

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 March, 2018 is “Evil”

March 4th 10 A.M
1st Sunday Potluck!

Pastor Amy Brooks
Worship Associate: Robin Crane

March 11th 10 A.M
Spaghetti Dinner Fundraiser!

Ruth Maskow
Worship Associate: Sabrina Trupia

March 18th 10 A.M

Pastor Amy Brooks
Worship Associate: Robin Crane

March 25th 10 A.M.

Sabrina Trupia
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.

1st Sunday Pot Luck Dinner, Sunday March 4th

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



A Strong Word

One of the signs of being an oppressed people is that you need to have a campaign to affirm the rights other people take for granted. ~ Rev. Raphael G Warnock

Friends,

As I reflect on evil, the worship theme for this month, I feel a tension. I am aware that this word is an accusation that has historically been flung at the most vulnerable of people. 'Evil' is a label that has been, and continues to be, attached to people inhabiting religious, political, gender and sexual diversities. Oftentimes the phrase 'you are evil' could accurately be translated to 'you are different.'

And ALSO I have seen the evidence in this world of forces that seek to demean and to diminish life in ways that I can only describe as... *evil*. African Americans have a tradition reaching back to the mid-twentieth century of using the term 'woke' to describe the notion of being conscious of systems of oppression. It has had a recent re-emergence on social media as #staywoke.

As Unitarian Universalists we often refer to the seven principles, the first of which speaks to 'the inherent worth and dignity of every person.' And so I invite you to awaken to the reality that in this world we do not treat people as if they have dignity and worth. (And, very gently, I suggest that the ability to sleep through this reality is the privilege of the unoppressed.) And that is a reality that I do not hesitate to name as evil.

NEWSLETTER DEADLINE



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



"I'm pleased to announce the birth of the new **"Social Action: Fourth Saturday"**! This group, as you know, is not actually new. We built some structure in what was the ad-hoc Fourth Saturday crew, claiming official ownership of our recent history of helping Alton's less fortunate with household and personal care items.

We are always looking for people to help with the distribution once a month, no experience necessary. Come and help your neighbor, engage with Black Lives, get thanked and blessed a lot, have coffee with us and if you need it, receive community service credits. We are needed in the community, so come and be part of it."



Embracing Our Beloved Community

Every time I attend services at First UU Alton, I am overwhelmed by the love that surrounds our community. We are a group that *gets* each other. We have seen each other through the best and most difficult of times. We believe in our hearts that all are welcome to join us in spiritual growth, justice seeking, and community outreach. We are part of something special. Together we have given our Time (service to the community), Talent (music, IT, carpentry, etc), and Treasure (pledges, donations). It takes ALL three of these to make First Church the special place it is. I invite you to see how you are able to support these three "T"s. As we begin our pledge drive, it is important for everyone to see how their contributions are a vital part of **embracing our beloved community**. Without you, we can't be us.

~Tracey Koch, Stewardship Chair

Religious Education for Children and Youth

**March 11th
Youth
Fundraiser
Luncheon!**



The youth will be cooking a spaghetti after-worship luncheon on March 11th to fundraise for summer/fall youth and intergenerational events. The menu includes spaghetti, garlic bread, and salad with some desserts & other side dishes. There will be gluten-free & vegetarian options available. For parents of youth, youth will be asked to arrive early in order to prepare the meal. We hope all of you will consider coming to enjoy a meal while raising some funds for our youth programming!

Introducing your new RE Coordinator

I've been told that it's good to introduce yourself to people, so here's my best attempt. I'm Zipporah Lee (I tend to go by Zippy, but either's acceptable). I'm a queer lady nearing 30yrs with a lovely partner and two cats (hoping for a dog soon!) I have a bachelor's degree in Fine Art from Ashland University, OH and a master's degree in Divinity from Eden Theological Seminary, MO. I am seeking ordination in the United Church of Christ (UCC), a tradition that I've been raised in since confirmation (church school), but my roots are Catholic and Evangelical Pentecostal. I've worked in the past at UCC and DOC (Disciples of Christ) churches as a religious educator. Currently, I work in the development dept. at Lift For Life Academy, a STL charter school, and a youth suicide crisis line, KUTO, in Brentwood, MO while additionally working with you all here! I'm excited to work in a theological/spiritual tradition other than my own and hope to grow with you over time.

