

# 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  
November, 2018 - "Ancestors"**

**November 4<sup>th</sup> 10 A.M – Potluck Dinner!  
And Music!**

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

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**November 11<sup>th</sup> 10 A.M**

**Robert Kokenyesi  
Worship Associate: Mary Johnson**

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

**Pastor Amy Brooks  
Worship Associate: Michael Tarabulski**

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

**John Herndon  
Worship Associate: Sabrina Trupia**

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**The Church Office will be closed for the  
Thanksgiving Holiday on Friday,  
November 23<sup>rd</sup>**

## Pastor Amy's Corner

### Hope

*"It's really a wonder that I haven't dropped all my ideals, because they seem so absurd and impossible to carry out. Yet I keep them, because in spite of everything, I still believe that people are really good at heart." ~ Anne Frank, The Diary of a Young Girl*

These days seem far removed from the time when the first African American President was sworn in to the office, having run on a platform of 'hope.' For many people within the United States the 'feeling word' that best sums up these times is 'dread.' This is particularly so for the most vulnerable among us.

I write this in the final days of the 2018 mid-term election season, knowing that whatever the outcome in November there will be some who receive the results with joy and some who receive them with sorrow. This being the case it seems the greatest absurdity to invite you to find some way to hold onto hope.

Hope is a fickle and fleeting thing. Yet it is also a radiant light, a comforting breeze, a firm foundation. Oftentimes it exists only because we have wrestled it

into being. In the middle of the struggle for justice in a hurting world we can forget the good that truly does exist. I know that good exists because I have seen it in you. And so, despite everything and whatever happens next, be hopeful.

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### On Sunday, Nov. 4<sup>th</sup>

Tracey Howe-Koch and her string quartet, *No Strings Attached*, will perform during the service. Enjoy!



### Sunday November 4<sup>th</sup>

Stay after the service to share a meal with your church family. Bring your favorite dish or maybe stay to help clean up afterwards. Enjoy the warmth of our church community. Everyone is always welcome!



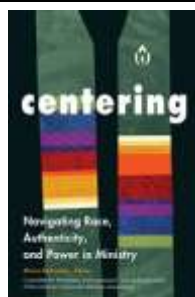
### The Seekers

Seekers discussion group meets each Sunday, in Emerson place, about 15 minutes after that day's service is concluded. On the second and third Sunday of each month, (Nov. 11<sup>th</sup> & 18<sup>th</sup>) we will have a facilitator; the remaining

Sundays will be self-led by those attending. All adults are encouraged to use this forum to discuss the sermon and related ideas. Please be thoughtful of time, so that everyone can participate. This is a great way to get to know your fellow members. We always have a lively and interesting exchange of ideas. Hope to see you there!

### Common Read

Have you been wondering *when are we going to start the Common Read book again?* (The Common Read is a book chosen by a Unitarian Universalist



Association panel which all UUs are encouraged to read for the year.)

Answer: After careful discussion with Pastor Amy and our religious education professional, Zipporah Lee, the book "Centering: Navigating Race, Authenticity and Power in Ministry" is on hold for now. However, watch for further developments (currently in the works) on the important issue of race.

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**Don't forget the church now offers online giving!** -You can now make a contribution to our church through a mobile app! To get started download **GivePlusChurch** for **FREE** from the App Store or Google Play. Simply search for "**GivePlusChurch**" to quickly find and download the app today. Then, you can easily make donations directly from your smartphone using your debit/credit card or checking/savings account. You can also choose to donate as a guest or set up an account that allows you to securely and conveniently schedule recurring donations and manage and review your giving history. We hope you enjoy this new way to contribute to our church and thank you for your support!



### Religious Education Updates

The Eliot Chapel Youth are visiting on Nov. 4th to worship with us & also to tour the building after worship. *Please welcome them warmly as they join us.*



Religious Education for Youth & Children is currently being held in Emerson Place due to the need for slight building updates. We plan to share the space kindly with Seekers and any other group that wishes to use that space on a Sunday morning.

**The Religious Education Schedule has changed!** In an effort to move toward sustainable youth & children's RE here at First UU Alton, there have been adjustments to how RE is scheduled on a Sunday morning. **Youth now meet for RE every 1st and 3rd Sundays. Elementary now meet for RE every 2nd and 4th Sundays. 5th Sundays, all children & youth remain in worship.** If anyone has further questions about these arrangements, please contact Zippy, whose information is found in the church directory.

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## From the Board



Some Board meetings last longer and are more complex than others and sometimes we have one that lets us reflect on recent events and take a relative breather. The Board

meeting on October 11 was one of the latter.

We talked about the past and future of the proposed Easton St. closure at 4th St. but, in the absence of any tangible plans to review, there was little to do for now other than watch and wait.

