

# FIRST UNITARIAN FOCUS

---

*Newsletter of the  
First Unitarian  
Church  
Alton, Illinois*

[www.firstuualton.org](http://www.firstuualton.org)

*Pastor Amy Brooks*



*Congregation established 1836*



**Sunday Worship 10:00 A.M.  
The Theme for September is "Beginnings"**

**Sept. 3<sup>rd</sup> 10:00 A.M.**  
**Pastor Amy Brooks**  
**Worship Associate: Robert Kokenyesi**

**No Potluck Lunch**

---

**Sept. 10<sup>th</sup> 10:00 A.M.**  
**Ingathering and Water Communion**  
**Pastor Amy Brooks**  
**Worship Associate: Ruth Maskow**

**Barbeque Potluck Following**

---

**Sept. 17<sup>th</sup> 10:00 A.M.**  
**Guest speaker: Irene Gulovsen**  
**Worship Associate: Mary Johnson**

***"In Search of Common Ground: Conversing our Way Toward Peace"***

Irene Gulovsen will share personal learnings from her intentional conversations with women in a variety of settings during her perspective-changing 3 ½ years in Abu Dhabi, the capital city of the United Arab Emirates.

---

**Sept. 24<sup>th</sup> 10:00 A.M.**  
**Robin Crane**  
**Worship Associate: Michael Tarabulski**

***"Riding the Waves,"***

Robin Crane and Michael Tarabulski will lead a service adapted from UUA's Faith Rocket program dealing with the subject of resilience. The sermon gives us some tools for enhancing our resilience in the face of life's tough challenges and exhorts us to glory in the storm.

---

**Sunday Potluck Changes, from  
9/3 to 9/10**



**On Sunday, September 3 (Labor Day weekend), we will NOT hold our usual potluck lunch, because..... The following week, Sunday, September 10, will be In gathering, featuring Water Communion during the service and, afterward, a Barbeque Potluck at the church organized by Kayci Combs-Lueker.**



**Come one and all, let's get together for Ingathering, Water Communion, and some good old-fashioned American grilling! Details later.**

## Pastor Amy's Corner

### Beginning.

*"The visionary starts with a clean sheet of paper, and re-imagines the world."*

*~ Malcolm Gladwell*

A clean sheet of paper, a blank slate, a vacant field... these are some of the images that can come to mind when we think about beginnings. When I first experienced snow, after moving to America, I took great delight in placing the first footprints into a crisp, white yard.

The thing is, the more time I spend on this planet the more deeply I understand that beginnings are more complicated than that. Very rarely do we have the opportunity to do some brand new project where nothing at all has existed before. Even work on a new construction site must wait until the ground has been cleared. Most often the task of beginning incorporates the work of beginning **again**.

Beginning again requires a different skillset. Discernment is needed; decisions need to be made about what must be removed and what can be incorporated into the new creation. Imagination is necessary; often the dream is hidden by the murk of reality. And above all else there must be the willingness to pick up the tools and get to work; nothing about beginning again is easy.

So I find that I must disagree with Malcolm Gladwell. Any fool could re-imagine the world with a clean sheet of paper. A true visionary is the soul who sees the mess of 'what is' and refuses to let it obscure the wonder of 'what could be.'

The sort of visionary that I aspire to be is the one who takes in the full scope of the sorrow and the beauty of the world that exists now, and who rolls up their sleeves as if to say, 'Now **this** is where I begin.'

*Rev. Amy Brooks*

### **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.



## 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)

Non-perishable foods items are always needed to contribute to the Alton Crisis Food Pantry. It's important to help our neighbors get the food they need.



### NEWSLETTER DEADLINE



Newsletter Deadline is on the **15 of each month.** Send info. to Dorothy Wilson [djjccw@sbcglobal.net](mailto:djjccw@sbcglobal.net) and to Becky Green at church [church@firstuualton.org](mailto:church@firstuualton.org)

### Wash, Dry and Put Away!

Enjoy some coffee and cookies with your conversation after church? Thank you for being sure our dishes are taken care of and trash removed.



*Keeping our church home clean and comfortable is everyone's job.*

## Religious Education for Children and Youth News

***The RE Committee will be having a student registration and teacher sign up after services on Sept 3. Please stop by and talk to me, Jennifer, Kayci, or Paula about opportunities and information about the classes.***

\*\*\*

For the Children/Youth Group RE, classes will begin on *September 17*. Children and Youth will start in the sanctuary, then will be released to their classes later. The Elementary class will be learning about World Religions. The curriculum features a different religion every week or so by introducing the children to a boy or girl of that faith. They may also possibly get the opportunity to take some field trips during the year to visit other churches or even a mosque!

