

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 November, 2017 is “Blessing”

November 5th 10 A.M.

**Pastor Amy Brooks
Worship Associate: Dorothy Wilson**

Potluck after Service

November 12th 10 A.M.

**Sabrina Trupia
Worship Associate: Ruth Maskow**

November 19th 10 A.M.

**Pastor Amy Brooks
Worship Associate: Dorothy Wilson**

November 26th 10 A.M.

**Dee Evans
Worship Associate: Joy Hoeft**



The Seekers

Every Sunday, 11:15 am 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.



Thanksgiving for All!

Carol McGrew would like to invite church members and their friends to a LGBTQIA+ and Allies Accepting Thanksgiving.

This will be a Potluck Thanksgiving Meal held on Thursday, November 23rd from noon to 3pm or later. Meal to be served at 1pm. If you don't have anywhere else to go, don't want to cook a big meal alone, or don't feel comfortable going to your family and would like company on Thanksgiving please join Carol and others at First Unitarian of Alton, Illinois.

Please contact Carol McGrew if you'd like to come.

Blessings

"Blessed is the influence of one true, loving human soul on another." ~ George Eliot

Friends, it's November.

And we all know that November means comfort food, and gathering with friends and family around the table of plenty. We all understand that the pinnacle of these good things is the celebration of Thanksgiving. And everyone knows that Thanksgiving is a time of love and companionship, where there is food for all and no one is turned away...right?

Excuse me.

For a moment there I started to believe the narrative our capitalist society tries so hard to sell about this holiday.

I feel that many of us have already encountered a different version of this meal. There is another Thanksgiving, one we don't see during the commercial break. This other meal is one where families argue, parents struggle to buy food, and children are rejected by the people who are supposed to love and accept them as they are.

It is tough to find blessings in that other Thanksgiving. For many people November is the beginning of the peak season of struggle that continues through Christmas, the winter months, and into the new year.

As we move into November perhaps we can lean more into the other, harder reality of what this month brings for many. Maybe we can focus not simply on counting our blessings but also on being a blessing to each other.

Rev. Amy Brooks

**1st Sunday Potluck Dinner
November 5th, following service**



Share a meal with your church family – come, enjoy good food and conversation and the warmth of community

Nursery Care

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



**Religious Education for
Children and Youth News**

"What we've been up to in Elementary RE
And Youth Group."

The elementary RE class has jumped right into learning about world religions. We have started with some ancient religions. We have met Fiona, who celebrates the ancient Celtic religion. We have also met Bjorn, who celebrates ancient Nordic gods and goddesses. We have heard stories from these religions, sung songs, and celebrated some of their customs. The kids have enjoyed this and are making great connections between these religions and some modern ones we see today, including our own. They are looking forward to learning about lots of other religions as the year progresses. And so are us teachers!!

The Youth Group began the Social Justice curriculum by learning to identify *Awareness* as a quality needed to bring about a more just world. They learned about the Spheres of Influence and how people and events influenced their social justice identity. Next we explored *Maslow's Hierarchy of Basic Needs* and how meeting basic needs is a justice issue. There was much discussion on this topic. The *Call for Understanding* encouraged the youth to increase their understanding of justice issues, the meaning of "abilities", and the importance of nonviolent communication.

This coming month, the Youth Group will concentrate on how words can demonstrate *Empathy*; identify empathy as a quality needed to bring about a more just world; and to connect affirming and promoting the inherent worth and dignity of every person to fulfill people's basic needs. To explore the role that fear plays in acting with *Courage* and how we can act with courage in big and small ways. We will identify *Cooperation* as a quality needed to bring about a more just world and demonstrate the strengths and challenges of cooperation."

Thanks,
Joy

Board of Trustees

Summary of Sept. and Oct. Board Meetings

The Endowment Committee is now at full strength since Ron Glossop and Tracy Howe-Koch have agreed to serve along with Chairman Jerry Johnson.

Our **banking changes** to Liberty Bank are almost complete. President Michael Schmidt suggested that perhaps the President should not be a signatory, since he/she is only in office for one year. Pat Moore moved that the Secretary should be the additional signatory, since he/she serves a three- year term. Robin Crane seconded and the motion passed.

