

# FIRST UNITARIAN FOCUS



Congregation established 1836

*Newsletter of the*

## *First Unitarian Church*

*Alton, Illinois*

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

*Pastor Amy Brooks*



**Sunday Worship 10:00 A.M**

**The Theme for February, 2018 is “Earth”**

**February 4<sup>th</sup> 10 A.M**  
**1<sup>st</sup> Sunday Potluck!**

**Pastor Amy Brooks**  
**Worship Associate: Robin Crane**

**February 11<sup>th</sup> 10 A.M**  
**Feb. 14<sup>th</sup> Lent Begins**

**Marsh Berry**  
**Worship Associate: Dorothy Wilson**

**February 18<sup>th</sup> 10 A.M**

**Pastor Amy Brooks**  
**Worship Associate: Ruth Maskow**

**February 25<sup>th</sup> 10 A.M.**

**To Be Announced**  
**Worship Associate: Joy Hoeft**



### **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 [djccw@sbcglobal.net](mailto:djccw@sbcglobal.net) and to Becky Green at church [church@firstuualton.org](mailto:church@firstuualton.org)

### **1<sup>st</sup> Sunday Pot Luck Dinner, Sunday February 4<sup>th</sup>**

Warm your body and spirit with good food and interesting conversations with your church family following our service. All are welcome!



Home

*Don't oppress an immigrant. You know what it's like to be an immigrant, because you were immigrants in the land of Egypt. ~ Exodus 23:9, CEB*



Home is an intangible,  
nebulous, notion.  
Home is a vivid memory -  
joyful... painful...  
problematic...  
Home is an emotion, a location,  
a time.

Home is an open door (and) home is a slamming door.

Home is the hearth warming the heart of the Refugee  
it is a smoldering ruin left behind  
and the dimly lit flame flickering ahead.

Home is everything the Dreamer has ever known  
and it is a foreign land, never experienced.

Home is where the heart is,  
where the heart breaks  
where the heart aches  
for the Homeless.

Home is a blue-green marble  
tucked into the pocket  
of a fathomless, ever-expanding universe.

There are no homeless.  
There is no refugee, no dreamer, no immigrant.

There are only those whose homes have been denied them  
by we who have forgotten that yesterday  
we, too, stood in desolation  
and looked for home.

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**GIVING STATEMENTS**

The second week in January, our Treasurer sent out two kinds of giving statements. If we have an e-mail on file for you, the information was sent via e-mail with a link to an easily printable file. If we have no e-mail listed for you, we printed the giving statements and "snail-mailed" them to you:

**1. Tax Year 2017 Giving to First Unitarian Church of Alton**

These tax year statements list the detail for every contribution. They also summarize the prior fiscal year pledge and payment amounts and the current fiscal year pledge and payment amounts.

Our software program presents us with the full Tax Year 2017 figures, itemized and totaled, and BELOW that, a section (cryptically) headed "Pledges." That section presents both PRIOR and CURRENT pledge year figures, but unfortunately the dates are not printed as part of the labels, so you may find that section a bit confusing. If you wish any help interpreting your figures, feel free to phone Becky Green at church (618- 462-2462) or e-mail Robin Crane, Treasurer, at patriot4511@gmail.com.

The statements will NOT have picked up any cash contributions you have made that were not labelled with your name. If you contribute cash on Sundays and wish to have your contributions recorded, please use the envelopes provided in the pews.

**2. Pledge Fulfilment Statements for the First Half of Our Fiscal Year**

To show you how we are doing financially and how your contributions are coming along compared to your original pledge, we sent a second set of statements covering the first half of our fiscal year (7/1/2017 through 12/31/2017).

This statement shows YOUR contribution to the church's financial operations. To get a picture of how that fits in with the overall story, read the article elsewhere in this newsletter that summarizes our financial standing at this point in the fiscal year.

As always, we appreciate regular giving to help us avoid deficits. If you experience an important change in your own financial circumstances, please contact Becky or Robin, preferably in writing, to either decrease or increase your pledge.

## Religious Education for Children and Youth

Zipporah Lee, our new RE Coordinator, is working with teacher volunteers to enhance our children's religious education. More details in the future.

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### Nursery Care

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

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## Our Whole Lives (OWL) Classes

Juliette Crone-Willis has started teaching OWL classes, beginning in January. Every other Sunday, in Emerson Place, the group meets from 10 am to 12:30. More information will be posted in "Church This Week."