I hope you'll find me easily approachable and considerate, even if I make mistakes, which I'm sure I will. I'd like everyone to remember that I'm human and respond well to constructive conversations. It will take me a while to learn names & faces, but please introduce yourself whether or not you'll be involved with RE programming -- it's important for me to connect & understand -- these things help me do so. In closing, I'll share my contact information with you.

Zipporah Lee

Email: rebeccamularski@gmail.com
Cell (text preferable): (419) 961-3164

Nursery Care

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



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.

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 Recent Board Meetings

President-Elect Paula LaFond

has had to resign her position on the Board due to work pressures and other personal reasons. The Board accepted her resignation with regret, noting the excellent job she has been doing. The Board will appoint someone to fill her position until the June congregational meeting, when there will be a regular Board election. **Dee Evans** is chair of the Nominating Committee.



Work on obtaining the 501C3 status for the church has been completed, thanks to the tremendous job **Mary Johnson** did in studying all the materials regarding the rules. The congregation approved the needed by-law changes, and the Board and staff members signed Conflict-of-Interest statements and answered a series of questions on the application. After the application is approved, we will be able to apply for grants and solicit corporate donations for 4th Saturday products.

Our new religious coordinator **Zipporah Lee** (Zippy) has been hired and has begun her work with the RE teachers and nursery workers.

The Endowment Fund now has three official signatories: **Jerry Johnson, Tracy-Howe Koch, and Ron Glossop**. The fund had a total balance at the end of 2017 of \$188,516.89 from our three funds: Pax World, Ariel, and American Fund. The planned amount of contribution to the working funds of the church for 2017 was \$5462.94.

Phil Embree accepted the chairmanship of the Building and Grounds Committee and has been doing a lot of work already. He, Dee Evans, and Pastor Amy Brooks have been working with Simmons Insurance to determine the exact boundaries between church property and the park. Phil has been working to get grass established on some of the areas plowed up by workers who were cutting down the trees. The work on repairing the flat part of the roof has been completed by Lakeside Roofing. Also, Minden Masonry completed work on some broken masonry on the roof, but they also submitted photos of other places that need either masonry or flashing work. Phil will be seeking bids on that job. One of our refrigerators has quit working and was found to be not worth repairing. We decided to experiment with using only one refrigerator for now. We are currently looking for someone who would reclaim the coolant and haul away the old frig for recycling. Amy has asked for new blinds for her office, and we are currently seeking the best bid for the job.

A new doorbell will soon be installed at all doors that will ring in the offices and the Kate Wuerker Room.

Pastor Amy Brooks reported that she now has a larger balance in the Minister's Discretionary Fund thanks to the Christmas Eve offering. She has frequent requests of needs from both church members and community members. She has a wedding scheduled at the church in April and requested that the Board needs to work on revisions to the Building Use Policy, especially regarding weddings. The Board will work on that, plus revisions to our definition of membership when reporting to the UUA. The Board voted to pay \$100 to outside speakers, beginning on May 20, 2018. Amy will complete her course work at Eden Seminary and graduate in June with her master's degree in theology. This summer she will take classes specific to Unitarian theology.

