The Seekers

Every Sunday, 11:15 in the Emerson Room, We'll engage in a more in-depth discussion of that day's sermon and the monthly topic. Everyone is welcome to join in. It's a great way to get to know your fellow congregants and to get a deeper understanding of the lessons we are learning.

NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

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



The Miracle of Presence

You've probably heard of the #metoo movement, the people, women, and men speaking out about their experiences with sexual harassment, abuse, and violence. Every day, courageous people are speaking out, and it is time for courageous people to listen.

The survivors of sexual violence are our friends, neighbors, colleagues, family, and members of our congregation. They need us to help them, to listen as they speak out, to create a place where their stories can be heard without fear, or judgment. They need us to witness with them to the pain of their stories, and to stand with them, and be the healing love of community.

Being a survivor can be a very isolated experience. Join us for Break the Silence Sunday on April 15, 2018, as we create the miracle of presence for survivors of sexual violence.

This service may be difficult and challenging.

Some parents may not want their young children to be present. Our nursery and RE arrangements will look different on this Sunday so that we can provide spaces for young people to be during the service.

Please take time to prepare yourself also. We understand that it takes strength to open our hearts and minds, to support all the survivors who are part of our church, our community, and the world.

If you have questions or concerns about the service, or if you would like to help with worship leadership, please contact me.

Amy



NEW MEMBER!

Arthur Crawford
joined our
congregation
on March 18th

Youth Fundraiser Success!



I'm happy to share that, before any deductions from food/drink receipts, we made around \$236 on the youth fundraiser. After all receipts are turned in, that number should go no lower than \$150! That's ABSOLUTELY FANTASTIC!

The youth & children had an incredible amount of fun learning how to set a lovely table, joust with carrots, shake and dance with the lettuce heads, and learn that cooking and cleaning up can be a fun & faithful community endeavor. I also want to thank all the parents of our youth & children, Michael Tarabulski, Phil Embree, and Robin Crane, all who helped with a significant amount of the after-luncheon clean up.

The money raised will be going toward summer opportunities currently being planned for our youth & children. In June, the youth will participate in The Patchwork's monthly social event at St. John's UCC in Brighton, IL. In July or August, pending on further planning (it's still in the infant stages), there will be a chance for the youth & children (and other members of the congregation) to participate in Urban Forum, a program sponsored by Kingdom House.

Wash, Dry and Put Away!

We count on each other to be thoughtful and fair in all our interactions – that also includes seeing to it that our church home is kept clean and dishes washed up and put away. If you enjoy a cup of coffee, a plate of snacks, or a full meal, please take your turn to help with cleaning-up.



Supporting our Youth, Children, and Teachers

Friends,

I am grateful to be serving side by side with you in this church, which I've found to be a loving, caring, and straightforward community. As the coordinator of Religious Education, I've had the direct privilege of planning, teaching, leading, and having fun. Our Elementary and Youth programs on Sunday morning continue to be informative and creative spaces for our youth people to explore their spirituality and faith. We desire to be a community that provides strong programming that honors our youth and children, maintaining for them their own spaces to develop their authentic selves and to spend time communing with their peers. To continue doing so, we need your help.

Our nursery, elementary, and youth classrooms all need a teacher and helper on Sunday morning to offer our children a safe space for learning and engaging. Though our nursery is staffed, there is occasionally a Sunday where additional help is needed. Our elementary and youth classes are also in search of helpers and teachers in order to give our dedicated teachers a rest and prevent burnout. Teachers and helpers also desire time to stimulate and nurture their own spirituality -- let's give them a chance to do that on Sunday mornings in this community.

There are a few ways you can help out and support our children, youth, and teachers. You could offer to "sub in" as a teacher/nursery helper for a Sunday in case of illness, injury, or day off. Additionally, you could offer to be placed in the elementary or youth teaching/helping rotation once a month, giving our teachers a much-needed rest for a week. If you would like to volunteer, please speak to me (Zippy) either in person, by email, or by phone.

I appreciate all of you taking the time to think about how your wisdom, enthusiasm, and curiosity about your own spirituality, faith, and traditions can enrich the lives of our youth and children. Thank you for your commitment to showing your youth and children that they matter. It's important that they know that they matter.

Nursery Care



All children, 5 years of age and under, are welcome to our staffed nursery during Sunday Services

Layne Simpson's father, Loyd "Wayne" Simpson, 87, died on March 10, 2018, at his home, with his daughters by his side. He had been a member of the United States Navy, serving on the USS Redfin submarine. He was signed to a minor league baseball contract for the St Louis Browns, but was called back to active duty. His was buried with military honors.