The RE Coordinator position was posted and applicants were interviewed by an ad hoc committee of Pastor Amy and Board members. The Board heard their report and has agreed on the hiring as of Nov. 1. The position will pay \$1000/month for 8 months for 10 hours of work per week, and will be reviewed at the end of the church year. The new coordinator will be referred to Emerson, Fellowship, who is also wanting to hire someone.

A 2nd Nursery Attendant has been hired to work with Lily. Laura Rayson will be here for most Sundays, but we still may need occasional volunteers, as we could only afford to budget for 34 Sundays. The attendants are paid \$60 per week.

The 501c3 Application Process has been thoroughly investigated by Mary Johnson. We are seeking this status in to be able to seek corporate donations for our 4th Saturday program. We will need to pay an \$850 fee for processing the application, but it need only be done once. The application is 14 pages long, with 17 pages of instructions. Mary has completed most of the parts, but is waiting to get clarification of our last 5 years of financial records. Mary prepared packets of material for Board members to study comment on. It will be necessary to change two of our by-laws, for which Mary has written proposals. We hope those will be ready for congregation voting at the January semi-annual meeting. Many **thanks go to Mary** for the many hours of work she has done.

The **Easton Corner Park** has had the trees cut (as you have no doubt noticed). Apparently the city forgot that we had a lease on the lot before giving Simmons law firm, the new owners of the Miller's Mutual Building, permission to make changes to the lot. We are still not sure exactly what they are doing with the lot or what it means for us. Pastor Amy and others have been talking to both parties. Our main concerns are the continued ability to have accessible access across the lot and what will be done in terms of lawn care. We are hoping to determine exactly when our property boundary is located. More news may be forthcoming by the time you get this newsletter.

Roof Repairs are needed to the flat roof installed a few years ago on the Wuerker Room and RE wing. There have been leaks in several places. We have received assessments from several parties, and it has become apparent that the roof was not installed properly. The installer has gone out of business, so we have no recourse with him. We have approved a contract with Lakeside Roofing to do repairs, and they have suggested that we need to have annual updates done. The repairs will cost \$2650. Also one area needs masonry repair and tuck-pointing, so a second contractor will be sought for that work.

A vacant committee chair of Social Justice is being filled by Dee Evans, with help from Sheila O'Brien and Carol McGrew. We are still in need of someone to step up to chair the Grounds job. You don't need to do all the yard work yourself, just be willing to organize volunteers. Talk to any Board member if you could serve.

Treasurer Robin Crane has been doing an outstanding job on getting our finances in order, along with the work of church administrator Becky Green. She reported that bank balances are down a little but still healthy. Most pledges have been coming in. Spending has been below budget because we have not yet paid an RE Administrator, nor have we done roof repairs yet. We have started paying our "fair share" to the UUA. We have not yet had to draw from our Reserve or Endowment Funds, which was to be allowed after congregational approval at our last meeting. The Board approved up to \$800 for a used fire-proof safe for our office to protect our important and historical records.

Electrical work is still needed on some of the outlets in the Wuerker Room. Michael Schmidt will be seeking bids from electricians. Apparently the problem is in the wiring, not just the outlets.

The sign on the Alby St. side is finally going to be redone. It will be replaced at a cost of \$200 with a new sign stating the church name, phone number, and email address.

A Fund-Raising Committee has been formed by Dee Evans, with Mary Johnson and Sandy Shaner as members. They will be researching new ways to raise money from outside sources. If you have any ideas, they would be happy to hear them.

The Annual Board Retreat will be held on Nov. 11 from 11-2. New ideas and future plans will be discussed.

Submitted by,
Pat Moore, Secretary



NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

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

From the Editor

to Becky Green at church djjccw@sbcglobal.net and church@firstuualton.org

Schnucks eScrip Fundraising Program

Several years ago our church began to participate in a fundraising program called "eScrip." This is a program in which Schnucks supermarkets donate from 1% to 3% of our home grocery purchases directly to our church.



