

# FIRST UNITARIAN FOCUS

Newsletter of the

## First Unitarian Church

Alton, Illinois

**Pastor Amy Brooks**

[thisisamybrooks@gmail.com](mailto:thisisamybrooks@gmail.com)

Office phone: 618-462-2462

[church@firstuualton.org](mailto:church@firstuualton.org)

[www.firstuualton.org](http://www.firstuualton.org)



Congregation established 1836



### Sunday Worship at 10:00 a.m. December 2019 Theme: "Signs and Wonders"

**December 1<sup>st</sup> - 10:00 a.m.**

**Presented by: Robyn Berkley**

**Worship Associate: Michael Tarabulski**

Potluck Lunch

Decorating the church for the Holidays

**December 8<sup>th</sup> - 10:00 a.m. - Pastor Amy Brooks**

**Sermon: "Assigned a Sign"**

During the Time for All, people will be invited to answer "When have you been blessed by accepting an unconventional gift?"

**Worship Associate: Robert Kokenyesi**

Congregational Conversation III

**December 15<sup>th</sup> - 10:00 a.m. - Pastor Amy Brooks**

**Sermon: "Big Little Signs"**

During the Time for All, people will be invited to answer "Can you share an example of something 'ordinary' that you think is wonderful?"

**Worship Associate: Jerry Johnson**

RE for children/youth

**December 22<sup>nd</sup> - 10 a.m.**

**Presented by: Michael Tarabulski**

**Worship Associate: Peg Flach**

**December 24<sup>th</sup> - 7:00 p.m.**

**Pastor Amy Brooks**

**Worship Associate: Jerry Johnson**



**December 29<sup>th</sup> - 10:00 a.m.**

**Burning Bowl Ceremony**

**Presented by: The Worship Associates**



**Next Newsletter Deadline: December 20, 2019**

Send articles directly to Mary Johnson

[mejohanson@mindspring.com](mailto:mejohanson@mindspring.com)



## Letter from Lee

Dear Congregation,

On November 17<sup>th</sup> we had our second Town Hall meeting. The focus of that meeting was to present financial answers to questions that were generated from the first meeting. Charts were presented that covered pledging, where congregation members live, budget information from 2016-2019, endowment and the draws that have been taken, and an average cost of two years of set expenses.

From our research we presented the importance of having members understand our fiscal status and how it's used. Quoting from UUA on "Why it is important to talk about money?" the UUA helps us to remember that "money is connected to our needs, and is used to pay for goods and services, it's an expression of power, values, and money is a tool that is needed to accomplish our Mission and Vision." As the congregation understands our costs it helps us to make sound decisions for our future.

As President of the Board, my agenda is to help us understand how we are spending our money and how we are using it to accomplish our Mission and Vision. Understanding our money is a tool to advance and guide us. But there are questions that still need to be answered by the congregation like: How do we grow community? Do we stay in Alton? Can we replicate programs outside of Alton? Do we stay or do we relocate? Are we a Building or Congregation?

After the figures were presented, we broke up into two Groups. Each Group had members that represented two frames of thought, those that want to Remain in our current building and others who want us to relocate. These two Groups selected leaders, and found out when, how, and where they will meet again to find answers to questions like resolving accessibility or finding a new location. Each Group will present to the congregation convincing facts and findings at the December 8<sup>th</sup> Town Hall meeting. This process represents our 5<sup>th</sup> principle - a democratic process within our congregation. It is the Power of WE.

I want to thank the 34 individuals that participated in our second Town Hall meeting discussing our future direction. Hope to see you at our next town hall meeting Dec. 8<sup>th</sup>.

**Lee Suarez**, Board President

## Upcoming Events for 2019



### Sunday Dec. 1<sup>st</sup>

Regular potluck and annual "Deck the Halls" together. Let's decorate for the holidays.

**Anna Ds Lunch Gathering – Winter Schedule** (Dec./Jan./Feb.) – 1<sup>st</sup> Thursday of each month at Best Buffet



**Thursday, December 5<sup>th</sup> - 11:30 a.m.**

We'll be at the Best (Chinese) Buffet in Wood River on the hill across from Wood River Wal-Mart because the Buffet is always open and they won't miss us if weather prevents our group's meeting. The formal address is 615 Wesley Drive and the phone number is [618-258-1888](tel:618-258-1888). If the weather is good, please come and join us. If the weather turns sour or is predicted to do so, stay safe and warm at home. RSVP to Sandy Shaner [wrgma2@gmail.com](mailto:wrgma2@gmail.com).