There were things to do regarding the movement of the Office Administrator's office to the main floor, and we did them so that the move is either done by the time this newsletter is available or very nearly completed.

We talked about a few more policy items to think about over the next few months as well as items to go in an overall Governance Calendar to help us ensure we have a handle on "what's due when".

Financial items consisted of a detailed Treasurer's Report and the status of the Givelify app that we've opened to general congregational use. Robin Crane has prepared a special Treasurer's Summary for you which is included in this newsletter.

Our Pastor Amy provided a detailed plan for RE the rest of this congregational year as well as reporting on progress with the GlenEd and North County satellite groups.

All in all, we had an informative meeting with good conversation, plans and reports.  
Sandy Shaner, Secretary

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### Hanging in There!

By Robin Crane, Treasurer



Hang in there!

After three months of our new fiscal year, now is a good time to take a big picture look at our finances. I have a responsibility to report to the Board and the congregation. Similarly, you, the loving, thoughtful members of this congregation, have a responsibility to attend to how we are doing, so you will be informed enough to

vote on impending issues about our financial and organizational future. Keeping informed about our finances is especially important, because we know that our expenses exceed our income. We are trying to grow our program and our membership by supplementing our normal income with transfers from the Endowment Fund.

## Financial Status

So let's get to it! Overall, this is my assessment of where we are three full months into fiscal year 2018-19 (July through September):

- Our pledge income at almost \$24 K came in slightly above what we budgeted, with some people ahead of their total pledge and others quite behind. Those who are ahead of schedule probably won't be able to keep up the larger payments all year (though we'd love it if they could), so we need those who are behind schedule to step up their contributions.<sup>1</sup>

Total quarterly income (\$28 K) is almost \$8 K lower than budgeted (\$36 K) at this time of year. That seems like a big discrepancy, **but we knew that we'd be running short and planned for it:** We had intended to use \$6,400 of Endowment savings to supplement our income by now - we haven't done that YET for logistical reasons,<sup>2</sup> relying temporarily on our bank savings balance, but we will make the transfer within the next few months. Still, normal income was lower than we'd expected by \$1,600.

- Luckily, where we'd budgeted about \$36 K in expenses, we only had about \$31 K, so we didn't need that higher cash flow.
- Our net "loss" (actual income less spending) was only about \$1 to \$3 K for the quarter, depending on resolution of a small accounting discrepancy.
- If a few more people could catch up on their pledge payments, we could be "running even," and that would be genuinely encouraging!

### Supplementing Our Income

Since our fiscal year began on July 1, to meet bills we have transferred \$8 K from our Reserve (Savings) account into our normal Operations checking account. Toward the end of the year we'll make one transfer from Endowment

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<sup>1</sup> If your circumstances have changed enough so that you think you can either exceed or will fall short of your pledge, please contact Treasurer Robin Crane or Church Administrator Phillip Harris in the office. We won't lay a guilt trip on you and we WILL thank you, but we do need to know how things are going in the long run. As we have some potential building expenses coming up that we are going to have to decide upon, we need to have confidence in our income budget.

<sup>2</sup> It's time consuming and difficult to take money out of the Endowment, so we prefer to do it only once or twice a year.

to rebuild the Reserve. So far, it looks like we are pretty much on track to use most of the approved \$25,500 Endowment transfer by the end of the fiscal year on June 30.

### Automating Our Giving

We are trying out the VANCO company's GivePlus program for making electronic payments by cell phone. So far the program is working quite smoothly. It takes just seconds to download the app to a cell phone and a few minutes to set up the routing for your contributions. Subsequent gifts are remarkably easy and quick to do; they don't require you to carry your checkbook to church or hurriedly write a check as the offering plate passes by your row.

In September, six people made eight contributions ranging from \$5 to \$500 to the church using Give Plus's free app. For that month, the church received about \$1 K for a total fee of about \$32.

A GivePlus contribution appears in our church bank account within two days, as fast or faster than other payments. The church receives immediate e-mail notification of each payment. The contributor receives notice of the payment on his/her credit card or bank statement as usual.

VANCO, in effect, operates exactly as would any other vendor whom you paid by credit card or direct bank withdrawal. The difference is that it sends the money it collects on to the church. VANCO takes its fee for the GivePlus service out of each contribution before depositing it in the bank and reporting it to us. The company's fees are calculated based on the size of the gift and whether done by credit card or bank withdrawal:

- *Credit Card Charges:* 2.75 % plus \$0.45 per transaction<sup>3</sup>
- *Bank Charges:* 1.00 % plus \$0.45 per transaction<sup>4</sup>

As these figures suggest, the fee is smaller for a direct draw on one's bank account than for a credit card charge.

