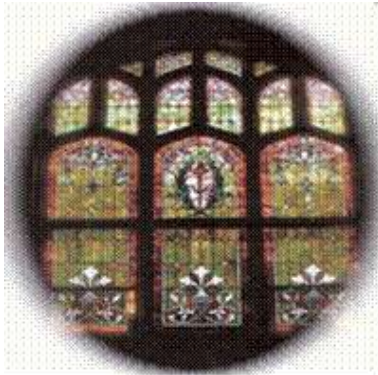


FIRST UNITARIAN FOCUS



Newsletter of the
**First
Unitarian Church
Alton, Illinois**

Pastor Rev. Amy Brooks
www.firstuulton.org



Sunday Worship 10:00 A.M.

April, 2019 Monthly Theme "Restoration"

Sunday April 7th
Monthly Potluck Luncheon
UUA MidAmerica Regional Meeting, STL

Pastor Amy Brooks
Worship Associate: Sabrina Trupia

Sunday April 14th
Wayne Politsch
Worship Associate: Robert Kokenyesi

Sunday April 21st
Easter Sunday
Pastor Amy Brooks
Worship Associate: Mary Johnson

Sunday April 28th
Michelle Bryant-Barbeau
Worship Associate: Robyn Berkley

2019 MidAmerica Regional Assembly

This year's Regional Assembly will be held in St. Louis, Missouri, at the Marriott St. Louis Airport Hotel, April 5-7. Registration begins at 4 P.M. Friday April 5th; Saturday offers a full day of workshops, socializing, singing, and lessons. The Assembly will end with a worship service beginning at 9:30 A.M. Sunday, April 7th. Details can be found at

<https://www.uua.org/midamerica/ra>

UUA President, Rev. Susan Frederick Gray is our Keynote Presenter. Join us to explore, share, and worship with fellow Unitarian Universalists.

Potluck Luncheon Sunday April 7th



Share the warmth of community, good conversation and plenty of good food. Bring a dish to share or maybe help with clean up. All are welcome!



Board of Directors

The March Board meeting has been delayed until April 4th. Report will be included in the May newsletter.

PASTOR AMY'S CORNER

The following is the content of an open letter of condolence and support that I wrote on March 15, 2019 in response to the terrorist attack at the Al Noor Mosque and the Linwood Islamic Centre in Christchurch, New Zealand. As you read, I invite you to search for the places in the text where you find yourself; and where you find yourself missing. Look next to the world and do likewise. Amy.

To All Who Gather in Prayer This Day,

Greetings in the name of all that is Holy, Just, and Life- Giving. I am the Minister serving at First Unitarian Church in Alton, Illinois. I am also an Australian citizen.

I write to share my deep sorrow for the trauma that has been inflicted on the Muslim community of Christchurch, New Zealand; and on the people of Islam as a whole. I am so sorry for your loss.

As an Australian I name the culpability of my nation's unwillingness to address our own historic bigotry and the rising tide of extreme right-wing sentiment that have contributed to this terrorist act.

As a permanent resident in the United States of America I confess to the times that I have failed to object to those same evil forces within my host country, particularly as they have increasingly become enshrined in harmful legislation.

As a Unitarian Universalist I denounce the culture of white supremacy that is entrenched within my organization and that prevents us from forcibly objecting to hate-crimes such as these with integrity.

As a member of the Queer community I share with you the trepidation that comes with the territory of living as a marginalized member of society in these troubling times.

As a human I weep with you.

As a person of faith, I humbly offer this word of comfort from your own tradition: 'O Allah! Reward me in my calamity and replace my loss with a better one,' (Sahih Muslim).

During this time of grief, and at any time, I offer my support in any way that you might find meaningful.

Sincerely yours,

Amy Brooks,

Minister, First Unitarian Church of Alton

Is this newsletter important to you? Do you have roughly eight hours a month, and some skill in word processing? If so, please consider serving your church by editing our newsletter.



This is the last newsletter that Dorothy Wilson will be able to edit. Please consider volunteering to take on this task for your church. Contact a Board member or Dorothy if you have questions or need more information.

Until another editor is named, please send articles, news items or "Save the Date" information to the church administrator Phillip Harris at church@firstuualton.org, so that the information can be included in "Church This Week" emails.

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. Weather has caused cancellations lately, but hopefully we will be past all of that for several months.



The Glen/Ed group will meet on Saturday, April 13th at 4 p.m. at A Holistic Approach, 88 South Main Street in Glen Carbon.

The North County gathering will be on Saturday, April 20th 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.

I Watched A Man Die Today

A FaithRocket essay, written by Mike, CLF Member incarcerated in Kentucky

I watched a man die today. This day, like all others, he awoke, ate breakfast, and thought gloomy thoughts of the dreary day ahead. Infirm with age, he was hobbling along with his cane as he went to the commissary window to buy a few snacks for the long, lonely, hungry hours to come. Maybe he felt an odd premonition at the window, for stepping backward, he bumped directly into Death.