**Men's Monthly Lunch  
December 12<sup>th</sup>  
@ 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](mailto:pphebert@mail.com)

### Saturday Dec 21<sup>st</sup>



*You're Invited to a  
Holiday Open House  
at the home of Lee & Char  
2:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.  
116 Crystal Gate Lane  
Glen Carbon, IL*

### 4<sup>th</sup> Saturday Personal Care Distribution – Dec. 28<sup>th</sup>

As you are shopping this month, please pick up an extra package of toilet paper, or diapers, or a bottle or two of laundry detergent, or body wash or other products for personal care. Our guests who come by will be very thankful.

## Pastor Amy's Corner

*He drove out the human. To the east of the garden of Eden, he stationed winged creatures wielding flaming swords to guard the way to the tree of life.  
(Genesis 3:24, CEB)*

### Reflections from the Garden

Peace must be penned.

Who's to say what might happen  
if the Vandals and Visigoths -  
who populate this raw earth -  
were permitted to enter here,  
to wander freely,  
to roam at will?

Is this tranquility so fragile  
that it would erode entirely,  
should our rough hands and clumsy feet  
stray beyond the rope?  
Would our coarse tongues flay the air,  
leaving calm in shreds -  
eviscerated by our profane presence?

Or

Is this fence built FOR us?  
Are the guides assigned...  
for our protection?

Peace must be penned.  
For if it were permitted to run wild  
beyond the boundaries caging in  
the dangers of this place,  
the power of its presence would be  
devastating.

Amy G. S. A. Brooks, October 18<sup>th</sup>, 2019  
Japanese Friendship Garden -  
Phoenix, Arizona



## Anna Ds Sponsored Fall Fund Raisers and Social Events



On October 27<sup>th</sup> we helped the Edwardsville Moose folks with their bi-monthly chicken dinner. Our regular 10:00 a.m. worship service, led by Pastor Amy and attended by church members and several visitors, happened right there under the iconic moose head. A tidy profit of \$320 was raised via the chicken dinner and bake sale. – **Peg Flach**

In celebration of the **Anna D. Sparks Women's Alliance 121<sup>st</sup> year anniversary**, a Tea was held on November 9<sup>th</sup>, reminiscent of such events held by the Anna Ds for decades.

We welcomed 30 + congregants and friends to the Wuerker Room for Tea. Both harp and piano music were enjoyed, as well as a lovely lunch and information shared about tea traditions, Joan Hashimi's teapots, and the Anna Ds. Functioning both as a fundraiser and social event, a profit of \$810 was raised for the church via the luncheon and teapot silent auction.

Bountiful thanks to the many volunteers who worked to make these two events a success! - **Peg Flach**



The Anna Ds give a **BIG THANK YOU** to Peg Flach for her efforts in arranging for our participation in the Moose Lodge chicken dinner, and for all her work in planning, coordinating and organizing down to the last detail, the November Tea.





**Summary of the Church  
Board Meeting of  
November 14<sup>th</sup>, 2019**

On November 14<sup>th</sup>, the Board again had a very focused meeting. While our main priority was preparing for the all-Church meeting on November 17<sup>th</sup> and reviewing all the data collected, we also spent time on several other topics.

With the official resignation of our Office Administrator, we discussed various tasks that still need to be done, how to divide them and who could perform each. Clearly such a broad topic wasn't concluded and will be addressed again soon.

We also had an extensive discussion of the work that Aiden, Jennifer and Ben have been doing on our safety plan. They began with a plan originally drafted by Rev. Sunshine and are incorporating suggestions from the Marquette High School administrators and their own work experiences. Ben has prepared diagrams of the Sanctuary and Wuerker Room (and will add other building rooms) to indicate fire extinguishers and will eventually add escape routes. There's still a lot to do, but they have created a comprehensive map for us to follow in developing and training on the Plan.

In December we are shifting the Board meeting date and time to Wednesday, 12/11 at 6 p.m. and, as always, will welcome all visitors.

**Sandy Shaner**, Secretary

**News about the Extension Groups**

The Glen Carbon / Edwardsville Group (Glen/Ed) and the North County Group are no longer meeting.

**Recipe from the Anna D. Sparks Alliance Cookbook**

The Anna D. Sparks Women's Alliance produced two cookbooks as fundraisers – one in 1946 and the other in 1963. The following recipe is from the section submitted by men in the church.

Risotto (Rice) by Ralph Cook

1¼ cups rice - ¼ Tb. butter - 1 can condensed beef bouillon – 1 can condensed onion soup – 1 can drained, mushroom pieces.

Add everything to a casserole, cover, and bake for about 1:20 in the oven at 325 degrees, stirring a couple times. The dish is done when all the excess moisture has been absorbed, leaving the rice a glistening golden brown.



**Providing Holiday Cheer  
for a Family  
at the Oasis Women's  
Center**

Once again we have the opportunity to be Santa's Helpers for a mother and her children living at Oasis. Your support will help them in a real and meaningful way this Christmas.

The mother and the three children have made lists of what they would like most for Christmas, plus clothing sizes.

The instructions from Oasis say that no gift should be over \$30. However some of the items on the lists are, in some cases, way over that amount. If you want to give a more expensive gift perhaps several people could go in on the purchase, or buy a less expensive "generic" item similar to the name brands asked for.

The lists are on a display board at church (and given below). Decide what you are going to give and write your name next to the item on the posted list at church. The gifts should be wrapped with a tag on each gift with the recipient's name and Christmas number.

Gifts must be brought to church by Sunday, Dec. 14<sup>th</sup> as they need to be delivered to the Oasis Santa House by December 20<sup>th</sup>.

**Cassie:** Mother. (RRRR-1) 1. Pioneer Woman Instant Pot. 2. Nice Tupperware. 3. Baking pans (cake, cupcake, angel food). Clothing: Favorite color pink sparkle; shirt LG/XLG; skirt/pants 15; dress XL; shoes 9-9.5

**Shawn:** 10 year old boy. (RRRR-2) 1. WWE Wreckin' Performance Center Play Set; 2. WWE toys; 3 A size 18 (kids size) Jersey either with Golden State Warriors or St. Louis Cardinals or St Louis Blues. Clothing: Favorite color is blue. Shirt size 18 (kids); pants waist 20 (kids); shoes 6.5-7.

**Saber:** 7 year old boy. (RRRR-3) 1. Film for Instax camera; 2. Pixie Belle by Wowwee; 3 Fuji film Instax Mini camera. Clothing: Favorite color is green. Shirt size 7/8; pants waist 7/8; shoes 1.

**Hallee:** 6 year old girl. (RRRR-4) 1. A baby bed for a baby doll; 2. Musical mobile for a bitty baby; 3. Hair style essential set. [These are all American Girl products, but probably less expensive similar items are available.] Clothing: Favorite color is purple. Shirt size 7/8; pants/skirt 8; dress 8; shoes 1.

## **CHURCH LEADERSHIP as of December 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 Hoeft - 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 Hoeft

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**

Nathan Brown

Alex Hoeft

### **Sunday Support Services**

Paula Moore

Carol McGrew

### **Worship Associates**

Chair – Amy Brooks

Robyn Berkley

Peg Flach

John Herndon

Joy Hoeft

Tracey Howe-Koch

Jerry Johnson

Robert Kokenyesi

Michael Tarabulski

### **4th Saturday Distribution Program**

Mary Johnson

Sabrina Trupia

Carol McGrew

Robyn Berkley

**Social activities committee:** Pat Moore, Robyn Berkley, Peg Flach, Jennifer Lewis, Kayci Combs-Lueker, Mary Lu McManus, Sabrina Trupia, Carol McGrew.

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.

### **Who Was Anna D?**

Our Anna D. Sparks Women's Alliance, organized in 1898, is the oldest continuous woman's group in Alton. It was named after Anna Davenport Chapman Sparks, a woman of indomitable spirit, who died suddenly in 1896 at the age of 66.

Anna Chapman married David Sparks when she was 19, and over the years they raised 6 children. Anna was known for her generosity and community service. She took food to the men in the Confederate prison in Alton during the Civil War. She opened her home to the wives and mothers of the Alton Union troops serving under her husband's command, and helped their families however she could. She held leadership roles in several community organizations, including the Women's Christian Temperance Union and the Women's Council. Her great-great-granddaughter has said that Anna's sense of what was right, and her willingness to do something about wrongs, was a key cultural message passed down in their family, especially to the women. If there were a need, Anna found a way for it to be met. In 1878 after the church had been without a minister for three years, and was on the brink of closing, the women of the church demanded that the church leaders (all male) take action and call a minister. When that minister arrived, Anna stepped up to be church treasurer – a position not usually held by a woman in those times. She held this position for at least 8 years, and by 1886 the church was reported “financially out of debt and in a prosperous condition.”

Our Archival minutes of the Anna Ds' meetings and activities from 1903 through 1999 give historical insights into the important activist and fundraising roles of our church women throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century.