Our Whole Lives is a program of lifespan sexuality education with curricula for all ages up to young adults. Our Whole Lives takes a holistic view of sexuality. It provides accurate, age appropriate information while helping people clarify their values, build interpersonal skills, and understand the spiritual, emotional, and social aspects of sexuality. Our Whole Lives is based on the Guidelines for Comprehensive Sexuality Education produced by the National Guidelines Task Force, a group of leading health, education, and sexuality professionals assembled by the Sexuality Information and Education.

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## Social Justice Organizational Meeting

**Saturday, February 17<sup>th</sup>, 1 PM, at the church.**



We will be forming the social justice committee and deciding what direction the committee will go. Pastor Amy will be there as well. If you care about justice, please come to explore what our church can do, together.

## 4th Saturday Personal Care Item Distribution

**Saturday, February 27th**

**Personal Care Distribution in January**



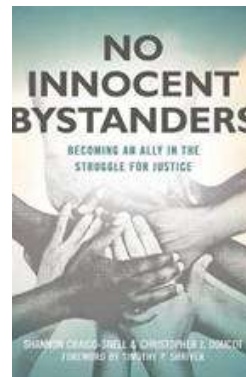
Please remember your less fortunate neighbors and help us keep this important service going. Your purchased items or financial support helps struggling families make ends meet. We serve thirty to sixty people each month, plus their families. A list of specific items needed is published in the "Church 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 4<sup>th</sup> Saturday Distribution noted on the memo line.

The Team thanks everyone for their ongoing support.

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## Alton Area Cluster Book Group Thursday, February 15 - 3 to 5 p.m.



The interfaith Alton Area Cluster Book Group will start up again on Thursday, February 15 from 3 to 5 p.m. at our church. The book chosen is "No Innocent Bystanders: Becoming an Ally in the Struggle for Justice" written by Shannon Craig-Snell and Christopher Doucot. It was published in 2017 and is available on Amazon. It's 157 pages long. Following the introductory chapter, the chapter titles are: 1. Understanding the struggle for LGBTQ Equality and Racial Justice - 2. Getting Ready to be an Ally - 3. Resources for being an Ally - 4. Concrete Steps - 5. Examples to Follow. There are discussion questions following each chapter. Dr. Craig-Snell is Professor of Theology at Louisville Presbyterian Seminary. Mr. Doucot is co-founder of the Hartford Catholic Worker community in Hartford CT which "transcends generational, gender and class barriers; houses homeless, feeds the hungry, and works to keeps kids in school." If you are free on the afternoon of February 15, please join us. Questions - contact Mary Johnson [mejohanson@mindspring.com](mailto:mejohanson@mindspring.com)

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## INTEREST GROUPS:

### Anna Ds – Women's Alliance

February 4<sup>th</sup>,  
11:30 a.m.



As you probably remember, we lost Audrey Wiseman recently. In the past, the Anna D's have contributed \$\$ to the Church in the name of deceased, long-term Anna D's members, most recently Grace Madison. Pat Moore is accepting special contributions from members in honor of Audrey and will make a contribution to the Church soon. If you'd like to participate, just give or send a check to Pat Moore made out to Anna D's.

We'll also be meeting again at The Best Buffet in Wood River on February 1, weather permitting, Until then, see you at church!

Sandy

### Men's Monthly Lunch February 11<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)



### *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 keep 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.

## Women & Religion



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



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!!!**

### WhaleCoast Alaska 2018



Have you ever dreamed of visiting Alaska? If so, **WhaleCoast Alaska 2018** is for you! Four Alaska UU fellowships invite you to experience our eco-cultural and

spiritual program this summer. See Alaska through the eyes of local UUs, 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! Tours led by Dave Frey, member of the Fairbanks UU congregation and Alaska travel expert. Find out more about this Alaskan trip of a lifetime. For complete information go to:

[www.WhaleCoastAK.org](http://www.WhaleCoastAK.org), email: [dfrey@whalecoastak.org](mailto:dfrey@whalecoastak.org) or call 907-322-4966. Discount for groups of 8 or more. We would love to share our Alaska with you!

David Frey  
Whale Coast Alaska Tour Director  
[www.WhaleCoastAK.org](http://www.WhaleCoastAK.org)  
[dfrey@whalecoastak.org](mailto:dfrey@whalecoastak.org)  
907-322-4966

## 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

Dorothy Wilson

Mike Tarabulski

Ruth Maskow

Sabrina Trupia

## Memorial Fund Contributions

It has been traditional for many members in our church to honor those special friends who have passed away with a financial contribution to the church. In lieu of flowers, members often submit their contribution to the church in the name of their friend, indicating by a quick note that the contribution is for the Memorial Fund.

At the Semi-Annual Congregational Meeting on January 21, 2018, a member of the congregation asked the Treasurer whether we were accepting specific memorial contributions and how we were spending them. The Treasurer indicated that we were accepting contributions into a specific income line in the main operating fund, but would report more detail in the next newsletter. Here's the most accurate information we have at present:

During this current fiscal year (7/1/2017 to 6/30/2018), we have received memorial contributions totaling \$200. These figures are recorded in a specific memorials budget income line in the operating fund, but there is no specific bank account for memorial contributions. There is no specific memorials spending line, and there is no balance accumulated from prior years.

The Board is inclined to spend memorial contributions on one-time items that may help the congregation going forward. These might include:

- (1) purchasing a safe to protect items of historic and legal importance such as the silver communion set and papers on our tax-exempt status, or
- (2) replacing the second refrigerator in the kitchen, which is not functioning and cannot be repaired.

We try to acknowledge and express our appreciation for such contributions by a note from a church Board member or volunteer. When Pat Moore ends her term as Board Secretary, she has volunteered to take over tracking and acknowledging memorial contributions.

As usual, further memorial contributions and additional ideas for use of memorial funds are welcomed. Feel free to talk to Pat or the Board.

**EXPRESSING FAITH AND LOVE  
THROUGH MONEY:  
A Mid-year Financial Report to the Congregation  
of First Unitarian Church of Alton, By the  
Treasurer on Behalf of the Board**

Finances reflect priorities, commitment, and, yes, faith in ourselves. In that spirit, your Board offers this report on the state of the congregation's finances mid-year.<sup>1</sup> For ease of reading, we have included few dollar figures, but copies of the most recent Treasurer's Report to the Board are available for anyone who wishes to see the details. Just ask Robin Crane ([patriot4511@gmail.com](mailto:patriot4511@gmail.com); 804-405-8303). Because of space limitations, this report is slightly abridged compared to the Semi-Annual Meeting.

**Budgeted Income and Expenses (\$70,000, six months):** Last Spring, the congregation passed a balanced budget of \$140 K for the year (\$70 K for six months).

**Expenses (\$59,300, six months):** Partly due to delayed hiring of a second nursery attendant and a Religious Education Director, expenses were under budget for the first half of the year. In addition, the Board carefully monitored and negotiated with contractors over roof repairs, allowing us to save several thousand dollars.<sup>2</sup>

**Pledge Income (\$44,040, six months) and Supplementation:** Last year, the congregation placed a high priority on several actions: hiring a half-time minister, expanding nursery attendant coverage, hiring a part-time Religious Education Director, and doing some much-needed repairs to the roof. Realizing that pledge income cannot yet support all these priorities, the congregation chose to temporarily supplement member contributions by authorizing transfers of up to \$37,000 (total) from the Reserve Fund and the Endowment Fund. These transfers allowed us to establish our current budget of \$140,000 per year. Happily, pledge income came in more or less as we had budgeted for the first half-year, largely because some givers fulfilled their entire year's pledge early in the year.

**Total Income (\$57,811, six months):** Revenue is close to our expectations for the first half of the year and, due to lower expenses, the deficit is very small.

**Transfers from Reserves (\$0):** Thus, we have not yet transferred funds from Reserves into Operations. We will need to do so later in the year, however.

**This Point in Our Shared History:** To look back to the financial conditions when we entered this fiscal year on July 1, please recall that pledges were fewer in number than the prior year, and the total amounts pledged were lower. However, those who have pledged this year have, on average, fulfilled their pledges earlier in the year, and the fiscal picture looks more stable than last year.

Our faith congregation clearly has some good opportunities. In mutual love, respect, and hope for the future, the congregation approved those reserve transfers. That financial security is paying off in a number of ways, including the return of some former church members.

**Good News:** In a courageous statement of faith in the future of the congregation, two members made a very generous, one-time, unrestricted donation of \$20,000. The Board has placed the gift in the Reserve Fund.. Because this is a one-time donation, we do not think it wise to merge these monies with normal operating funds that support recurring expenses, at least not until we spend some time considering alternatives.

Over the coming months we will discuss possible one-time uses of the funds and incorporate the decision in the budget proposal for the annual meeting in May or June. So far, we have identified three possible options:

- (1) One possibility is to partially fund the cost of capital improvements to increase building accessibility.
- (2) Another would be to replace some or all of our leaking windows and frames.
- (3) A third would be simply to save these funds until membership and giving pick up.

We invite all members to offer their suggestions and considerations on dealing with such gifts. Talk to any member of the Board or, even better, write us a brief note.

As usual, all questions and suggestions are welcome.

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<sup>1</sup> The current fiscal year began July 1, 2017 and will end June 30, 2018.

<sup>2</sup> Kudos to Phil Embree, our unofficial due diligence negotiator.