I watched his rheumy blue eyes, wide with surprise, grow lifeless as the purple blanket of eternity spread itself over his face. Then men who care nothing for any of us were inconveniently compelled to do the nearly impossible—to try to restart the worn-out engine of life, now suddenly silent in his chest. They failed.

May his passing out of this life be easy for him, accompanied by visions of happier times. May he be oblivious to his death. May he be reborn into a more favorable life. May the same be true for all of us.

As I contemplate the continual process of change and of impermanence that are marked by a man's death, it occurs to me that restoration of a heartbeat shouldn't be more difficult than the restoration of a human heart. People will work tirelessly to restore a heartbeat for a stranger, but shouldn't we all work just as diligently to restore a "heart" for others? Perhaps even our own heart. Should we not work for restoration of hearts that are broken? Restoration for the lost and lonely and misguided in our world?

If the hearts of all people were restored to a state of compassion and kindness, what would our world look like? Almost everyone feels compassion for a sick child or an injured animal. So why don't we feel the same way for others who are broken, lost and lonely? Why not for the prisoners, the addicts, the confused teenagers or the other down-trodden people all around us?

I believe that in every human heart, from the bitterest to the softest and most mirthful, there is a capacity for genuine kindness and compassion. Somehow, somewhere, something has buried that innate ability in too many people.

Whether we realize it or not, we all need restoration. Restoration of our heart's deep compassion. Restoration of our faith in basic human goodness. Restoration of our sense of connection with one another and with all people. We need restoration of our genuine "heart" in order to continue, or even to begin, living our lives with real depth and fulfillment.

"For Such A Time As This"

As forces around us change and differences threatens to push our society apart, our Beloved Community inspires us to work for more positive change and action NOW more than ever, WE need to be TOGETHER in a caring safe Community.



Make A Pledge on Stewardship Sunday, MAY 5th to Continue to Work On Our Sacred Space.

Char McAllister
Stewardship Chair

Religious Education Updates

A new, 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).

The 2019 religious education curriculum 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.

2019 Wish List:

- 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.

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!



4th Saturday Personal Care Distribution Saturday April 27th at 10:00 a.m.

Every month, an average of 60 individuals – plus their family members - depend on our church to help them stretch their budget and make their lives a little bit easier.

All the products distributed are provided by church members and friends – or are purchased using funds donated by church members or friends. Leaders of this program are actively seeking partnerships with other organizations to increase the good we can do, but for the past many years, the 4th Saturday Program has been wholly dependent on our church members. Thank You for YOUR participation in this important community service efforts.

Items always needed: Reusable bags, toilet paper, laundry detergent (some free and clear), body wash, shampoo, baby wipes, diapers, dish detergent, deodorant, lotion, sanitary products. Other items are listed in “Church This Week” and on UU Friends.



Guest at Your Table (GAYT) is UUSC's annual intergenerational program to raise support for and awareness about key human rights

issues. Since UUSC works in over 25 countries, with over 75 grassroots partners, there are thousands of individuals involved in and who benefit from the work that our members make possible. The program is an opportunity to celebrate grassroots partnership, support human rights, and learn about just four of these individuals – the “guests” in Guest at Your Table. **Look for the donation box in the Wuerker Room to support this critical mission.**

2018-2019 Theme: Justice Across Borders From the Northern Triangle of Central America, to deserts of Mexico and Arizona, to detention centers in the United States, the road away from danger is paved with injustices. Partnering with grassroots allies along the Central American migration trail, UUSC addresses root causes, supports migrants in transit, and protects the right to seek asylum. Join with UUSC for Guest at Your Table to learn more about UUSC's and our nation's involvement in Central America – historically and presently – and our courageous Migrant Justice partners.

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.



Anna Ds – Women’s Alliance
April 4th, 11:30 a.m.



We asked Mary Weber reserve a table at Fazzi's this month, but no dice there. It seems they already have a regular reservation there for 1st Thursdays.

Instead, we wanted to stay in the south end of our group and Mary identified Sugo's Spaghetteria. 243 Harvard Dr, Edwardsville, IL 62025
Phone: +1-618-659-4640
It's in the Dierberg's shopping center, next to Buffalo Wild Wings.

There are several locations for this restaurant so you may want to work your way through their web site:

Go here <http://www.sugoscucina.com/>
then click on Locations,
then the Edwardsville address for the map.

After that you can go back to menu to find what's offered at the Edwardsville location...looks like some lovely options.

We'd appreciate it if you RSVP with Mary or me (just reply to this email) so we have a good idea of the number planning to come. Since Spring is officially here, we can always hope for a pretty day.

See you soon!
Sandy

Men’s Monthly Lunch

April 11th, 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



CHURCH LEADERSHIP

2018 - 2019

Board of Trustees

Board President - Chris Strangeman

Co-Presidents-Elect - Lee Suarez and
Char McAllister

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

Sandra Shaner

Mary Weber

Ruth Maskow

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

Peg Flach

John Herndon

Robyn Berkley