The YG will participate in a curriculum on Social Justice called *Heeding the Call*. YG will be about 1 hour long, from the time we leave the sanctuary, and will get out around 11:20 or so, give or take.

We are still working on the **possibility** of having OWL classes this Fall. OWL (Our Whole Lives) is a comprehensive, lifespan sexuality education curricula that helps participants make informed and responsible decisions about their sexuality and relationships. We are still working out kinks. Please contact Joy if you have a middle school or high school student that you would like to be involved in OWL.

**We are still in need of people to volunteer to teach in both the Elementary class and in the YG.** If you would be willing to devote the same 1 Sunday, once a month, from September to December, that would be only 4 or 5 times you would be asked to teach or be a co-teacher in the classroom, but we need you to commit to a specific day. If we don't have 2 people in a classroom, we can't have class, then the kids would have to stay in the sanctuary.

Remember, that a strong Children's RE program helps bring in and keep families, thus grow the church. We can't provide quality and interesting classes for our kids, if we don't have help in teaching. It is not difficult. The curriculum is provided, just reading over them ahead of time to see what activities and resources you may need. It is not difficult, and it would be great for both adults and kids to get to know each other better.

Another things about keeping and growing our church, is if we can't keep our teenagers coming to church, we will lose families and future Unitarian Universalists. So,

trying to keep teenagers engaged in our faith by providing fun, social, and interesting activities where the teens will want to come to church is a plus for us.

**IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN SOCIAL JUSTICE, PLEASE VOLUNTEER WITH YOUTH GROUP SO THEY CAN LEARN AND GET EXCITED ABOUT SOCIAL JUSTICE.**

I have been embarrassed when we have had visitors who have children, and we haven't had RE. What do these visitors think? Will they come back? Most of the time new families come because they want their children to learn about faith, etc. Sometimes, just the parents come a couple of times without their kids just to check out what is available for their kids before dragging them to church.

In 1978, about 40 years ago, that is what my parents, Mary and Jerry Johnson did. They visited this church several weeks in a row, for themselves, and to find out what kind of RE program this church had because they believed that a good religious education was important. Then they brought my brother and me to church for Religious Education.

At that time, Grace Madison was the volunteer RE director, and one of the teachers. There were a bunch of children, and from what I can recall, we met in the Emerson Place. They found people who were willing to teach their children about Unitarianism and faith. And look, I was here as a child and a teen, then I left for a while, but came back and brought my kids here. I have been back here as an adult for 17 years. My oldest son, Alex, was in 2nd grade when we came back. My youngest son, Ben, was born into this congregation.

If we can't provide consistent Religious Education classes, we cannot keep new families and grow our church. ***And without your help, we cannot be successful. Come talk with us about teaching RE.***

Joy  
"RE Chair"



### Nursery Care

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

---

## August News from your Board of Trustees:

The Board met on August 9 at the church, with all members present.

Dee Evans is still working on getting us a 501C3 status with the IRS, so that we can seek corporate donations for our Saturday giveaway program.

Sandy Shaner will join Jerry Johnson on the Endowment Committee, and we are seeking one more member to complete the 3 person membership.

We will be voting next month on our new Policy on Hiring. We will be seeking applicants for the job of RE Director. Robin Crane, Tracy Howe-Koch, and Pastor Amy Brooks will write a job description and start the process of advertising the job. According to our new policy, we will seek outside applicants first. If no qualified outside applicants are found, we will then take applications from interested members. The job will pay \$10,000 per year for 10 hours of work per week (or quarter time). In the meantime, Paula LaFond, Joy Hoeft, and Jennifer Lewis have been working on getting our RE program organized for the fall.

We will also be hiring a second nursery attendant to join Lily Tarbell. The job of organizing the nursery supervision will be part of the job of the new RE Director, but Dee Evans has volunteered to supervise in the meantime. We will be writing a job description for the attendants.

We have approved a new banking policy, and names will be updated on all bank accounts.

Becky Green has been trying hard to keep track of who has church keys. If you have a key that you no longer need, please turn it in to Becky or any Board member.

Dee Evans is still waiting for a bid on roof repairs. She may have to look elsewhere if she doesn't get a response soon.

The Board was finalizing plans for the congregational picnic at Gordon Moore Park. There will be a short ceremony led by Paula LaFond and the Pagan Group, and there will not be any services at the church building that day.