Our Deepest Sympathy

Gene Werner, 89, of Marissa Illinois, father of **Jen Politsch**, died peacefully March 16. He served in the United States Marine Corp, attended Washington University and worked over 30 years for Peabody Coal Company. He was a talented carpenter and wood carver. He will be remembered for his loving, caring spirit for family and friends. Gene will be buried next to his best friend and wife of 70 years.

The Women's Alliance of First Unitarian Church, St. Louis, Is offering a scholarship of \$3000

to a woman 21 years of age or older who is active in a Unitarian Universalist congregation and is pursuing post high school education. Please contact First Unitarian at 314 361-0595 for more information.



If you have any questions, please phone me at 314 646-7918.

Pamela Gempel
Chair, Scholarship Committee

SUMMARY OF MARCH 8 BOARD MEETING:

Sheila O'Brien has been working on some advertising about the church and our availability for inclusive weddings. She has developed ideas for signs at the church and for bulletin board ads that could be put up at area restaurants, etc. She also has ads that can be placed in local newspapers. The Board liked the items she has developed and has asked her to come back with prices. We thank Sheila for taking the initiative to work on this project to hopefully take advantage of the publicity coming with the winning of the Small Business Revolution contest by the city of Alton.



Our **501C3 Status** application is ready to submit, with much thanks to **Mary Johnson**. The Board approved the \$600 application fee.

Phil Embree reported that Minden Masonry has completed the first round of masonry work on the roof. He is seeking bids for the rest of the work.

We have one bid of \$656 from Budget Blinds for **new blinds** in the minister's study. Another bid is being sought.

There are still several **committee chairmanships** still available. Talk to a board member about what you can do to help with the work of the church.

Minister Amy Brooks is applying for "aspirant" status with the UUA, the first step to becoming a full fellowship UUA minister. The Board has agreed that we will be her sponsoring church.

Amy is planning a special "Break the Silence" Sunday for April 15, with the subject of sexual harassment and abuse. Look for more details to come. She will be a guest on WBGZ radio to discuss the problem, and our church will be purchasing some advertising time on the station.

The Board approved some signs for the doors with Amy's name as minister and to indicate where to enter for the offices. Our new doorbells at all entrances can be heard in the Wuerker Room and offices and have a special ring for each door.

Amy is planning to offer counseling for couples planning to live together, in addition to the regular pre-marriage counseling.

She would like to establish "satellite" groups for the various communities like Edwardsville and North County to provide a closer place to meet with a "chalice" type group.

Treasurer Robin Crane reported that we may end the year with about a \$12,000 to \$13,000 deficit, so she thinks that we should soon be transferring some money into checking from our reserve and/or endowment funds, as the congregation approved last June. You are encouraged to pay your pledge on a timely basis. Robin is starting the work of planning a budget for next year, with the thought of increasing Amy's hours if feasible.

Dee Evans has been working hard to get us involved in **social justice** projects. She is planning to do research for available grants. Also, on April 14 she will attend a UUA workshop about voter registration.

As Past-President she has been working on finding members to run for the Board positions of President and President-Elect. With the resignation of Paula LaFond, the Board will appoint someone to fill her President-Elect position who could then run as President at the June meeting of the congregation. Sandy Shaner has agreed to run as Secretary.

The Board is in contact with a representative from the **Travel Channel**, which wants to film some programs at the church about "hauntings" and ghost tours.

We have been featured in some of these programs before, and in fact they have brought new people to us.

Tracey Howe-Koch is planning the **Stewardship Campaign**. May 6 has been designated as "Stewardship Sunday," when pledge cards will be collected and a catered lunch will be provided by the Board members. The goal is to get all members to pledge what they can, even if they are on a tight budget. Her theme is "Supporting our Beloved Community." Members are also encouraged to pledge their time and talents to the work of the church. Look for more information to come from Tracey.

Pastor Amy is working on developing an advertisement and job description for the hiring of a **new Church Administrator** to replace Becky Green, who is retiring in June. #SAD

Sunday Security has become a focus. Members are encouraged to wear their nametags to identify them as members. We are beginning to keep all entrances except 1 and 2 locked once services begin. If you come late, please use one of those doors.

