

FIRST UNITARIAN FOCUS



Newsletter of the First Unitarian Church

Alton, Illinois

www.firstuualton.org



Congregation established Dec. 7th, 1836

Pastor Amy Brooks
Sunday Worship at 10:00 a.m.

January 2019 - "Hope and Despair"

January 6th at 10 a.m.

Pastor Amy Brooks
Worship Associate: Joy Hoeft

**Semi-Annual Congregational Meeting followed by
a Potluck Lunch**

January 13th at 10 a.m.

Ruth Maskow-*"Hope Is Just the Ticket You Need"*
Worship Associate: Mary Johnson

January 20th at 10 a.m.

Phillip Harris-*"Hope for the Beloved Community"*
Worship Associate: Michael Tarabulski

January 27th at 10 a.m.

**John Herndon-*"Hope and despair, A UU tale of my
personal journey of becoming."***

Worship Associate: Robin Crane



Semi-Annual Congregational Meeting
Sunday, January 6, 2019
11:15 a.m.

Following the worship service we will hold our semi-annual Congregational Meeting. The Board and Committee Chairs will report on their work thus far this church year, and church members will have the opportunity to ask questions and bring up issues of concern. The regular 1st Sunday Potluck lunch will follow the meeting.

Pastor Amy's Corner

Hebel

Whatever has happened—that's what will happen again; whatever has occurred—that's what will occur again. There's nothing new under the sun. (Ecclesiastes 1:9, CEB)

Primordial dust that caked the faces of those who wept in Babylon, in Dachau, in Rohwer, Arkansas fly into the eyes of we who ignore the tears in Tijuana, until we weep anew.

Ageless star that blazed with furious indignation over the atrocities of Herod, of Bia Ogoi, of Tulsa, Oklahoma see the again over we who desiccate children, until we rage anew.

Timeless ore, that pierced the skin on the hill of execution, on the middle passage, on the fence outside Laramie, Wyoming press into the flesh of we who fear no barbed wire, until we bleed anew.

Steel, sun, and soil reveal to us new ways of addressing ancient offences. For we each contain within us the potential for rebirth.

As the earth turns, as the year turns, so may we turn away from persistent evils towards eternal truths.



Religious Education Updates from Zippy

Friends,

It nears the end of my first full year here at First

Unitarian Church in Alton. Your welcome has been wide, your guidance filled with celebration, and my mistakes handled with compassion and graceful understanding. You've made space for me here at First Unitarian - your wisdom and laughter keeps me going on the difficult days.

A series of changes has modified how religious education is part of the life of this congregation. First, a rotating model of religious education has been implemented with youth meeting on 1st and 3rd Sundays and elementary-aged children meeting on 2nd and 4th Sundays. On 5th Sundays, all young persons stay in worship with their families along with additional planned special services throughout the year (e.g., Ingathering).

Second, religious education curriculum in the coming year will be matched with the monthly worship themes to promote conversations between you all and our young persons. After some entertainment and use of the "Tapestry of Faith" curriculums provided by the UUA, leaders and I have discovered that the model provided in Tapestry does not fit the particular needs of our congregation. As always, the need for leaders for our religious education programming increases this coming year. I hope that you all will consider lending some of your time to share your wisdom with our young leaders and learners.

Third, I hope to do the following with this congregation in the coming year:

- Schedule at least one intergenerational visit & worship experience with a gathering of persons from another religious tradition.
- With Main Street United Methodist, plan & attend a 3-day youth retreat experience with the "Urban Forum" at Kingdom House STL
- Update our nursery area with the help of our Sunday morning nursery staff

Thanks for an awesome year! Let's make the next one even better! Contact me at rebeccamularski@gmail.com if you'd like to volunteer with RE.

News About Our Extension Groups

This church has started the process of expanding into the Edwardsville and Glen Carbon areas and North County in Missouri, with one meeting a month at each location.



The Glen/Ed group will meet on Saturday, January 12 at 4 p.m. at A Holistic Approach, 88 South Main Street in Glen Carbon.

The North County gathering will be on Saturday, January 19 at 10:30 a.m. in the chapel of Village North Retirement Center. The Center is a little bit west of Christian Hospital at 11160 Village North Drive, off Dunn Road.

Watch your “Church This Week” email notifications and this newsletter for updates.



The Seekers

Seekers discussion group meets each Sunday, in Emerson place, about 15 minutes after that day’s service is concluded. The second and third Sunday (January 13th and 20th) of each month 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!



Who is the Guest at Your Table?

Guest at Your Table (GAYT) is the **Unitarian**

Universalist Service Committee’s (UUSC) annual intergenerational program to raise support for and awareness about key human rights issues. The theme for 2018-2019 is “Justice Across Borders.” UUSC addresses root causes, supports migrants in transit, and protects the right to seek asylum.

There are GAYT boxes in the Kate Wuerker Room to put at your dinner table in which your family can put a daily or weekly donation. This is particularly a way for children to contribute their coins.

Or you can simply write a check and mail it to UUSC. Look for the donation information in the Wuerker Room.

Our 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!



Check with the church office for information about further electronic methods that are available to you for donating to our church.

A New “Baby” at Church

If you’ve been attending Sunday services, you may have noted, thanks to our pianist Nicole Robbins, we now have a beautiful new baby grand piano in place of the previous upright.



The new piano was made by a small company named Bramberg sometime before 1990. You’ll probably notice that the color of the wood is a warm light brown-yellow, and the “wood grain is amazingly straight. Just imagine how carefully the wood cutting had to be done to produce such a beautiful object!

Phil Embree and his elfish helpers moved the upright piano into the Wuerker Room, saving the church several hundred dollars in labor costs. The grand itself was carefully moved out of Nicole’s house by Modern Piano Movers on November 28th. One day later, Phil opened the

church and played host to the movers who delivered the piano on its side, coming in from Easton Street on the concrete walkway and up the ramp to the Wuerker Room.

Pianos are delicate instruments. This one now has a floppy misaligned key right in the middle of the keyboard, meaning that note can't be played. (Bad placement for playing hymns, all of which hover in that pitch range.) Hopefully, the alignment will improve as the piano gets acclimated to its new surroundings, with a new temperature range and differing degrees of dampness, etc.

Nicole warns us not to have the piano tuned for six months until it gets used to its new home. Keep an eye on that floppy key in the middle of the keyboard. Whisper good thoughts to it, that it corrects itself to more fully participate in our Sunday morning music. And, in gratitude, let us forgive any missing notes in our hymns for the next few weeks or months.

Many thanks to Nicole for her incredible generosity. We are going to love this piano! *Submitted by Robin Crane*



4th Saturday Personal Care Distribution – The Way It Works

The average attendance at this community service project has grown from 40 to 60 in two years. In November 2018 we had a record 86 adults come by for personal care products. Folks start lining up outside the Alby St. door around 9 a.m., although unless the weather is bad (too cold or too hot) we don't open the doors until 10:30 a.m. Distribution begins at 11 a.m. We have a helper named Roger who knows most of the people who come, and he has them sign in as they arrive and gives each person a line number.

Once people come in they are invited to go to the Hospitality Room down the hall where they can get coffee, lemonade, and cookies. Sometimes we have additional items like clothing or toys in the Youth Group room for people to select from. Seating is available in both rooms.

We provide two white boards listing the products available for the month. People are encouraged to take a note card and write down the items they want. Everyone

always gets two rolls of toilet paper, and then they can choose 4 or 5 more items – 5 if they bring a reusable (non-plastic) bag. We have been handing out reusable bags since the program began. Over 80% bring their reusable bag each month. Water and condoms are available and do not count as one of the 4 or 5 items ... but are limited to 4 condoms and 2 bottles of water per person.

At 11 a.m. Roger starts calling people by number, three people at a time. Each person hands their note card and bag to one of the church workers in the distribution room (first room at the bottom of the stairs) who then calls out the items wanted and the other workers in the room go from shelf to shelf adding the requested items to the bag.

All the products distributed are provided by church members and friends – or are purchased using funds donated by church members or friends.

This 4th Saturday Program is wholly dependent on YOU donating needed products or money.

Items always needed: Toilet paper, Laundry detergent (some free and clear), Body wash, Shampoo, Baby wipes, Diapers, Liquid dish detergent, Deodorant, Lotion, Kotex pads. Other items are listed in "Church This Week" and on UU Friends.

January's distribution is on January 26th and helpers as well as products and financial support are needed.

Thank You for YOUR participation in our church's community service efforts.

***HELP – Do Your
Part!
Wash, Dry and Put
Away!***



We often see the same few people each Sunday doing cleanup in the kitchen and Wuerker Room. If you've enjoyed a snack or beverage at our weekly fellowship time following the service PLEASE take your turn in the kitchen, giving others an opportunity to talk and visit rather than having to clean up. The sign-up sheet in the Wuerker Room is often empty of signatures, it needs yours!! Invite someone else to help you in the kitchen – often the best friendships are made there.



First UU Alton would not be the wonderful, functioning home that it is without the help of dedicated volunteers. The Board would like to take time each month (or so) to recognize these individuals!

You may have seen her smiling face welcoming you as you come through First Church's door or maybe she taught your child in Religious Education, but Mary Weber has been quietly making a difference for the past seventeen years. Mary first came to Alton on the invitation of a friend. As a stalwart against organized religion, she was intrigued by that day's topic: The Scopes Monkey Trial. She realized she had found her community. It is hard to pinpoint something that Mary hasn't helped with. She served for 4 ½ years as the Board Secretary, was a RE teacher, and headed up of the Welcoming and Membership committees. Additionally, she stepped up to help with Hospitality and coffee hour clean-up while enjoying lunch with the Anna Ds. Did you ever wonder where the welcome packets come from?! Yep, Mary. Recently Mary stepped down as Usher lead and is now looking to join the Caring Committee. If you see Mary, please give her a big Thanks! We are lucky to have you!

UUA 2018 - 2019 Common Read



The UUA Common Read for 2018-2019 is **Justice on Earth**. As we are reaching the nadir of US leadership on climate justice, I encourage you to read this engaging book. Climate change is larger than just recycling and it affects those least able to adapt the most. It is social justice work and our principles call

us to action. As national leadership lags, it is up to individuals to demand the changes necessary to provide a livable future for all creatures on Earth. Our survival depends on this interconnected web. To help stay engaged and up to date, check out <https://www.createclimatejustice.net/> for UU justice work happening in our area.

Tracey Howe-Koch



Notes from the Board Meeting of December 5, 2018

I wish all of you could have come to the meeting: we had discussions, made decisions but, more important to me, WE LAUGHED A LOT. If you haven't been a Board member in a long time, laughing may not be one of your enduring memories. However, laughter will be a lasting memory for the current Board members because we like each other and the work we do. Maybe you don't believe it and should come to a meeting just to see? All are welcome.

So, on to the work we did. The most serious issue facing the Board and the Church itself is the lack of volunteers to run the Church. What kind of volunteer are you? Do you like using the phone or text messaging to keep track of Church friends? Do you like organizing social activities? Are you a Facebook addict and love using social media to inform everyone far and wide of upcoming plans? Do you like spreadsheets full of dollar signs? No matter what form your volunteerism can take, there's a role for you at Church.

No surprise, then, that we spent a fair amount of time discussing the planned agenda for the January 6, 2019 semi-annual congregational meeting...or that the agenda is designed to address the need for volunteers.

While those issues are being developed and will be waiting for us next month, Phil briefed us on the status of the repair of the downstairs Boys' Room floor. He is waiting for final bids for removal of the broken tile and we authorized him to proceed with the best bid within a "not to exceed" dollar limit in order to get the work started soon. And, at the same time, he is getting bids for vinyl tile replacement so that can follow removal quickly.