Our new minister Amy Brooks has been busy settling into her new office and has had one meeting with the Worship Committee. She asked for a Minister's Support Group to be formed to help her get acquainted with all our traditions and ways of operating. Tracy Howe-Koch, Michael Schmidt, and Pat Moore volunteered to work with her.

Robin Crane presented a simplified treasurer's report. We are working with the larger budget approved by the congregation, but still have only about \$92,000 in pledges. If you have not yet pledged for this church year, please consider doing your share.

The Board is working on having church T-shirts for sale, which would identify us when we are out in the community doing social services work. Watch for these to be on sale soon for about \$13 each.

We will have our traditional in-gathering picnic on Sunday, Sept. 10 at the church. It will be a potluck, with Kayci grilling burgers, veggie burgers, and hot dogs. Cake will be dessert, and others should bring side dishes. We will NOT have a first Sunday potluck that month.

Dee, Sandy Shaner, and Mary Johnson are working on an application for a Chalice Lighter Grant to help us pay for our RE Director. Some of you might remember that we received one of these grants some years ago to help increase the hours of our director.

Watch for a new (to us) program called the Common Read in which UU's all over the denomination read and discuss the same book. Dee Evans will be working on getting us organized.

This is the year for another series of the OWL (Our Whole Lives) program, which teaches responsible and realistic sex education to our middle school children. We will possibly be joining with other area UU and UCC churches. Watch for more news to come regarding this highly acclaimed program.

Becky Green is planning to purchase a substantial safe for the office to store important papers, confidential information, and valuables.

It's vitally important that we find members willing to take on some leadership positions to organize some of our important activities. We are seeking individuals who would organize others to work on Building and Grounds, Stewardship, Sunday Support, or Kitchen. Please contact any Board Member if you are willing to serve in one of these areas. They can give you some idea what would be expected in each of these positions.

The next Board Meeting will be Sept. 14 at 7:00 pm. If you have concerns you would like to bring before the Board, give them to President Michael Schmidt to be added to the agenda. Anyone is welcome to attend Board Meetings.

From Pat Moore, Board Secretary



*The congregation's sympathy and thoughts of comfort is extended to Jen and Wayne Politsch on the death of Jen's mother, Joanne Werner, on August 10<sup>th</sup>. A private service for Mrs. Werner was held on August 18<sup>th</sup> in Marissa, IL.*

## Save the Dates:

### Animal Blessing - Sunday October 1st - 10:00 am



You are invited to bring your animals, large or small, for a blessing of the animals service. The service will be outdoors, at the church. Since you know your animals best we ask that you use your own discernment as to whether to bring them if the weather is cold on the day. If, for whatever reason, you prefer to leave your animal/s at home you are invited to bring an image of them instead. Depending on how well your animals play with others, cages or leashes are advised.

This is a great event for first time visitors. Feel free to invite neighbors, friends, coworkers, or any strangers you meet at along the way.

**\*\*In case of inclement weather this service will be moved indoors. If we wake up to a wet day on the 1st we ask that you leave your animals at home and bring an image of them instead, as the possibility of allergies or accidents could make an indoor service unpleasant for all.\*\***



**Potluck Picnic**  
**Sunday, October 8<sup>th</sup>**  
**10:00 am**  
**Location: Gordon F. Moore Community Park on College Ave.**

The Pagan group will lead us in a brief, earth-centered ceremony after which we will share in food and fellowship.

Please Bring: food to share, yard games, and folding chairs. There are benches, grills, and a playground available for our use.

This event will serve as our worship service for this Sunday. Signs at the church will direct visitors to the park.

Note: due to park rules this is a dry event.

### *Enhancing Civil Conversations* Led by the Rev. David Crowley Thursday evenings - October 12, 19, 26 6 to 7:30 p.m.

**First Presbyterian Church – 4<sup>th</sup> & Alby Sts., Alton IL**

- Would it be helpful to you to learn how to create space for a new quality of conversation and relationship building in these divisive and turbulent times?
- Do you think the social art of listening is being drowned out by fearful commentaries and hateful speech?
- Would you like be able to be strong, as well as respectful, in situations where there are entrenched opinions being expressed?

If so, you are invited to join in conversations where we may re-discover the precious resource and skill of being civil with each other, even though significant differences may exist in our world outlook. ***“Enhancing Civil Conversations”*** is planned as a three-session workshop to help us find and live out the best in humankind. It will be led by the Rev. David Crowley, minister of the First Presbyterian Church in Alton, and coordinated by the **Book Discussion Group of the Alton Area Cluster - United Congregations of Metro-East.**

Participants will receive handouts, engage in question/answer dialogues, and practice some interactive activities.

An optional resource you may be interested in borrowing from a library, or purchasing, is the book Uncommon Decency: Christian Civility in an Uncivil World by Richard Mouw.

If you have questions please email Mary Johnson [mejohanson@mindspring.com](mailto:mejohanson@mindspring.com). If you will be attending please email Mary before Thursday, October 5<sup>th</sup>.



Would you like to sing during the service for Ingathering Sunday, September 10?

We will have a choir practice on Thursday, September 7 at 6:30 pm at church.

Let's make it a special service welcoming our new minister, Pastor Amy Brooks!

All are welcome to sing, any age. It will be fun!

**4th Saturday  
Personal Care Item  
Distribution  
Saturday, Sept. 23<sup>rd</sup>**



Please support our church's community outreach by donating to our personal care inventory.

Each month we need laundry detergent, toilet paper, shampoo, body wash, deodorant, hand lotion, shaving cream, baby wipes ("free and clear"), dish detergent (for hand washing dishes).

Donations of reusable tote bags (like what you can buy at grocery stores) would be appreciated.

Stay tuned for more specific information on what will be needed this month.

---

**INTEREST GROUPS:**

**Anna Ds – Women's Alliance, Sept. 7<sup>th</sup>, 11:30 a.m.**

We'll be meeting at Catrina's in Edwardsville. Parking should be fine since they're in the same commercial development as Bella Milano. They're on the back row behind McDonald's and Bella Milano (which anchor front/left and front/right) in this commercial strip.



1027 Century Dr., Edwardsville, IL 62025  
(618) 692-5522

And here's a link to their menu:

<http://www.menupix.com/menudirectory/menu.php?id=27180468>

*Great news: Pastor Amy will join Anna D's on 9/7, just a little late because she's coming from class at Eden. If you can, you might want to plan on staying a bit longer than usual to take advantage of this opportunity to get to know Pastor Amy better. Sandy [wrgma2@gmail.com](mailto:wrgma2@gmail.com)*



**Healing Energy Group**

**Wednesday, September 13<sup>th</sup> and  
September 27<sup>th</sup>  
6:30 pm by the Fireplace**

Conversation, meditation and growth with friends:  
Come Explore The Mystery with us!

**Men's Monthly  
Lunch  
September 14<sup>th</sup>  
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](mailto:pphebert@mail.com)

---

**First UU of Alton Pagans**



We are not planning a fall equinox celebration, however, our church has asked us to do a ritual at our picnic on Sunday, October 8<sup>th</sup> at Gordon Moore Park so we will put energies into that. I am having shoulder surgery at the end of September, so any help with the 10/8 ritual would be appreciated!

At our last event, we decided to learn more about (or brush up and revisit) Goddess spirituality. We decided to read The Chalice and the Blade, by Riane Eisler. If you are interested in reading and learning together, let us know here, and try to get in Chapter 1! See you on Sunday, October 8<sup>th</sup>. We will meet next for Samhain on 11/4 at church at 4 pm.

If you have any questions or would like to join us, please contact Paula LaFond at [paulafond721@gmail.com](mailto:paulafond721@gmail.com), or through messenger on Facebook.

---

**Meditation Group**

For a third eye opener become a meditation class participant. Learn how to tap into the stillness during four one hour sessions. Consistency is important for developing a successful practice. A one-time \$50 fee is due- first session. The fee is being donated to the church.

**Dates: Saturdays, 10/28, 11/4, 11/11, 11/18**

**Time: 10 am**

**Where: First UU of Alton**

**Cost: \$50 which will be donated to the church**

**RSVP: Please let Mary Lu McManus or  
Paula LaFond know if you plan to attend**

## A CHALICE LIGHTER GRANT

When I first heard the term "Chalice Lighters Grant," I thought, "Why would we need grants for chalice lighters. We just ask for volunteers." I went to the web to see what "Chalice Lighters" meant. I learned that Chalice Lighters give out grants. I learned that we could have possibly gotten help paying through a grant for paying an RE director. They have calls for grant proposals three times per year.

MidAmerica Region Chalice Lighters put on their website the expectations of congregations that apply for grants. Below is a quote directly from the website.