The **next Board Meeting** will be **April 19** at 7:00 PM. Anyone can attend. If you have business to bring before the Board, please let President **Michael Schmidt** know ahead of time so you can be placed on the agenda.

Submitted by **Pat Moore**, Secretary

A Heroic Congregation: A “Shout Out” to You!

A heroic congregation calls on its enthusiasm, creativity, love and courage to carry out its mission(s). In order to even begin to engage in mission, though, the congregation must devote time, money, and energy to achieve its own survival, in both good and bad economic times. A church can survive without performing its mission very well, but it certainly cannot perform its mission at all without surviving. That means pledging and fulfilling those pledges with la sense of loving responsibility.

This congregation in Alton is truly “stepping up to the plate” in paying its pledges, and the Treasurer and the Board are most grateful. Your responsibility and generosity help us to feel more secure about our current fiscal situation and more confident about the future. We want to say a resounding “Thank you!” Keep up the good work.

We thank you BECAUSE:

- Four households have long ago paid up their entire pledge for the year
- As of the end of February, another 22 had contributed half, or more than half, of their annual pledge
- 14 households are contributing at a slower pace -- and we surely encourage you to make your additional contributions as soon as you can
- Altogether over \$60,000 of our pledges has been paid, with another \$31,000 still to come in.

This is great news, and we are hopeful that we can end this fiscal year with a flourish!

Here’s a key reason why this steady pace of giving is particularly important to the church at this time: Of course, it lets us pay our bills, and reduce borrowing from Endowment or Reserves. Equally important, though, this reliable flow of pledge money gives us a solid foundation for planning and budgeting. As we look toward next year, we are particularly considering whether we can:

- Increase ministerial services beyond the current half-time
- Increase the services of the religious education director beyond the current ¼ time
- Increase the availability of child care in the nursery to cover every church service and other important activities (we’re not quite there yet)
- Continue to pay to UUA the full amount of our assessment
- Cover continuing needs to repair our beautiful historic church building

Thank you, Congregation of First Unitarian! You are coming through for your church. Keep up the good work! If you are really feeling hopeful, responsible, or courageous, give MORE than you pledged. That big tax cut our “Electeds” in D.C. just gave us could not go for a better cause, could it?!

Together, we are building a shared confidence that we can move forward into full-time ministry. With a solid pledging foundation, we look forward to the joys of expanding our community and increasing our service in a world that sorely needs our help.

Thank you!

Robin Crane, Treasurer,
For the Board of Trustees

4th Saturday, April 28th Social Action: Fourth Saturday



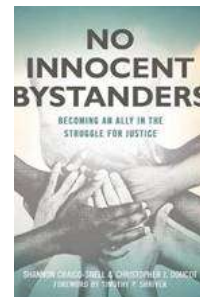
Please remember your less fortunate neighbors and help us keep this important service going. Your purchased items or financial support helps struggling families make ends meet. We serve thirty to sixty people each month, plus their families. A list of specific items needed is published in the “Church This Week email notice and a list will be available at church and on UU Friends, but items always in demand: Toilet paper, laundry detergent, shampoo, toothpaste, deodorant, body wash, hand lotion, shaving cream. Other items needed are paper towels, counter wipes, dish detergent.

Checks may be made out to the First Unitarian Church with 4th Saturday Distribution noted on the memo line.

The Team thanks everyone for their ongoing support.

Alton Area Cluster Book Group

The interfaith Alton Area Cluster Book Group will meet on Thursday, April 19 from 3 to 5 p.m. We will continue with our discussion of Chapter 1 in “No Innocent Bystanders” by Craig-Snell and Doucot, and move into Chapter 2, “Getting Ready to Be an Ally.”



If you are free on the 3rd Thursday afternoon of each month, please join us. Contact Mary Johnson at mejohanson@mindspring.com if you have any questions.



Embracing Our Beloved Community

Stewardship Sunday Celebration!

When: Sunday, May 6 2018

Time: 10:00am with lunch provided at 11:00am

Join us as we celebrate all things First Unitarian Alton! We will enjoy a lively service followed by a meal and turning-in of pledge cards. Don't miss this opportunity for fun and fellowship!

Embracing Our Beloved Community Stewardship Campaign

I talked in the last newsletter article that Stewardship encompasses the three "Ts": Time, Talent, and Treasure. All three are important aspects to congregational life. Frankly, though, we need a certain amount of Treasure to keep the doors open and our ministry alive in and for the community. We are grateful that members have been fulfilling their pledges. Because of your commitment, we have been blessed with stable finances. The question we need to ask ourselves is how do we see First UU Alton's future? I know a lot of us would like to see our outreach grow. We have a lot to offer and we want to be a presence in the community (while embracing our own congregant's needs). We can't do this without growth. We can't do this without everyone pitching in. We need you!