Treasurer Robin Crane reported that Pledge Reports for the 2017 tax year have been sent out to all pledging units. \$400 has been received by the church in memory of Audrey Wiseman. The church also received an unrestricted donation of \$20,000 from a member couple who asked to remain anonymous. The Board decided to place the money in the Reserve Fund until the use of it has been determined. After Amy, Becky, and the Board worked to determine current membership, we were found to have 53 members currently attending and contributing, 18 attending but not giving, 2 emeritus members, and others who should probably be classified as "friends." At the end of January, the overall bank balance stood at \$63,198, with \$21,851 of that in the checking account. Our total income so far is about \$2000 above the budgeted level, but some pledges were paid early. Currently both spending and pledges are below budget for the year, leading to an actual deficit of only \$661. Members are encouraged to participate in the Chalice Lighters program of the UUA so that we could be eligible to receive grants.

Dee Evans and Sandy Shaner will be working on revising our list of committees and their responsibilities. Members are encouraged to respond to needs for work being done by committees.

The Board is planning to work on an advertisement of our availability for weddings, especially our welcoming attitude toward same sex weddings. We would like to place the ad in local papers and perhaps prepare a brochure to hand out at Pridefest, local bridal events, etc. We hope to continue our participation in PRIDE events.

We received information about the **Iva Laughlin Fund** which makes grants to needy elderly Unitarians for medical bills, rent assistance, utilities, personal care assistance, etc. If you would like to apply or know of

another member who could use help, please let Amy know.

Dee Evans is working on making First Unitarian Church T-shirts available for purchase. These could be worn when we are participating in outside events to make us more visible as an active group.

Sandy Shaner continues to work on Church Policies. If you are interested in reviewing an updated list of policies approved by the Board, please consult with Sandy.

Submitted by **Pat Moore**, Secretary of the Board.



2018 Community Lenten Service and Lunch

On Wednesday, March 21st, our church once again is participating in the Alton Community Lenten Services, organized by Church Women United. All the worship services begin at 12:00 noon followed by a lunch put on by the host church at 12:30. The lunch costs \$5.00 per person (no charge for our volunteers) and a free-will offering is also taken to be divided between Oasis Women's Shelter and the Crisis Food Center. The host church keeps the \$5.00 per person fee to use as it sees fit – usually to pay for the food provided for the luncheon.

On Wednesday, March 21st, we will host the service and lunch. In the pulpit will be Rev. Charles Burton from Unity Fellowship Church. We're planning on 50 attendees at the service.

On Friday, (Good Friday), March 30, our Pastor, Amy Brooks, will be leading the service at Unity Fellowship Church in Godfrey (1301 W. Delmar Ave).

On the Wednesday we're hosting (March 21) we will need volunteers for a variety of tasks.

Sandy Shaner has already volunteered to serve as cashier and Pat Moore will coordinate the decorating of the sanctuary and Wuerker Room.

There is a volunteer sign-up sheet on the table in the Kate Wuerker Room or contact Peg Flach at pegflach@gmail.com to say you'll take one or several of the jobs listed:

- set up: tables, cutlery, and napkins (we'll be using china dishes)

- beverages: (coffee/tea (hot and cold)/lemonade)
- cooking up nutritious soups (veggie and non-veggie), baking yummy desserts
- onsite: keeping the buffet table stocked
- cleaning up (important that those folks doing the set-up and food preparation do not have to do clean up too).

Dates for Other Lenten and Lunch Services:

March 7th @ Morningstar Baptist Church – 1 E. 6th St. – Rev. Tim Pate of Main St. United Methodist in pulpit.

March 14th @ Godfrey First United Methodist – 1100 Airport Rd – Rev. Charles Bufford of Tabernacle MB Church in pulpit.

March 21st @ First Unitarian – Rev. Charles Burton of Unity Fellowship Church in pulpit.

March 28th @ St. James Baptist Church – 2016 Belle St. – Rev. Steve Friese of Godfrey First United Methodist in pulpit.

Friday March 30th @ Unity Fellowship Church – 1301 W. Delmar Ave., Godfrey – Pastor Amy Brooks in pulpit.

Joyce Berney

Former long-time church member Joyce Berney died on February 12th 2018. She and her husband Paul joined the church in February of 1973. They were both very involved in the church for the next twenty-



plus years before moving from Florissant to St. Charles and later to a retirement home in Brentwood. Among her many church activities, Joyce taught in the RE program, served on the church Board, including a term as church president, and participated in Anna Ds. Joyce and Paul moved to Escondido, California three years ago to live closer to their daughter. Joyce's ashes will be interred in a military cemetery in Escondido.

Mary and Jerry Johnson visited with Paul and Joyce in November.

INTEREST GROUPS:



Anna Ds – Women’s Alliance March 1st 11:30 a.m.

At the last meeting, we agreed it had been a while since we've been to Castelli's, so that's where we're going in March. I've called and made the reservation and would appreciate your RSVPs by Monday, 2/26 so I can confirm the day before.

Here's the info on Castelli's:
3400 Fosterburg Road
Alton, IL 62002
(618) 462-4620

It would be nice if we all remembered to bring either a food can for the Food Bank or an item for the personal care distribution church has on the 4th Saturday of each month.

Sandy

Men’s Monthly Lunch March 8th 11:30 a.m.



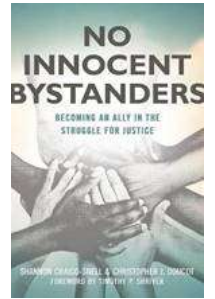
The men’s lunch bunch (Retired old Men Eating Out) meets on the second Thursday of each month. Join us at the Best Buffet at 615 Wesley Dr. in Wood River. All men in our church are invited (retired or working, old, or not). For further information contact Paul Herbert pphebert@mail.com

Alton Area Cluster Book Group

The interfaith Alton Area Cluster Book Group will meet again at our church on Thursday, March 15th from 3 to 5 p.m. The book chosen is “No Innocent Bystanders: Becoming an Ally in the Struggle for Justice” written by Shannon Craigo-Snell and Christopher Doucot. It was published in 2017. Chapters include:

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. Craigo-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 3rd Thursday afternoon of each month, please join us. If you have any questions – contact Mary Johnson at mejohanson@mindspring.com



4th Saturday Personal Care Item Distribution Saturday, March 24th 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 4th Saturday Distribution noted on the memo line.

The Team thanks everyone for their ongoing support.

**Minutes from the Social Justice Committee
February 17, 2018**

Members Attending: Amy Brooks, Minister and Leader; John Herdon; Mary Johnson; Carol McGrew; Ruth Maskow; Sheila O'Brien; Sabrina Trupia, Sandy Shaner, Dee Evans

The group decided that the Social Justice Committee is a committee that includes groups that engage in social justice projects and in social justice actions.

The following was agreed upon:

- Any group that arises from the Social Justice Committee will be considered a "group" under the Social Justice Committee. These groups are formed by the members of the larger committee and run by the members that form that group.
- Any member of the church qualifies to be on the Social Justice committee as well as the groups formed by the members of the Social Justice Committee.

There are two such groups that are part of the Social Justice Committee.

1. Fourth Saturday Group
2. The Voter Registration Group

Fourth Saturday Social Action Group already has leadership, members, procedures, and communication with the rest of the congregation. The Group will continue in its role.

Voter registration is a new social action group that was suggested by Sheila O'Brien and agreed upon by the Social Justice Committee. It was decided that we could best intersect with the goals of UUANI by working on the voter registration project.

- Sheila will find out what it takes to become certified to register people to vote and call Lewis and Clark to see if we can go there to register people.
- Dee will call the Farmer's Market and Earth Tones to find out the cost to put Voter Registration booths at these events.

The other topic discussed was the Pride parade. During the St. Louis Pride Parade, many members will be at General Assembly. For that reason, attendance at other Pride Parades was suggested.

- Carol will look into the dates of those parades and suggest how we can best participate in them.

Respectfully Submitted: Dee Evans

**Next Social Justice Meeting at church
Saturday, March 31st at 1:00 pm**

**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