- "Congregations may be awarded a CL grant more than once; however, preference will be given to congregations who have not previously received a Chalice Lighter grant.
- A congregation may submit only one proposal for each call.
- Shared stewardship within the whole congregation, such as a challenge matching pledge or increase in volunteers will be viewed favorably.
- Preference will be given to those congregations which have contributed their fair share to the Annual Program Fund (APF) and regional dues, or can demonstrate a plan for getting to Fair Share, and/or have given financial support to a new church start.
- Preference will be given to congregations with active and growing Chalice Lighter programs. We suggest a minimum goal of 20% of members active in the Chalice Lighter Program.
- Churches receiving Chalice Lighter Grants are expected to participate in the life of the MidAmerica Region, UUA, including regional growth, membership and leadership development workshops.
- Interim and 6 and 12-month reports will be required on the expenditure of Chalice Lighter Funds."

We did pay our Regional dues if I remember correctly. But as far as I know, we have not participated in the life of our MidAmerica Region. We have not participated in membership and leadership development workshops.

And we most certainly don't have 20% of our members active in the Chalice Lighters Program.

Encourage our board to find a way to get involved in MidAmerica region. We as congregants can immediately get 20% of our members active in the Chalice Lighters program. How? All it takes is an individual contribution of **\$20.00** per year. So help make us eligible to be able to apply for the next call for grant proposals. Go to the UUA MidAmerica Region website, find the tab for the Chalice Lighters Program donations, click, and make your donation.

---

## WHY WE SHOULD PAY DUES TO THE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST ASSOCIATION.

To use their own words: "The Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) is the central organization for the Unitarian Universalist (UU) religious movement in the United States." "The primary purpose of the Association is to serve the needs of its member congregations, organize new congregations, extend and strengthen Unitarian Universalist institutions and implement its principles."

The UUA helps define who we are. "Unitarian Universalism affirms and promotes seven [Principles](#), grounded in the humanistic teachings of the world's religions. Our spirituality is unbounded, drawing from scripture and science, nature and philosophy, personal experience and ancient tradition as described in our six [Sources](#)." "We are brave, curious, and compassionate thinkers and doers. We are diverse in faith, ethnicity, history and spirituality, but aligned in our desire to make a difference for the good. We have a track record of standing on the side of [love, justice, and peace](#)."

The UUA seeks congregational input and feedback on statements like this. For example, at General Assembly congregations voted for a committee to review the seven Principles with emphasis on adding an eighth principle about prejudice of any kind.

The UUA has a staff that we can call upon to help us in all areas of congregational life, has developed regions to aid us, publishes the UUA World, runs a bookstore to help support UUA, provides committees to promote UU concerns, and provides education or support for education in many forms (web courses, books, education of ministers and so on). This is not an inclusive list of all UUA does. For example, the whole "Love Resists" campaign is part of UUA. However, it would take more space than we have to describe the extent of what UUA does.

Continued on page 8

We need the UUA. They can not exist without congregational financial support. This is why our congregation passed a budget this year that includes paying them our dues. It is one of the reasons that we ask that we keep our pledges up to date. To know more about UUA and what they do, please go to the Unitarian Universalist website.

---

**I AM WILLING**  
**February 2nd - 4th, 2018**  
**Unitarian Church of Evanston**

*"I do not  
separate my  
music from  
my heart nor  
do I separate  
my ideas from  
my daily life.*



**Holly  
Near**

*... It is from this personal place that I  
write my songs." Holly Near*

*Image courtesy of Irene Young*

[womanspirit@womenandreligion.org](mailto:womanspirit@womenandreligion.org)



Once upon a time in every district in the UUA, there was a Women & Religion Committee charged with creating a woman's space for the exploration of women's spirituality. Our committee (for the MidAmerica region) is one of three left of the original 21.

We gather one weekend a year to explore, learn, and celebrate our Woman Spirit. Through music, worship, workshops, and a spectacular keynote speaker we rejoice in a woman-only conference.

This year singer and activist Holly Near will speak, inspire and serenade us. If you have not attended before this is your year to be renewed and energized by experiencing **WomanSpirit!!!**

**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** - Carol McGrew

**Fundraising** - Dee Evans & Peg Flach

**Pastoral Associates**

Marcia Custer

Sandra Shaner

**Religious Education Council**

**Chair**-Joy Hoeft

**Stewardship Committee**

**Building** - TBD

**Grounds** - Robyn Stranquist

**Canvass 2017** - TBA

**Endowment Fund** - Jerry Johnson

**Finance** - Matt Koch

**Membership** - Mary Weber

**Sunday Support Ministries** - TBA

**Worship Associates**

Mary Johnson

Robin Crane

Joy Hoeft

Robert Kokenyesi

Dorothy Wilson

Mike Tarabulski

Ruth Maskow

Sabrina Trupia