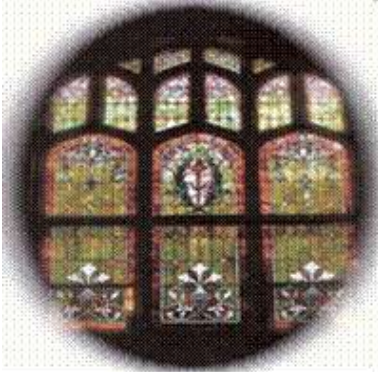


FIRST UNITARIAN FOCUS



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

Rev. Amy Brooks, Pastor
www.firstuulton.org



Sunday Morning Worship @ 10:00 am
August 2019 Theme: “Wonder”

Worship Schedule

Sunday, August 4th -Monthly Potluck Luncheon
Sermon: Pastor Amy Brooks
Worship Associate: Char McAllister

Sunday, August 11th
Sermon: Michael Tarabulski
Worship Associate: John Herndon

Sunday, August 18th
Sermon: Pastor Amy Brooks
Worship Associate: Robyn Berkley

Sunday, August 25th
Sermon: Robert Kokenyesi
Worship Associate: John Herndon

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New Church Online Giving Option

First Unitarian Church of Alton has entered a new era: the age of anytime, anywhere giving. We are now signed up with **Givelify**, the mobile giving app for places of worship and charities. To make your first mobile donation the best experience possible, **we recommend you download the Givelify app for Android or iPhone before you get to service.** Givelify gives you a beautiful, easy giving experience using your smartphone. There are no frustrating web forms or text-to-give codes to memorize. Even better, it's free to download and use. It's totally safe and secure, and for tax time you have one-tap access to your complete donation records. **Make your offerings, pledge giving, 4th Saturday program donations, and other gifts that support First Unitarian Church of Alton to special envelopes right from the palm of your hand.** You can give to First Unitarian Church of Alton wherever you are. Make us your home place of worship for quick one-tap access.



"From the Bottom Up" Cleanup Day(s)

August the 8th and the 9th (if needed)

9 a.m. to 3 p.m. (come for an hour or for the day)

Do you like to see order come out of chaos? Do you have clothes you don't mind getting a bit dirty? Do you have work gloves? Do you enjoy the comradery of working with others at church?

Well then, we have a project for you!

Plans are in the works to **clean out and straighten up the furnace room, the hall next to it, and one of the nearby classrooms.** These areas have become dumping grounds for things that no one knows what else to do with – old cans of paint, worn out Christmas decoration, a live-animal trap, a power washer, yard tools, and other miscellaneous items. We want to do this clean up in part to encourage additional 'ghost tours' to come through as fund raisers, and while the area needs to be a bit spooky, it also needs to be safe.

So, more reminders will be forthcoming, but we'd like you to mark your calendars now and consider how you can help. If you have questions ask Peg, Mary J., Char or Lee.



In order to be good stewards of the earth and of all creation, and to live into the 6th principle of Unitarian Universalism, this August newsletter will be the last newsletter available in printed form. Beginning in September the newsletter will only be available in electronic form. There will be a very limited number of printed newsletters available for those who do not have access to the internet, and still wish to get a printed copy. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the church office.



**Would you like a “free” way
to support the Church?
From Sandy Shaner**

Following Mary Johnson's successful efforts to obtain a federal 501(c)(3) designation for the Church, Phillip Harris (our Office Administrator) successfully registered the

Church as an Amazon Smile charity. This means that anyone who designates the Church as their preferred charity will generate 0.5% of the purchase price from their eligible AmazonSmile purchases.

Here are some excerpts from the Amazon Smile web site about this program.

What is AmazonSmile?

AmazonSmile is a simple and automatic way for you to support your favorite charitable organization every time you shop, at no cost to you. When you shop at smile.amazon.com, you'll find the exact same low prices, vast selection and convenient shopping experience as Amazon.com, with the added bonus that Amazon will donate a portion of the purchase price to your favorite charitable organization. You can choose from over one million organizations to support.

How do I shop at AmazonSmile?

To shop at AmazonSmile simply go to smile.amazon.com from the web browser on your computer or mobile device. You may also want to add a bookmark to smile.amazon.com to make it even easier to return and start your shopping at AmazonSmile.

Which products on AmazonSmile are eligible for charitable donations?

Tens of millions of products on AmazonSmile are eligible for donations. You will see eligible products marked "Eligible for AmazonSmile donation" on their product detail pages. Recurring Subscribe-and-Save purchases and subscription renewals are not currently eligible.

Can I use my existing Amazon.com account on AmazonSmile?

Yes, you use the same account on Amazon.com and AmazonSmile. Your shopping cart, Wish List, wedding or baby registry, and other account settings are also the same.

How do I select a charitable organization to support when shopping on AmazonSmile?

On your first visit to AmazonSmile smile.amazon.com, you need to select a charitable organization to receive donations from eligible purchases before you begin shopping. We will remember your selection, and then every eligible purchase you make at smile.amazon.com will result in a donation.

Here's how to find and select the Church. If you walk through the last paragraph of information, you can search for the Church as First Unitarian Church of Alton. When it pops up, just select it. (For now, under the Church portion of their database, we had to pick a type so we're shown as "Christian". Knowing that many of us as well as others who might be interested in us find that adjective too restrictive, Phillip will be checking to see if there's an "other" category available.)

I may be unusual in my use of Amazon (dating back to the time when shopping was extremely difficult before both knees were replaced), but Amazon says that as of May 22, 2019 they've contributed \$66.40 to my charity (primarily a different one before I switched to the Church option).



My name is Joy Hoefft (Johnson). I was asked to write a bio about my religious history and how/ why the First Unitarian Church is important to me. I have been a member here for 41 years. I am 52 years old.

My parents are Mary and Jerry Johnson. They grew up as Christian Scientists and continued to follow the teachings of that church after they got married. I remember Dad reading us stories from the Bible, as well as writings from Mary Baker Eddy. As a young child, around 6, I remember attending the Christian Science church in Rolla, MO, and remember singing songs, and seeing the phrase "God is Love" all around. Also, I remember one time during Sunday School, the teacher was describing Hell, a terrible place with Hell fire and awful creatures, and that it was a terrible place. This brought up terrible images for me that horrified me, and I thought why would a place where God is Love is posted all around, would also talk about terrifying places. My parents don't believe that someone from the Christian Science church would talk about Hell that way because it is not part of the C.S teachings, but I guess somehow in my 6-year-old mind, this is what I thought I heard. Even at 6 years old, I decided that this is not what I believed.

In 1974, our family moved to San Angelo, Texas, and I remember that Dad would take my brother, Mark, and me to the local Christian Science church for Sunday School. I don't think that Dad attended. Then two years later, we moved up to Shippensburg, Pennsylvania for Dad's job, and then I remember Mom taking Mark

and me to the local Methodist church. I still didn't feel like I fit in there either. I wasn't all that excited about worshipping Jesus, and that to absolve our sins, we needed to accept Jesus as our Savior. I had questioned to myself, when have I sinned? What are my sins? I was just a kid, and what did I do wrong? I had a hard time grasping that. I did enjoy singing in the Children's Choir though, even though I didn't believe in what I was singing.

Finally, in 1978, when I was about 11, our family moved back to the North St. Louis County area. My dad had not attended a church of any kind for a number of years but believed that we should have some background knowledge of the Christian religion and both he and my mom were wondering about and what type of church we should attend.

We began attending The Ethical Society, and Mark and I attended Sunday School. I don't remember much about that time, but I do remember that I had my first Sex Education class there.

My parents didn't seem satisfied that The Ethical Society was the place for us, but they had known something about the Unitarian Universalist religion, and they found that there were several churches in the area. The closest one to us was the one in Alton, IL, so one Sunday in October 1978, Mom and Dad left my brother and me at home and went to visit the First Unitarian Church of Alton. At that time, the church didn't have a minister and was lay-led. They also noticed that there were several children there and asked a woman about their program for children. The woman told Mom that they didn't have anything at the moment, but if they brought us the next week, there would be something for us.

Sure enough, the next week we all came back, and the woman had prepared some kind of religious education for us.

We kept coming back, and early in 1979, the church had a minister, and she had three kids about the same age as Mark and me, and the religious education at church continued to grow. Through the years, I had various teachers who taught me about being a Unitarian. Some of the people I remember were Joe Russo, Ginger and Jack McCall, Grace Madison, David and Audrey Wiseman, Marcia Custer, Gerry Gilman, Yvonne McCall, Midge Hallet, and a few more. Their caring, enthusiasm, and commitment made me who I am today.

I don't remember many specific things from RE back then, but I do remember that Marcia Custer was charged with providing us some Sex Education, this was before OWL; Joe Russo discussed with us about the Psalms, and had us rewrite Psalm 23 Unitarian style; and all the kids put on a play that my mom wrote about our church's history and we got to dress up in era appropriate clothes. When my brother was in Boy Scouts, his friend, George, came to church and Dad met with us, and helped Mark and George earn the Religion of Life badge; I earned it too. I received a small charm with a chalice on it.