Although the fees do reduce the amount received by the church, the contributor's giving record is automatically credited with the full amount of the contribution.

<sup>3</sup> For example, a \$500 gift would be reduced by a fee of \$13.75 plus \$0.45 for a total of \$14.20.

<sup>4</sup> For example, a \$500 would be reduced by a fee of \$5.00 plus \$0.45, for a total of \$5.45.

Although the church loses something on each contribution through GivePlus, other churches have found that the convenience of the contribution enables more regular contributions and motivates givers to increase their giving overall. Our Board will continue to monitor how this is working to see if it improves our giving as well.

Right now, we cannot offer such an easy payment method for those without cell phones. Some large churches use an in-church kiosk for them, but right now that seems impractical for us. Let us know if you have questions, suggestions or comments.

### Let's Celebrate!

Thank you to the congregation for being so supportive of our budget this quarter. Your Board continues to try to serve you by carefully monitoring giving and spending and directing our financial management toward that which we really need.

Let us not forget that our objectives are to extend our service and activism in our community and to grow our membership. We all are working in some way to accomplish those goals. As Treasurer, I remind you that we can view our giving to the church as a necessary form of activism and service. While we might like to operate without having to talk about money, like most other human endeavors we need to raise and spend money to accomplish things in this world. Please continue to help us grow, serve, and witness to our ideals by supporting this church financially, as well as in other ways.

We thank you for every contribution, whether small or large! Keep them coming and increase them when you can! We have good things to do.

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### Social Justice Committee Meeting October 21, 2018



#### Action needed:

Lucy will call for herself about driving people to the polls in her precinct. Dee will call Madison County Democratic Committee to see if they are doing anything about driving people to the polls and communicate that to the rest of the social justice committee as soon as possible.

After the group, Amy came up with the idea that we might have a game about voter's registration and give a prize like our church pen. We will ask Carol if she will help design a game.

Amy

Fourth Saturday—It is going well. Ruth did the shopping and it worked well. We need shoppers for every month in 2019. Ed will do shopping for October, Pat for November, and Sheila for December.

**I. Old Business**

**II. New Business**

The procedure will go as follows for the shopping:

A list of what is needed is to be done at the end of 4th Saturday as well as the name of the designated shopper. The list should be e-mailed to Phillip that same day or the 4th Sunday at the latest. Phillip e-mails the list to the designated shopper.

The shopper takes the list, gets money from Phillip for the items, and shops. On either the 1st, 2nd, or 3rd Sunday, the shopper brings the products to church and asks those attending to help carry the products into the product room so they are there before the 4th Saturday.

Pastor Amy endorsed what the committee plans for the remainder of this year and next year. She will inform United Congregations of Metro-east what we are doing. Pat Moore has contacted the UU Service Committee and will inform the church about this group and invite us to join. There are various awards for members joining and doing other activities. Amy will see when the service is for the Committee is and we will hold our Sunday service about the Committee at the same time the rest of the UU congregations do.

The enthusiastic members present: Amy Brooks, Nathan Brown, Lucy Bouton, Pat Moore, Ed Navarre, Sheila O'Brien, Sabrina Trupia, Dee Evans

The group decided that we will continue doing voters registration and give out voters registration information in 2019. We decided that due to limited time of some members and limited mobility or stamina of others, we will not be going door to door. However, members who wish to do so, can do so, but it must be in pairs. We will look for events to take booths, tables, and spots at the various events. We will hand out information. However, some of us will get re-certified for 2019 so that we can register people to vote at these events. We need to be aware of people who cannot vote like people here that are permanent residents and visas and ask them what they are interested in and pass that on to people who vote.

**UU Service Committee Voter's Registration**

Voters' registration was successful. Sheila set the arrangements at Alton High School. She and a person from another church registered students to vote the first day. The second day Ruth and Dee registered the students. A lot of students did not have the information but Sheila gave out information needed. Some of these students came back the second day and registered to vote.

We registered about 36 students all told. Secondly, Ruth made a bright red sandwich board and walked the farmers markets giving out tons of information about how to register and where and about early voting. Most people did not have the required documents with them, so information was given out. Next year, we will start earlier at the farmer's market. A big thank you to Lucy who drove the registrations to Edwardsville court house to make sure they were there in time. We cannot have a voters celebration reward booths on election day at either Lewis and Clark or SIUE due to L&C not allowing food and SIUE charging too much for a table.