All you have to do is to pick up a free eScrip card from the Customer Service counter at your local Schnucks store. Then go online to register your card and designate First Unitarian Church of Alton, ID # 164501344, to have the donated percentage contributed to the church. (There are several "First Unitarian Churches" participating in this nationwide program so just enter the Alton zip code [62002] and search on that.) If you do not have internet access, call 1-800-931-6258 to register by phone.

Then, whenever you make a purchase at Schnucks, give your eScrip card to the cashier before you pay.

The church made:

- \$266.00 for 2015-2016
- \$210.04 for 2016-2017 and
- \$32.00 for this year so far

The gradual decline in income may reflect membership changes or changes in shopping patterns. But, maybe some church members who shop at Schnucks have forgotten to use their cards.

If you shop at Schnucks and still participate in the program, THANK YOU! If you shop there but don't participate, please consider doing so, as described above.

Thanks,

Robin Crane

Based on information provided by Jerry Johnson & Becky Green

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST ADVOCACY NETWORK OF ILLINOIS



Several years ago (before Rev. VanZandt left), we became part of the UUANI. You will be hearing more about UUANI. It is an answer to the workshop we had on

social justice asking the congregation what we wanted to do to get involved. The consensus was that we are a small church and cannot take on big projects. We still want to do social justice--we just need small projects. UUANI is perfect for us. Be ready to learn more in November.

CHALICE LIGHTERS

Chalice lighters. Chalice Lighters is an organization that gives out grants. Their web site is [Chalice Lighters @ MidAmericaUUA.org](http://ChaliceLighters@MidAmericaUUA.org). Their web address is.



<https://midamericauua.org/programs/chalice-lighters>

At the web site, you can sign up to support chalice lighters. The more members we have who sign up is a very strong point when we apply for a chalice lighters grant to help pay for a religious education coordinator. The cost is \$20 and is a small donation toward helping UUA to give out grants. It would be so nice if we could qualify for a grant.

Calling All Singers!



We would like to celebrate our church's 181st anniversary on Sunday, December 3, 2017 with special music.

You are invited to attend a choir rehearsal on Thursday, November 30th at 6:30 p.m. at church. More rehearsals may be decided upon later.

Also, singers and musicians:

There is an opportunity for you to perform holiday songs for shut-ins who are church members or friends in December! We would perform in small groups for those interested in hearing us. It is almost like old-time caroling!

Email Ruth at rma3206@gmail.com or call her if interested.

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**)



HURRICANE SEASON

The Gulf Coast has been hit by two hurricanes. The national Unitarian Universalist Association is collecting money to help with emergency services. Half of the money collected will go to Unitarian Universalist congregations in Texas and Florida. The other half will go direct to high risk groups that are outside of our churches. Online contributions can be made to <https://giving.uua.harvey-floods>. Checks can be sent direct to the national Unitarian Universalist offices in Boston. Checks should be marked: "Hurricanes Irma and Harvey."

Address:

Unitarian Universalist Association,
24 Farnsworth Street
Boston, MA 02210.

4th Saturday Personal Care Item Distribution Saturday, November 25th



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.



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!!!**



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.

INTEREST GROUPS:

**Anna Ds – Women’s Alliance,
November 2nd
11:30 a.m.**



We’ll meet at Madison’s Tea Room in Wood River this month. The address is 144 East Ferguson, telephone number 251-8474. Plenty of parking on the street in front or in a large lot behind the building. Suggestion: start with your dessert choice and go from there! Yum



**Men’s Monthly Lunch
November 9th
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

**Healing Energy Meditation
November 8th and November 22nd, 6:30
p.m.**



Come Explore the Mystery with us!
Conversation, meditation and growth with friends. This group meets the 2nd and 4th Wed. of each month at 6:30 P.M. at the fireplace. All are welcome

Sanctuary Lights



Have you noticed it’s brighter in the Sanctuary? The spotlights have new bulbs in them and all 52 of the light bulbs in the wall sconces and chandelier have been replaced with LED bulbs. Thanks to Jerry Johnson for purchasing and installing the new light bulbs.

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

Wash, Dry and Put Away!

Enjoy some coffee and cookies with your conversation after church? *Remember that the coffee cup you used won’t wash & dry itself! Please be thoughtful to keep our church home clean and tidy.*



And now, before we go - pictures of last Month's Animal Blessing:

