

FIRST UNITARIAN FOCUS

Newsletter of the

First Unitarian Church

Alton, Illinois

Pastor Amy Brooks

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www.firstuualton.org



Congregation established 1836



Sunday Worship at 10:00 a.m. November 2019 Theme: "Giving Praise"

November 3rd 10:00 a.m.

Pastor Amy Brooks

Worship Associate: John Herndon

RE for Children & Youth

Potluck Lunch

Daylight Savings Time ends midnight Saturday

November 10th 10:00 a.m.

Presented by: Robert Kokenyesi

Worship Associate: Michael Tarabulski

November 17th 10:00 a.m.

Pastor Amy Brooks

Worship Associate: Peg Flach

RE for children/youth

Congregational Conversation II at 11:15 a.m.

November 24th 10:00 a.m.

"Thanksgiving Soup" – Presented by the children and youth with Joy Hoeft as Worship Associate. This will also be our traditional BREAD SERVICE. Please bring bread to share (sliced or cut) - either something you have made, or which has some kind of meaning in your family, or a store-bought bread you enjoy.



Upcoming Social Events for 2019

Saturday Nov. 9th: Join the Anna Ds for Tea at high noon in our own Kate Wuerker Room. (see page 2 in this newsletter).

Thursday Nov. 28th: Again this year we will celebrate Thanksgiving together at church with those who don't have local family (or bring your family). We'll have a planned potluck, which will be coordinated closer to the date. We usually plan to eat at around 1:00-2:00 p.m. If you want to stay after dinner, there will be plenty of time for conversation and/or games.

Sunday Dec. 1st: Regular potluck and annual "Deck the Halls" get-together. Let's decorate for the holidays.

Saturday Dec 14th: You are cordially invited to the beautiful home of our President and Vice-President, Lee Suarez and Char McAllister, for an **Open House**. Time and details will come later, but save the date now.

Your social committee for 2019-2020: Pat Moore, Robyn Berkley, Peg Flach, Jennifer Lewis, Kayci Combs-Lueker, Mary Lu McManus, Sabrina Trupia, Carol McGrew.



Letter from Lee

Dear Congregation,

Your Board has been active in preparing for our Congregational Town Hall meetings. We have been looking forward to hearing different opinions and perspectives from our membership.

I want to thank the 32 people who participated in our First Congregational Town Hall Conversation. The goal of that meeting was to deal with our emotions and hear questions from the membership that need to be answered. I am aware of the uneasy feelings and emotions that were expressed. It was successful in that the Board now knows what questions and facts the Congregation would like to have. We will make every effort to address the questions that were asked.

Our second Congregational Conversation on November 17th will deal with the questions asked and financial information requested. Our third Conversation on December 8th is planned so as not to interfere with the Christmas Holidays. We hope to be preparing for a Congregational Semi-Annual Meeting in early 2020 to make an official decision. In this instance, a decision which is intended to be publicized outside the confines of the Church, our By Laws require a 2/3 majority of the voting members present at that meeting.

From there, we will develop a Strategic Plan no matter what the vote, to remain or find another place. A small committee will be formed from the Congregation to help find answers for us. Our meetings will be held after Church rather than asking everyone to return on another day of the week.

We are in need of some help in doing research. Does anyone have skills in the following: Writing grants and finding out how historical tax credits work? Some ideas are needed: How do we increase membership participation? How do we grow our community? Can we replicate programs outside of Alton?

Any and all information is greatly appreciated, please contact me. Continue to be involved.

Lee Suarez, Board President



You are invited to
Tea with the Anna Ds
on Saturday, November 9th
At High Noon
In the Kate Wuerker Room
First Unitarian Church, Alton IL

Suggested donation \$30 per reservation ***
Limited availability

Feel free to dress in your best finery ... or not! Our tasty afternoon "tea" will include a goodly amount of tasty meal items as well as variety teas, special treats, entertainment ... and more! Chef Debra Grace is taking a hand in the preparations and they are going to be plentiful and elegant! Live music will include piano and harp. All genders welcome.



Also, in memory of long-time Anna Ds member Joan Hashimi, her family generously donated 25 of her lovely teapots to First UU ... as well as some other items special to Joan. We plan to keep a few teapots for church use and, utilizing a Silent Auction format, allow friends to attain

wonderful keepsake items as a special remembrance of Joan.