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Peace, Dee

If perhaps you haven't been taking part in our 4<sup>th</sup> Saturday program because you don't have time to shop and bring items to the church, please see Dee's information in the Social Justice article – the team has devised a way to make participating easier. Just put your check (indicate 4<sup>th</sup> Saturday program on your check) or cash (be sure to include who it is from for your tax record) in the offering plate, or give it to the church secretary or a member of the 4<sup>th</sup> Saturday team. And of course, you're always welcome to bring in your own purchases as well. Our clients – roughly 70 people per month – count on this help. Watch "Church This Week" for items needed if you decide to shop.



*Also, remember, in addition to product, we need additional volunteers to be trained in the processes involved in this community outreach.  
It will do your heart good!*

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***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.



## It's Not Too Soon to think about Turkey Day!

We will have a Thanksgiving Meal at the church again this year. If you would like to join us, please sign up on UU Friends Facebook, on the clipboard sign-up in the Wuerker Room, or by contacting Pat Moore. This event is for all ages, and guests are welcome. The meal will be at around 1:00, but you are welcome to come early or stay late for conversation, board games, and/or leftovers. Please sign up by Sunday, Nov. 18, so we will know how many to prepare for. Please indicate what you would like to contribute for the meal, and how many adults and smaller children will be coming.



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## Riverbend LGBTQIA+ Gathering November 29<sup>th</sup>

Last month we had a great initial turnout of 35 people to begin a conversation on how to support and connect our LGBTQIA+ community. Several things came of the first meeting. We identified areas of felt need for both LGBTQIA people, families/allies and faith communities, helped identify several welcoming businesses and we heard from 4-6 congregations in the area that are actively working to be a safe, welcoming place for LGBTQIA people and their families.

**What's new?** We have renamed the group to **The Riverbend Rainbow Community Connection.**

We are working to start a Facebook page and maybe group following the November 29th meeting (needing community feedback on this).

A small group of us sat down and planned our next meeting set for November 29th at 7 p.m. in Brighton again. This meeting we will be breaking out into affinity groups based on the audience to dig deeper into what people envision what should be developed in the area. This may include various support groups, social events or groups, faith based focused work, Advocacy/political activism, who knows. So please help us get the word out and invite others to join in the conversation. We want all the voices at the table, young, old, single coupled, allied, religious, activist, etc.

### Press Release:

**The Riverbend Rainbow Community Connection** is a new group forming in the Riverbend area of Illinois. We are reaching out to the LGBTQIA+ community and Allies to make connections, build support and share resources for our Rainbow Community.

Join us on Thursday, November 29th at 7 p.m. for community meeting as we form new groups and share

resources. This is open to all ages, identities, and organizations interested in improving the LGBTQIA Community.

**Host:** The Riverbend Rainbow Planning Team

**Where:** St. John's UCC; 216 North St.; Brighton IL 62012. (Handicap accessible building)

**Date:** Thursday, November 29th at 7 p.m.

For more information please contact Laurie Crelly, lead organizer, [Lcrelly@yahoo.com](mailto:Lcrelly@yahoo.com) 618-556-0801.

This event is not Religiously focused but LGBTQIA affirming faith leaders are invited to be involved.

St. John's UCC is an officially open and affirming Community of Faith of the United Church of Christ <http://www.openandaffirming.org>

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## INTEREST GROUPS:

*Ladies Luncheon*

**Anna Ds – Women's Alliance**

**Nov. 1<sup>st</sup> 11 a.m.**

We're going to a new (to us) restaurant: Queen's Cuisine in Edwardsville. Peg Flach has been there and loves it, so we'll give it a try.

Here's the web site (which includes a menu).

<https://qconline.us/>

120 S Main Street,

Edwardsville, IL, 62025

(618) 205-6188

Peg suggests we park in the Library parking areas. Peg would like RSVPs by Monday, 10/29 so she can confirm arrangements with the restaurant. As always, lunch at 11. Let us know if you have any questions.

Sandy

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## Men's Monthly Lunch

**Nov. 8<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)



**CHURCH LEADERSHIP  
2018 - 2019**

**Board of Trustees**

**Board President-** Chris Strangeman

**President-Elect- TBD**

**Past President-** Michael Schmidt

**Treasurer-** Robin Crane

**Secretary-** Sandy Shaner

**Member-At-Large-** Phil Embree

**Member-At-Large-** Tracy Howe-Koch

**Committee/Team Leads**

**Transitions Committee -** Vacant

**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 2019-** TBD

**Endowment Fund-** Jerry Johnson,

Ron Glossop & Tracy Howe-Koch

**Finance-** Matt Koch

**Membership-** Mary Weber

**Sunday Support Ministries-** Vacant

**Worship Associates**

Mary Johnson

Robin Crane

Joy Hoeft

Robert Kokenyesi

Mike Tarabulski

Ruth Maskow

Sabrina Trupia

Dorothy Wilson

Peg Flach

John Herndon