Another memory about growing up in the First Unitarian church, was the unconditional support I received for my talents. I had been taking piano lessons since I was seven, so music has always been a part of my life, so incorporating it into my spiritual life was important to me. As a teen, I remember being asked on occasions to play special music during the worship service. I was usually nervous but playing in front of people who were not going to judge me made it easier.

I really felt like I was part of a big family when I came to church.

Everyone seemed vested in the development of my faith, whatever it might be. So, in 1983, when I was 16, I signed the membership book and became a member of The First Unitarian

Church of Alton. I found my spiritual self as a Secular Humanist, which is a democratic and ethical life stance, which affirms that human beings have the right and responsibility to give meaning and shape to their own lives. I am also an Atheist.

After I graduated from high school in 1985, I went away to college, then a few years later I got married, and then a few years after that, started a family.

In 1999, my husband Ken, our son Alex (who was six at the time) and I moved back to the St. Louis area. We occasionally attended this church, although we lived in South St. Louis County, but I was invited to be one of the three organists / pianists of this congregation, all volunteer.

We also came back to this congregation in 2000, because I wanted my children to grow up in a church where they were able to develop their own spiritual beliefs. Throughout the years, the number of children in RE ebbed and flowed. Alex grew up in the church and participated in Youth Con Events where he visited different churches within the region each year, as well as he attended MUUSA (Midwest UU Summer Assembly) in Potosi, MO where he met some lifelong friends. He was one of the first participants in the OWL program at our church and was also the first Youth representative to the Board, where he served several years.

Benjamin was born into this congregation in 2002. Benjamin went through Elementary RE and beginning of Youth Group and OWL with 4 other boys his age. Ben has also been attending MUUSA for several years, including this coming July. From 2000 to 2013, I served as the primary pianist for our congregation. This was not just a job for me, but I felt it was part of my spiritual journey here, a way to share my musical gifts with the congregation. Many Sundays, as I sat down at the piano before

the service, I could feel the music connecting me to spirit of the church here, speaking to me. The music would reach down to my soul and move me, allowing me to share my gifts during the service. I felt it was a way for me to express and share my faith, my spirituality, and my emotions with the congregation, because verbally, I couldn't.

I had never really been able to express what I believed and didn't realize how much music connected me to this church or to my faith. Music has helped me express myself emotionally, spiritually, and made me feel like part of the community here, and through the years. It has also helped me grow in my faith and allow me to be here today as a teacher of Religious Education, Chair of the RE Committee, and Worship Associate.



**The church office will be open
on Tuesday and Friday
from 10 am - 2 pm.**



ICE CREAM SOCIAL

The Alton-Godfrey Cluster of the United Congregations of Metro-East is having an ice cream social on Friday, August 9th from 4:30 to 6:00 p.m. at the Old Bakery Beer Company, 400 Landmarks Blvd. in Alton. Everyone is invited to hear about Community Policing from Chief Jake Simmons.



After a two-year hiatus, Mary Johnson will resume the position of Newsletter Editor with the September 2019 issue. The deadline for getting newsletter items to Mary will be the 20th of each month, starting in August (for the September issue). Please send news and articles to Mary at mejohanson@mindspring.com with a cc to the church office church@firstuualton.org. Formatting articles as Word documents (Times New Roman 11) is preferred, but plain text is ok too.

September Newsletter submissions due Tuesday, August 20th



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.



The Extension Groups will **not** be meeting during the summer months. When they resume in the fall, ...

The Glen Carbon/Edwardsville Extension Group will meet at A Holistic Approach located at 88 South Main Street in Glen Carbon.

The North County Extension Group will meet 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 the "Church This Week" e-mail or the September newsletter for updates for when these groups will be meeting again.

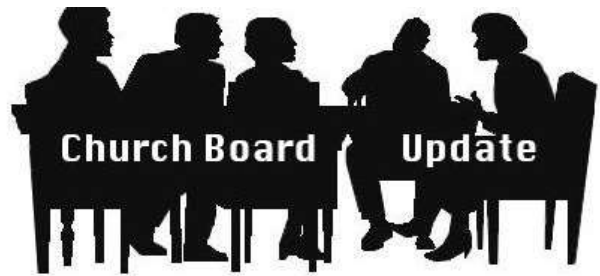


4th Saturday Personal Care
Distribution
Saturday August 24th at 10:00 am

**Please Help the 4th Saturday Personal
Care Distribution Program**

We need your regular and ongoing financial support and product donations to continue serving those in our community who are struggling. If giving cash, please use the envelopes at church and indicate that the donation is for the 4th Saturday Program and include your name. This will ensure that it is recorded as a contribution from you and will be included in your giving record for taxes. If you are making a contribution by check, make sure you write 4th Saturday Program on the check. You may also set up your 4th Saturday Program contributions online through Givelify. More information about this new method of giving will be coming out soon.

If donating products, please bring them to church as early in the month as possible so we can do a shelf inventory the week before the 4th Saturday and only purchase the items still needed after your product donations have been counted.



**POWER OF WE
(everyone has a gift to give)
Your Board in Action**

Developed 2019-2020 Budget

- Held Budget retreat
- Held Annual Congregational meeting
- Developed and Shared Goals for this year
- Getting the Congregation Involved
- Filling Board positions (Phil Embree as Treasurer, Jennifer Lewis for at-large one-year term, Aiden Crist for a two-year term)
- Filling Committee positions (John Herndon co-chair Social Justice, need one more, Joy Hoeft, Jennifer Lewis and Kayci Combs-Lueker RE Council, Co-chairs Tom Cochran and Michael Tarabulski the Building and Char McAllister – Grounds, Pat Moore as Social Event coordinator and need two more volunteers)
- Held 2 RE re-organizing meetings
- Had student input on RE program
- Survey sent out to Congregation for input on RE program
- Met with two church members who have not been able to attend church
- Went to Alton Community meeting regarding Revitalization of Alton
- Repaired Boys bathroom toilet
- Organized two Garden grounds cleanup with 10 volunteers
- Cleaned and organized downstairs office with Joy Hoeft

- Met with Marquette H.S Principal to discuss parking & safety
- Have 2 students reps. For the Board (Ben Hoefft & Isabella Navarre)
- Pledge drive follow-up with quarterly reports during the rest of year
- Asked our social event coordinators (Pat Moore and two others) to put on 3 events per year
- Invited Marquette Asst. Principal to come to a Board meeting to discuss safety issues & options with us
- Worked on Minister's annual contract, have it completed and ready for signatures before 8/1/19 beginning of contract term
- Planning a presentation at the August Board meeting with the chair of the Endowment Committee to talk to about Endowment Fund historical and potential \$ yields
- Continue work on updating the Directory

Church Board Meeting will be Thursday, August 8th



WOMEN'S ALLIANCE

Anna Ds

Thursday, August 1st at 11:00 am

Tai Indian Cuisine

Edwardsville

www.tajindiancuisineil.com

4 Club Center Court

Edwardsville, IL 62025

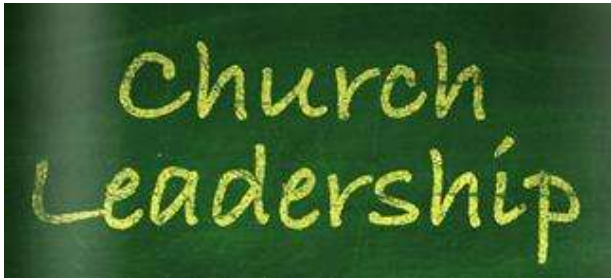
618-692-8110



Thursday, August 8th

@11:30am

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 Hebert at pphebert@mail.com.



Board of Trustees

President

Lee Suarez

Co-Presidents Elect

Char McAllister

Past President

Chris Strangeman

Treasurer

Phil Embree

Secretary

Sandy Shaner

Members at Large

Aiden Crist

Jennifer Lewis

Committee/Team Leads

Transitions Committee

Vacant

Social Events

Vacant

Social Justice

Dee Evans

Fundraising

Peg Flach

Pastoral Associates

Sandy Shaner

Mary Weber

Ruth Maskow

Dee Evans

Religious Education Council Chairperson

Joy Hoeft

Building and Grounds

Tom Cochran

Michael Tarabulski

Pledge Drive

Char McAllister

Endowment Fund

Jerry Johnson, Ron Glossop,
and Tracy Howe-Koch

Finance

Matt Koch

Membership

Mary Weber

Sunday Support Ministries

Vacant

Worship Associates

Rev. Amy Brooks

Joy Hoeft

Robert Kokenyesi

Michael Tarabulski

Ruth Maskow

John Herndon

Robyn Berkley

Jerry Johnson