We are taking limited reservations until October 31st. Please contact Peg Flach by phone or at pegflach@gmail.com to:

- #1 confirm availability (we are filling up FAST!).
- #2 after confirming availability your check must be received by Nov 3rd to complete your reservation.

*** a UU congregant has generously donated several luncheon spots to provide participation if this cost is prohibitive to anyone. Contact Peg by Nov 3rd and DO join us! ***



Pledge Drive 2019-2020 Update
“Such a Time as This”

As we lean into our 2019-2020 fiscal year, we are experiencing financial fluctuation with our current pledge donations.

We currently have \$86,000 in pledges for this fiscal year with a Goal of \$89,000. The current Operational Budget is \$123,177.

If you are a Pledge Donor, please make sure you let us know on your check, cash envelope, or online donation that your contribution is to go towards your Pledge for 2019-2020.

Give what you can to this Beloved Community to meet our fiscal responsibility.

Thanking You Forward,
Char McAllister, Campaign Chair

In Our Church Family



Our condolences to **Ronald Glossop** on the death of his twin brother Donald LeRoy Glossop Jr. on October 2nd in Frisco, TX. A memorial service was held there, with interment on October 14th in Oswego, Illinois, near Aurora IL where he and Ron grew up.

The memorial service for **Willis McCoy**, a former member of our church, will be held at the UU Fellowship of Northfield MN at 2 p.m. on Friday, November 29th in Northfield. The address is: 5785 Lonsdale Blvd E, Northfield, MN 55057. If you plan to attend, please get it touch with Brynda McCoy for further details and directions bryndamccoy@yahoo.com.

Next Newsletter Deadline: November 20, 2019

Send articles to Mary Johnson -
mejohanson@mindspring.com



First UU Gardeners

Starting in July, a group of members started working to clean our church grounds. We have spent 32 hours in getting our grounds trimmed, weeds pulled, brush cut, mulch applied, and hours of getting to know each other.

Gardening is good for the soil and the soul. If you like to dig in the dirt, beautify our grounds and meet other members who enjoy this task, Come Join Us. We have finished for the year with Fall cleanup tasks and will be returning in Spring 2020. We have been offering 2 cleanup days each month - one during the week and one on the weekend.

In June I started building a personal relationship with the City of Alton regarding the need to have the brush on the hillside near the Wuerker Room cleared. This area is owned by the City of Alton. During our working relationship an agreement was decided to have our members work on clearing the brush and the City of Alton would take care of removing the debris. We completed 3 large trimming days and the City removed the debris as agreed upon.



On 10/14/19, the City of Alton completed the clearing of the brush on the hillside. This collaborative relationship was a true sign of working together.

Char McAllister, Grounds



Religious Education Program

The RE class will meet in Emerson Place on November 3rd and 17th, at 10 a.m. in preparation for the “Thanksgiving Soup” skit they will present during the Worship Service on November 24th. On Sundays when there is RE, Pre-K children will be with Carol McGrew, and a helper, in the nursery.

In class on Nov 3rd speaking and non-speaking parts for the skit will be assigned. If your child has a speaking part, please help them learn their part. As well as meeting during church on November 17th, please allow some time after church that day for the children to actually do a run through in the sanctuary. It probably won't take more than 30 minutes. Please let me know if your children will not be attending in November. **Joy Hoeft**

SUMMARY OF CONGREGATIONAL MEETING I October 13th, 2019

Thirty-two individuals participated in our first Town Hall meeting, to discuss our future direction regarding where we are going to house our congregation and its activities. It seemed that most people were able to express their opinions in the format that we used. It was called “*World Café*.”

Individuals at each table discussed among themselves the questions posed by the facilitator(s), and then there was an open discussion time for sharing with the whole group.

The questions posed were formulated to identify hard facts about the building and grounds that we need to continue discussing at the Congregation Meeting II on November 17th. I continue to believe that creative perspectives and fresh thinking are required for a sustainable solution.