We took some time to bask in the joy of Nicole's donation of her Bramberg grand piano to support the congregation's voiced desire music, music and MORE MUSIC. Then we discussed the first step in upgrading the mobile microphone system with a replacement of one mic and battery pack. Once that's been received and is working, we'll work with Ken for any further reasonably priced AV upgrades.

We reviewed the status of Pastor Amy's affiliation process with the UUA as well as scheduling a meeting of the Ministerial Support Group for later this month.

The next Board meeting will be on the normal Second Thursday of the month or, January 10, 2019 at 7 p.m. in the Wuerker Room. Any and everyone is welcome to join us: come for the work, stay for the laughter!

Sandy Shaner, Secretary of the Board

The Newsletter
Deadline is on the 20th
of each month. Please
be sure to send all
information to Dorothy
Wilson at

DJJccw@sbcglobal.net

and to the church administrator,

Phillip Harris at church@firstuualton.org



From the Editor

Men's Monthly Lunch January 10th - 11:30 a.m.



The men's lunch bunch, the ROMEOS (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

Donations to the Crisis Food Center



Our church members and friends support the Alton Crisis Food Center through donations of food and / or money. Please bring non-perishable food items – making sure that the items you bring are not expired or close to their expiration date. The collection box is in the RE foyer. Thanks to Wayne and Jen Politsch for regularly taking our donated items down to the Crisis Food Center.

HELP – Do Your Part! Wash, Dry and Put Away!



We often see the same few people each Sunday doing cleanup in the kitchen and Wuerker Room. If you've enjoyed a snack or beverage at our weekly fellowship time following the service PLEASE take your turn in the kitchen, giving others an opportunity to talk and visit rather than having to clean up. The signup sheet in the Wuerker Room is often empty of signatures, it needs yours!! Invite someone else to help you in the kitchen – often the best friendships are made there.

INTEREST GROUPS:



Anna Ds – Women's Alliance Lunch January 3rd 11:30 a.m.

The Anna Ds are now on their winter schedule. They will meet at the Best Buffet (Chinese Restaurant) 615 Wesley Dr. in Wood River. Reservations are not needed at the restaurant so if the weather is bad there is no worry about having to cancel a reservation. However let Sandy Shaner wrgma2@gmail.com know if you are planning to come so she will have a general idea how many to expect.

If you'd like to bring some personal care items for our Fourth Saturday distribution, or non-perishable food for the Crisis Food Center in Alton, please do so. We'll make sure they get to church.

501(c)(3) Status



Early in 2018 the Board approved a proposal that the Church apply to the IRS for certification as a 501(c)(3) organization. After much paper work and many files gathered together, the application was sent to the IRS in March. In October 2018 word was received that our church was approved for this certification.

What does this mean? Being 501(c)(3) means that a particular nonprofit organization has been approved by the Internal Revenue Service as a tax-exempt, charitable organization. As a church we have always been tax exempt – we do not pay taxes. But now we have the ability to apply for project grants and public or private funding that only 501(c)(3) IRS recognized organizations may apply for. The funding organizations can then count such monetary donations as tax deductible contributions.



I hope everyone had a wonderful holiday season! I would like to say thank you to all of you, for your condolences in the recent passing of my father, and for your words of encouragement as I have now completed another semester of seminary. I only have three more semesters left, so I'm starting to see the end in sight.

New reimbursement request forms are now available and located right next to the church mailboxes. If you are needing to be reimbursed for items that you purchase for the church, please fill out one of the forms and place it in my mailbox. Please be sure to attach the receipts.

Finally, the church office will be closed Monday, January 21st through Friday, January 25th.

Shalom,
Phillip A. Harris
Church Administrator



Emerson UU Chapel is searching for a new RE Coordinator. Please contact Colleen Patterson at office@emersonuuchapel.org for more information.

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 UU - 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 - Vacant

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