The Stewardship Campaign goals are:

- 100% participation (small or large, your donation makes a difference)
- Increase pledge amounts by 5%

Why?

- Increase Pastor Amy's hours (which will increase in/outreach)
- Address deferred maintenance and accessibility needs
- Prevent deficit spending (drawing on endowment funds)

Please stay tuned for special Stewardship emails in April that will go into further details on the "why". In a time of upheaval and difficult change, First UU Alton is a beacon of hope to so many disenfranchised folks. We are needed!

~Tracey Koch, Stewardship Chair

Help the Good Guys in the Comfort of Your Own Home:

Some wonderful kids need our help. High schools kids from many countries who have won Department of State scholarships after a long and arduous vetting process are looking for host homes in America. Two of our church members have hosted five high schoolers in former years and will help anyone else who offers. The hostile atmosphere in Washington may discourage potential hosts, so we need to reach out to new people for hosting. Can you help us find hosts, or offer to do so yourself? It's really fun...and is a great way to keep retired folks young and involved.



In our experience, these students are exceptionally adaptable and interested in new experiences. They are good students and pretty mature and independent, but respectful and cooperative. They must maintain a "B" average in their host high school, complete 30 hours of volunteer service, and join a leadership club or activity. They receive a monthly stipend for spending money and some funds for school-related expenses. They come with full health coverage.

Host families must provide three meals per day, a place to sleep, a place to study, a comfortable home environment, and transportation to and from school and school activities (school bus is fine.) Host families must be US citizens and English needs to be the primary language used in the home. The organization who administers the scholarship program provides a lot of constructive help, including reimbursing up to \$300 for school-related expenses.

Who can host? Couples with or without children, singles, and empty nesters.

Please contact: James E. Kerr 618-667-9858, jekerr@charter.net, to (1) suggest he contact someone who might be interested or (2) get a profile of available students and get started on your application yourself. Or contact Robin Crane or Alison Reiheld to learn more about their experiences.

Alton Area Cluster Meeting April 30

The Board of the Alton Area Cluster (part of the United Congregations of Metro East) will meet at our church on Monday, April 30 at 7 p.m. All are welcome to attend Cluster meetings. Mary Johnson mejohanson@mindspring.com

INTEREST GROUPS:



Anna Ds – Women’s Alliance April 5th 11:30 a.m.

At the last meeting, those in attendance decided it was time to return to Bella Milano in Edwardsville (at the far end of the strip mall with McDonald's on the other end and generally across 157 from Vallow Flooring) for our April 5 meeting.

Bella Milano
1063 S. State Route 157
Edwardsville, IL 62025
618-659-2100

Joan Hashimi offered to be the contact, so please call or email (she's on the above "to" listing) Joan with your RSVP or need to decline.

And we always ask (and frequently forget to bring) one or more packaged food items or items for the personal care distribution every 4th Saturday.

Thanks and hope to see you soon.

Sandy

Men’s Monthly Lunch April 12th 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

CHURCH LEADERSHIP

2017 - 2018

Board of Trustees

Board President - Michael Schmidt
President-Elect - Paula LaFond
Past President - Dee Evans
Treasurer - Robin Crane
Secretary - Pat Moore
Member-At-Large - Phil Embree
Member-At-Large - Tracy Howe-Koch

Committee/Team Leads

Transitions Committee - TBA
Social Events - Vacant
Interfaith and U.U. - Vacant
Social Justice - Dee Evans
Fundraising - Dee Evans & Peg Flach

Pastoral Associates

Marcia Custer
Sandra Shaner

Religious Education Council

Chair - Joy Hoeft
RE Coordinator - Zipporah Lee

Stewardship Committee

Building & Grounds - Phil Embree
Canvass 2018 - Paula LaFond
Endowment Fund - Jerry Johnson,
Ron Glossop & Tracy Howe-Koch
Finance - Matt Koch
Membership - Mary Weber
Sunday Support Ministries - TBA

Worship Associates

Mary Johnson
Robin Crane
Joy Hoeft
Robert Kokenyesi
Mike Tarabulski
Ruth Maskow
Sabrina Trupia