The following were questions asked by those present:

1. How long is our sustainability as we continue to draw from the endowment at the rate we are doing?
2. What are some funding opportunities (grants, etc.)?
3. How do we fund the cost of repairs and upkeep needed to maintain the current building?
4. What would be the cost of retrofitting a new location?
5. What are the cost of current utilities?
6. Do we stay in Alton? Can we replicate programs outside of Alton?
7. How do we provide better accessibility?
8. Can we take a loan to upgrade building?
9. How do we grow our community?
10. Are we in a position financially to make changes?
11. Are we one “event” from disaster?
12. What are viable options to relocate - buy, sell, rent, lease, share a new space?
13. Is there a possibility to sell building yet rent back from new owner?
14. How can we gain parking?
15. What are our options that are realistic?
16. Where do people live?
17. If everyone doubled their contributions would we have enough money?
18. How do we increase member participation?

The above list of questions are a synthesis of similar questions.

Additional comments:

“Today was a good start to get us thinking and getting conservation started. It is a realistic look at what we need to do?”

“Helpful in that it defined the parameters or problem. Bring us more hard data. Feeling like it could be resolved with work.”

“It was helpful. Before we address moving, I think we should look into grants. A move to E’ville would double the distance that Missouri families have to travel.”

“Excellent process that was extremely needed. We as a community of UU’s need to see the reality we are faced with at this time. Decision must be made and followed through. No more Avoidance.”

“Personal meaningful experience. Community, welcoming, accepting family, spiritual space of acceptance.”

“Is our identity tied to the building?”

At the time of the writing of this article we are working to get the financial information that we all need.

Lee Suarez, Board President



Summary of the Church Board Meeting of October 8th, 2019

Some Board meetings are all about “process” or the ways we’re doing things, while other meetings are about “products” to be shared with members, generally sooner rather than later. The October meeting was primarily about products and, by the time you read this newsletter, you might already know about many of them. If not, or if you missed something, here’s a quick recap.

We spent a pleasant time talking with Pat Moore about social events she and her group are planning for every month through June. These included November’s Moose Hall Chicken Dinner and the High Tea (both of which are being organized by Peg Flach).

The balance of the meeting was devoted to Pastor’s Amy’s report and planning for the three All-Member meetings scheduled to talk about how the existing building does or does not serve us or our mission. Since this Board meeting, the first of those meetings occurred on October 13th.

We’re now busy researching answers to questions raised by Members. Stay tuned!

The next Board meeting will be on Tuesday, November 12th at 7 p.m.

Sandy Shaner, Board Secretary

INTEREST GROUPS:



The Anna D. Sparks Alliance (aka Anna Ds) will meet on Thursday, November 7th at 11:30 a.m. at the Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows
442 S. DeMazenod Dr., Belleville IL 62223
(located on IL State Highway 15 east).

RSVP to Sandy Shaner by Nov. 4th
wrgma2@gmail.com

Thanks to Char for arranging this luncheon site.

Their web site is simply <https://snows.org/>
Here's a link to information about the restaurant and its menus. <http://shrinorestaurant.org/>

From Northern Illinois: Take I-55 south to I-255 south (just south of the Collinsville exit), take I-255 south to IL State Highway 15 east (exit 17A), go 1 mile and Shrine is at the top of the hill on the right-hand side.

From Southern Illinois: Take I-64 west to I-255 south, take I-255 south to IL State Highway 15 east (exit 17A), go 1 mile and Shrine is at the top of the hill on the right-hand side.

From North County, St. Louis, MO: Take I-270 east across the Mississippi River; take exit 7 to merge onto I-255 towards Memphis; take exit 17A to IL 15 east towards Belleville; go 1 mile and Shrine is at the top of the hill on the right-hand side.



**Men's Monthly
Lunch
November 14th @
11:30 a.m.**

The men's Lunch Bunch meets on the second Thursday of each month. Join us at the Best Buffet, 615 Wesley Dr. in Wood River. All men in our church are invited. For further information contact **Paul Hebert**
pphebert@mail.com.

UUA MidAmerica Region Chalice Lighter Grants



The MidAmerica Region includes 200 congregations in North Dakota, South Dakota, Minnesota, Iowa, Kansas, Nebraska, Wisconsin, Missouri, Kentucky, Michigan, western Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois.

Chalice Lighter grants to congregations are funded from small donations from individuals across the Region which are pooled together to help MidAmerica congregations with specific growth projects. The goal is to be able to award a grant of at least \$10,000 to one congregation from each Call for Donations (Fall, Winter, and Spring). Smaller grants (every month or so) will be available in the form of contributions of up to \$1000 to Faithify campaigns posted by MidAmerica Congregations.

The most recent recipient of a Chalice Lighter grant is the People's Church in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. They submitted a grant proposal to allow them to hire a professional choir director and weekly accompanist. The current recipient of Regional support through Faithify is the Heritage UU Church in Cincinnati which is raising money for purchase and preserve 40 acres of farmland to create a nature sanctuary and a green burial ground for their area.

To become a Chalice Lighter donor go to
<https://www.uua.org/midamerica/giving>

For more information go to
<https://www.uua.org/midamerica/giving/chalice-lighters>

News about Our xtension Groups



Pastor Amy is working on new plans for the Extension Groups. She will get word out regarding any changes.

The Glen Carbon / Edwardsville Group (Glen/Ed) is scheduled to meet on meet on the 2nd Saturday of each month at 4 p.m. The location is still to be determined.

The North County Group is scheduled to meet on the 3rd Saturday of each month at 10:30 a.m. in the chapel of Village North Retirement Center. The Center is at 11160 Village North Drive, little bit west of Christian Hospital off Dunn Road.

You are invited to choose to attend either of these two gatherings, no matter where you live. These meetings provide an opportunity for discussions, sharing, and a time to get to know each other better.

CHURCH LEADERSHIP as of November 2019

2019 - 2020

Board Members

Lee Suarez - President
Char McAllister - President-Elect
- Past President
Sandy Shaner - Secretary
Phil Embree - Treasurer
Aiden Crist - Member at Large
Jennifer Lewis - Member at Large
Isabella Navarre & Ben Hoelt - Youth Representatives

Building & Grounds

Co-Chair - Tom Cochran
Co-Chair - Michael Tarabulski
Grounds - Char McAllister

Endowment Fund

Jerry Johnson
Tracey Howe-Koch

Fund Raising

Co-Chair - Peg Flach
Co-Chair - vacant

Membership

Co-Chair - Mary Weber
Co-Chair - vacant

Newsletter

Mary Johnson

Pastoral Care Associates

Rev. Amy Brooks
Dee Evans
Ruth Maskow
Pat Murrell
Sandy Shaner
Mary Weber

Pledge Drive

Char McAllister

RE Council

Joy Hoelt
Jennifer Lewis
Kayci Combs-Lueker

Social Events Coordinator

Co-Chair - Pat Moore
Co-Chair - vacant

Social Justice

Co-Chair - John Herndon
Co-Chair - Ed Navarre

Social Media

Alex Hoelt
Nathan Brown

Sunday Support Services

Paula Moore
Carol McGrew

Worship Associates

Chair – Amy Brooks
Robyn Berkley
Peg Flach
John Herndon
Joy Hoelt
Tracey Howe-Koch
Jerry Johnson
Robert Kokenyesi
Michael Tarabulski

4th Saturday Distribution Program

Mary Johnson
Sabrina Trupia
Carol McGrew
Robyn Berkley

If you have questions, concerns, or helpful ideas regarding any of the church activity areas given above, please get in touch with one of the people listed in your area of interest.



4th Saturday Distribution Program (November 23rd)

We are grateful for the support of church members and friends who donate personal and household care products and/or provide financial assistance. We also use outside resources – “I Support the Girls” and the St. Louis Area Foodbank – to add supplies to our inventory, and we are very thankful to have access to the products they can provide.

We have an inventory of about 30 products that we make available on the 4th Saturday. The quantity of each product varies from month to month and item to item ... sometimes we have enough that everyone gets what they want ... but often we run out of the “popular” items such as toilet paper, laundry detergent, and body wash.

Help with the monthly shopping and shelf restocking would be appreciated. Volunteers would be given the inventory shopping list, a tax exempt letter (for Illinois), and an expense reimbursement form to turn into the church office. You would use your own credit card and expect to spend between \$200.00 and \$250.00 with purchases mainly done at a Dollar Tree store. If you are interested in being a shopper, let Mary Johnson know – mejohanson@mindspring.com.